re:think

A Journal of Creative Ethnography

Jeanne Coppens

Spring 2023   Volume 4   Number 1

re:think

Editors

Sandra Sippola
Julio César Nistal
Dais Kaga
Jess Inamdar

Marketing

Ella Boland
Tash Burnel
Fernanda De-Szyszlo

Design

Julio César Nistal

Copyeditors

Xi Luo
Verity Limond
Ella Garrod
Elle Liu
Yiyang Wen
Dais Kaga
Shreya Singh
Jess Inamdar
Sanda Sippola

Advisory Team

Dr John Harries
Augustin Diz
Sahara Choudhury
Rebecca Wojturska

re:think

Spring 2023 · Volume 4 · Number 1

From the Editors ⁞

Once again we bring to you a wonderful selection of disparate ethnographies.

Our contributors have submitted incredible ethnographic pieces that creatively reflect on how we connect with the world around us. These pieces explicate and complicate our understandings of kinship, work and selfhood. We are delighted to also include two photographic essays in this issue. Both experimental in nature, they encourage the reader to play around with ethnography by taking it beyond prose.

Over the past years Re:think has established itself as a journal where creative forms of ethnography are valued and welcomed. How we care for ourselves and others, experience/construct economic spaces, and how we perform the self, are the guiding questions undertaken by our contributors.

The editorial collective feel that putting this issue together has been an honour. To the wonderful authors of this issue, thank you for trusting us with your incredible work. Special thanks also to all our peer reviewers, to Dr John Harries and Agustin Diz for organising and guiding us throughout the process. Thank you everyone for your indispensable help in bringing this issue together.

On the Watershed of Becoming Old: Talking about aging among a group of elderly Japanese retirees

Academic Essays

ABSTRACT

This paper is about the relations between work, rhythm and life course among a group of elderly members of a rice paddy collective in Kyoto, Japan. Through the stories of people's professional work, personal lives and recreational activities, I portray and discuss their understanding of aging and elderhood. Also, by illustrating the rhythms of two elderly people in their retirement and in their post-work activities, I argue that underlying the particular changes of their rhythms are their reminiscences of their working lives.

keywords: rhythm, aging, life course, professional work

Xinyi Lin

I want to express my gratitude to my host family in Japan. Without them this thesis could have never come about.

In the summer of 2017, I was in Kyoto, Japan for two months working with a group of elderly people in a rice paddy. Growing rice was a leisure activity for my informants; it was an errand keeping them busy and helping them cope with aging. The age of my informants fell within the range of 69 to 80 years old. This generation are the ones that worked in machinery, textile, chemical, electronics and later tertiary industrial sectors, who bolstered the Japanese post-war economy until the early 1990s. Despite their advanced age, many of them were still working freelance or had just retired from industry. By living in their neighbourhood, I learnt more about their personal lives, their work and their view of aging. According to Eisenhandler (1989) and Danley (2013), from a phenomenological point of view, becoming old does not simply mean one's reaching a certain age, but refers to the certain set of conditions or changes one chooses

Figure 1: The paddy. Own work.

to correlate oneself to a particular stage of the life course. In the following, we will also see what becoming old meant to my informants, and the ways they were trying to cope with it.

On the Watershed of Becoming Old

Dunmire (2000) says, that by scheduling time, 'a time limit or temporal demarcation [is] placed on the task' (p. 98). The temporal demarcations here, I suggest, when formulating a task, also create a rhythm out of them. This rhythm structuring the time with work/non-work demarcations is something typical of workers in capitalist societies (McCourt and Dykes, 2013; Stevens, 2013; see also Thompson, 1967). As we will see later, for people who have newly retired from capitalist professional work, this rhythm, that featured in their life when they were as young capitalist workers, is important. It affects the way they understand their life course, and affects their life after retirement. In the following, I would like to mainly draw on

Endo-san's case to discern this.

When I roamed onto the topic of his age by accident, Endo-san and I were by the side of the paddy. He was opening the water-gate then, letting the water into the paddy. It must have been a very hot day - I remember the sweat constantly streamed down from his grey hair, through the wrinkles on his cheeks, and dropped down from the tip of his jaw at a point of convergence. Endo-san said he was among the 'super-aged'. Later, he tried to add even more modifiers to his description, saying that he was of the 'most super-aged', as if one were not enough. This bit of self-recognition was actually not too exaggerated – Endo-san had reached 80 in March just this year. And reaching 80 seems to stand for a huge turning point of Endo-san's life, because of a striking incident that happened suddenly after that – he got fired by his employer.

After 20 years working as a regular contract worker for a textile firm, Endo-san 'eventually' lost his job – as he put in a way of bitter self-mockery. The textile maker, Kawashima Selkon, is one of the best-re-

6

puted in Kyoto – a detail that Endo-san mentioned every time he talked about it. The firm was comprised of two departments, and the one that dealt in kimono fabrics and textile fine arts was the one that Endo-san was registered with as an employee. Endo-san was a hand-bag-maker. Before that, he was a tailor, making cheap backpacks sold in supermarkets for a garment manufacturer. It was his passion for kimono and crafts that drove him to Kawashima, and kept him there for 20 years. I knew he loved his old job. He talked about it with me through his excited gesticulation of the drop curtains, and of the kimono belt that he saw coming out from people's hands and old weaving looms in Kawashima factory.

In fact, though, Endo-san worked more at his own office near where he lived. On my first visit there, I was impressed by its compactness and order-liness. Fabric rolls of different sizes stood at the corner, with a large working stand occupying the centre of the room. It was in this workshop that Endo-san had made handbags in all styles for 20 years by his employer's orders. Some of these hand-bags were made of leather, large-in-size, durable looking, intended for ladies' office everyday use. Others were more compact, their outsides covered with embroi-dered Japanese-style textiles, designed for older women who need refined cloth-ing for elegant social occasions. All the bags are polished, with neat, straight stitching - handiwork that only comes from experienced and dedicated tailors. The finished products, after being handed

---

(1) 3000 Japanese yen = 18.680 pounds, based on the average rate in March, 2023.

over to the company, were delivered to department stores over the city where they would be sold at a price that is around 10 times the wage given to Endo-san (3000 Japanese yen per bag(1)).

For Endo-san, life used to be regu-lated by the orders and delivery deadlines assigned by his employer and before each deadline, he clearly felt his life was stuffed by work:

'For example, [my employer would be like –] "for the handbags being made today, I need however many of them tomorrow". They would order me like – "Give them to us!"... There were times like that… … so it would be harsh for me then….I would need to stay here every day… And, when there was no work, I would just be put aside by them…..'

In Endo-san's narration, we could see, as a worker in a capitalist system, he felt his life was clearly divided into distinctive segments of 'harsh work', and 'being put aside'. These time periods are segregated by temporal demarcations – times when he was given an order and the delivery deadlines assigned. These constituted the structure of his time, and the rhythm of his life – a rhythm defined by work.

It was not long after Endo-san got fired that he first told me about it, and it was also at that time that he first addressed his aging. Apparently, he still hadn't totally settled down from the shock:

Endo: '20 years, I've been there… so ridiculous…'
Me: '20 years…Since you were 60?'
Endo: 'Exactly.'
Me: '…..seriously…'
Endo: [Indignantly] 'Yes. And I turned down all other offers - worked only for them.'

Figure 2: The autumn of harvest 2017,
Photo by Teruko-san, the contact person of the works at paddy

Me: 'Right…'
Endo: '…. I don't know why… Our manager got changed last year. And the moment it changed, many old chaps were kicked out….. Isn't it cruel?!'
Me: 'Ohh…'
Endo: [Sigh] 'But…. yeah…… I am old after all…...it is probably time to stop.'

Endo-san felt he was old. He felt old only when he realised he had lost his job. Therefore, becoming old, to Endo-san, means a change in his working status – from employed to unemployed. Being old, as we can see here, does not refer to simply being at a certain age, but also to a certain set of conditions or changes one

chooses to correlate oneself to a particular stage of one's life course – a point Eisenhandler (1989) and Danely (2013) also indicate in their researches of elderly people's views on life course regarding illnesses and spiritual beliefs respectively.

What I learnt from Endo-san is that the life course is like boundary work, with different changes, conditions and events built up as milestones by the individual on their life trajectory, marking and demarcating out different stages of their life. Endo-san identifies his moving from adulthood to elderhood with his working status, and so, working status becomes his milestone. Although as many argue, the choice of events or changes (milestones) to construct and understand his life course is often socially and culturally embedded

8

(Gardner, 2000; Shweder, 1998; Trapha-gan, 2000), here I want to focus more on how individuals' own experiences they have acquired over the past affect their understandings of their life course. Standing in line with Giddens (1991) and Hareven (1991), I understand people's current stage of life as a reflection of cumulative past events – namely, their past life.

Being old, to elderly people, often means a change in their rhythmic and temporal experience. For example, Lager, Hoven and Huigen (2016) in their study of elderly members of a neighbourhood in northern Netherlands, notice the 'slowing down' of everyday rhythm in old age. Living right next to Endo-san's office, I was familiar with the rhythm of Endo-san's life when he was still working as a contract worker. I did feel that the rhythm of his life changed after he lost his job. I felt the changes when I saw his car less often in the garage – the car I would usually see when I strolled over from my house to the supermarket in the after-noons. Endo-san didn't come to his office as often as before – it used to be a work-ing place he frequented, particularly when he had received new orders. When orders were received, he would usually stay there from noon until the early evening before dinner.

Now, he just popped into his office once in a while. He said he needed to clean out the paper patterns he used to standardise the handbag measurements, so sometimes he would come to work on this. Sometimes he would come to sort out the excess of fabrics left from his former work; sometimes, though, he would just come over and sit there, simply flipping through the catalogues for the golf contest he volunteered for.

Endo-san spent less time in his office, and along with it, he lost the rhythm of his life; the orders and delivery dead-lines – those demarcations of time that once dictated his life disappeared. Now, he just came to the office whenever he wanted. Sometimes he seemed to come with an aim; sometimes he didn't. I would see him wandering around here and there – he would hover around like a plastic bag drifting in the wind.

Endo-san also felt the fading rhythm himself. He disclosed this to me when we talked about his plan to run a vendor stall at the handmade craft market in the shrine nearby. He brought this thread into a piece of reminiscence on a trade fair he once attended:

'[In the fair,] once you get orders, an order will come for like...around 100 [handbags]… That number was very attractive… so I saw it as a good chance …. But I was still doing work here [for Kawashima]… so it was difficult to take part in that sort of thing…. Well…. I am sacked from the firm now… I lost my job... I am free… so I wanna take on the challenge again [by displaying and selling his handbags in the craft market]….'

Endo-san indicated the fading rhythm in this comparison between the trade fair and the craft market, and between the past and the present. In the past, when he was an official worker of the company, he felt bound to his working schedule. Now, after losing the job, he lost his schedule – the schedule that once segregated his time into work and rest disappeared. The rhythmic texture of his time faded away.

And as he said – he was free. I would argue that the 'freedom' here is not as positive as it sounds. It stands, at least partly for an unbound-ness – not only unbound from any activities, but unbound from a rhythm – no more deadlines, no more assignment dates that regulate his

time and urge him to work, no more demarcated linearity. The 'freedom' is of the rhythmless-ness of his life and of losing the self-empowerment of being able to do what he wants. For Endo-san, to take on the challenge of exhibiting crafts in the market again is in part to fill the lack of a rhythm – to fill the emptiness of time, as I will argue again later in the next section.

This aspect of the loss of rhythm, also voiced itself in another piece of narrative by Endo-san, when he addressed another reason why he is still making handbags –

'….[W]ell, and the fabrics, there are so many of them here … I don't wanna waste them. So I will just do it, for time-killing..'

The lack of rhythm, I suggest, is reflected in the word 'time-killing'. The vocabulary of 'time-killing' was often used by Usui-san, another elderly member of the paddy, in explaining why he came to the paddy so often –

'Well… people like us, you know – we have nothing to do at home…. We just sit there for the whole day… it won't bother me too much, even if I come here… for time-killing…'

'Time-killing' here, I suggest, echoes the concept of 'timepass' as suggested by Jeffery (2010) in his ethnography on educated unemployed young men in India. As noted by Jeffery (2017), 'timepass' is defined as 'the action or fact of passing the time, typically in an aimless or unproductive way' (p. 407). Fuller (2011), in his review of the same notion in modern India, calls it 'killing time by doing something that is neither serious nor productive' (paragraph 10). In brief, it is the 'having nothing to do' and 'sitting there

for the whole day' as mentioned by Usui-san – passing the time by doing meaningless activities.

And the meaninglessness of the activities one conducts for 'timepass' renders the meaninglessness of the time that one passes in it. Time is 'featureless' (Jeffery, 2010, p. 76), something felt by Usui-san, as much as by college students in Meerut, India - a time experienced as neither linear, nor cyclical, nor a combination of both. Fuller (2011), instead, remarks on such a time as 'unstructured (paragraph 9)', which brilliantly conveys the rhythmless-ness of such time – no longer segmented or marked by anything. In this way, time takes on an emptiness – like a hollow that contains nothing – in which one falls down and down but never touches the ground as time passes – a hollow of uncertainty. And this uncertainty is a core experience one acquires when one is suddenly abandoned by the rhythm of one's life. As the anthropologist Archambault (2015) says, 'a rhythm, with its recurrence and tempo, brings […] a degree of certainty' (p. 129). Therefore, the loss of rhythm results in uncertainty, and thereby, I would argue, temporal anxiety. It is this uncertainty and anxiety that drove Usui-san to kill the time. However, unlike students in India who kill time by 'timepass' – wandering around and doing meaningless things, Endo-san's and Usui-san's 'time-killing', I suggest, has its own meaning. A meaning I will discuss next.

Retaining the Rhythm, Reminiscing on the Past

Usui-san is 73 years old now. He used to be a construction worker in a demolition firm before he developed cancer a few

years ago. Teruko-san said Usui-san couldn't carry out the heavy manual labour demanded by demolition when he got to a certain age, and even less so after getting ill. His supervisor was concerned about his condition and allocated relatively light tasks to him, such as taking pictures off the walls, but a few years later even these tasks became too hard for him. So he withdrew, mostly by his own wishes, since he knew he was not as able as before. This was acknowledged by his employer and colleagues – in this way, Usui-san retired unofficially from the firm by tacit consensus.

Usui-san has always played an active role in the paddy activities. Unlike most of the others, he goes there almost every day – as he put it, 'I'm here when I'm not seeing the doctor'. It usually takes him two hours to commute to the paddy from where he lives. Bus, subway and one more bus – then he arrives and starts working. In the paddy, he is the one that takes the work most seriously. Teruko-san, another paddy member, appreciates the tidiness of the ridges he has weeded over, and I remember Usui-san's silent figure, pulling weeds alone – something that I would see from afar almost every time I wound my way down the narrow path to the paddy. Even so, sometimes he would still complain that his illness makes him sweat so much 'on just a little bit of work' and need to take a break. During the short breaks he took, Usui-san would light a cigarette. The choky smoke coming from his cigarette often reminded me of the smell of the construction workers from rural areas in my country, a smell I would catch from their jackets as they passed me by in the streets of my hometown in China.

I was astonished at how frequently he chose his tasks from his surroundings – those tasks whose importance I would have completely neglected:

'Must pull out the weeds now. We won't see the snakes hidden there, right? If I don't.'

Spending much time here, Usui-san is all too familiar with the paddy. From one day to the next he can identify subtle changes and plan the tasks for the day accordingly. He assigns himself tasks to be done, one after another. In this way, Usui-san's time spent working at the paddy was marked by dense and ever-emerging deadlines of tasks, which very much resembles a typical working schedule experienced by capitalist workers.

Usui-san told me that he 'has had nothing to do' for six or seven years. Six or seven years, as he remembers it, is not the time since he had withdrawn from work, but the time in which he 'had nothing to do'. When he has nothing to do, time becomes empty. His life does not have its rhythm any more. This emptiness of time, and loss of rhythm, is distinct from what Usui-san felt when he was still a functioning worker. Therefore notably, the boundaries of his life course, as revealed when Usui-san looked back on his life, were marked most significantly by the rhythm and temporality he felt, rather than his working status – unlike Endo-san. By these marks, Usui-san identifies his changes, his moving from one stage to another on his life course. In their study of older people's memory, past experiences and place attachments, Rowles and Watkins (2003) propose an *experience-based life course model of being in place*, highlighting the role that disruptions of environmental experiences caused by geographical displacement play in elders' understanding of their life course. Here, using Usui-san's case, I would like to sug-

Figure 3: Usui-san working at the paddy. Own work.

gest instead an *experience-based life course model of being in rhythm and time*, and highlight the significance of rhythmic changes that work, or lack of work, make in elders' life-course construction.

The emptiness of time, as I have argued previously, leads to Usui-san's uncertainty and anxiety, which makes him realise that the time needs to be killed. To Usui-san, the paddy is for time-killing. It takes up most of his waking life now. Every day he would take one of the earliest buses there and leave for home according to the returning bus schedule after a few hours of work. On reaching home, he would head directly for bed, and in the next morning when he woke up, waiting for him would be another trip to the paddy. A regular schedule of paddy attendance is thereby established.

Maybe just as his friend Hongo-san said, the paddy is good for Usui-san, because he 'developed his rhythm' by his work in it. Indeed, with the paddy, his life is no longer rhythm-less. As I have argued, the time spent on the paddy is characterised by the deadlines of the tasks that Usui-san experiences. Moreover, his life is rhythmised by the alternation between the working time he spends in the paddy every day and the rest of it, demarcated by, if not clear temporal demarcations, then at least a regular schedule.

I further argue that such a rhythm of life is in part made by Usui-san himself, by the way he chooses to engage with the paddy. As growing rice on the paddy is their leisure activity, there are no coercive working schedules imposed on paddy members. Usui-san's particular ways of committing – coming to the paddy day after day on a fairly regular schedule, or

assigning himself many tasks– are ultimately his own choice. Thus, the rhythm that is constituted by these activities is also a choice he has made. Therefore, by working in the paddy in such a manner, Usui-san opted to create a certain rhythm for himself.

However, the question that follows on from this is – why did Usui-san choose to create such a rhythm? I would like to argue here that it is because it resembles the rhythm that Usui-san had experienced as a construction worker before his unofficial retirement. To him, it is the rhythm of clocking in and out of his company; it is the rhythm by which he dismantled the walls of derelict houses for two hours with a hammer, and drank beer with his workmates afterwards. To Usui-san, life used to be regulated by his profession. It was regulated by the alternation between linear working time and time for recreation, and the temporal demarcations that segregate them.

Therefore, I would like to suggest an analytic perspective here in terms of how to look at his choice to retrieve his rhythm – that his struggles to resume the rhythm now are a form of nostalgia in which he recalls the past, when he lived a similar rhythm.

The same, I suggest, goes for Endo-san. When he talked about making handbags for time-killing, he was killing time as a way to resume the rhythm. This is indicated in the way he talked about the temporal relation between making handbags and the craft markets:

'[For running a stall in the markets] I need to make the bags first, right?…. it's handmade, so it's like…. I would need to make a few before bringing them there [for sale]……'

This comment shows me that Endo-san is also calling for a way to restructure his time and retrieve a rhythm. He is clear that each craft market in Kyoto has its schedule to be adhered to. I argue that with these schedules, he regulates part of his time into linear working time. As he said, he would need to make handbags first before the markets' schedules. In this way, the markets' schedules are like deadlines for him, by which time he finishes up a quantity of work. By these arrangements, a rhythm of alternation between his linear working time and the rest is constructed. This rhythm is almost the same as the one he felt when he was working as a contracted handbag maker, when his life featured by working hours and was regulated by the orders and delivery dates. I argue, it is his experience of his former rhythm that has led him to make this choice of activities now, and that like Usui-san, with this rhythm, he reminisces and reaches out to the past when he was young.

I would therefore like to conclude here that 'time-killing', for both Usui-san and Endo-san, takes form not as blocks of meaningless activity merely to fill in the emptiness, but as a meaningful resource for reminiscing on their past experiences. The rhythm they endeavour to reproduce through 'time-killing' in their post-capitalist-worker life echoes the rhythm they used to live as capitalist workers when they were young. For Usui-san, it was the rhythm of moving through clocking in and clocking out, between manual demolition work and recreation; for Endo-san, it was the rhythm of orders and delivery deadlines, with quantities of working time he spent in his office. The paddy and the handbags are different elements in their lives they rely on to retrieve such a rhythm – one with alternation between working time and the rest, the segments of which

are demarcated by temporal points.

Here I shall further emphasise that these specific approaches to reminiscence find their base from Usui-san's and Endo-san's past experiences when they were young as capitalist workers. Then, the work/non-work alternation marked by sharp temporal divisional points was their rhythm of life, which they resonate with and remember by their bodies and emotions. Their efforts to reproduce such a rhythm is therefore a form of reminiscence and an effort to reach out to the past as elders feeling old, and feeling their time to be empty.

Conclusion

We can see throughout this article how life course is understood by people according to different measurements. Unlike some scholars' focus on how understanding of life course is culturally embedded (Gardner 2000; Shweder 1998), I have stressed the significance of one's past personal experiences in the mapping of one's life course. Usui-san's and Endo-san's identification with their working status and the rhythm they lived are the references for them to demarcate the stages of their life course.

Becoming old was therefore perceived by the change of rhythm and loss of working status; the ways to deal with crossing the watershed of oldness turn out be fulfil the elders by reconstructing the working rhythm that they were used to as capitalist workers. Their efforts and attempts to retain those rhythms thus can be seen as a way of reminiscing and of paying tribute to their youth.

References cited

ARCHAMBAULT, J. S. (2015) 'Rhythms of Uncertainty and the Pleasures of Anticipation', in Cooper, E. and Pratten, D. (eds) Ethnographies of Uncertainty in Africa. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 129-148.

DANELY, J. (2013) 'Temporality, Spirituality and the Life Course in an Aging Japan', in Lynch, C. and Danley, J. (eds) Transitions and Transformations: Cultural Perspectives on Aging and the Life Course. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, pp. 107-122.

DUNMIRE, P. L. (2000) 'Genre as Temporally Situated Social Action: A Study of Temporality and Genre Activity', Written Communication 17(1), pp. 93-138.

EISENHANDLER, S. A. (1989) 'Social Aspects of Time and the Identity of Elders', in Thomas, L. E. (ed.) Research on Adulthood and Aging: The Human Science Approach. Albany: SUNY Press, pp. 163-181.

FULLER, C. (2011) 'Timepass and Boredom in Modern India', Anthropology of this Century. Accessed on 10/12/2017 at http://aotcpress.com/articles/time-pass-boredom/.

GARDNER, K. (2002) Age, Narrative and Migration: The Life Course and Life Histories of Bengali Elders in London. Oxford: Berg.

GIDDENS, A. (1991) Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modem Age. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

HAREVEN, T. (1991) 'Synchronising Individual Time, Family Time and Historical Time: The Life Course Approach', in Bender J. B. and Wellbery D. E. (eds) Chronotypes: The Construction of Time. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp

167-184.

JEFFREY, C. (2010) Timepass: Youth, Class, and the Politics of Waiting in India. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

JEFFREY, C. (2017) 'Timepass', South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies 40(2), pp. 407-409.

LAGER, D., Van Hoven, B. and Huigen, P. P. (2016) 'Rhythms, Ageing and Neighbourhoods', Environment and Planning, 48(8), pp. 1565-1580.

MCCOURT, C. and Dykes, F. (2013) 'From Tradition to Modernity: Time and Childbirth in Historical Perspective', in McCourt, C. (ed.) Childbirth, Midwifery and Concepts of Time. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, pp. 17-36.

ROWLES, G. D. and Watkins, J. F. (2003) 'History, Habit, Heart, and Hearth: On Making Spaces', in Warner Shaie K., Wahl, H., Mollenkopf, H. and Oswald, F. (eds) Aging Independently: Living Arrangements and Mobility. New York: Springer, pp.77-98.

SHWEDER, R. A. (1998) 'Introduction: Welcome to Middle Age', in Shweder R. A. (ed) Welcome to Middle Age!: (And Other Cultural Fictions). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 9-15.

STEVENS, T. (2013) 'Time and Midwifery Practice', in McCourt, C. (ed.) Childbirth, Midwifery and Concepts of Time. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, pp.120-142.

THOMPSON, E.P. (1967) 'Time, Work-discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', Past & Present 38, pp. 27-40.

TRAPHAGAN, J. W. (2000) Taming Oblivion: Aging Bodies and the Fear of Senility in Japan. Albany: SUNY Press.

Algorithms, Aesthetics, and Agency : An exploration into the performance of the self amongst young women on TikTok

Academic Essays

Eloise Lucia Burchell

ABSTRACT

This article explores how the self is performed on TikTok. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, TikTok - a social media app at the forefront of youth-culture - burst onto the screens of millions of users. On the hilarious, inventive, frustrating and saddening ForYou Page (FYP), short-style videos play one after the other. I will discuss the performance of the self under digital conditions using Goffman's (1959) foundational work on the presentation of self. I follow Mahmood's (2005) definition of agency to explain how TikTok affords its users certain freedoms. However, this sense of agency is complicated by strict standards of beauty which are propagated on TikTok via trends and aesthetics and ultimately, made valuable through likes.

keywords: TikTok, performance of self, aesthetics, trends, likes, agency

One of my participants, Chloe, is a doctor who also works as an Instagram and TikTok influencer (Roberts 2016). Influencers typically have many followers on at least one social media platform and frequently post selfie videos (Nouri 2018). I asked Chloe how she maintains her online aesthetic. She replied:

Generally it's like, neutral colours, neutral backgrounds [she hesitates] – steering away from like brights and harsh prints and that kind of thing. Erm… yeah. Those are probably the main things. And then when I actually film it, I'm using a ring light at the moment just cause its actually really dark here, now, but I'll try and use a ring light, make sure I'm filming in day time just so it looks really bright and airy.

When I conducted this interview, Chloe was working as an emergency doctor on a COVID ward in Australia. She was sad because she had not visited her home in England for around two and a half years. She was tired of receiving sexist comments on her Instagram posts and she was tired of

talking about COVID. She was tired and it was nighttime for her when we spoke. The ring light – a large, circular LED light – is a staple piece of equipment for any influencer. It illuminates the face, making it flatteringly bright for filming. It seemed incongruous to me that she had set it up for our casual interview, especially as I was just lit by the overhead lights of my kitchen. I felt like I had turned up to a party in my pyjamas when everyone else was in heels. The ring light's halo-shaped luminescence shone not a salvific light-in-the-darkness type of illumination, but a clinical, abrupt, and obvious brightness, like when you open your laptop at 1AM to reply to an email you forgot about earlier. I found her use of a ring light in this circumstance disconcerting. Why had she felt the need to present herself in this immaculate fashion for our interview? Was I incorrectly prepared?

Though "vividly actual" (Coleman 2011:13), our engagement took place on Zoom, a digital platform. It was therefore perfectly apposite that my participant was lit with a ring light and was consciously stylised. The meeting took place digitally, and was thus an extension of her digital self-presentation, one which is archetypically, aesthetically crafted. The fact that the interview was cast on a digital stage meant that it would have been jarring for her to appear without one.

Owned by Bytedance, TikTok is a video-sharing social media app that was created in China in 2016 under the name Douyin. Short-style videos of up to three minutes long are presented on the 'For You Page' (FYP), where videos play one after the other. During the pandemic,

TikTok sprung forth into the foreground of our 'social' lives (Kennedy, 2020). It allowed people to maintain connections when in-person socialising was banned (Cordos and Bolboaca 2021). Downloaded over 315 million times during lockdown (TikTok's Rapid Growth Shows the Potency of Video 2021), it is no coincidence that all of my interviewees began their TikTok journey during this time. (1) Indeed, TikTok and the pandemic remain inextricably linked. The term 'viral' was a linguistic marker for both cases of mayhem: while the COVID-19 'virus' carried disruptive and negative connotations, going 'viral' simultaneously celebrated and coveted on the app. This ironic linguistic link felt especially poignant during lockdown, when both words had exponential use.

In this essay, I will discuss how female actors/influencers contribute to their own online self-presentation (Goffman 1959; Bhandari and Bimo 2020) through the performance of trends and aesthetics (Elias et al. 2017). The ring light was Chloe's way of maintaining her immaculate TikTok/Instagram aesthetic. This encapsulates what is fascinating to me about performances of the self on a digital stage: my participant was speaking with authenticity and generosity about her tiredness and social media pressure, whilst maintaining her visual aesthetic. The authentic self, which was revealed in the interview via her dialogue, was obscured by the shadow of the ring light. In the glow of the light, then, stood the synthetic self: "the self(ie)" (Burns 2015:1716). Burns (2015) uses this term to conceptualise the implicit link between the selfie and the self, raising important questions about agency,

_____

(1) see Fitzgibbon, 2021 for further information on how COVID-19 increased the prevalence of start-up companies.

authenticity and identity (Abidin 2016).

Following our conversation, I saw that Chloe had uploaded something onto her 'story' on Instagram, because of the multicoloured ring that had appeared around it. 'Stories' allow creators to upload content which will disappear after 24 hours. Once a 'story' is viewed, the multicolours fade to grey. On social media the new quickly turns into the old; once the audience has seen the content, it is used, consumed and laid to rest amongst other "transient" pixels (Handyside and Ringrose 2015:348). The rapid rate of consumption and production on social media aligns with the ethos of expansionism under capitalism in which temporality is key (Stein 2018).

In the story, Chloe briefly explained our conversation and relayed the basic premise of my thesis. She looked composed and beautiful, tilting her phone camera just above eye height, whilst inserting text over the video in a neutral-pink font shade. Being involved in her "ephemeral journalism" (Vázquez-Herrero et al. 2019), I couldn't help but feel flattered. I wondered why. Why did she incorporate me on her story? Why was I flattered that she did? But then I realised - of course -this was the magnetic pull of social media, this was the "mana of mass society" (Mazzarella 2017:3) – that invisible energy which "connects the macro-forms of ritual, publicity, and display with the micro-dimensions of experience." My participant was updating her followers – a central, structural role of an influencer – and I experienced excitement because of her digital status and credibility. My participant had incorporated *me* into her digital world! My thesis, our conversation, was given validation through its presentation to her followers. Our conversation had morphed from the private to the public, the qualitative to quantitative.

Being woven into her digital world reified my position as a researcher carrying out ethnography virtually; whilst my research was real and tangible, it was digitally mediated, creating messy boundaries of authenticity (Miller and Horst 2012). Something I had conceived of privately now sat proudly on the digital stage, when it had not yet rehearsed the choreography, it did not yet know the lines! My work was "matter out of place" (Douglas 1966). The ability of social media to present alternate realities and disassociate from physical actualities (Betancourt 2016) transformed my thesis: whilst sounding intelligent, it was still in its very early stages. This highlights the performative nature of participation on TikTok which will be discussed throughout this essay.

I feel lucky to have undertaken my ethnography virtually because it was so interesting. Weaving through "digitality" (Negroponte 1995), I engaged with kind and inspirational women such as Chloe on Zoom and through direct messages. I was able to whizz in and out of Instagram profiles, contacting whoever I wanted and viewing posts from years ago. I could then, with a swipe of the finger, swish into TikTok, buy myself a bracelet and go on a virtual tour of the best bars in Edinburgh (the algorithm knows me well), all whilst remaining physically in the real world: this was a time-travelling, supersonic ethnography!

POV: You're the main character

The POV (Point of View) trend encapsulates what content creation on TikTok is all about (Haskins 2019). POV's can cover a

Figure 1: Source Pinterest [https://pin.it/uyTPTKa]

Figure 2: Source Pinterest [https://pin.it/2f9tw4X]

range of topics, from conspiracy theory storytelling to porn, from inane comedy to travel montages. The creator of the video orchestrates a "situation that unfolds in real-time, where the viewer feels like they're right there in the room, watching as it happens" (Imagor 2021).

As an example, if I were to make a POV video about writing this essay, I would set up my phone against my laptop screen, and face the camera towards me. I would film myself typing furiously and sipping scalding hot coffee. I would then caption the video, "POV: you're my laptop and I'm stressed". In this scenario, you, the viewer are given the absurd role of being my laptop screen. The comic disruption of the first-person narrative is engaging, can be hilarious and is now a classic meme format.

"Humour is what happens when we're told the truth quicker and more directly than we're used to." (Saunders 2007). Perhaps my POV video is more

than an attempt at humour. Perhaps the disturbance of human/object relations speaks to the nature of the laboured self under neoliberalism: "At the heart of capitalism is the illusion that people are like things… and things are like people" (Gates 1989:799).

A sub-category of the POV genre which garners many views and Likes are "POV: you're the main character" videos. In such videos, the content creator might film a montage of themselves completing a Pilates workout and writing affirmations in a journal. Being a "main character" is about showing TikTok that you are the protagonist. Similarly, "POV: you're becoming THAT girl" is an equally popular genre which follows a similar narrative. They entail content creators displaying their journey of self-success.. 'Becoming THAT girl' involves showing your audience the very best version of yourself (Bullingham 2013).

I searched 'becoming THAT girl' on

20

Pinterest and am now armed with 35 ways I can "kick the snooze habit" (laundry, podcast, essential oils), seven ways I can be attractive (messy bun, smiling) and 99 habits that will make me a smarter woman (recycle, chess). Thank goodness I researched it! This rampant personal refurbishment speaks to the nature of late-capitalism in which the self is quantified, measured and improved upon constantly (Strathern, 1996).

A subsequent feature of "becoming THAT girl" or being "the main character" is a generic aesthetic, which induces the viewer to not only *do* better, but to *look* better too. The aesthetic is romantic and whimsical: impossibly beautiful friends having a spontaneous time (Fig. 1); a girl swishing her skirt in a meadow (Fig. 2). It is an 'inspirational' aesthetic which onlookers yearn for and aim to emulate on their own. There are many digital avenues one can venture down to get their fix of aesthetic inspiration. For example, you can follow along with famous YouTuber, NikkieTutorials in her eighteen minute video, "Full Face Of VIRAL TikTok Makeup Trends!", or look at FreddieMyLove's video, "Trying out TIK TOK aesthetic styles!" You can also change your relationship with food and restrict your eating habits, as one respondent told me, showing how the digital can quickly transmute into material and embodied effects.

The POV trend enables content creators to become the author, narrator, protagonist and actor who perform (Goffman 1959) to their "imagined audience" (Marwick 2010). "Main character" videos require great usage of "'I' narratives" (Reed 2005:226): videos about becoming the main character are hyper-individualistic showcases in which the creator is elevated above TikTok's endless stream of videos and images. Through performing trends, the curation of one's own aesthetics affords users visibility in the whirlpool of images and Others on TikTok (Goodwin et al. 2016).

Is it too far-fetched to wonder if TikTok has bestowed its users with god-like powers of creation, making them feel omnipotent and omnipresent? Instead of godly creations made imago dei, the content creator crafts imago self. As one famous TikToker said, if you are good-looking or talented, you too can become "a TikTok god" (Lorenz 2020 in Boffone 2021:29)…

Regardless, the narration and presentation of oneself online gives users a sense (Flanagin 2010) of elevation whereby they can perform a brilliant digital version of themselves online (Dijck 2015; Horst 2009). I italicise 'sense' because our "perception[s]" are subjective (Flanagin 2010:185). It becomes pertinent to ask: is the agency propagated by "main character" trends real? As one respondent synthesised, "social media enhances one's need to try and be the perfect girl". Crucially, the "perfect" girl aesthetic is easy to identify and copy: it is repetitive, generic and chronic.

Statistically, posts that follow trends are more likely to be successful (TikTok Community, New studies quantify TikTok's growing impact on culture and music), catering to the audience's appetite for the familiar (Ritzer 2019). Trends allow users to signal to others that they conform to TikTok's ideals of accomplishment, beauty and success. They also allow users to go viral, thus gaining financial security or income, but this comes at the cost of their uniqueness.

Uniqueness, human difference, is lost as users are pushed into a mould, literally monetising homogeneity. Horst

(2009:99) explains that "individuals exist in alignment with highly socialised media[s] of expression"; the way users present their self-identity is bound with moral codes. Trends are harnessed by users to fit neatly within TikTok's idealised standards of beauty and success. TikTok gives users the tools to perform a self which will be monetarily and socially productive through trends. That said, the cost of these social benefits are outweighed by the negative impacts of self-commodification and I will explore these in the next section.

The Quantified Self(ie)

In this section, I explore the commodification and quantification of the selfie video on TikTok. The networked selfie (Kuntsman 2017) is a commodity, used to gain monetary value by the creator of the selfie, but it ultimately facilitates the "disciplining [of] the individual" (Reichardt and Schobar 2020:8) and economically bolsters the company (Gerlitz and Helmond 2013).

The quantification of the self via mobile apps which track steps, heart rates, sleep and menstrual cycles are firmly embedded within the digital tapestry of our everyday lives (Reichardt and Schobar 2020) - we rely on them to quantify our success, to be the most productive and efficient versions of ourselves (Strathern 1996), to become "THAT girl". In the pinnacle of self-quantification, people use TikTok, another tracking device, to showcase and manage their success. This success is visually quantifiable (how thin is the actor), and numerically quantifiable (how many Likes does she have?).

"[T]he mobilisation of selfies by citizens should be understood as a new techno-social practice that is embedded not only in new forms of agency, but also in new forms of governance and violence." (Kuntsman, 2017; 15)

All digital presentations of the "branded self" exist under late capitalism, in which the selfie is "a commodity to which financial and other kinds of value can be assigned" (Roberts 2016:3). The commodification of the laboured self is symptomatic of late capitalism, where one must "[bring] oneself to market" (David 2007:10).

For the purpose of this essay and its focus on digital navigation of the self, I will follow Gerlitz's and Helmond's (2013:1349) idea of the 'Like economy'. Liking a post on Facebook does not just indicate an agreeable exclamation, condensed into a quantifiable cluster of pixels and data, but it sets off a chain reaction, whereby potential new Likes are attracted (Gerlitz and Helmond 2013). Likes are economically valuable for Facebook "because they produce valuable user data that can enter multiple relations of exchange and are set up to multiply themselves" (Gerlitz and Helmond, 2013:1360).

On TikTok, users with 10,000 followers and 100,000 views over 30 consecutive days are eligible for TikTok's content creator fund (Mauran 2021) - a $200 million support for budding content creators (Pappas, Introducing the $200M TikTok Creator Fund). Consequently, each user supplies data to TikTok in what Srnicek (2017:24) explains as "network effects": the more users who contribute data to the platform, the more useful and valuable that social media platform becomes (Gerlitz and Helmond 2013). Importantly, the accumulation of users and thus data - which is a key marker of capital (Srnicek 2017) - gives companies such as

TikTok the knowledge and funding to refine their algorithm, sharpen their advertisements and keep their users' attention (Srnieck 2017; Wu 2017). In other words, the self-aggrandizing of its users fuels the exponential growth of the self-aggrandizing platform. Therefore, it serves TikTok as a company to have users creating content. Equally, it serves users to create content for the personal accumulation of monetary and social value (Ross 2019) in what is a highly lucrative, reciprocal, value-attracting exchange relationship.

On weblogs (blogs), a blogger is "held to be the prototype or entity depicted in the digital text"; indeed, weblogs are "indexes of self" (Reed 2005:227). The text incorporated within blogs becomes the blogger. Extending this logic within the "main character"/"THAT girl" framework, the aesthetic of the content creator is the content creator. In his work on value, Engelke (2018:129) establishes how "[F]orms of modern commodity trading try to remove the person" from the exchange. With the establishment of unifying, conformist trends which essentialises actors into aesthetic categories, Engelke's assertion is only too true.

On TikTok, the self(ie) is brought to market: a digital version of yourself, a beautiful, hilarious and brilliant version of yourself. The 'true you' is hidden behind the smokescreen of filters and beauty enhancing digital tools (Elias et al. 2017). The self as performed on TikTok's marketplace is highly engineered and has considerable implications on the laboured self (Hochschild 1983).

The Labour of Aesthetics

In the previous section, I illuminated the prevalence of aesthetics in users'self-per-formance. Following Elias et al. (2017), I use a 'labour of aesthetics' discourse to understand actions required by everyday users to mirror the beauty of famous TikTokers, who have contributed to and benefitted from the conflation of beauty with success (aesthetic capital) (Sarpila et al. 2020:2). The processes of aesthetic labour are wide ranging, often invisible and never complete (Elias et al. 2017; Cherry 2016; Braun 2017). Labours of aesthetics are performed by users to maintain a successful digital profile and to ensure they can participate within social media's "visual economy" (Ross 2019:364). Ultimately, the labour of aesthetics transmutes into "aesthetic entrepreneurship" (Elias et al., 2017; 33), in which "neoliberal capitalist imperatives" (Banet-Weiser, 2019; 266) of self-quantification and measurement are implemented (Strathern, 1996).

The labour required to maintain online aesthetics encompasses the careful curation of one's digital profile. Whether deciding which aesthetic style you should choose, "strategically choosing images to upload" (Goodwin et al., 2016; 5), or posting at peak time to maximise the number of Likes you can acquire (Ross, 2019), the maintenance of one's aesthetics requires content creators to "constantly and recursively monitor their own self-representations" (Goodwin et al., 2016; 4). The term "monitor" successfully conceptualises the labour done by Chloe, my interlocutor, for whom a pastel, bright, airy aesthetic was a crucial aspect of her profile. She decorates her flat with peonies (baby pink) and a mirror. Reflections of beauty are contained within her physical environment and captured in her TikTok/Instagram profile.

In order to emulate TikTok's beauty standards, users undergo digital altera-

Figure 3. Addison Rae using the 'baby filter'

tions via beauty apps (Elias and Gill 2017) or filters.. Addison Rae (Fig. 5) has a particular affinity with the 'baby filter' on Snapchat, where the filter makes you look like a young child (Fig. 6). A Pinterest board was created to compile and showcase these filtered images.

The Pinterest board both normalises and glamorises Rae's self-infantilisation (Zhang, 2021). The 'baby filter' contorts the face into age-obscurity, representing vast digitally mediated appearance alteration. This technology uses advanced facial recognition technology, thus "normali[sing] biometrics and automated image manipulation" (Rettberg 2017:94). I was unsurprised when 44% of my respondents said they needed to change their appearance before posting a TikTok. Luckily, "[T]he management of ones face and voice" (Goffman 1956:211) has never been easier (Elias and Gill 2017). Ordinary TikTok users can contort their expression into a nose scrunch, whiten their teeth or

use the 'baby filter', just like Addison Rae. The appearance of "aesthetic capital" (Sarpila et al. 2020:2) is orchestrated by illusionary tools afforded by TikTok.

The modification of content towards a specific beauty type is entrenched and therefore goes much further than just impacting what users see, it impacts how users see. Elias and Gill (2018:74) use "'nano surveillance'" to explain the chronic scrutiny that women place on their own and each other's bodies. One respondent told me, "[t]here is an expectation that you will always see the perfect image on TikTok, especially for women". She expects to see a beauty ideal and prepares herself for the wounds inflicted by visual comparison. In this way, the surveillance of others morphs into the surveillance of the self whereby users contort themselves via restrictive eating or using beauty tools to emulate what they have observed of others.

Similarly, my interlocutor, Chloe regularly posted updates onto her 'story',

24

keeping followers constantly updated. This extends what Elias and Gill (2018; 65) term "360° surveillance"; all-encompassing scrutiny of women by tabloids, articles and paparazzi. Chloe self-publishes in accordance to the affordances that social networking sites offer her: Instagram's 'story' feature and TikTok's inbuilt beauty enhancing tools. Through multiple avenues of self-publication, they give followers a 360° insight into their lives. The performance of the self is, once again, influenced by TikTok. Agency, the "capacity for action" (Mahmood 2005:18), is impeded as users are held captive by unattainable ideals of beauty but at the same time, it is also exercised, through the advertising and branding of oneself.

That being said, Horst (2009) explores how the manufactured curation of one's digital profile on Facebook is paramount in defining young people's self-presentation. Though synthetic in its engineering, there are authentic motives of visibility, connection and friendship behind the presentation of the self (Horst 2009). Selfies are "claims made by ordinary citizens via the use of their own networked self-portraits" (Kuntsman 2017:14). Following Mahmood's (2005) assertion that agency is the capacity for action, the "aesthetic entrepreneurship" (Elias et al. 2017:33) done to maintain aesthetics and ultimately bolster the success of the profile is evidence of action being taken, albeit under TikTok's reign.

Ultimately, TikTok allows its users to be agentive if they perform under certain constraints, which, as I have aimed to illustrate, are aesthetics and trends. This essay has illustrated that TikTok does enable its users to perform a self, but it is exactly that: a performance. Simply put, "[t]echnical characteristics

that enhance individuals' agency… also present the potential for centralized control" (Flanagin 2010:190). Here, Flanagin (2010:191) synthesises that the same technical tools which affords users agency, creativity and connectedness, are also used to surveil, "exploit" and "violate" (Zuboff, 2019). Content creators are able to perform freely on TikTok, so their action of creating videos is their agency (Mahmood 2005). On the other hand, this action serves TikTok as a capitalist corporation, whereby the sale of the selfie video is tantamount to an acquisition of followers and Likes. Additionally, the management of ones own aesthetic performance highlights TikTok's location within neoliberal governmentality (Kipnis 2008).

Social media is complicit in "amplifying economic, political and cultural grievances" (Zhuravskaya 2020:416). TikTok videos further elucidate an already concrete link between beauty and success. Filters and beauty apps propagate the ceaseless surveillance and quantification of the female body and ultimately trap users into conformity and "discipline" (Reichardt and Schobar 2020:8) via desperate aesthetic monitoring and overreaching. My fieldwork highlighted truly saddening accounts of women whose lives are consumed by an unshakable feeling of inadequacy.

References cited

ABIDIN, C. 2016. "Aren't These Just Young, Rich Women Doing Vain Things Online?": Influencer Selfies as Subversive Frivolity. Social Media and Society 2, 1-17.
BANET- WEISER, S. 2017. 'I'm Beautiful the Way I Am': Empowerment, Beauty, and Aesthetic Labour. In Aesthetic

Labour: Rethinking Beauty Politics in Neoliberalism (eds) A. S. Elias., R. Gill., and C. Scharff, 265-283. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

BETANCOURT, M. (2016.) The Critique of Digital Capitalism: An Analysis of the Political Economy of Digital Culture and Technology. New York: punctum books.

BHANDARI, A., and Bimo, S. 2020. Tiktok And The "Algorithmized Self": A New Model Of Online Interaction. The 21st Annual Conference of the Association of Internet Researchers, 27-31 October (available online: https://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/spir/article/view/11172/9856, accessed 7 October 2021).

BOFFONE, T. 2021. Renegades: Digital Dance Cultures from Dubsmash to TikTok. New York: Oxford University Press.

BRAUN, V. 2017. Rethinking Ruskin's Wife's Vulva. In Aesthetic Labour: Rethinking Beauty Politics in Neoliberalism (eds) A. S. Elias., R. Gill., and C. Scharff, 265-283. London: Palgrave Macmillan,

BULLINGHAM, L. 2013. 'The presentation of self in the online world': Goffman and the study of online identities. Journal of Information Science 39, 101-112.

BURNS, A. 2015. Self(ie)-discipline: Social regulation as enacted through the discussion of photographic practice. International journal of communication 9, 1716-1733.

CHERRY, M. A. 2016.Virtual work and Invisible Labour. In Invisible Labour: Hidden Work in the Contemporaary world. (eds) Crain, M.G., Poster, W. R., and Cherry, M.A. California: University of California Press.

COLEMAN, B. 2011. Hello Avatar: rise of the networked generation. Massachusetts: MIT Press.

CORDOS, A-A., and Bolboaca, S. D. 2020. Lockdown, Social Media exposure regarding COVID-19 and the relation with self-assessment depression and anxiety. Is the medical staff different? International journal of clinical practice 75, 1-8.

DAVID, S. 2007. Self for Sale: Notes on the Work of Hollywood Talent Managers. Anthropology of work review 28, 6–16.

DOUGLAS, M. 1966. Purity and danger: an analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo. London: Routledge & Paul.

ELIAS, A. S., and Gill, R. 2018. Beauty surveillance: The digital self-monitoring cultures of neoliberalism. European journal of cultural studies 21, 59–77.

ELIAS, A. S., Gill. R., and Scharff, C. 2017. Aesthetic Labour: Rethinking Beauty Politics in Neoliberalism. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

ENGELKE, M. 2018. How to Think Like an Anthropologist. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

FITZGIBBON, A. 2021. The age of the entrepreneur: how Covid-19 triggered the start-up boom. University of London, 1 July (available online: https://london.ac.uk/news-opinion/london-connection/feature/how-covid-triggered-start-up-boom, accessed 2 November 2021).

FLANAGIN, A. 2010. Technical code and the social construction of the internet. New media & society 12, 179–196.

GATES, H. 1989. The Commoditization of Chinese Women. Journal of Women in Culture and Society 14, 799-832.

GERLITZ, C., and Helmond, A. 2013. The like economy: Social buttons and the data-intensive web. New media & society 15, 1348-1365.

GOFFMAN, E. 1959. The presentation of self in everyday life. London: Penguin Books.

GOODWIN, H., et al. 2016. Precarious

Popularity: Facebook Drinking Photos, the Attention Economy, and the Regime of the Branded Self. Social media + society 2, 1-13.

HANDYSIDE, S. And Ringrose, J. 2015. Snapchat memory and youth digital sexual cultures: mediated temporality, duration and affect. Journal of Gender Studies 26, 347-360.

HOCHSCHILD, A. 1983. The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling. Berkeley: University of California Press.

HORSt, H. A. 2009. Aesthetics of the Self: Digital Mediations In Anthropology and the individual: A material culture perspective (ed) D, Miller, 99-114. New York: Berg.

HORST, H. A., and Miller, D. 2012. Digital Anthropology. London/New York: Berg.

IMAGOR, T. 2021. What Is a TikTok POV? How to Make Your Own. MakeUseOf, 26 March (available online: https://www.makeuseof.com/what-is-pov-on-tiktok/, accessed 9 September 2021).

KENNEDY, M. 2020. 'If the rise of the TikTok dance and e-girl aesthetic has taught us anything, it's that teenage girls rule the internet right now': TikTok celebrity, girls and the Coronavirus crisis. European journal of cultural studies 23, 1069–1076.

KIPNIS, A. 2008. Audit Cultures: Neoliberal Governmentality, Socialist Legacy, or Technologies of Governing? American Ethnologist 35, 275-289.

KUNTSMAN, A. 2017. Selfie Citizenship. Manchester: Palgrave Macmillan.

LORENZ, T. 2020. Hype House and the Los Angeles TikTok Mansion Gold Rush, New York Times, 3 January (available at https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/03/style/hype-house-los-angeles-tik-tok.html, accessed 29 September 2021).

MAHMOOD, S. 2005. Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

MARWICK, A. E. 2010. I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. New media & society 13, 114-133.

MAURAN, C. 2021. How to get paid on TikTok. Mashable, 15 August (available online: https://mashable.com/article/get-paid-on-tiktok, accessed 14 October 2021).

MAZZARELLA, W. 2017. The Mana of Mass Society. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

NEGROPONTE, N.1995. Being Digital. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

New studies quantify TikTok's growing impact on culture and music, TikTok Community, 21 July 2021, (available online: https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/new-studies-quantify-tik-toks-growing-impact-on-culture-and-music, accessed 2 Secptember 2021).

NOURI, M. 2018.The Power of Influence: Traditional Celebrity vs Social Media Influencer. Advanced Writing: Pop Culture Intersections 32, 1-20.

REED, A. 2005. 'My blog is me': Texts and persons in UK online journal culture (and anthropology), Ethnos 70, 220-242.

REICHARDT, U. & Schober, R. (2020). Laboring Bodies and the Quantified Self. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

RETTBERG, J. 2017. Biometric Citizens: Adapting Our Selfies to Machine Vision. In Selfie Citizenship (ed) A. Kuntsman, 89-98. Manchester: Palgrave Macmillan.

RITZER, G. 2019. The McDonaldization of society: into the digital age. California: SAGE

ROBERTS, S. T. 2016. Commercial Content Moderation: Digital Laborers' Dirty Work. Media Studies Publications 12.

ROSS, S. 2019. Being Real on Fake Insta-

gram: Likes, Images, and Media Ideologies of Value. Journal of Linguistic Anthropology 29, 359-374.

SARPILA, O. et al. 2020. Double standards in the accumulation and utilisation of 'aesthetic capital'. Poetics 82, 1-11.

SAUNDERS, G. (2007) The Braindead Megaphone. New York: Riverhead Books.

SRNICEK, N. (2017) Platform Capitalism. Cambridge: Polity Press. Cultural anthropology 33, 275-385

STEIN, F. 2018. Selling Speed: Management Consultants, Acceleration, and Temporal Angst. PoLAR 41, 103-117.

STRATHERN, M. 1996. FROM IMPROVEMENT TO ENHANCEMENT: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL COMMENT ON THE AUDIT CULTURE. The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology 19, 1-21.

THE ECONOMIST. TikTok's rapid growth shows the potency of video. 7 October 2021 (availble online: https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2021/10/07/tiktoks-rapid-growth-shows-the-potency-of-video, accessed 2 November 2021).

VÁZQUEZ-HERRERO, J., Direito-Rebollal, S., López-García, X. 2019. Ephemeral Journalism: News Distribution through Instagram Stories. Social media + society 5, 1-13.

WU, T. 2017. The Attention Merchants: The Epic Scramble to Get Inside Our Heads. New York: Alfred A Knopf.

ZHANG, C. (2021) TikTok Face. REAL LIFE, 8 February (available online: https://reallifemag.com/tiktok-face/, accessed 23 October 2021).

ZHURAVSKAYA, E., et al. 2020. Political Effects of the Internet and Social Media. Annual review of economics 12, 415–438.

ZUBOFF, S. 2019. The age of surveillance capitalism: the fight for the future at the new frontier of power. London: Profile Books.

Making the Market : The Characters of Izmailovo Market

Academic Essays

Ayuna Zhimbiev

ABSTRACT

In describing the social fabric of the market, this essay aims to demonstrate the seminal role of social relations. Sellers may be motivated by individual pursuits to make a living, but this should not locate individualism at the crux of the study: they frame their business processes within frameworks of moral concern. In applying themselves, sellers make the market.

keywords: relationships, affect, russia, market, work

It is a warm afternoon, and I am standing outside Asan's stall helping him vend. The white sheets stretched above our heads offer an aperture for the sun to glimmer down and flood the marketplace with a golden colour. I notice a middle-aged woman meandering down the walkway and in a salesman manner: straighten up, smile and edge closer, to appear accommodating.

One of the brightly coloured tourist souvenirs caught her eye as she slowly lingers over. To reciprocate interest, I point to the postcards and keyrings to try and distinguish what the visitor may be after. Yet, mid sales pitch she enquires about my English accent. Keeping it short, I explain that I am conducting research and have been in Moscow for the past couple of months. She is inquisitive and asks further questions. Our conversation trails off as we talk about her visit and places I would recommend. Interestingly, the tone of the conversation is amicable as I forget my role as a vendor. After several minutes of talking, she turns back to the products and picks out some fridge magnets to

Figure 1: A bird's eye view - the white building is Izmailovo Kremlin and below is the marketplace.

purchase. We smile and exchange good-byes as the woman catches up with her husband and children.

My thoughts are interrupted as I hear Pavel, a cheery retiree who neighbours Asan's stall jokingly shouting out 'Did you see that, Asan? The researcher has truly become one of us.' Leaning over the wooden stand, Asan proclaims 'Sovershenno verno tovarishch!' ('Absolutely right comrade!) (1). Drawing on ethnographic research that was undertaken over two months in the Izmailovo market, I focus on the logic that governs vendors and shapes economic action. Origins of this market go back to the 1980s when the informal space comprised alleyways for artists to exhibit their work to the public. The legalisation of private cooperatives in the early 1990s facilitated the growth of small-scale trad-

ing. The collapse of the Soviet Union signalled a rapid adjustment in ideological reform. Russia was now open to the prevailing structures of capitalist forces. During the political transformation, there was a development of the tourism industry as post-communist states attracted an ever-increasing number of foreigners.

In 2003, the administration of Vernissage Izmailovo LLC formalised the space into Kremlin in Izmailovo and Izmailovo market. The Kremlin's exterior resembles a 16th-century architectural design, envisaging an 'old-style Russia'. A cultural complex where you can find a dozen small museums in the vicinity, the Museum of Russian Vodka or the Museum of Bread. Yet, if you make your way past these curated spectacles, you will find

(1) A popular synonym from the Soviet period (Wade, 2004).

(2) I recognise that 'institutions' have been critiqued for governing behaviours within human collectives. I employ it as Gambold who describes social institutions as a 'framework of expectations' (2010, p.274)

yourself at the metal gates of the market.

The space comprises over 90 wooden stalls. On any weekday, approximately two-thirds of the stalls are occupied by full-time vendors. One informant explained that there are roughly 450 individuals who work here, and the number rises to 650 on weekends. As the market provides work employment to traders and is fashioned to attract local and international visitors, I position it as a social institution (2) where communication is a fundamental feature.

My attention was directed to the meanings of work. Relevant here is the body of literature that discusses the ambivalence in the notion accorded to work (Harris, 2007). The concept of work can act as an idiom through which societies think about themselves.

In Western thought, the concept of work is related to the process of 'capital accumulation' (Narotzky, 2018). This is rooted in the Protestant ethic that Weber explicitly linked to the emergent capitalist ethos (1958). Such a theorisation gave way to an underlying notion that society is run by rational principles, where worldly success is an implication of divine favour and salvation. Weber saw work as a way for people to realise a supernatural mandate. However, is this applicable to societies that do not stem from Calvinist roots and still merit hard work?

Such a Weberian framework was utilised by Geertz in his examination of the culture-economy nexus and how social organisations affected economic growth. In Peddlers and Princes (1963) he identified the different types of entrepreneurship in a Javanese bazaar and those of the Balinese gentry. In the bazaar economy, Geertz found that reformist Muslims played a significant role in the economic transformation of the town based on their asceticism. The group of peddlers and shopkeepers were driven by a source of pride to work hard which was a 'stimulus to economic enterprise' (ibid., p.128). Nevertheless, Geertz's work reflected a modernisation theory. Bazaars marked an underdeveloped form of exchange, where scarcity of information and personalised transactions prevailed. Although he saw parallels with the Protestant ethic as conceived by Weber, he argued that the logic of trade in Bali entails a greater variety of meanings. What is effective in this work is that it underscores the reformist Muslim values that motivate work. Geertz sought to discover the meaning of their practices based on local knowledge.

Geertz's substantive legacy was the 'webs of significance' as this precept calls for renewed attention to the sense people make of their own life situation (1973, p.5). However, how does such a basis apply to the Russian context? It gives merit to the fact that understanding of work may stem from a system that both shapes and are shaped by individual actors. That 'culture' may define the context of work. For instance, the Communist Party championed hard discipline and labour-intensive goals under the banner 'workers of the world, unite!' (Krylova, 2017). Work was celebrated if it embodied ideas of egalitarianism. Nevertheless, if we are to follow Geertz's interpretation of culture, then Russia would still perhaps be under a red banner as semiotics are 'public' and hence, not only ideas but programmes and plans (LaCapra, 1988). As we know from history, such a deterministic approach is not sufficient.

Why are such reflections important for the contemporary context? Of particular interest is how postsocialist citizens' approaches to market economics are coloured by certain legacies of socialism.

Figure 2: The scene once you enter the market gates.

This is not to dispel that such views are changing but literature has noted the moral resistance to 'the market' (Mandel and Humphrey, 2002). In her monograph on privatisation and labour reform in Poland, Dunn stated that the effective adoption of market values 'requires changing the very foundation of what it means to be a person' (2004, p.6). Thus, implying that subject categories have been introduced by the transition to capitalism. People should either conform to prevailing logic or can resist seemingly individualistic notions but face exclusion (Makovicky, 2014). It underlines a fairly strict dichotomy towards market attitudes. However, such assumptions cannot be predicted. I will illuminate the ways individuals may oscillate between these notions and in some instances, cooperation can productively establish the basis for work. As I hope to show, the practices of selling are not merely beneficial as a product of work but are valuable in their very action.

Methodology

Throughout the course of my research, I spoke with thirty-five sellers five of whom I developed a more extensive relationship with. As I have a high proficiency in the Russian language, the interviews were undertaken in Russian with several individuals who chose to speak English. The communicative processes aided my data as they enabled people to articulate themselves in their 'native language'. My linguistic abilities were not quite of that standard but in some instances, this was constructive as it had implications for my collection and analysis. If I was unable to understand colloquialisms or casual terminology, I asked my informants to expand. Subsequently, I appreciated that I had become an instrument of data production. Researching 'multilingually' – both on the field and reading academic literature affects the knowledge amassed. The process of translation can impact how my participants are interpreted by readers.

Therefore, consideration has been placed on translating the extracts as candidly as possible, and when suitable, I have left the Russian term.

Understanding the Space

'I've been here for years, if not my whole life!' Moving the pipe from his mouth Ivan introduces himself to me, a Muscovite, selling Soviet memorabilia for the past thirty-six years. Trading here since its beginnings, Ivan counts himself as a handicraft master. As I ask him whether he enjoys working here or not, he seems affronted. In a hasty tone, he declares 'Of course, I love what I do.' What had I said that caused him to be so direct? While quickly trying to think of another question to ask, Ivan interrupts my thought process, leans back in his chair and calmly states 'However, it never used to be like this…' He succinctly explained:

'The "rynok" (market) has always been a remarkable area for us Russians…... there was even a market in Communist times, but it was done behind doors, illegally I guess especially with speculation. Trading in those days, was seen as bad and when I started in 1980s… I remember my uncle kept questioning why I was doing it… he could not understand how I made money off working people.'

For Ivan, there has been a clear shift in the way the market has been perceived. Post-Soviet literature has extensively referenced that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the 'market' represented a challenged site (Mandel and Humphrey, 2002). The Soviet person was constructed around production and consumption within the state sphere; thus, to depart from such an alliance was contentious (Burawoy and Verdery, 1999). The public

deemed private trading a conspicuous activity that heralded individualism and the disregard of the communal. This explains why sellers operated in the 'black market' as speculation was negatively perceived. Ivan added:

'I was not open about it, but I only started doing it because I collected badges and saw some money could be made (pauses and starts laughing) and now look… who would have thought that I would be here enjoying and showing off ah… my uncle would be "v shoke" (shocked).'

The figures of early post-Soviet individuals gave rise to contrasting images of commercial trade. On the one hand, new entrepreneurialism was realised in the 'new Russians' who derived their success from social capital accumulated in the Soviet period (Mandel and Humphrey, 2002). They exploited their networks by means of 'blat' (favours) to beat the system (Ledeneva, 2008). Their work stood for illegitimacy as they capitalised on illegal speculation. Speculation involved the purchasing of commodities or assets with the hope that in the future they will become more valuable. On the other hand, trade was associated with the necessity for a group of people including former workers, teachers, and clerks. Inhabiting this sphere of commerce was seen as a fall from grace (Patico, 2008). Here, it can be seen how there is a dichotomy between the racketeering 'new Russians' and the victimised individual who had to resort to such activities. However, in Ivan's statement, he does not fall into either category. He chose to be a seller – involved with speculation prior to the collapse of the USSR and did not use networks of 'blat' to move up in the business world.

Additionally, within Ivan's explanation, there is also a sense of pride in "enjoying" the position, which explains why he seemed taken aback by my earlier inquiry. By probing if he appreciated his job, I implied that as a researcher his actions conveyed this. I want to bring in Yurchak's findings in the late 1990s, as Ivan's pleasure evokes popular publications that championed a new business spirit (2003). In his ethnography, he showed that magazines were catering for a new generation of entrepreneurs: a neoliberal 'homo economicus' (ibid., p.73). Magazines such as Kar'era stated that individuals should meticulously organise aspects of their life. These ideals began to acquire a positive meaning due to the ascendancy of a neoliberal spirit. However, Yurchak emphasises the individual as the 'spirit of true careerism' (ibid., p.71). For Ivan, he does not only present himself, but he is showing off for the 'collective' by using the word 'we'. I believe that Ivan demonstrates the shifting moralities, where economic activities were gradually being welcomed by the Soviet public.

The structures of the market economy called for mobile individuals, leading to the emergence of a new subjectivity. This discourse reframed the workplace as an arena for the 'enactment of the self' by promising autonomy and empowerment (Makovicky, 2016, p.11). Another seller, Asan would fit into this category. Originally from Kyrgyzstan, he is thirty-eight years old and has been working here for the past eleven years. His products included tourist commodities: fridge magnets, matryoshka dolls and lighters. Echoing a similar sentiment to Ivan, Asan gestured

towards his stock:

'Yes! As you can see. I am advertising Russia! If you look at what I sell, the products are recognisable... I trade these products as I know they are popular among visitors. Back in my home country we say that to gain a better understanding of a country, you should go to their bazaar (3). Then you get a real understanding of their "obshchestvo" (society).'

Furthermore, Ivan's and Asan's extracts underscore how the market has shifted from an ideologically marked space to a celebrated space. Formerly, commercial endeavours were politically condemned, yet here the organisers are capitalising on the market as a main attraction. This is one of the chief aims of the directors who describe it as an 'exhibition fair of products and objects' in collaboration with the Government of Moscow (Orlov, 2019). Presently, 'Izmailovsky Market' has 1,012 reviews on TripAdvisor and is ranked 107 out of 2,939 things to do in Moscow. Organisers are not only awaiting visitors to come through their appealing gates but actively promote the locality to a wider audience. Subsequently, it could be said that the market is geared towards a globalised and tourist audience.

Creating a Community

The saying 'не имей сто рублей, а имей сто друзей' translates to 'It is better to have 100 friends than 100 roubles' is an old proverb. Presently, 100 roubles will only equate to just £1.20, however, the bygone holds relevance. Many of the stands are run by family members so I witnessed how the united dynamic could

---

(3) The vast majority of people in Kyrgyzstan are Muslims - they refer to the market as the bazaar.

Figure 3: Katyusha and Maria sell food in the middle of the walkway.

operate. Yet, I was surprised by how accommodating each seller was to one another. Was each stall not effectively competing against one another? After several weeks, I came to comprehend that to be a 'khoroshiy prodavets' (good seller) one must take on a specific approach to work and see it as a practice.

In the Izmailovo market, work was a matter of exchange and was not confined to economic transactions. Bear et al assert in their seminal work 'Gens: A Feminist Manifesto for the Study of Capitalism' that economic systems are diverse and intimate networks of human relations (2015). This led me to question what kind of relationships are produced within the context of the marketplace. The networks and ways of being created between fellow vendors were, I argue, ultimately struc-tured by their notion and respect of 'hard labour'. Hence, why relationships formed between vendors were an important part of their lives as there was an affirmation of community – an intimate network as opposed to competition.

Work vs Labour?

In a setting of monetary incentives, it was fascinating that work could reinforce values centred on cooperation. Conceivably importing my ideals of commercial rationality that each stand was in direct competition with those surrounding them. My views countered Dimitri's belief:

'You have to find common ground (opshe iuzuk) with those around you. Otherwise, you'll never have a good business. Look we

are all doing the same thing, being "prodavtsy" (sellers) we are connected by this and should respect each other. Why should we not get on?'

Referring to the workers as 'we' and 'connected' implies that the community spirit is created from the process of selling. I want to expand on Carsten's notion of 'relatedness' and situate this logic within the market (2000). Her formative book elucidated that in society there are types of emotional and social feelings of connectedness, of which biological relationships are only a fraction. Suitably, it enlarged the analytical terrain of kinship as Carsten placed it in a wider frame of 'relatedness' and acknowledged that it could be constituted through practice. This is mirrored in Dimitri's view, although vending is performed by the individual it contributes to the collective sense of belonging. There is an acknowledgement that each person is here to work on their stalls, but they are bounded through their laborious actions.

I believe it is important to discern the difference between 'rabota' (work) and 'trud' (labour). Individuals sometimes used the terms interchangeably, but I soon grasped a salient difference in the actions they evoked. An ethos was instilled through the very act of labouring. If someone saw this market merely in terms of 'work' it was believed their principal ambitions were to generate profits. This is not to deny that the sellers' main reason here is for employment, but the correct type of work was when they were seen to labour intensively. Katya relayed a story about a previous seller who lacked respect for the 'kommuna' (communal):

'This man...hm… what was his name, Lesha… I think. He came here just to make money without thinking about anyone around him. Lesha even took someone else's stall! Which is the first mistake you can make. Hm... he did not bother to make conversation or help his neighbours…... sales motivated him. Although he made money, it was not the right type of work. He did not work here for long and was unsuccessful (starts laughing) … which is why I probably can't even remember his name!'

From Katya's viewpoint, there are tacit rules if one is to be prosperous. Sellers who tried to maximise sales did so at the expense of the community spirit. I want to underline her explanation of the 'right type of work' and compare this to Asan who was perceived as a very successful seller. Asan would often help those neighbouring him, but it was his active approach to work which was highly regarded. Throughout my time, I noted that he seldom sat down, lunch took less than twenty minutes, and he was constantly up on his feet ready to engage. When I spoke to my informants, rather than perceiving him as competition they praised him. In one instance, someone told me that he 'exemplifies what we're about'. Those seen to enthusiastically labour such as Asan garnered respect and promoted the collective essence. He approached market competition in a different way than theory dictated. Whereas Losha partook in work that was profit-motivated and nonconformist. Hence, his activities were negatively viewed and explained as unsuccessful. The market was not an economic realm but came to constitute a sociability. To reject the 'kommunal'nyy', such as labouring in a way that was favourable and failing to cultivate social relations, was morally dubious.

Figure 4: Ivan's posters that are exhibited. His stock also includes badges and medals.

Entrepreneurial Ethic

I assert that an admired form of selling is seen as a managed technique by interacting with visitors. In doing so, sellers attribute the theatricality of the market. Many informants declared themselves as 'entrepreneurs', 'boss' or 'businesspeople'. On numerous occasions, I was handed professional cards detailing their phone number, Instagram, and email address. Yet, I remained conscious of labelling them as entrepreneurs, aware of its connotations with capitalist logic within varying geographical locations. The classification of an 'enterprising selves' implies a trajectory of the worker where valorisation is established in the market sphere. It centralises on the fact that work is a significant site 'for the formation of persons' (Miller and Rose, 2008, p.174). Nevertheless, as a foreign researcher, what

authority had I to question their beliefs?

I do not disregard that being an entrepreneur may incorporate the requirement for innovation. I noticed that sellers would always ponder about new potential opportunities or products that could be incorporated within their business. However, I want to highlight that Izmailovo sellers applied themselves to make their ventures. It was their actions which created economic possibilities. As Brenner and Theodore have noted, such processes are spatially uneven and there should be an analysis of 'existing neoliberalism' (2002). Hence, I postulate that they embodied an 'entrepreneurial ethic'. To those I spoke to, work empowerment was founded in their initiative and action as opposed to commerce results. Their business practices were not geared toward individualism but took account of the market as a whole.

Sensorial Experience

It represented a staging space for individuals – whether that be for work, consumption, or leisure. In La Pradelle's ethnography in Provence, France she portrayed the food market as an exceptional place (2006). She challenged the notion that relations have ceased to endure in modern economies by stating that a social bond is always established, even if trading takes place on an anonymous basis. Far from disappearing, they take on new forms. The meeting between seller and buyer is central and they engage in an 'equality of chances' in which they play at being temporarily equal (La Pradelle, 2006, p.4). In other words, markers of class or race are irrelevant, as everyone is governed by the pursuit of pleasure. The market is a game where everyone participates meaningfully, both shoppers and vendors 'seem as though they are not there to do business' (ibid., p.55). Instead, there was a 'capricious desire' to potentially purchase something which the sellers seek to capture (ibid., p.63). Such similarities were seen in Izmailovo – visitors meandering down the pathway, with products exhibited in abundance to attract lingering eyes. La Pradelle rightly sees being in the market as a public act but in the Izmailovo market, I believe this performative connection was founded on difference as opposed to 'equality'. What distinguished each seller, was how they applied themselves to sell - their charismas and knowledge gave extra leverage.

'Wow so much is being stated without a single word in sight!' I overheard one American woman say in a state of awe. She had just turned the corner and was met with a copious display of 'Pravda' magazine covers and posters of leading Soviet figures. Behind the stand, Ivan gave out a hearty laugh and said 'Back in the day, the state had said every word possible …. by the time they got to these posters they had nothing left to say … they had to use visuals!' Immediately, there was an outburst of chuckles. Taking pride in the interest they were generating, Ivan pointed to a grainy poster. Cautiously unpegging it from the white thread, he looked at it longingly as the woman urged him to tell her more.

Remarkably, stories evoked from these memorabilia contributed to a form of sociality and were an affective quality for sellers. Firstly, the products aroused curiosity in the American woman. Ivan was able to utilise his symbolic capital and his knowledge having grown up in the Soviet Union to transform it into financial capital. Later confirmed, I watched her stroll away with a rolled-up red and white realism print. Secondly, this form of 'trud' (labour) would have been respected among fellow traders as Ivan's embodied skill was evident in the personalised information he provided about his prints. He was not sitting by his stand awaiting her to purchase the item but provided greater meaning to the object. Ivan may have been 'self-making' as the entrepreneur and collaborating with the customer, but it was ultimately him, his story and his actions that formed the moment. In describing entrepreneurship processes as 'becoming' (Bröckling, 2016) we should not disregard what this individual also brings.

I want to propose that the 'entrepreneurial ethic' that sellers exhibited was future-orientated. From visitors I spoke to, they heard of the place either through 'word of mouth' or it had been recommended on internet search lists. Therefore, it can be stated that the continual flow of

people contributes to the relevance of the market. Without visitors, organisers would consider shutting the market down. Hence to function, it relies on the memories and reviews from people who have entered its gateways.

Subsequently, the correct manner of 'trud' that individuals aspired towards was one where they provided items and engaged visitors. Even if they did not buy anything, it was important that visitors were engrossed. As Miller asserted, the moment of sale is never an 'alienated moment' (2002, p.226). Conversely, it is a moment when the vendors' highly qualitative 'entanglements' and judgments come into play (ibid., p.227). It acknowledges that vendors can apply their styles and attitudes to go about their enterprise as long as they contribute to the collective effort of creating an evocative market experience. This ethical framework guides behaviours between sellers as well as with their customers, defining the embodied skill they exhibit for selling. By stating this, I don't disregard vendors who seek to make profits, but it simply means that how one does so matter.

Conclusion

The characters I have discussed illustrate the heterogenous category of the vendor. Although they have different objects, stories, and beliefs they are all unanimously joined by their labour 'trud'.

The major aim has been to describe the social fabric of the market. Pushing back against the notion that economic expansion indexes a debasement of the community (Gudeman, 2001), my objective has been to demonstrate the seminal role of social relations. I have avoided delineating spheres of market and morality as this dichotomisation implies that they conflict with one another. Sellers may be motivated by individual pursuits to make a living, but this should not locate individualism at the crux of the study. I have hoped to show how they frame their business processes within frameworks of moral concern. They were not only 'becoming' (Bröckling, 2016) market actors, but they had an active role in 'creating' this position. In applying themselves, sellers made the market.

On my last day, I stood on the pathway to take in the last blissful moments of the exuberating energy around me. Coming out of her 'zhilishche' Katya smiled, I could see she was holding something carefully wrapped in her hands. Without saying a word, she passed me the item, gesturing with her head to open it. It was an object that I had become quite accustomed to – yet here it seemed distinctly unique. A matryoshka doll. I closely examined the beautiful and alluring design. Katya calmly expressed 'I want you to take this….so when you look at it… you will remember your time here.' It was not only a symbol for my trip to Russia, or a reminder of my fieldwork but for me, the matryoshka doll and its many nesting sections represented the many layers of the Izmailovo market.

References cited

BEAR, L., HO, K., TSING, A. & YANAGISAKO, S. 2015. "Gens: A Feminist Manifesto for the Study of Capitalism". In Theorizing the Contemporary, Cultural Anthropology website, Retrieved 04 November 2019 https://culanth.org/fieldsights/gens-a-feminist-manifesto-for-the-study-of-capitalism
BRENNER, N. & THEODORE, N., 2002.

Spaces of neoliberalism: urban restructuring in North America and Western Europe, Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell.

BRÖCKLING, U. & BLACK, S., 2016. The entrepreneurial self: fabricating a new type of subject, London: SAGE.

BURAWOY, M. & VERDERY, K., 1999. Uncertain transition: ethnographies of change in the postsocialist world, Lanham, Md.; Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.

CARSTEN, J., 2000. Cultures of relatedness: new approaches to the study of kinship, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

DUNN, E.C., 2004. Privatizing Poland: baby food, big business, and the remaking of labor / Elizabeth C. Dunn., Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press.

GEERTZ, C., 1963. Peddlers and princes: social change and economic modernization in two Indonesian towns., Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

HARRIS, O. 2007. What Makes People Work? In Questions of Anthropology, R. ASTUTI, J. Parry, and C. Stafford eds. Oxford, NY: Berghahn. pp. 137–167.

KRYLOVA, A., "Bolshevik Feminism and Gender Agendas of Communism" in Silvio Pons, Stephen A. Smith (eds.), The Cambridge History of Communism, Vol. 1: World Revolution and Socialism in One Country, 1917-1941, Cambridge University Press, 2017, 425.

LA PRADELLE, M., 2006. Market day in Provence. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

LACAPRA, D., 1988. Culture and Ideology: From Geertz to Marx. Poetics Today, 9(2), pp.377–394.

LEDENEVA, A.V., 1998. Russia's economy of favours: Blat, networking and informal exchange, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

MAKOVICKY, N., 2016. Neoliberalism, personhood, and postsocialism enterprising selves in changing economies, London; New York: Routledge.

MANDEL, R.B. & Humphrey, C. 2002. Markets and moralities: ethnographies of postsocialism, Oxford: Berg.

MILLER, D., 2002. Turning Callon the right way up. Economy and Society, 31(2), pp.218–233.

MILLER, P. & ROSE, N.S., 2008. Governing the present: administering economic, social and personal life, Cambridge: Polity.

NAROTZKY, S., 2018. Rethinking the concept of labour. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 24(S1), pp.29–43.

ORLOV, 2019. "Кремль в измайлово" Retrieved 02 November 2019 http://www.kremlin-izmailovo.com/o-kremle/kreml-segodnja

PATICO, J., 2009. Spinning the Market: The Moral Alchemy of Everyday Talk in Postsocialist Russia. Critique of Anthropology, 29(2), pp.205–224.

WEBER, M., 1958. The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalismStudent's., New York: Scribner.

YURCHAK, A., 2003. Russian Neoliberal: The Entrepreneurial Ethic and the Spirit of "True Careerism." Russian Review, 62(1), pp.72–90.

Political thought in a student housing Co-operative
Academic Essays

Ella Boland

ABSTRACT

This ethnography came out of a project by pre-honours Social Anthropology students, studying the space of the Edinburgh Student Housing Co-Operative in the beginning of 2020. I spent time renovating the basement with members of the Co-Operative and spoke with them about the political leanings of members, as the public perception of the Co-Operative is that it is based on socialist ideologies. I describe my time at the Co-Operative and discuss the methodologies I used to gain data. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the role politics plays in the decision to become a member of the Co-Operative.

keywords: politics, space, Edinburgh, student housing

The Edinburgh Student Housing Co-Operative is an attempted model for direct democracy aiming to remove power from housing corporations and give power to the tenants. Whilst it is effective in removing power from landlords, there are issues with the success of direct democracy. 'Direct democracy' has various definitions; however, for this argument Christians' (2009, 103) general definition of "a system in which people participate in direct governance govern directly" will be used. Reasonings for living in the co-operative are highly subjective, and so to reduce all motivations to personal political beliefs would be, fundamentally, a lie. Yet, it is undeniable that many members focus political activism, and this impacts their experience of living in the space. This ethnographic report centres around the social structure of a Student Housing Co-operative (henceforth referred to as 'the co-op') in Edinburgh. This building was renovated in 2014 from derelict university accommodation, and the participants in this ethnography are students from various socio-economic back-

grounds living in the co-op. We smile and exchange goodbyes as the woman catches up with her husband and children.

Visiting the Co-Op

The concrete steps leading up to the main entrance of the co-op have posters advertising co-operative living and signs supporting local causes, such as the UCU strikes. The general sense of activism follows through into the main stairwell of the building. The walls are painted yellow, yet this can barely be seen under the politically charged graffiti, and there are printed signs reminding occupants that it might be their flat's turn to clean the communal stairwell. Helena, the team member allowing us access to the building, greets me at the door of her flat. The corridor is similar to other student accommodations, but there is a clear sense of individualism through writing on the doors of each flat.

Helena invites me into her room whilst we wait for another group member, Sophie. The walls are painted sage green, which Helena tells me she did herself. I ask how many items she built, and she shows me a wooden bookcase and the wooden base of her bed. The room is small and homely, with handmade ivy decorations hanging across the ceiling like bunting. Helena explains that the only furniture which came with the room was a desk/drawer combination and the radiator. The carpet is the same as standard university accommodation, but Helena has personalised the room by covering the carpet in a large, patterned rug with a geometric design. When Sophie arrives, Helena leads us out of her flat and down two flights of stairs to the basement. She explains that the basement is renovated from an old car park; as such, the space is

Figure 1:
Poster in Entrance Door. Own work.

extremely large with concrete pillars supporting the ceiling. The walls are covered in white painted wooden panels, and Helena points out the handmade wooden tables and worktops. There is also a kitchen area with a sink, dishwasher, and fridge, all of which were installed by members of the basement team. The tables are scattered with construction tools (e.g., drills, saws, nails) and light floods in from windows at street level and the large glass doors facing the back yard of the co-op. Gaelic folk music plays softly in the background, and there is a strong scent of sawdust in the air.

We are introduced to Kate, a student living in the co-op and working on the basement team, and Kate recommends that before we start work, we should view the basement in "28". Helena

takes Sophie and I out of the basement through the glass doors, and we walk past a bike rack in a self-built wooden storage system decorated with painted flowers and leaves. There is also a small garden on the top of the bike shed, and Helena tells us about the irrigation system built by co-op members to care for the plants. We leave the back garden space and walk up the road to the second half of the co-op. This building is smaller with only seven flats, and the basement itself is in a significantly greater state of disarray than the main basement. I can't get more than a few steps into the space before having to climb over broken pieces of wood, old bathtubs, large painted signs for protests, and other miscellaneous "junk," as Helena called it. When I returned to the main basement it seems instantly more impressive given what "28" had looked like.

Upon returning to the basement Kate assigns Sophie and myself the job of poly-filling cracks in the walls, which have appeared over time due to the fluctuations in temperature making the wood expand. Sophie and I are directed towards the pack of 'polyfilla', and when we begin creating the paste, Kate continues fireproofing the walls. We all work in relative silence for the next hour, with the soft sounds of the radio playing in the background. During this time approximately five people come through the basement and out of the glass door. It becomes apparent that the people wearing overalls and asking Kate where "Mike" is are also involved in the basement team. There are also a handful of people who borrow tools for personal construction projects; for example, one member is building a shelf. There is no sense hostility or resentment by the basement team for non-team members using the tools, and there is an implicit trust that items will be returned.

Kate comes over to Sophie and me, and we have an informal, unrecorded discussion about the construction and how co-op members have reacted to the basement project. The project has been going on since the opening of the co-op, and Kate tells us about the controversy around paying members since this goes against egalitarian values of the co-op. She describes how she has found the experience rewarding and when asked by Sophie which aspect was the most challenging, she proudly shows us the first ceiling tile which her and Helena built. The process took approximately four months, and the final tile was laid next to the first. Kate discusses a sense of pride at seeing the result and having memories associated with the space. Following this idea of memory, I ask her what else strikes her as memorable in the space. Kate then tells us about a time capsule which the basement team buried in a hole in the floor before filling it with cement. In this they placed "things to confuse future archaeologists," such as tampons, ornaments of cows with the heads of people, and nude photos of some team members.

Methodology

I used various interview methods but found informal, unrecorded interviews whilst conducting participant observation to be most effective. This is because I was able to talk with the participants in a relaxed context and there was significantly less discomfort for both me and the subject. An example of this would be the natural flow of conversation between myself, Sophie, and Kate during construction, as opposed to the more formal sit-down interview I later had with Kate. I

Figure 2: Stairwell Walls. Own work.

found that the use of a voice recorder during my one-on-one discussion with Kate made us both feel on edge. This is further demonstrated by the fact that, after I stopped recording, Kate and I went on to have a longer and more personal conversation. Although the content of this discussion was less relevant to my research focus, I found it extremely beneficial in breaking down barriers.

Spending an extended period of time with the team was also vital for allowing us to become comfortable in each other's presence. Although the recorded interview was awkward, holding it in the basement felt natural as myself and Kate had gotten to know one another

in this space. If I had not been involved in the space prior to this, then I would have struggled to get the information that I did. Wall (2010) emphasises the importance of this informal participant observation in her fieldwork on quilt making in rural communities. The informal interactions both in my fieldwork and Wall's fieldwork allowed for more insightful outcomes. Consequently, I would argue that, as a research method, being involved in the community is more enlightening for ethnographers than formal interviews, which can be awkward and uncomfortable.

Recording interviews is an issue I will face throughout this ethnographic project since the informal, unrecorded con-

versations were more relaxed than recorded ones. However, I feel that transcribing in the interview would be more uncomfortable than using a voice recorder. I also felt that by putting analysis to the back of my mind whilst conducting participant observation was beneficial as I was able to gain a genuine experience. This is like what Shah (2017) proposes when looking at doing fieldwork and then writing the analytical ethnography afterwards. For me, the ethnographic practices I adopt are not based on theory and neither should they be. They evolve alongside theory, and I am finding that different ethnographic methods work in different contexts.

Another element of my fieldwork which I struggled with was discussing politics as it is a sensitive issue for many people. The time I spent in the basement before discussing politics allowed me to build a trustworthy rapport with Kate and so discussion of political views was not as uncomfortable as it could have been. Furthermore, having the context of the previous informal discussion gave me some topics to discuss in my recorded interview

as the majority of content which we discussed was an elaboration on Kate's previously made points. In terms of what I gained from the participant observation; the embodied experience was invaluable. I was proud to see the impact I had had on the space and knowing that I was contributing to a communal project created a sense of pride and purpose to my being there beyond that of just research. Due to the short-term nature of this ethnography, it was also beneficial to be involved in intense action, as Pink and Morgan (2013) recommend. The construction site, as Kate mentioned in her interview, is a centrepiece of action in the co-op and so by placing myself in this environment, I will hopefully open more opportunities with a range of aspects of life in the co-op.

Helena's presence as a point of contact was useful as participants were more inclined to speak with me and have more formal interviews. Kawulich (2011) emphasises the importance of having a means of access to a community is almost as important as becoming seen as more than a guest. I feel that by volunteering in the construction of the basement I

Figure 3: Basement (left), kitchen space in basement (right). Own work.

will be able to achieve this positionality. It was also beneficial to be in a space inhabited by students as the small age gap meant that the relationship dynamic was relatively equal, and we instantaneously had something in common being students. Coming in inexperienced was useful as the opportunity to be taught by members of the basement team allowed for more one-on-one interactions with a purpose, thus lending themselves to more informal conversations. Since the basement team members themselves were all self-taught, I felt that they were able to give me more genuine advice than professionals could have, which in turn allowed them to feel like they could know me better as they could see themselves in me. This combination of being of similar age and having a teacher-student dynamic allowed for the exchange of knowledge and information between myself and Kate to feel natural rather than transactional.

Overall, I feel like I faced some issues in my fieldwork in terms of the recorded interview being uncomfortable, and from this arises the issue of whether I should record interviews for a direct transcript or summarise a much more relaxed, unrecorded, and informal conversation. Despite this, my involvement in the construction, close age gap to the participants, and relationship with Helena all contributed to a successful series of interactions in my fieldwork. By continuing with a more informal approach to interviews and participant observation I believe that I will successfully position myself as an insider rather than a guest, which will in turn enable a more in-depth analysis of the social structure of the space.

Discussion

Idealised direct democracy is heavily reliant on the ideals of a generation. Sloam (2007) argued that UK youth are less involved in 'conventional' politics, and instead advocate new understandings of political ideologies. Many governments have attempted to implement 'youth councils' as a democratic representation of younger generations, yet young activists (as many members of the Co-Operative are) have viewed these councils as another means of elitist social control, which does not reflect collective concerns (Taft and Gordon, 2013). The system of direct democracy, which the Co-operative utilises, is a weekly general meeting open to all members; therefore, avoiding the social control of councils. Yet, these meetings are only attended on average by around 20/109 members of the Co-operative, and so many of the decisions made about the space are conducted by a select group. There are many reasons for this lack of attendance, highlighted in the following extract from an interview with 'J', a co-operative member:

You just have some people who are more involved, and at the end of the day they end up doing more things and indeed having more power.

In a separate interview with another member named 'P,' a similar point was raised about certain members being involved more to get more power: "if you have your hands in a lot of honey pots, you get to have more honey." This juxtaposes the ideal of a direct democracy in which people have equal power; thus, demonstrating the cracks in using a small-scale

direct democracy as a model for mass living spaces. Furthermore, controversy has arisen from the employment of members in construction, as is demonstrated in an interview with 'K,' a member of the basement-team.

A lot of people see this as a good thing as we're investing in our members. The money is not going to a contractor, it's going to educate and employ our members. And some people see that the cost is worth it because of the core value behind it; to be autonomous. And so, some people have this really positive view of this project and [are glad] that we've done this renovation all by ourselves … I think that [those who disagree with the project] have criticisms but they want to encourage us because when they do see progress, they feel particularly happy about that, because they were sad about the lack of progress.

A core issue facing direct democracy is whether it is biased to those who can vote (Lupia, 2004). As previously mentioned, not every member of the Co-Operative attends the weekly meetings; as such, the impact of members is limited. Following a line of questioning by Maddie about whether people's voices are heard in the Co-Operative, 'J' responded with;

Definitely not. No, there is this constant issue of like, since so many things are done in a public forum, if you can't express yourself on a public forum, then you can't express yourself. And there are also things with timetables, and there are also people who just don't really care.

People may have the right to vote in a direct democracy style of living, yet this does not mean that the system is effective. This contributes to the difficulties of creating an egalitarian, democratic state, as even when using a small Co-operative living space as a model there still exists a sense of hierarchy. Paley (2002, 476) argued that it can be easy for a state to label itself as a democracy when it is in fact a dictatorship, and the sheer ambiguity of democratic ideals makes it impossible to form a truly direct democratic space (Tavits, 2009). Yes, direct democracy is becoming increasingly popular amongst younger generations (Karp, 2006); however, it is a gross over-generalisation to claim that all members of the Co-Operative hold the same political beliefs and views on direct democracy.

In an interview with member 'A,' he states "direct democracy is stupid and cannot function on any large scale. It's fine at the Co-op and quite nice for the ideals I guess." This may be viewed in juxtaposition to a point made by 'K.' She stated that the nature of the Co-operative being focussed on removing power from housing companies means that the majority of members hold compatible beliefs with a "progressive [and] democratic left wing to anarchist political spectrum." Members have been heavily involved in activist movements, such as the UCU Strikes, the 2017 occupation of Gordon Aikman Lecture theatre, and climate protests.

However, even members with activist interests and, more generally, the direct democratic structure of the Co-operative still do not view the space as a site of revolutionary practice. Prior to moving into the Co-Operative, members such as 'J' discussed an assumption that it would be "very political and have a lot of engagement." However, in practice the Co-operative isn't the site of revolutionary practices, even though members do have the power to "influence policies and make things better." As such, this demonstrates that personal politics do not necessarily

hold a strong impact over the experiences of living in the Co-operative as different members find different values in the space: be it low rent, autonomy, or the direct democratic structure.

Conclusion

On balance, in terms of the impact political views of members of the co-operative has on their experience of living in the space, this depends on the individual. The majority of participants demonstrated an inclination towards a leftist political positioning; however, this is not always necessarily the case. Ideas of democracy are changing radically in the 21st century, and the Co-Operative is an effective model of how a direct democracy can manifest in spaces. However, there remain many issues with the administration of the Co-operative and levels of contribution have a major impact on power in decision making. At its core, the passion of the individual to be involved in the space is what encourages active participation in the direct democracy. Therefore, there are intrinsic limits on what a direct democracy can do in a living space, and so it is less important to share a political ideology than it is to share passion.

References cited

CHRISTIANS, C., (2009), History of Communication: Normative Theories of the Media: Journalism in Democratic Societies, University of Illinois Press.

KARP, J. A., (2006), 'Popular Support for Direct Democracy', Party Politics, 12:5, 671-688.

KAWULICH, B. B., (2011), 'Gatekeeping: An Ongoing Adventure in Research', Field Methods, 23:1, 57-76.

LUPIA, A., (2004), 'Direct Democracy: New Approaches to Old Questions', Annual Review of Political Science, 7, 463-482.

PALEY, J., (2002), 'Toward an Anthropology of Democracy', Annual Review of Anthropology, 31, 496-496

PINK, S., and Morgan, J., (2013), 'Short-term Ethnography: Intense Routes to Knowing', Symbolic Interaction, 36:3, 351-361.

SHAH, A., (2017), 'Ethnography? Participant observation: A potentially revolutionary praxis', HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory, 7:1, 45-59.

SLOAM, J., (2007), 'Rebooting Democracy: Youth Participation in Politics in the UK', Parliamentary Affairs, 60:4, 548-567.

TAFT, J. K., (2013), 'Youth activists, youth councils, and constrained democracy', Education, Citizenship, and Social Justice, 8:1, 87-100.

TAVITS, M., (2009), 'When Left Is Right: Party Ideology and Policy in Post-Communist Europe', American Political Science Review, 103:4, 555-569.

WALL, M. C., (2010), 'The Stitches Stayed: Creating Rapport around Women's Work', Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 41:4, 360-369.

On Shaken Terrains : Practices of attention at an urban day shelter
Academic Essays

ABSTRACT

This paper builds on short-term fieldwork at an urban day shelter in Brussels, which provides affordable showers and other essential services to sans-abris and sans-papiers, respectively homeless and undocumented people. In dialogue with Simone Weil's writings on attentionality and ordinary ethics literature, this paper firstly proposes that ethical dispositions informing workers' and volunteers' navigation of the shelter's volatile spaces often grow out of the imperatives of the everyday, rather than being imposed upon practices as external principles. Secondly, it frames everyday ethical action as what philosopher Laugier calls a 'politics of the ordinary'. As such, this paper offers ethnographic insight into modes of social organising that embrace the fluctuating character of the everyday.

keywords: ordinary ethics, attention, politics of the ordinary, Belgium, precarity

Jeanne Coppens

In her collection of essays Waiting on God (1978[1950]), the French mystic, organiser and philosopher Simone Weil wrote about attention as the orientation of one's suspended ego towards an abstracted conception of God or the good. In this way, attention is put in motion not by individual will but by an unbounded desire for goodness. Attention could be likened to a waiting posture (l'attente) which expands the mind's receptivity, 'ready to be penetrated by an object' (Weil, 1979: 56). It constitutes a 'negative effort': an active-passive orientation that 'is more a "turning" than a "doing", at once spontaneous and directed' (Davis et al. 2020). Most pertinently, the concept of attention enables Weil to consider our ethical dispositions and our embodied navigation of the world around us, as coeval.

Attention is such a crucial dimension of ethnographic practice that it almost seems irrelevant to approach it as a conceptual framework, method or object of anthropological writing (Pederson et al. 2020). Yet during my month-long field-

work among volunteers and workers at a citizen-led day shelter (DoucheFlux) in Brussels, which offers inexpensive showers and other essential services to those without access to them, it became apparent that different practices of attention cultivated in the building shaped how social relations were constituted. This also speaks to the ethnographic process more broadly, where sharp attentiveness becomes a way to adopt certain embodiments in an unfamiliar social space and thus to avoid disrupting that space by virtue of one's foreignness to it.

This paper explores how Douche-Flux's workers and volunteers develop practices to navigate volatile social spaces like the organisation's busy basement floor, where showering, laundry and medical services are provided. By 'volatility,' I refer to the instability-characterising 'socialities that undergird the lives of the poor [and that] are constantly being shaped by the experiences of precarity that go beyond material scarcity' (Das & Randeria 2015: S3). It is important not to naturalise poverty as an inescapable social category, but instead, to view it concerning 'the tight alignments with other conditions of life, such as […] the erosion of infrastructure, the denial of citizenship" (Das & Randeria 2015: S4). These conditions produce overlapping material, affective, bodily and spatial volatilities, which I refer to as 'shaken terrains'. They also engender the need for an infrastructure like this one. As such, DoucheFlux's shaken terrains generate atmospheres that are at once incredibly warm and imbued with solidarity, but also where affective eruptions, fights, and breakdowns are weaved into the texture of everyday social relations (Das 2020).

Theoretical framework and methods

To tackle my research question, I turn to the ordinary ethics approach commonly associated with Lambek (2015, 2010), Das (2020, 2018a, 2018b, 2007, 1998) and Laugier (2020, 2015, 2016) exemplifying a novel anthropological commitment to ordinary language and moral philosophy in the early 2000s, also referred to as the 'ethical turn' (Laidlaw 2017: 4, Lambek 2010: 5, Mattingly & Throop 2018: 477). This framework is valuable because the question of ethical 'navigation' posed in my research question not only inquires into the form of processes by which people sustain and inhabit spaces, but also advances a normative query: what does it take to navigate the basement well, or effectively?

The ordinary ethics turn enables us to approach this conundrum without relying too heavily on universal moral concepts like the 'just' or the 'good', which often tend to reify the complexities of the everyday by virtue of their universalising logic. Ordinary ethicists articulate a conception of ethics that emerges from everyday speech and practice (Lambek 2010: 1). Literature on ordinary ethics and emergent anthropological scholarship on attention thus aim to disentangle ethics from its traditional associations to religion and ritual in anthropology—which generally treats ethics as discrete structures that govern social life—towards a posture that embraces the polyvalency and uncertainty of social encounters.

The ordinary ethics literature is certainly not monolithic. In this paper, I favour Das' emphasis on the varied efforts to sustain and inhabit the ordinary, as well as Laugier's insistence on the essential

vulnerability of life, over Lambek's focus on action as a site of ethical dispositionality. This is because the former's work is concerned with care and social change, which aligns with Doucheflux's raison-d'être. In this way, ordinary ethicists invite anthropologists to look at how people make sense of the embodied gestures that constitute the everyday, and how, in doing so, they develop capacities to inhabit it. As Laugier (2020) proposes, ordinary ethics is not about living justly, it is simply about living a life; her argument takes as its starting point the fundamental vulnerability of human life-forms and the incessant efforts required to sustain them (Laugier 2020: 35-36). Something very robust emerges from this recognition of instability: a politics of the ordinary, grounded in the question: what matters to people in concrete spaces?

We arrive at Weil's conception of attention as an 'active-passive' disposition, an embodied orientation towards one's conception of the good or the important. The concept of attention can provide a useful start to think about such orientations in ethnographic terms (Pedersen et al. 2021: 19.10).

Locating ethics in ordinary interactions also formed an important part of my experience gaining access to and conducting fieldwork at DoucheFlux. In preparation for the month-long research project, I had long exchanges with Darva, the house's volunteer coordinator, to agree on common terms of participation; this included abiding by the professional secret clause that I had signed as a volunteer months earlier, and more broadly, adopting a thoughtful posture towards the space, which was less rule-bound than practiced during shifts.

Whilst working part-time in the basement for a month, I conducted thirteen-hour-long semi-structured interviews with my colleagues during lunch breaks, in cafés, or at people's homes. I practiced a form of 'deep hanging out,' (Geertz 1998) a method that recognises how '[i]n fieldwork, we replicate what we do in everyday life' (Das 2018b: 165) thus allowing the ethnographer to informally immerse themselves in their field-site. The intensity of reflexive interviews combined with the playfulness of our everyday interactions gave way to friendships that grew beyond DoucheFlux's walls.

On Shaken Terrains

On a busy street in the south of Brussels stands a former industrial ruin that was renovated in 2017 to house the 650 m² day centre that goes by the name DoucheFlux. The building hosts twenty showers, a laundry room, four-hundred lockers, and an array of other services: yoga classes and hairdressers, charging stations and computers, consultations with nurses, social workers and psychologists. A passer-by would notice the groups of people hanging out before the entrance during weekdays, against the backdrop of a slogan displayed on its façade reading: 'Homelessness is a crime against humanity' (Le sans-abrisme est un crime contre l'humanité). The statement emanates DoucheFlux's ethos rather effectively: no charity-chitchat here, this space pleads for a broad conception of 'humanity' and resists the hostile treatment of sans-abris and sans-papiers.

DoucheFlux sets itself apart from many government-led and non-government-led social work and humanitarian initiatives in Brussels. It starts with a very concrete objective—providing inexpensive sanitary facilities that are palpably

Figure 1: Doucheflux showers 15/07/2021. Own work.

lacking in Brussels' urban land-scape—and then extends this to an array of political demands:

Reclaiming social and medical rights, finding out about residency rights, getting help with administrative tasks. […] DoucheFLUX wants to go even further by developing a militant and committed 'Advocacy and awareness' hub. (DoucheFlux website)

It is this attention to the imbrication of psycho-social, physical, and political life that enables DoucheFlux to break with humanitarian initiatives that often reduce their conception of recipients of aid to 'bare life'. In Agamben's terms, it is a body that merely survives, 'unqualified by the political and social communities that distinguish humanity from other types of life' (Ticktin 2006: 34). Such forms of humanitarian or social aid, grounded in a 'moral imperative of compassion,' treat recipients of aid as unmanageable populations that constitute potential threats and must be governed by these same organisations (Ticktin 2006: 34, see also Weizman 2011: 56).

To provide a sense of the kind of destitution that shapes the everyday lives of many sans-papiers shower-goers, I call attention to a contribution to DoucheFlux's magazine by one of its former sans-papiers visitors, Ayo Ebenezer Morenikeji. 'I lack the bare minimum,' he shares, 'No lawyer wants to defend my rights. […] It is too much suffering: not being able to live like everyone else, not to know peace, to

sleep outside, not to have food, not having a place where I can feel at home, not having rights' (Morenikeji 2019, own translation). Mr. Morenikeji's statement resonates with many conversations I had with shower-goers during my fieldwork, their commonality being the intwinement of life without documents—hence, an absence of political, social, and even 'human' rights—and life without a home. Political and bodily survival become inter-meshed and produce a situation of pre-carity that fundamentally challenges the image of Europe as a pioneer of democra-cy and human rights protection (El-Enany 2020).

Conducting fieldwork at Douche-Flux provided devastating insight into the weight that Belgium's repressive anti-mi-gration policies exert on the everyday lives of irregularised migrants. Is it possi-ble, then, to create and sustain spaces of social solidarity in the face of such una-bashed hostility? Can workers, volunteers and customers adopt habits of attention in volatile conditions? These questions surfaced in many conversations I had with the organisation's workers. What stood out to me was the general refusal to engage with moral imperatives of com-passion that underpin contemporary humanitarian regimes. One of Douche-Flux's founders reminded me to:

Always remember that a right cannot be earned. It is either vested or it isn't. If [social] aid is a right, then it is to be granted without conditions; it is not a reward for good behav-iour, commendable effort or polite friendli-ness.

Francis, the house's long-standing laun-dry worker, added:

Besides, we don't do charity, we sell our

services. And this is deliberate. Because, frankly, it would be easier to say that it's free: you come in, get a number and when the 150th person has arrived, we finish and say goodbye. No! They are our customers. And so, they have the right—like any custom-er—to be a little annoying or demanding [chuckles]. Absolutely, why not?

What stands out in both statements, is that their conception of rights—in this case, to crucial hygienic provisions, psy-cho-social assistance, and more broadly, the right to exist in Belgium untethered from hostile police forces and migration services—is political rather than moral. Their emphasis does not lie on who should and should not access Douche-Flux's services—which can often result in direct forms of governance—rather, it lies on ensuring that these services can be sustained. When the aim is not to manage those entering its premises, but instead to ascertain that the thing they have set out to provide can indeed be provided, every-day activities are not contained by exter-nally imposed rules. It is the everyday that establishes the imperatives for action at DoucheFlux.

By being attentive to the flux of words, affects, and gestures that emerged in the basement, my colleagues and I were continuously negotiating the thin boundary between enforcing meas-ures to ensure the good functioning of the space, whilst providing a service that is responsive to clients' needs and can allow for a degree of flexibility with them. This flexibility—or the possibility to adapt to people's specific needs and affective states— is also what made working in the basement meaningful. Rather than merely performing a set of repetitive tasks, these negotiations became a way to include our various judgements and sensibilities in

our work. However, to return to the conversation above, these flexible, attentive approaches to a volatile space like the basement are not a mere matter of good-will or 'charity', in Francis' words: they are grounded in a firm political position that militates against the hostile treatment and abandonment of sans-abris and sans-papiers in Brussels.

In simpler terms, it is not the end that justifies the means at DoucheFlux, but instead, the means shape the ends; the way things are done in the everyday is what gives the organisation direction. This does not signify that DoucheFlux has no ambitions, or is apolitical; rather, it suggests that much importance is placed on the possibility of being attentive to the shifting everyday that grounds DoucheFlux's functioning.

A descent into the ordinary: attention and habituation

DoucheFlux has a particular warmth to it before doors open: the spacious common room patiently anticipating to be peopled by ninety-or-so shower-goers, the silence awaiting exclamations like 'hermano!', and 'how are you, my friend?' As one is let into the premises, they first encounter Josef, the house's mediator, and the receptionists in the rather chaotic entrance hall, where regulars pay for their showers and laundry, book appointments with nurses or social workers, and lost visitors are directed to the services they need.

Down the corridor, clients await their turn to shower or attend appointments in a spacious common room adorned with houseplants and mirrors, with large slabs of repurposed wood covering the walls. An open staircase leads

to the basement floor, where clients are greeted by Faheem, one of the house's most cherished employees. Faheem calmly checks the customers' ticket numbers and subsequently hands them a plastic container with a towel, shampoo and flip-flops. Customers can also ask for a range of items like razors, donated clothing, creams and perfumes. After their shoes are stored away, they head towards the shower stalls, where they can stay as long as they please. There's a rhythmic quality to the procedures on the basement floor: a sequence of repeated bodily movements in a restricted space, of habitual phrases—'ticket number?', 'toothbrush?'—and of objects changing hands—a cycle of dirtying, cleaning, and dirtying again.

These procedures are bounded by small conventions that often remain unspoken and require familiarity to learn. When a less experienced volunteer fails to follow baseline procedures to anticipate the shower-goers' demands, the entire functioning of the basement is momentarily destabilised. This can quickly escalate to heightened stress and even psychical or verbal aggression. As Francis pointed out during an interview, the basement is a particularly 'touchy' space: many visitors are on a comedown, have barely slept, or may find themselves in states of acute distress or physical pain.

Despite the volatility of the basement, I observed how workers, volunteers, and customers were generally able to avoid or de-escalate conflicts. Veena Das' work (2020) on habituation and attention offers a useful lens through which to read such events. She starts with the idea ordinary life has a twofold character: it holds the potential to be 'world-annihilating,' where words and gestures can cast doubt

onto the reality of a space by virtue of being unanticipated, thus becoming extra-ordinary (Das 2020: 60; 1996: 180-182). Conversely, it is the site where life-forms are sustained through repeated habits and procedures, and this, as Das suggests, also constitutes the generative dimension of the everyday. Yet habits are no mere mechanical repetitions; indeed – and crucially to Das' broader argument – life is fundamentally unpredictable and unstable, vulnerable to fluctuation, particularly in contexts tainted by precarity. It would therefore be futile to take a stab at discerning distinct conventions that drive these habits. Habits themselves are subject to flexible adaptations. She notes: '[w]hile no one would deny that habituation involves the dulling of the senses to some extent (I do not have to think every step of the process when I cook our daily meals), it also involves heightened awareness and attentiveness to other aspects' (Das 2020: 108).

To illustrate, Das recalls the small gestures that one woman performed when serving tea to her family. She recalled that Das preferred sugarless tea, that her son liked unmixed clotted cream in his, and that her husband favoured glasses over cups. Her attention to people's preferences constitutes not only an expression of domestic care; more fundamentally, being attentive becomes a modality through which individuals become aware of the presence of others in a common space and react accordingly. Attention thus opens space, or a 'contact zone' (Stewart 2007), to articulate ethical dispositions. Ethical action is less a matter of learning a distinct set of rules than of 'the cultivation of sensibilities within the everyday' (Das 2020: 98). We return to Weil's conceptualisation of the

'habit of attention' as an active-passive orientation that is shaped by our embodied and reflexive engagement with ordinary life (Weil 1978: 53; Freeman 2015).

However, the question remains: in the absence of explicit rules, how do volunteers, workers and customers manage to navigate the basement as a social and physical space? Wittgenstein's seminal remarks on language games might be useful to understand how procedures are formed, and above all, how they continuously alter. Wittgenstein's later work posits that there exists no unifying logic that connects meanings to words (Wittgenstein 2001: §65). Grasping meaning is a collective process insofar that the rules governing language are collectively formed. Yet the rules that give meaning to words are not pre-determined fixities, and following rules does not always guarantee that a word or gesture is used correctly. Hence, understanding a language game is less about rule-following than inhabiting the form of life that constitutes the backdrop of language-games (Das 2020: 107-111). '[T]he term 'language-game" Wittgenstein elucidates, 'is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life' (Wittgenstein 2001: §23).

In DoucheFlux's basement, the performance of gestures and words also takes shape within the flux of everyday life in that space; by such repetition, they take on the form of conventions. Navigating the basement requires familiarising oneself with the events that give form to the ordinary. As Silvestre, a retired mechanic who had been volunteering at DoucheFlux biweekly for the past three years, explained:

The atmosphere here is: we don't get too caught up in it all. There are other structures

where it's much more regulated (encadré, literally 'framed') [lowers his voice to sound authoritative]: If you don't have your ticket, well, you're out! But here there is a relative... latitude. You've seen it downstairs. Sometimes it annoys me because some people don't follow the rules, but hey, we don't take it personally. Between us [staff] neither! I have a lot of fun coming here, really. When we arrive, we say hello! to such and such... ah! how are you?... This good-natured, playful atmosphere– [pauses] I haven't experienced that anywhere else. But I've been told that it's unique in DoucheFlux, this thing. Unique!

Silvestre, like many other colleagues I interviewed, emphasises the importance of atmosphere over rules. 'We don't get too caught up in it all' hints that regulations are not the principal way of relating to each other and doing labour in the basement; what matters are the everyday greetings, games and improvisations that become weaved into habits. What Silvestre refers to as 'good-natured, playful atmosphere' could be associated with the Wittgensteinian conception of life-forms. Rules and procedures emerge out of ordinary life-forms, and by immersing oneself in this life-form and becoming attentive to the small gestures, the words and affects that texture it enables people to navigate volatile spaces like DoucheFlux's basement.

A politics of the ordinary

To close this section on attentionality and habituation, I recall an example of a moment when efforts to be attentive failed momentarily. Its violence, which stood in contrast with the overall playful atmosphere in the basement, characterises it as an extra-ordinary event. That said, the conflict escalated and de-escalated with a series of small gestures which were woven into the space's ordinary functioning. I investigate whether this can be considered as a politics of the ordinary.

The basement floor was rapidly crowding, unusual for an early Tuesday morning. A man in his forties sitting by the shower's entrance locked his eyes at Esteve and threatened: 'don't even think what you're thinking, I know what you're thinking.' Esteve reacted to this accusation with a puzzled glance, exclaiming 'but I'm not even thinking!'. You could tell by his heavy breathing that the client was in a sort of anxious, fatigued daze. The humid and echoey surroundings weren't helping either. And then the atmosphere shifted: the client started insulting the person seated to his left. Both men were now pushing one another against the door that led to the shower stalls. Heerad, a fellow volunteer standing near me, shook his head and sighed 'this is a jungle'.

Josef, the house's mediator, sprinted down the metal steps to join the dozen men gathered around the argument and exclaimed 'calm down!' to de-escalate the situation. But all the sounds morphed into one indeterminable buzz, making the air even more tense. In a matter of seconds, Josef forcefully placed his palms onto the man's shoulders, who resisted by jerking his arms. Faheem and Esteve intervened, there were now five or so men holding the man. I was scared stiff and returned to the laundry room to jot down fieldnotes and pick up the tasks I had left off.

That afternoon, the out-of-the-ordinary event replayed incessantly in my mind. One thing stood out to me, which went on to inform not only the way in which I performed labour, but also the form of my ethnographic attentiveness. I came to feel and understand that glances lasting

a second too long, a single misplaced word, an unanticipated gesture could set off moments of great tension or vulnerability. The basement, to return to Francis' expression, is a 'touchy' space, constituting a 'world of its own'. Moving through DoucheFlux's basement is a deeply relational and affective experience, where one is compelled to constantly re-assess their movements and words.

As he recollected the fight the day after it happened, Faheem told me that the client's mother had passed that week. Faheem understood his anger: 'He's having a hard time. You know, staff at the reception wanted to call the cops,' he whispered, slowly shaking his head to communicate his incomprehension. 'But the two men reconciled', Faheem went on to explain, 'they even shook hands. We dealt with it on our own. We didn't have to kick them out.' This wasn't the first time that Faheem had expressed his frustration with the minority of employees who were so keen to call the police when conflicts swelled up. I asked him whether they ever arrest people here, and he quickly exclaimed 'Yeah! Last week, three people got arrested on this block! They don't have papers and then get locked away for two, three months'. A long silence followed and was broken by our mutual pull towards the infinite, mundane tasks that lied ahead of us.

While a few workers were inclined to resort to police forces to maintain order, Faheem was attentive to the consequences that such interventions can have on the lives of those involved in conflict. The threat of detention was too great in the presence of police forces, and there were other ways of de-escalating conflicts. His approach was shaped by a recognition of the vulnerability of life without documents that places sans-papiers in narrow proximity to the states' policing and bordering authorities. In fact, Faheem had been in that very same position before. So, by being attentive to the concrete consequences of forms of conflict-management, Faheem articulated a politics of the ordinary. Indeed, French philosopher Sandra Laugier argues for a 'redefinition of ethics as attention to ordinary life' (Laugier 2020: 1). In doing, she veers away from an approach to ethics grounded in the quest for the 'good' or the 'just', and instead asks: what is important to people, what matters to them? The process of figuring out what matters in one's everyday life and the lives of others is, Laugier argues, a highly ethical and political one.

In line with Das (2020) I have demonstrated that small gestures rarely announce what they do: they can manifest as amicable expressions of attention or induce harm. It is therefore useful to consider the volatility of the everyday and to continuously adapt to these shaken terrains by paying close attention to the surging words, gestures and affects that texture it. Yet these habits of attention are not rule-bound; they are shaped by the way one inhabits the shifting atmospheres, or life-forms within a space. It is through attentiveness to the people around us and to the implicit language games that give meaning to social encounters, that DoucheFlux's basement workers can respond to the particularities of that space and working against the urge to manage and govern recipients of social aid. As such, workers and volunteers at DoucheFlux express their ethical dispositions by being attentive to what matters, to the tangible consequences of their actions in the everyday, which gives way to a politics of the ordinary.

Conclusion

Writing about sans papiers aid agencies in Paris, Miriam Ticktin suggests that, in the contemporary humanitarian landscape, 'the recognition of suffering [results] in a political program for change politics' whereby the 'joining of ethics and politics actually limits rather than expands notions of humanity' (Ticktin 2006: 35) because such discourses substitute urgent claims to political recognition with moral sentiments of compassion and benevolence. This paper demonstrates that in politically combative organisations like DoucheFlux, where a politics of the ordinary and not moral sentiments of benevolence drives its everyday functioning, there is perhaps a way to join ethics and politicised social solidarity. This ethics is articulated in everyday habits of attention, in affective responses to surging gestures, within a framework that already opposes the hostile treatment of people living in precarious conditions. It is an ethics from the ground that responds to the heterogeneity and volatility of social life. It also takes into consideration the fundamental vulnerability of efforts to collectively create counterhegemonic spaces. As Francis elucidated during a conversation:

One can either hope or regret that Douche-Flux will still be active in the coming fifty years. If there is a need, we will continue. In that case, we will always have the building. But if one day we stop because, in the best case, there is no more need, or in the worst case, we can't do it anymore, this social cooperative gets the building back and can do something else with it.

Unlike interventionist humanitarianisms that tend become particularly invested in upholding victims' states of injury and thus produce asymmetrical relations of dependency (Ticktin 2006, Ahmed 2004), Francis emphasised that citizen-led infrastructures like DoucheFlux should not have to exist, because everyone should be able to access sanitary facilities without the benevolence of a third party. He also suggested that, in a hostile political climate, the existence of spaces of social solidarity will always be under threat. Francis, like many other workers and volunteers I met, demonstrated a degree of flexibility in his attachment to the space, as though to say: 'if we are needed, we'll stay, if we aren't, we will go'.

Flexibility, however, is not enough to navigate volatile spaces in a way that is both efficient and refrains from reproducing systems of harm that govern Brussels' urban landscape. The process of understanding how to carry out labour in a manner that is attuned to the ordinary course of ethically informed events takes the form of stochastic processes of trial and error and of playful experimentation with words and affects, which demands continuous adaptation to altering circumstances. Such embodiments would perhaps have been side-lined in lofty, aerial descriptions of social aid initiatives (Das 2020: 92). We thus return to Simone Weil's writing on attention, which she conceived of as an 'antidote to force' (Davis et al 2020) whereby attention a means through which to articulate one's ethical commitments.

When European governments are making life increasingly hostile for anyone racialised as other, and where the cost to sustain ordinary life is escalating at a frightening rate, doing research at DoucheFlux has provided insight into the immense challenge in organising social solidarity and mutual aid initiatives. Citi-

zen-led infrastructures like DoucheFlux become crucial actors in making these hostile spaces inhabitable for those excluded from them. DoucheFlux's members' work becomes a way of 'reclaiming the quotidian when it is felt to be disappearing under the mass of bureaucratic regulations of life' (Das 2020: 93). Together with local organisers, sans-papiers and sans-abris, social workers, and other actors, anthropologists can start conceptualising forms of social solidarity—where practices of attention are not confined to the domain of repetition and routine, but rather, are considered as a political and embodied modality that generate relations that take seriously all those gestures, words, and affects that texture everyday life.

References cited

AHMED, S. Chapter 5: Shame before Others pp.101-122 in The cultural politics of emotion. First edition. (2004) Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

ASAD, T. Secular Translations: Nation-State, Modern Self, and Calculative Reason / Talal Asad. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2019. Web.

CSORDAS, T. J. Somatic Modes of Attention. Cultural anthropology 8.2 (1993): 135–156. Web.

DAS, V. and Randeria, Shalini. Politics of the Urban Poor: Aesthetics, Ethics, Volatility, Precarity: An Introduction to Supplement 11. Current anthropology 56.S11 (2015): S3–S14. Web.

DAS, V. Wittgenstein and Anthropology. Annual review of anthropology 27.1 (1998): 171–195. Web.

------Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary / Veena Das, Foreword by Stanley Cavell. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007. Print.

------in Loher, D., Schwaller, C., & Wolf, A.-L. Attuned to the Everyday: A Conversation with Veena Das. TSANTSA – Journal of the Swiss Anthropological Association, 23, 163–169. (2018a). https://doi.org/10.36950/tsantsa.2018.23.7324

------Ethics, Self-Knowledge, and Life Taken as a Whole. HAU journal of ethnographic theory 8.3 (2018b): 537–549. Web.

------Textures of the Ordinary: Doing Anthropology after Wittgenstein / Veena Das. First edition. New York: Fordham University Press, (2020). Print.

DAVIS, B. P.; Rozelle-Stone, A., Simone Weil, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = Accessed online 09/10/2021 <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/simone-weil/>.

DOUCHEFLUX vzw/ASBL. What we do. (Date unknown) Retrieved 23/11/2021 via https://doucheflux.be/notre-action/?lang=en

EL-ENANY, N. Bordering Britain Law, Race and Empire. First edition. Manchester: MANCHESTER UNIV PRESS (2020). Print.

FREEMAN, M. Beholding and Being Beheld: Simone Weil, Iris Murdoch, and the Ethics of Attention. The Humanistic psychologist 43.2 (2015): 160–172. Web.

GEERTZ, C. Deep hanging out: Clifford Geertz. The New York Review of Books. (1998, October 22). Retrieved October 5 2021 from https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1998/10/22/deep-hanging-out/

IBOS, C. D. A. Molinier, P.; Paperman, P. Vers une société du care: Une politique de l'attention. (2019). Paris: Le Cavalier bleu éditions.

LAIDLAW, J. Ethics / Morality. In The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology

(eds) F. Stein, S. Lazar, M. Candea, H. Diemberger, J. Robbins, A. Sanchez & R. Stasch. . (2017) http://-doi.org/10.29164/17ethics

LAMBEK, M. Ordinary Ethics: Anthropology, Language, and Action / Edited by Michael Lambek. New York: Fordham University Press, (2010) Print.

LAMBEK, M. et al. Four Lectures on Ethics: Anthropological Perspectives. Chicago: HAU, (2015) Print.

LAUGIER, S. The Ethics of Care as a Politics of the Ordinary. New literary history 46.2 (2015): 217–240. Web.

------ Politics of the Ordinary: Care, Ethics, and Forms of Life. Ethics of Care 11 (2020) Leuven University Press. Print.

------ Politics of Vulnerability and Responsibility for Ordinary Others, Critical HORIZONS, 17:2, 207-223, (2016) DOI: 10.1080/14409917.2016.1153891

MATTINGLY, C, and Jason T.The Anthropology of Ethics and Morality. Annual review of anthropology 47.1 (2018): 475–492. Web.

MORENIKEJI, E. Je vis après tout le monde, derrière tout le monde. Douche-Flux Magazine ; N°29 – PRINTEMPS (2019) ; Bruxelles, Anderlecht

PEDERSEN, A. M., Albris, K. and Seaver, N. The Political Economy of Attention. Annual review of anthropology 50.1 (2021): 309–325. Web.

TICKTIN, M. Where Ethics and Politics Meet: The Violence of Humanitarianism in France. American ethnologist 33.1 (2006): 33–49. Print.

WEIL, S. Waiting on God [translated from the French by Emma Craufurd]. London: Routledge & K. Paul (1975). Print.

WEIZMAN, E. The Least of All Possible Evils : Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza / Eyal Weizman. London ;: Verso, (2011) Print.

WITTGENSTEIN, L. Philosophical Investigations (2nd edition). G.E.M. Anscombe, trans. (1986) Oxford: Blackwell.

The Morality of Football Betting in its Intersections with Capitalism and Social Reproduction

Academic Essays

ABSTRACT

Gambling involves a mixture of luck, knowledge, skill, and nerve. Through interview discussions with my informant Mateo, I seek to analyze the ideologies of economy, money, and exchange that interplay in the formation of the moralities and motivations for sports betting. Furthermore, sports betting via the online bookmaker Paddy Power involves multiple moralities that shape the practice around accumulation and leisure. These forces speak to larger capitalist and societal ethical standards and spheres of exchange, including the seeking of wealth in the interest of generating more. However, the goal of interviewing my informant is to outline the combination of pleasure and knowledge in what becomes a socially reproduced activity in today's society.

keywords: morality, exchange, gambling, money, capitalism, commodities, football

Tom Delves

'Money is the fuel of gambling; it drives it, as petrol powers a car, but the pleasure of driving a car is not about petroleum. It's about speed, style, movement. Fuel is merely what makes the car run'

(Spanier, 2001: 50 cited in Binde, 2006: 474)

As Spanier's quote suggests, gambling requires money, but the pleasure of the various styles of gambling are (to continue the analogy) what causes the driver to put their foot on the gas. The relationship between money and gambling, however, is more complex than a simple car analogy and requires an analysis of a system of reciprocal exchange that establishes distinct moral boundaries. Honing on a specific form of gambling, I will discuss the sports betting practices of my friend and interlocutor, who I have given the pseudonym Mateo. The morality of his practice is characterized by the consent of users on the betting platform Paddy Power and similarities can be drawn to the modern capitalist market of Wall Street (Ho, 2009). Ho's analogy shows how money begets money

through the exploitation of the losses of other players within the market. Wall Street and sports betting are volatile money systems that then can further be compared to northeastern Madagascar export culture (Zhu, 2018). This economic structure conceptualizes earnings as 'hot money' - meant to be spent immediately - a characterization of money Mateo takes after due to its resemblance to the volatility of gambling (Zhu, 2018). In both instances, money is rendered for pleasure in order to distract from its power. However, Mateo oscillates between freedom from Paddy Power in spending his money on what he describes as entertainment activities, and being under 'Paddy's Power' so to speak. 'Paddy's Power' is diminished through Mateo's association with gambling as a leisure activity, where money provides the fuel, yet he needs 'Paddy' to beget money and leisure. Thus, Mateo's interaction with gambling is viewed as both leisure and the accumulation of money. Furthermore, money is a mechanism that enables Mateo to engage more fully and vividly with sport and its social relations by applying a combination of morals associated with capitalist accumulation and ideas of reciprocity.

Methods and the Money Man

I met my informant in the University Library Café in the middle of exam revision at the end of the first semester of the 2020-2021 school year. Mateo is a fellow undergraduate student at the University of Edinburgh, who I have known for most of my years there. He spends his downtime watching, playing, and betting on football; and playing poker with his flatmates.

For the methods of my ethnography, I conducted a long interview with Mateo in which we discussed his current gambling practices - with emphasis on his successes in online sports betting - and played a game of poker in his flat. Mateo had recently started using Paddy Power and other online sports betting platforms that June when he and a friend were watching football at home. While both ended up losing a fiver on the match, Mateo had won a newfound enjoyment of football, with raised stakes and a feeling of virtual immersion. For the previous 16 years, Mateo has followed the daily on-goings of the Premier League and other leagues around the world. He had accumulated what he termed 'stupid football knowledge' that he sees as otherwise useless, except when it comes to football betting.

As a result of the pandemic and closing of social spaces where Mateo would normally spend his free time and disposable income, sports betting has filled a hole in entertainment. By providing Mateo with an enhancement of watching football from home, and an outlet for his 'stupid football knowledge', gambling on matches had become a favorite past time for Mateo and his flatmates. I had noticed that other gambling activities have proliferated in his all-male student flat. From making bets on ping-pong tournaments and weekly poker nights, to betting on the 2020 United States election.

Though this paper is concerned primarily with sports betting, due to Mateo's more extensive history with it, I will briefly discuss other gambling practices. With poker, ping-pong, and the US election, Mateo admitted his primary reason for placing bets was to participate in the social field of his flat. In addition, he confessed he was not very knowledgeable or skilled at any of these activities, and thus maintained a risk-averse attitude by

only making small bets. I happened to conduct participant observation in a poker game with Mateo, in which he often 'checked'; wanting to bet only when having a worthwhile hand. Similarly, Mateo maintains the same mentality in his football betting regardless of his increased confidence in success. From these bets, revenue is spent on personal activities and investing into future bets on Paddy Power.

In the betting process, Paddy Power encourages its users to continue betting on earnings just won. For example, Mateo described that in a recent bet, he started by betting ten pounds on a football match between Sheffield United and Brighton Specifically, a win would come if Brighton received a yellow card and both teams had a corner in each half. The bet won and Paddy Power immediately encouraged him to put ten pounds on a riskier four-fold bet, which would have won him one hundred and sixty pounds. Yet he lost by a slim margin as only three out of the four players in the bet got yellow cards needed. Luckily for him, Paddy Power's policy allows him to get the ten pounds back as a free bet the next day because he only lost one leg of the bet. Mateo assured me that for good measure he had made twenty pounds on easy bets the day before. His risk-averse tactics regularly pay off too, as he modestly disclosed that he has made upwards of six hundred pounds in the last six months.

Ideologies and Moralities of Exchange through Gambling

I will analyze Mateo's gambling as part of spheres of reciprocal exchange, first as a negative generalized reciprocity (Binde,

2005) which provides morality to Mateo's wins and his flatmates' losses as he views it as a positively balanced exchange.

Per Binde's (2005) article on the different exchange systems and subsequent ethical quandaries associated with each, demonstrates how gambling across cultures is capable of intersecting different types of reciprocal exchange because of gambling's normative and structural duality (Figure 1) (472). With respect to norms, gambling can be perceived as 'negative' where players win or 'steal' money from other players, and 'positive' in the consent provided that allows for the taking of one's money (Binde, 2005: 472). '… [structurally], there are games in which one player or group of players confronts another or a gambling entrepreneur [structurally balanced], as well as games where all play against all [structurally generalized]' (Binde, 2005: 472). Thereby, a negative generalized reciprocal exchange is an exchange where one profits off the losses of multiple others (Binde, 2005: 448). In the game of poker I played with Mateo, all players put in a modest bet of £2.50. Mateo walked away with ten pounds. This 'negative generalized reciprocity' is justified under the morality that: 'Once you've started, you must take the consequences' (Binde, 2005: 450).

While the morality and conception around sports betting varies from poker, the deviation is not such that it elicits a different category of reciprocal exchange. This is questioned by Binde, as he discusses how horse-race betters see poker as an aggressive form of money taking from the hands of other players, while in horse-race betting (similar to sport-betting), gamblers are betting against the bookmaker. In Mateo's case this is Paddy Power (2005: 451). This is a deviation from a negative generalized
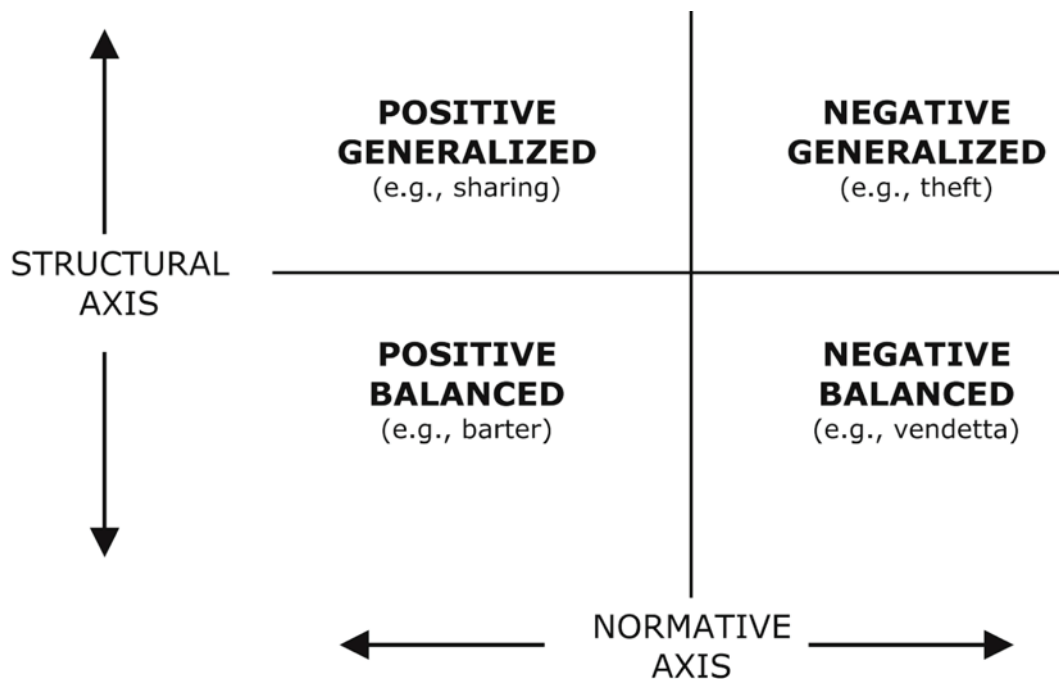
Figure 1: Four modes of reciprocal exchange. (Adapted from W. Mitchell, 1988)

reciprocity to a positively balanced system, yet the economic reality is that Mateo profits off his flatmates' losses regardless, even if indirectly (Binde, 2005: 451). Mateo's attitude towards earnings are centered on his online engagement with Paddy Power rather than the taking of money from his flatmates. This transforms Mateo's perception of hits bets into a positive balanced system, wherein by betting against a gambling organization, he is profiting off the miscalculations of the website and receiving revenue indirectly from actors in a system of consent. While he usually places bets on Premier league matches, he has profited from bets on Brazilian Serie B football, a league he admits he doesn't know much about but he claims he knows more than Patty Power. Thus, Mateo takes advantage of his 'stupid football knowledge' to place

bets he perceives Paddy Power to have miscalculated by looking at the odds and researching for himself. Rather than see sports betting as a competition between himself and his flatmates, Mateo sees himself in competition with Paddy Power.

'It's not really about the competition [amongst friends] part of it. Because when you both win the same bet, you're happy that you both won. […] If I see something, which I think isn't correct, in the odds or something. When I think there's like a miscalculation, you also get satisfaction from thinking you know more than what they're doing. That's the main thing.'

Mateo's gambling can be seen as a positively balanced exchange, where the consent of gamblers is assumed, and the mindset is against Paddy Power. On the other hand, Binde notes in horse-race betting: 'the economic reality however is that

bookmakers do not altruistically give away money to gamblers, all wins come from the losses of other gamblers' (Binde, 2005: 451). As a result, the upwards of six hundred pounds Mateo has made comes from the contributions of gamblers like his flatmates, some of whom are down one hundred pounds on Paddy Power. The opaque social field on Paddy Power allows Mateo to moralize winning money from potentially his friends in a system of exchange that is requiring knowledge and luck as opposed to theft. This conceptualization of gambling allows Mateo to see it as a socially reproduced activity which bonds his flatmates together through their communally shared winnings.

The Morality of Gambling and the Intersection of Capitalism

Knowledge of gambling's purported voluntary nature along with the exploitative nature within a capitalist economy, gives moral justification to betting practices. In Karen Ho's (2009) ethnography on the downsizing of Corporate America and the beneficiaries on Wall Street, she discusses how investment bankers earn money through the loss of jobs for employees in corporations to expand shareholder value. In 1995 telecommunications giant AT&T announced its split into three different companies, and in doing so, offered 77,800 employees buy-outs whilst downsizing another 40,000 (Ho, 2009: 180). On the day of the announcement, the AT&T stock rose 6.125 points growing $9.7 billion, meanwhile investment banks received a rise in corporate reorganization deals (Ho, 2009: 180). Furthermore, the investment bank that carried out the execution of AT&T's reorganization, Morgan Stanley, earned

tens of millions of dollars (Ho, 2009: 181). Ho exhibits how investment bankers profit off downsizing deals with corporations that involve unemployment for over one-hundred thousand people.

'Wall Street investment banks are central to corporate downsizing, they are key agitators for the restructuring of companies to 'create' stock price wealth from "undervalued" assets' (Ho, 2009: 181).

More money for the shareholders is more money for the agitators downsizing companies. On Paddy Power, similar to Wall Street, placing a successful bet returns a profit, and the loss of the other is moralized through the understanding of the nature of the market, where entering brings the potential of losing.

This brings us to question how natural the market is. When investing in a company, money becomes an avenue for its own reproduction, and effectively comes to life. As Karl Polanyi notes, money under systems of capitalist banking and finance is a fictitious commodity as It transforms from a means of exchange mediating the trade of commodities to a commodity itself that is invested, pushed, traded, bought, and sold (Polanyi, 2001: 75-76). Furthermore, there is nothing natural about the idea that money begets money, in fact, Taussig (2010) notes the concept is rather supernatural. His informants on a sugarcane plantation in the Cauca valley of Colombia conceive that those who increase their production and wages in order to accumulate capital are seen as making pacts with the Devil (Taussig, 2010: 13). Taussig's ethnographic research demonstrates the antagonism of a people in between precapitalist and capitalist societies. The consequences of these pacts are prema-

ture death and the destruction of one's capital, along with an inability to conduct future exchanges (Taussig, 2010: 118). This is the result of placing oneself as the goal of exchange rather than embracing reciprocity which allows for social reproduction (Taussig, 2010: 120). Taussig and Ho's informants represent different worlds of economics, with one group living off the concept of money's self-regenerative powers, and the other equating the concept with the devil. For Mateo, his sports betting is more closely aligned with the system Ho noted.

'It's made me like, realise there are opportunities out there to make money just from sitting at home, on my phone and having stupid knowledge from football.'

Mateo renders money as a commodity that can multiply as a necessity. Money is the stakes Mateo places on his knowledge because he values its ability to multiply 'from just sitting at home.' The acceptance of money as a commodity creates the ideological framework Mateo exists in. In some ways, Mateo resembles Ho's informants in profiting of the loss of others, reminiscent of a negative generalized exchange. It is the ideology and societal acceptance that money is a commodity that can be waged and used to beget more of itself that proliferates the conception of gambling, and the practices of businesses like Paddy Power. As previously mentioned, Paddy Power encourages further betting in order to increase one's accumulation. Evidently this ideology of money as a commodity seems natural and is accepted as the result of growing up under capitalism (Taussig, 2010: 4).

Lukewarm Money and the Pleasure of Challenging Paddy's Power

Mateo is of course not to blame for using money as a tool to accumulate capital, and in fact he uses his earnings in a socially reproductive manner, which I will conceptualize as 'lukewarm' to be spent immediately. Zhu (2018) describes the earning of money through erratic means as 'hot money' as her interlocutors immediately spend their earnings as if the money was hot. The volatility of the stock market and earning profit from sports betting is reminiscent of a systemic volatility in the export culture Zhu describes that conceptualizes income as restricted to the sphere of pleasure. The erratic nature of income from Paddy Power encourages Mateo to keep his earnings in the sphere of pleasure as they may not last forever. In order to analyze Mateo's earnings and his interactions with them, I will draw from Annah Zhu's (2018) ethnography on the export economy in northeastern Madagascar. During the past 20 years, Madagascar has experienced economic booms and busts due to the volatility in the exports of vanilla and rosewood (Zhu, 2018: 253). Cyclones destroy much of the region's crops which causes a rapid increase in the price of vanilla and leads to rural villagers receiving wealth previously unimaginable to them (Zhu, 2018: 253). With this newfound prosperity, farmers spend their earnings in indulgent sprees, consisting of cold beer and nights out in neighboring towns (Zhu, 2018: 253). When the region and crops recover from the cyclone, the price of vanilla decreases, along with the money of the farmers, causing them to sell their mattresses and return to straw beds (Zhu, 2018: 254). The spending habits of these

northeastern Malagasy are characterized by Zhu's description of the concept vola mafana or 'hot money', which one of her interlocutors describes as '[when] you have got such a lot of money, but you don't even want to think about saving it! All you want to do is just to find a way to spend it all!' (Zhu, 2018: 259).

Mateo's money is initially conceptualized as disposable. From the start, he notes his ability to gamble stems from an open space in his social life: 'I've just not been spending money on going-out.' In this sense, 'going-out' refers to the weekly visiting of pubs, nightclubs and parties in Edinburgh, all of which are currently nonexistent as a result of restrictions to stop the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. His disposable income is thereby funneled into Paddy Power, and spending it on shared activities such as takeaways with his girlfriend and beer for his flatmates replicates the types of leisure he would be participating in had Covid-19 not caused the closing of all night-life. Furthermore, football betting leads to socially reproductive activities.

'You watch football, with your friends. And you can talk about it. But I guess it's probably more social than poker, poker is like more competition, like you're playing against your friends, you're winning their money, or you're losing your money to them. Whereas when it's betting it's small, it's not competition like that.'

The emphasis on socially reproductive and shared activities deviates a little from Zhu's example, focusing more on the relationships rather than the extravagance of the spending. In addition, the notable absence of competition in football betting allows it to prevent antagonism between flatmates. In this instance, the shared

activities are what Mateo earns his money for.

'Like, what's the point in winning if you don't actually spend them otherwise? Otherwise, it's just silly. I'm not doing it to make money to earn a living. I'm doing it for the little things.'

The little things don't seem to draw a similarity to the extravagant hot money spending as discussed by Zhu. Mateo is not exactly rolling around in money that he does not want to think about saving either. Both volatile systems of earning money create a desire for immediate spending. The immediate spending on shared activities being a reward and benefit of his gambling, with the capability of enabling socially reproductive activities such as bears with his flatmates. His earnings are thereby lukewarm, for they are not as hot as the revenue gained from the Malagasy farmers, but are still warm enough to encourage immediate spending on 'little things'.

Though Mateo spends a portion of his earnings on immediate pleasure goods, he still saves his money in Paddy Power as a platform, which encourages users to continue betting through accumulation. The accumulating bets often reap larger rewards and offer protection that cancel a loss, as discussed earlier with Mateo's Brighton bet. Yet, Mateo is essentially under the control of Paddy Power, they dictate what the odds are, and the element of luck is a trap for many, such as Mateo's flatmates. Thereby Mateo's immediate spending could be seen as resisting the 'Paddy's Power'. Returning to Zhu's analysis of hot money spending, money is conceptualized and spent immediately as attempts to take away its power (Zhu, 2018: 256). In Zhu's example, she notes that the immediate

spending of 'hot money' is a way for the farmers to rid themselves of the power that the global economy exudes through imports, by spending it freely rather than adhering to its hegemony (Zhu, 2018: 264). 'Hot money' spending is a response to the volatility of the vanilla and rosewood markets (Zhu, 2018: 264), similarly to how Mateo's immediate spending of his earnings is an effort to remove his money from Paddy Power and prevent him from losing it on accumulation bets. The response to volatile systems of revenue is spending earnings in the pleasure sphere to reduce the power money has over the actor. The act of betting and checking the odds of football matches is a pleasurable activity for Mateo. The association of leisure implies he could stop at anytime, but the game of using his skills that he has spent his life acquiring gives him pleasure. Mateo could theoretically stop at anytime, but since he doesn't rely on his earnings and is able to manage the capricious system through small bets to enhance his entertainment, then why stop? Though Paddy Power gives him autonomy with revenue, he does not entirely subvert the economic order by spending all his earnings immediately to reflect the volatility of gambling like the Malagasy with 'hot money' (Zhu, 2018).

Therefore, Mateo's situation is more of a mix of subverting the economic order through gaining capital in an unconventional manner. Yet by keeping his items in the sphere of leisure and most of his winnings in his balance on Paddy Power, Mateo exists in constant purgatory between reaping benefits from success in gambling and losing his earnings through the convincing bets orchestrated by Paddy Power. This is also best described as existing between generalized and balanced exchanges. The balanced sphere represents the 'Power of Paddy', and is in this sense negative, as Mateo is in constant battle with the business to achieve earnings and winning bets, while using money as a commodity to accumulate capital. On the other hand, the generalized exchange in sharing his earnings with his flatmates is normatively positive as he distributes his earnings in a spirit of social reproduction. All the while his success, in general, is testament to his knowledge and ability to find 'miscalculations' on Paddy Power. At the end of the day, football betting is one of Mateo's leisure activities. In keeping money in Paddy Power, he is conscious of how his money is a reproductive capital that can bring him pleasure, which ultimately arises from the social interactions that football betting accompanies.

I have analysed the morality and societal framework that sports betting exists under, as well as the types of exchange systems Mateo is involved in. Looking at gambling as allegorical to and a part of modern capitalism in constructing money as a living commodity. Gambling is a volatile system, and thus encourages earnings to be spent immediately. Money conceptualized for pleasure is a way to mask power, as Mateo oscillates between spending and keeping his money in Paddy Power. However, because gambling is a leisure activity for Mateo and not a career, his interactions with sports betting are for entertainment purposes which prevents him from ceasing to operate under Paddy Power. His knowledge and successes continuously replicate feelings of value and pleasure in placing bets, despite the company attempting to use his failings for revenue. The joy derived from betting also coincides with the socially reproductive aspects of gambling that enable him to form deeper bonds with his flatmates in a

non-competitive and reciprocal manner.

Disclaimer

The informant involved in this ethnographic study is not addicted to gambling and no longer gambles. Addiction is a serious topic and while I am not addressing it in this essay, it is extremely important that I bring attention to it. My concern is to analyze the ideologies of economy, money, and exchange that interplay in the formation of the moralities and motivations for sports betting.

For further information on gambling addiction please visit https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/gambling-addiction/ or call the National Gambling Helpline at (0808 8020 133) if living in the UK.

References cited

BINDE, P., 2005. Gambling, Exchange Systems, and Moralities. Journal of gambling studies., 21(4), pp.445–479. Available from: https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/scholarly-journals/gambling-exchange-systems-moralities/docview/198799313/se-2?accountid=10673

HO, K., 2009. Disciplining Investment Bankers, Disciplining the Economy: Wall Street's Institutional Culture of Crisis and the Downsizing of "Corporate America." American anthropologist, 111(2), pp.177–189. Available from: https://search.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/disciplining-investment-bankers-economy-wall/docview/198172613/se-2?accountid=10673

POLANYI, K., 2001. 'The Self-Regulating Market and the Fictitious Commodities: Labor, Land, and Money' In Great Transformation : The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time, Beacon Press, Boston, pp. 71-80. Available from: https://search.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/disciplining-investment-bankers-economy-wall/docview/198172613/se-2?accountid=10673

SPANIER, D. (2001). The hand I played: A poker memoir. Harpenden, Herts: Oldcastle Books. Cited in: Binde, P., 2005. Gambling, Exchange Systems, and Moralities. Journal of gambling studies., 21(4), pp.445–479. Available from: https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/scholarly-journals/gambling-exchange-systems-moralities/docview/198799313/se-2?accountid=10673

TAUSSIG, M. T., 2010. The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

ZHU, A., 2018. Hot money, cold beer: Navigating the vanilla and rosewood export economies in northeastern Madagascar. American ethnologist, 45(2), pp.253–267. Available from: https://anthrosource-onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/share/7SWDGSNEEMW6KYECWQMK?target=10.1111/amet.12636

Experiencing Silence : Polysemic value of silence in introspection and social relations

Reflective Piece

Roberto Fracchia

Tohoku University

ABSTRACT

This short text is a simple reflection on the meanings and importance of silence. Starting from the sensory experience of silence I had with a local informant at Kennin-ji in Kyoto, Japan, I reflect on the various meanings of silence. On the one hand, the therapeutic and introspective silence of a temple garden immersed in the city; on the other hand, a fake silence, made of sounds and noises, that does not generate quietness, but anxiety and social distance.

keywords: silence, social distance, Japan, quietness, introspection

Entering Kennin-ji is in itself a highly emotional experience. This is not something that lies in the structure of the buildings that make up the complex, nor the perfection of nature expertly guided by the hand of man that adorns the courtyard. It is not even in the smell of wood, perhaps incense, which smacks of history, of cleanliness, of the sacred. Initial excitement comes from touch and hearing. The contact of the bare foot on that wood that seems ancient, but is not. The sound of the beams creaking with each step. It matters little whether it is a heavier step like mine, or a very light one, like Rei's, who with her slender build acted as my guide through the city of Kyoto. Perhaps it was the good fortune of being two of the very few visitors touring the temple that morning. Perhaps it was just the place that communicated that emotion that I could translate as serenity. The sacredness of the place required us to speak in low voices. This sacredness was not something exclusively religious. As Noriko Maejima (2010) suggests, sacredness is something constructed

through the relationship that various agents, with their interests, have to the place. These interests can include a religious aspect, of course. But it can also be a certain context or a social condition not related to religion that gives the value of sacredness to a place. It is not a single element that can transform the location or a building into a sacred place. Instead, there are various perspectives of various agents to give this value. It is not a structured meaning created by features, but a dynamic one created by different ontologies that are born from the relation between the agents. In my case, sacredness included, yes, a religious element, but it also included the awe of being in that place, of the architectural beauty and those sensations I felt. Sacredness was not identifiable as something intrinsic to the place, but as the action the place exerted on me through my senses, and my desire, in return, to welcome and be embraced by that awe.

Rei explained something about the temple but, partly because of her veiled voice, partly because of my less-than-perfect Japanese, I struggled to understand what she was telling me. I dared not ask her to repeat it, as it seemed inappropriate to disturb the quiet of the place. I thought my footsteps were already disturbing that silence enough. The sight was certainly gratified by the beauty of the place. Aesthetic values are reflected in every tiny architectural detail, in every hue of the artwork entitled 'Raijin and Fūjin', by Tawaraya Sōtatsu, in every brushstroke of Kaihō Yūshō's 'Dragons and Clouds'. I like to imagine, surely mistakenly, that this applies to every visitor to the temple. Admiring such magnificence makes it difficult to think that anyone could remain indifferent before it. But surely some visitors leave the temple with

the idea that they have wasted time, thinking that there is nothing particularly worthwhile to see. I could have spent hours observing, enraptured by a beauty that surpassed the preemptive image I had of Kennin-ji. But it was the silence we encountered shortly after that represented the climax of the experience. Passing from one corridor to another, we came to a garden called Chōontei, meaning 'the garden of the sound of the tide'. Sight is usually conceived as the strongest of the senses. Often, the first relationship between us and our surroundings is mediated by this sense. In that first moment of encounter with the garden, my hearing was paying no attention to the creaking of floorboards, to some voice coming veiled from the corridors, if there were any. Only sight connected me to the place, as my eyes were invaded by that mixture of green, wood and stone, combined in an almost unreal perfection. We sat on the edge of the courtyard. I can recall my sight was so fulfilled that I could swear my eyes closed on their own. And it was there that what I felt was the real beauty of the Chōontei emerged. In the darkness that closed eyelids created, an almost total silence arose. Our footsteps ceased, and people's voices seemed more distant, to the point of disappearing. The presence of other people did not disturb us, because anyone who arrived there could only become part of that quietness. Or so I like to think. For a few seconds or minutes, I also immersed myself in that silence. Honestly, it is something I am not so used to. I come from a country town where people on the street shout even at deep night. And if no one does, there is the nature talking. Moreover, we were in Kyoto, not in a remote temple somewhere deep in the mountains. About 30 meters as the crow flies separated us from

Donguri-Dori, the road we had traveled only a few minutes earlier. There were cars and people, stores and bars on that street. Is it possible that in that precise moment everyone in the city was silent just so we could enjoy that silence?

Obviously not. It must be part of the magic of the place to have recreated that unnatural silence. Of course, nature has its sounds, and it is not total silence. Hearing allows us to enjoy various things, such as music, the voice of a loved one, the voice of family members. And those voices we always recognize can comfort us. But at the same time, it is the sense that more than others keeps us out of danger. It is the sense that is activated when sight fails to tell us that we our safety is at risk. There in that silence, there are no familiar voices, no music. Only the sound of the wind. And there, in front of that garden, silence takes the form of introspection. Without an external visual or auditory object to turn one's attention to, the focus of thought becomes the voice from within, one's memory, the construction of the simulation of the self in that particular environment. That, at least, is what happened to me. In a study about the interrelationship between nature and silence, Pfeifer, Fiedlera and Wittmann (2020) showed that, while silence both indoors and in a natural context is effective in relaxation, in the outdoor condition it is easier to reach a stronger present orientation and a reduced past one. In that moment, it was difficult to realize the geographical place where I actually was. The city seemed like a faraway place. Kyoto is not a chaotic city like Tokyo, Milan, or Taipei. It is formed by a harmonious blend of beige and brown hues, blending with refined shapes, elegant gestures, and quietude. It is an impression perhaps only mine, but it

is a still vivid memory I have of that magnificent city. It seemed that everyone in the city participated in this staging, which only tourists can disturb. As I surely disturbed it with my frantic picture-taking, my wanting to observe and consume the landscape, and asking questions. But even I had to surrender to the silence of the Chōontei. And somehow it was good for me. 'Silence itself is a fertile mode in which the self is enriched and strengthened, the source of that quiet growth in which distortions of the self can be reflected upon and then transformed' (Elson, 2001, p. 351). Perhaps that is the purpose of that garden. The opportunity to close one's eyes, turning away from any visual focus and in the silence of the place, reflect on the distortions of the self, trying to recalibrate them by coming out transformed, if only slightly.

Silence has an important value in Japan. It is practiced in many Zen arts. And these arts, a word that in Japan means both aesthetic arts and crafts, are a part of the country's identity. It does not mean that everyone practices them or follows their principles. But in some contexts, it seems that everyone can embrace the meaning and the practices connected with Zen. One such practice is mu, the void or emptiness with its silence. Another principle is the interconnection between the self and the environment or the universe, where other individuals are also present. I have experienced what I would call mu by practicing karate, taking part in a tea ceremony, or observing an acquaintance practicing ikebana. And in the mu, I felt connected to the other participants, my fellow students or my sensei. In particular, the practice of karate and the words of my sensei, made me better understand the importance of silence, emptiness and interconnection

with others.   This use of silence also extends to the everydayness of language.

Takie Lebra (1987) explains that the prevalence of silence in Japan relates to individuals' awareness of being interconnected. This factor inhibits vocal self-assertion. There is a polysemic value in silence. It is a value made up of truth, social discretion, embarrassment, and defiance. These are values that stand at opposite extremes. Defiant silence is expressive and assertive of the self. Silence as social discretion is useful in gaining social acceptance and pushes the individual to restrain from revealing that internal truth, whether cognitive, moral, or emotional. Lebra explains that 'the Japanese view the person as sharply split into inner and outer parts, and believe that truth lies only in the inner realm as symbolically localized in the heart or belly' (1987, p. 345).

Silence is thus a way of expressing the truth of oneself toward the people with whom one is connected. But in order to express this truth without becoming embarrassed, it is first necessary to know one's own emotions, thoughts, judgments, and perceptions. That is, introspection is necessary to understand if and how this truth can be expressed. Going back to the example of karate and the teaching I received, creating mu and silence is meant to promote an understanding of one's position in relation to the opponent, and to understand what the opponent can do, where he can strike. In short, mu and silence allow at the same time introspection and interconnection with the opponent.

Yet there is also another silence, not unique to Japan, but a product of modernity. This silence stands at the opposite of both the silence I experienced at Kennin-ji and the polysemic silence part

of Japanese communication. First of all because it is not a true silence, as it is not opposite to noise. In fact, is not an absence of voices or sounds. Itis not a silence that helps one to enter in contact with the self in quietness. In my opinion, it doesnnot even allow for interconnectedness. It is a silence made of noise and voices, but these do not help communication. Nor do they allow introspection. It is an egoic and anti-social silence. As in Kennin-ji we can physically find ourselves in an urban area and experience silence. But urban silence is made up of loud noises and continuous voices, never veiled. It is a different silence. We experience it in the invasion of the space by text (Augé, 1995, p. 99), in social atomization, in our feeling alone. We can be surrounded by people talking and still be immersed in silence. And we end up reading voices on a screen instead of hearing them. Reading, however, does not drive away that silence.

This kind of silence does not allow introspection. It does not allow us to find peace, in terms of inner quietness This kind of silence generates stress. It is a fake silence because it is constantly interrupted by messages, notifications, and pushes. And attention always falls on that noise that pushes us to believe we are lonely people, even when all around us there are thousands of voices. As Sherry Turkle suggests, when we feel lonely and isolated by the real people around us, we searchfor 'for another hit of what feels like connection' (2011, p. 227). And we need to talk, to communicate. Humans, in general, seek for sociality. We have a bio-cultural need to communicate, to be connected to other people. And spoken words have been the primary tool of communication for a really long time. At Kennin-ji it is different. During the silence, one does not feel alone. The presence of other people around me was

strong. I was part of a group. Apart from Rei, strangers. Yet in those moments, silence was the connecting force between everyone present. Like an unspoken agreement between strangers, no one dared to speak, aware that it would break the enchantment. You do not need to be religious or spiritual, nor do you even need to know a Zen practice to understand the meaning of that silence. There is no need for a conscious analysis of the surroundings. I sit, I close my eyes and I let my mind create a state I call quietness and serenity. Obviously this is a personal emotion, as it is not possible for me to read other people's minds. I do not know what those people feel or how much they know about Zen practices. But what I felt in that moment was a connection, and that required the projection of that feeling of mine onto other people. To feel connected I had to believe that other people were connected to me. Rei confessed to me later that she is not particularly religious. Like many Japanese she visits temples and shrines on special occasions, such as during her freshman year or when some events, such as a college entrance test, require extra help. She too, however, confirmed to me that in that silence she felt happy. I discussed this with her months later, specifically asking if she remembered that day at Kennin-ji and that experience of quietness. The conversation passed from silence to loneliness, as she told me she feels lonely at times, because she communicates with friends through messages, but not actually talking with them. I was of course one of those friends, as most of this communication happened through SMS.

A few years after that experience at Kennin-ji I am now thinking back to how meaningful that experience of silence was. Obviously, I did not learn to meditate

in those few moments of silence, nor did I find satori (enlightenment) in that instant. Yet somehow, every time I pick up the notes of that trip, I cannot help but stop and think back to that silence. Above all, I think about what the fake silence is stealing from us. Technology, in the form of digital communication, robbed from us the necessity of the open-ended conversation. Or, as Turkle suggests, of the courage for this kind of conversation: 'For most purposes, and some-times even intimate ones, they [people] would rather send a text message than hear a voice on the phone or be opposite someone face-to-face (Turkle, 2015, p. 22). I see this lack of face-to-face conversation as a kind of silence, the one I defined as fake. And this silence is definitely not the therapeutic silence that results in introspection. It is about that silence that creates social distance, and at the same time, it keeps people busy with textuality, notifications and noises, and thus does not provide space for communication with oneself. It is only about not communicating with others. It places barriers between ourselves and others. It turns into loneliness, not connections. It ends up generating anxiety and stress. Those notes on silence are important to me, because I, like many, experience fake silence on a daily basis. But the experience at Kennin-ji provided me with a valuable tool to understand that there is good and therapeutic silence. And I believe that silence has transformed me. It was not an immediate change, but with time I learned to keep my phone more off than on, to ask people for meetings rather than discuss by email, even when meetings are just online. I learned to use my voice and ask others to use their voices with me. As I result, I can better manage the open-ended conversations. And most of all, I

learned to use those moments of real silence, when there are no noises and no voices, to talk with myself. I wonder if the Chōontei is meant for just this kind of metamorphosis of silence, allowing a person like me, used to connecting silence and loneliness, to understand silence as something positive and to be sought after. Maybe it was my occasion to find out that silence is something that can communicate and create connections, as the garden taught me to close my eyes and just follow my hearing, finding polysemous voices in the pure sound of the silence of a garden.

References cited

AUGÉ, M. (1997) Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity. London: Verso.

ELSON, M. (2001) 'Silence, its use and abuse: a view from self psychology', Clinical Social Work Journal, 29(4), pp. 351-360.

LEBRA, T. S. (1987) 'The Cultural Significance of Silence in Japanese Communication', Multilingua: Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage communication, 6(4), pp. 343-358.

MAEJIMA, N. (2010) 'The Significance of Local Context for the Formation of "Sacred place"', The Annals of Japan Association for Urban Sociology, 28, pp. 167-181.

PFEIFER, E., Fiedlera, H. and Wittmann, M. (2020) 'Increased relaxation and present orientation after a period of silence in a natural surrounding', Nordic Journal of Music Therapy, 29(1), pp. 75-92.

TURKLE, S. (2011) Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other. New York: Basic Books.

TURKLE, S. (2015) Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age. New York: Penguin Press.

The 'Vijaya Dashami' ritual in Nepal

Short Essays

Alana Pradhan

ABSTRACT

This article is based on a short ethnography conducted on the 10th day of the Hindu festival 'Vijaya Dashami' in Nepal. Although, symbolism is important, I use a phenomenological approach to demonstrate that this ritual shows reverence not just to religion but social order and kinship. In doing so, I discover that it is 'disorder' or the unconventional aspects of the ritual, that make the ritual a social order. I hope this article encourages a move away from bounded definitions of rituals and ritual 'order', towards fluid understandings of ritual as 'self-organised' and entangled with society and culture, whilst adding to anthropological debates around theory and practice.

keywords: ritual, social order, kinship, phenomenological approach, practice theory

Worship rites, graduation and marriage– is that what you think of when you think of rituals? Recently, anthropology has highlighted the importance of recognising rituals in the everyday. Rituals can be as 'ordinary' and 'informal' as pouring a cup of coffee every morning, despite being attached to complex and contextual meanings. However, even worship rituals, which are ostensibly about 'formality' in the sense that they are repeatable, predictable and standardised, do indeed change in some respect in order to absorb new forms usually classed as 'informal'.   On the 10th day of the Hindu festival 'Vijaya Dashami' on the 15th of October, I participated in a ritual on zoom with my family in Nepal – a familiar ritual nonetheless made unfamiliar through zoom. The picture below shows the materials used in the practice: tikka (a mixture of rice, yoghurt, and red powder), jamara (a household-grown plant), and money and fruit, which I will refer to as 'gifts' for simplicity. Symbolism is explicit here—the gifts symbolise purity, good luck and good virtue, all

Figure 1: Materials used in the practice: tikka (a mixture of rice, yoghurt, and red powder), jamara (a household-grown plant), money and fruit. Own work.

omens of Durga. Elders give these gifts and blessings to youngers repeatedly until the second-youngest member has blessed the youngest. The meaning behind the ritual is religious: a celebration of the Hindu goddess Durga killing a demon, a symbol of victory over sin and deceit (Thapa, 2021). However, the unconventional aspects of the ritual interested me: the disruption to the structure of the proceedings due to Zoom, other informalities and spatial disruption challenged the ritual form. Thus, to understand these unconventional aspects, I focused on a less explicitly talked about, phenomenological approach of bodily gestures, discourse, and uncovered social meanings. I focus on Bell's 'practice theory' to show how ritual reflects and reinforces social order, and Handelman's 'ritual in its own right' to see how ritual creates and strengthens kinship ties. Although I carried out some research, much of my knowledge comes from years of practice. While usually an

insider, Zoom gave me a different perspective of both an insider and an outsider. It is important to note however that due to the spatial disruption, I was limited in my experience in that I was unable to experience all senses.

The ritual

I joined a link to the Zoom session my sister, Cassy, sent through email at 10:10 am. I saw beaming faces—my grandparents, parents, sisters, aunts and cousins, all trying to fit into one screen. 'Can you see us?' my grandfather shouted. 'Yes,' I replied, excited to see everyone in one room again. They were all dressed in formal attire, men in traditional suits, women in glittery traditional dresses, and children in their newest clothes. The living room looked cleaner than it did when I saw it last. A plastic sheet and a plate of tikka, jamara, and a bunch of fruits in the middle separated four cushions on the floor. The ritual began with my grandparents. They

sat on the cushions and beckoned my dad (the eldest child) and my mum to come to sit on the other side of the plastic sheet. Both my grandparents put tikka on my dad's forehead. They then handed over jamara, fruit and money, which my dad received with two hands. My dad bowed down whilst my grandparents placed their hands on his head and blessed him with their mantras.

'swastha hos, bigyan hos, dhani hos, gyani hos'

they said, which more-or-less translates to:

'I hope you become healthy, smart, wealthy and good'

The same thing occurred with my mum. My dad waited for my mum to receive her blessing, and then they both moved out of the way. The next oldest individual, who was my aunt, replaced them. Next in line was my other aunt, Sandra, who had not yet arrived at the house. There was no acknowledgement of this, and the ritual just moved on. The entire ritual, although repetitive, and seemingly monotonous, was quite informal. Those not on the giving or receiving end of the blessings were chatting away about updates on their personal lives. When it was finally my turn, my grandparents unexpectedly acknowledged this even though I was not physically present. They faced me and used similar bodily gestures of putting tikka on and said the same mantra. I bowed in front of the laptop to accept their blessing even though the tikka ended up back on the plate instead of my forehead. My aunt Sandra arrived a few moments after, and she enacted the same

practices even though it was not her turn. The ritual finally ended with the second-youngest member blessing the youngest. After the ritual, I asked a few questions.

Social Order

Bell says ritual can reflect or reproduce social order through practice (1992:64). Thus, practice is strategic. More specifically to my ethnography, ritual stresses the hierarchy of family based on age. Age structures the ritual where the elders give blessings to the youngers.

Especially around the 10th day, the discourse of the festival is around money. Indeed, a common phrase addressed to youngers is 'you're going to be rich today'. Whilst my grandmother gets the other 'gifts' ready, each participant has to get money (usually fresh notes from the bank) ready to hand to their youngers. Youngers are taught to accept this money with respect, and keep the money safe. A focus on money makes it seem like this ritual aims to teach the young the value of money and earning to attain a higher status (Weber, 2008). However, rituals cannot be reduced to modes of components they include (Rappaport, 1999). Instead, I argue that through the repetition of accepting not just money, but all the gifts combined: the tikka on their foreheads which signifies good virtue, and the bodily gesture of bowing, the young are learning how to respect their elders. Through these bodily senses, even children embody and concretize social norms of respecting elders without adults explicitly teaching them (Clark, 2017: 30).

While Rappaport argues all rituals are formal in that they are more structured than in everyday life, Bell argues that formality is not intrinsic to a ritual (1992).

Figure 2: My cousin bowing down to receive blessings from my grandparents. Own work.

While informally chatting when not on the giving or receiving end of the ritual, even children know that when it is their turn; they quietly and formally carry out the bodily gestures and exchanges they have repeatedly practised before. I argue this very binary of formality is strategic because it emphasises the importance of giving and receiving and, thus, the importance of respecting elders. Altogether, no one actively thinks about these bodily gestures. Bell says, while 'ritual is embedded in misrecognition of what it is doing,' strategies of ritual action construct the social body (Bell, 1992:76). Therefore, the body even unknowingly, reflects and reinforces the hierarchy of the family and, thus, social norms of honouring elders.

Kinship ties

Looking at 'ritual in its own right', I noticed ritual invokes feelings of 'connectedness' that creates and strengthens kinship ties. Handelman describes looking at ritual 'in its own right' by separating it from the social order and analysing it. He concludes that rituals do not simply reflect social structure but have self-organisation and thus, autonomy (Handelman, 2005). My dad and aunts, although with families and homes of their own, all come together on this day to the home they grew up in. Every family member receives and gives gifts and blessings. They enact the same bodily gestures and have the same tikka on their foreheads. This is an embodiment of family unity that produces feelings of 'connectednesses'. Even though Zoom caused a spatial disruption, it still created feelings of 'connectedness', what Handelman (2005) labels 'communitas,' as portrayed in my aunt's statement: 'it feels nice to see everyone. I feel connected like one family again.' Therefore, the body is not just a passive slate receiving societal knowledge but produces feelings of 'connectedness', which strengthens kinship ties. Although everyone now has separate households, families, and obligations, they experience

a unified sense of connectedness unique to this ritual itself. This ritual and the feelings of 'connectedness' and familial unity that come with, created a temporary reality autonomous from wider societal structures and obligations (Handelman, 2005). Thus, perhaps the ritual has self-organised itself to be less about generational expectation and more about kinship, which in itself is a kind of 'social order', in Bell's terms. This explains why no one disputed, let alone acknowledged Sandra arriving late and disrupting the ritual order. 'It doesn't matter as long as she's here' my grandfather says, implying my aunt's presence, thus kinship was more important.

Rappaport emphasises how rituals are irreplaceable (1992). Although family members visit my grandparent's house from time to time, at no other time do members embody this unified 'connectedness' in the same manner. However, my presence on zoom contested this idea of irreplaceability. Whilst not present, the bodily gestures of me bowing and the blessings I received with it allowed me to participate and feel 'connected' like last year. My family members informally chatting to me about personal lives during the ritual only strengthened this feeling of 'connectedness' and hence our kinship ties. Handelman states 'self-organising phenomenal forms have variable capacities to build additional aspects of themselves' (2005:13). This implies that rituals themselves have consciousness and agency and create a separate reality. Thus, although separated through screens within the realities of the pandemic, this ritual self-organised itself to create a new virtual aspect that allowed me to embody feelings of 'connectedness' and restore kinship ties. Whilst the ritual is not replaceable, it is changeable

in that it absorbs new formats and expectations. Perhaps, then, the malleable nature of the ritual itself allowed me to more accurately respect what Handelman would refer to as its 'core DNA,' premised on generating cohesion and blessing within family units.

Conclusion

Although symbolism is important, a phenomenological approach, demonstrated in this ritual, shows reverence not only to religion but also to social order and kinship.

Bell states that ritual reflects and reinforces social order. I show how the exchange of gifts, blessings and bodily gestures reflects and reinforces hierarchies of the family based on age. Further, Handelman encourages looking at ritual 'in its own right'. I show how ritual can be autonomous whereby unified feelings of 'connectedness' strengthen kinship ties.

Thus, the unconventional aspects of the ritual I noticed did not disrupt the ritual or limit its efficacy as it continued to establish social order and strengthen kinship ties. It is important not to essentialise or see rituals, even traditional ones, as bound to convention. Ritual is embedded in society and culture with ever-changing elements.

References cited

BELL, C (1992). Part II - The Sense of Ritual. In Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice. Oxford University Press.
CLARK, C.D.(2017) Enculturation Incarnate: Ritual Sensoria in U.S. Patriotic Holidays. Ethos. 45 (1): 24–47
HANDELMAN, D., and Lindquist, G.

(Eds.). (2005) Ritual in its Own Right: Exploring the Dynamics of Transformation (1st ed.). Berghahn Books.

RAPPAPORT, R. (1999) The Ritual Form (Ch 2). In Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity. Cambridge University Press. Pp. 23-68.

THAPA, B.(2021) Dashain Festival 2021 Update: Why Celebrate Dashain Festival?. [online] Nepal Hiking Team. Available at: [Accessed 8 October 2021].

WEBER, M. (2008) 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' (Ch3). In A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Ethnographic drawings and poetry : the Vultures, the Cows and the People

Photo-Essays

Tash Burnell

ABSTRACT

This graphic ethnography consists of ethnographic drawings and prose based on Thom van Dooren's article, 'Vultures and their People in India: Equity and Entanglement in a Time of Extinction' (2011).
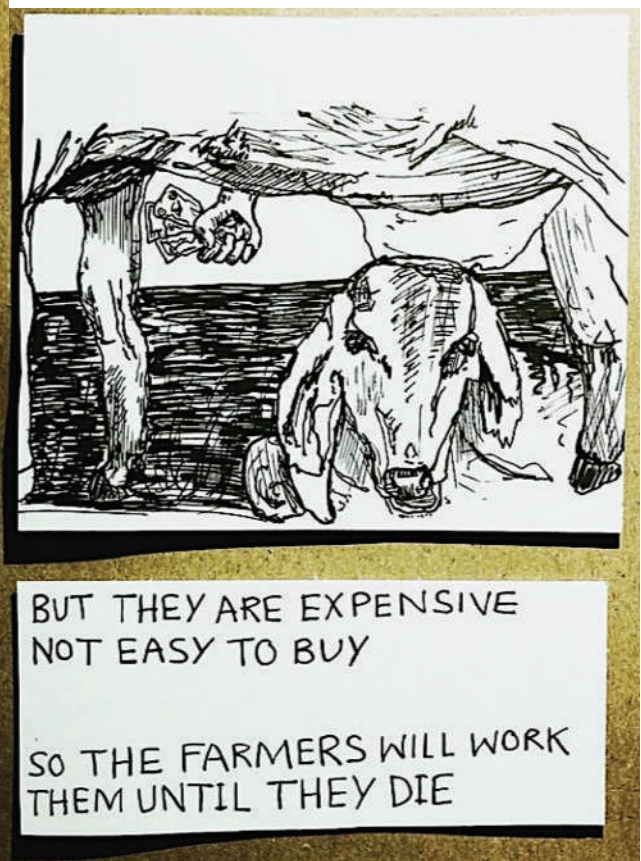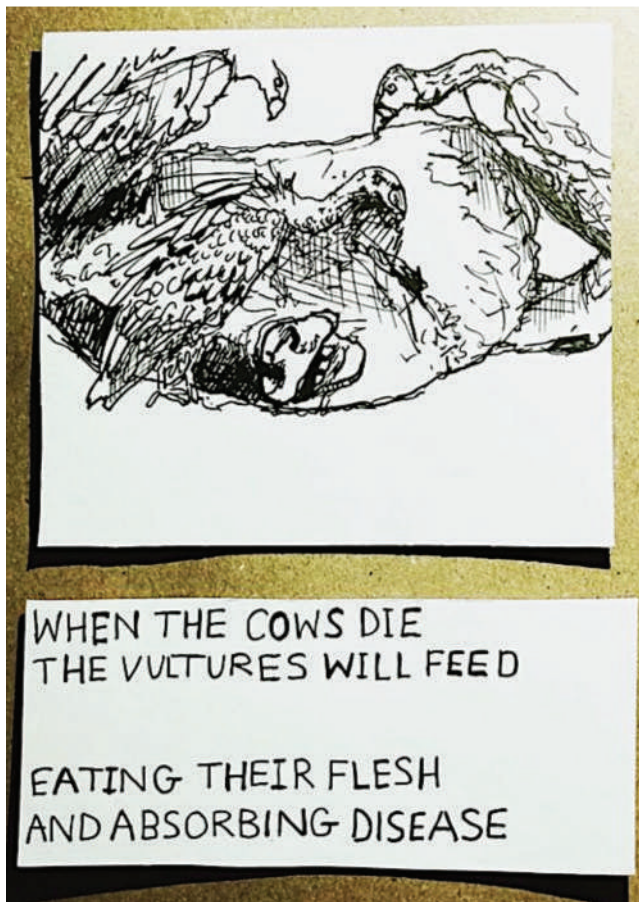It is an experimentation, translating anthropological literature into a condensed visual text in the hope of making ethnography accessible and engaging to a broader audience.

keywords: vultures, death, entanglement, visual ethnography

THE VULTURES
THE COWS
AND
THE PEOPLE
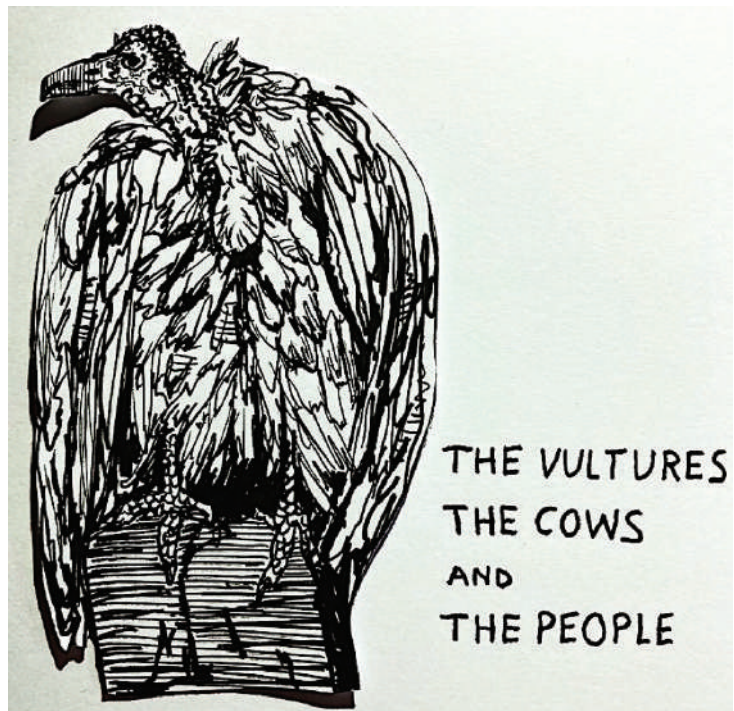
WHEN THE COWS DIE
THE VULTURES WILL FEED

EATING THEIR FLESH
AND ABSORBING DISEASE

BUT THEY ARE EXPENSIVE
NOT EASY TO BUY

SO THE FARMERS WILL WORK
THEM UNTIL THEY DIE

Own work.

re:think
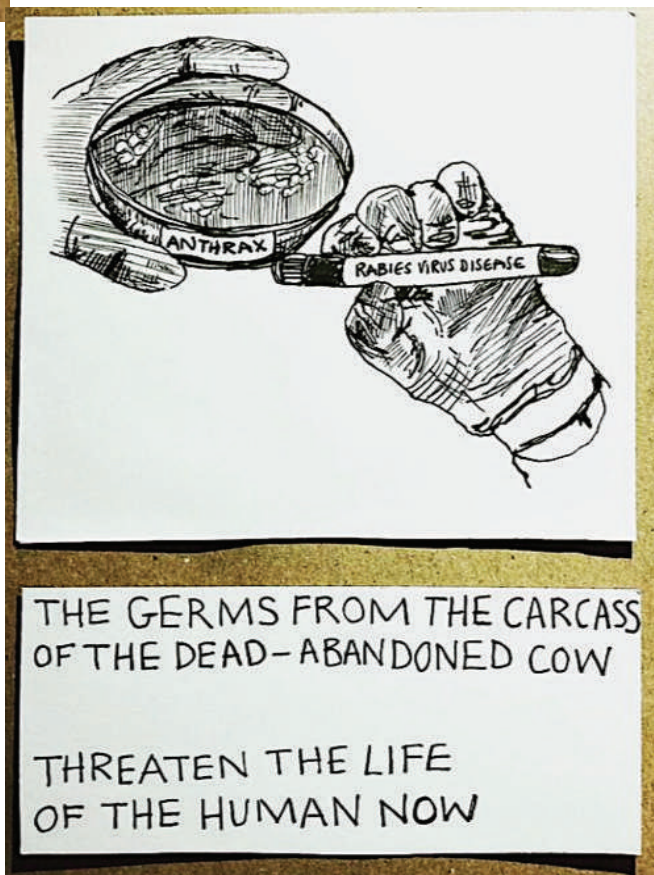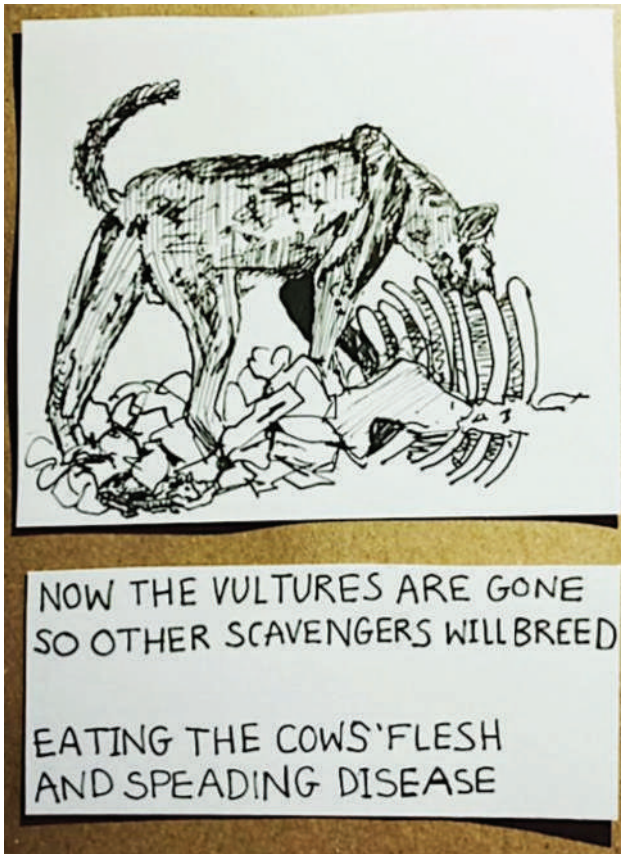

SO WHEN THE COWS GROW OLD
AND THEIR JOINTS START TO SWELL

THE FARMERS GIVE THEM A DRUG
TO TRY TO KEEP THEM WELL

BUT DICLOFENAC
IS A POWERFUL DRUG

WHICH KILLS OFF THE VULTURES
WITH A BAD STOMACH BUG

NOW THE VULTURES ARE GONE
SO OTHER SCAVENGERS WILL BREED

EATING THE COWS' FLESH
AND SPEADING DISEASE

THE GERMS FROM THE CARCASS
OF THE DEAD-ABANDONED COW

THREATEN THE LIFE
OF THE HUMAN NOW

References cited

VAN DOOREN, T. (2010) 'Vultures and Their People in India: Equity and Entanglement in a Time of Extinctions', Manoa, 22(2), pp.130-145. Available at: DOI:10.22459/AHR.50.2011.03.

A Trip to Time-Space Through Street Art : A Message On-Hold

Photo-Essays

ABSTRACT

The following photo-essay consists of photos taken in different places and times, conveying messages written in different languages and for different purposes. I invite readers to select some or all these pictures and re-order them to create a three-phrase story with a message they want to share with the world. Story-plot ideas can be shared with the #rethinkstreetart.

keywords: street art, urban messages, story making, inspiration

Lamprini Chartofylaka

Street art, including graffiti, tags, stencils, art visualization and art installations, usually denounce an actual situation and convey messages related to the societal, cultural, economic, and political scene. It can be designed in a way to invite individuals to interact with their environment, consciously or unconsciously. It can work as a fictive discussion between society members who have never met before (Macdonald, 2001), in this case referring to the creator and the interpreter of the message conveyed.

In some cases, messages on the wall are designed beforehand to criticize a specific purpose (Baratashvili, 2013, pp.2-6). In other cases, as some of those described in Wagner Tsoni and Franck (2019) regarding refugees crossing borders, messages were created spontaneously, "(…) inscribed by any available means on any accessible surface (…)" (p.10) and were used as narrative media, recording present and past experiences.

'Departure'

'Make your move, cross the line'

'Hello world. We are still
alive this morning.
Aleppo children'

'No matter how many people you
have next you, you will always miss
the people who are inside you'

'Do you still believe
what's on TV?'

'So far, so good'

'Exit'

Story-plot ideas can be shared with the
#rethinkstreetart. Own work.

88

References cited

BARATASHVILI, T. (2013). The Message of Street Art - Street Art as Commodity and Communications Tool. Faculty of Communication, Gazi University.

MACDONALD, N. (2001). The graffiti subculture: youth, masculinity, and identity in London and New York. Palgrave.

WAGNER TSONI, I., & Franck, A. K. (2019). Writings on the Wall: Textual Traces of Transit in the Aegean Borderscape. Borders in Globalization Review, 1(1), pp.7–21. https://doi.org/10.18357/-bigr11201919243