



grafica: infinita | foto: M5 - Giovanni Marini, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0 - elaborazione grafica by Pamela Strati



UNIVERSITÀ
DI TRENTO
Dipartimento di
Sociologia e Ricerca Sociale



Ethnography and Qualitative Research International Conference - 10th edition

Trento, 9 - 12 July, 2025

E statev'attente
e voi d'la poblazione
impareteve a legge a scrive pe'
defendeve da li padrone

Lu m'nestre Colombe

E statevi attenti
voi, popolazione
imparate a leggere e scrivere per
difendervi dal padrone

Il ministro Colombo

*Take heed,
all you people,
learn to read and write to
defend yourselves from the bosses*

Minister Colombo

In "I treni per Reggio Calabria" (1976), Giovanna Marini, su testo di / based on text by Giuseppe Miriello

ABSTRACT BOOK

TABLE OF CONTENT

PRE-CONFERENCE DOCTORAL WORKSHOP	4
PLENARY SESSIONS.....	5
Poulami Roychowdhury, Taking democracy for granted.....	5
Les Back, A view from nearby: Ethnography as sociable people writing.....	5
PARALLEL SESSIONS	6
1. Ethnographies of the contemporary far-right.....	6
2. Migration and the transition to adulthood	13
3. Domestic ethnography in marginalised and shared dwelling spaces: relationships, dilemmas, and the micro-macro link.....	20
4. Civil society and care practices.....	27
5. Lines, traces, streets. Writing urban ethnography	45
6. Despicable public personas: dynamics of infamy in digital culture.....	56
7. «Work is not just work»: Ethnographies on migrant workers' health in Europe	68
8. Labour and exploitation in the contemporary waste industry	72
9. Distant neighbours: Urban ethnography through temporary practices and digital connections	78
10. Labour market insertion of young migrants	89
11. Imagining future worlds: New ethnographic perspectives on creative approaches to climate change	93
13. Creative/inventive methods in contemporary ethnographic inquiry	101
15. Environmental labour ethnographies of workplaces and working-class communities	115
16. Theorising ethnography across disciplines and methodological approaches.....	126
17. Comparative ethnographies of borderlands: Everyday practices of bordering and resistance across securitised geographies	1495
18. Aesthetics and imaginaries of eco-activist movements.....	169
19. Rethinking the role of ethnography in more-than-human participatory research and design.....	177
20. Collectivities rule their own lands: Ethnography and interdisciplinary approaches for territories of life ...	190
21. Examining the controversial social space of female genitals.....	206
22. Observing digital practices: The role of artificial intelligence in cultural processes	213
23. The everyday lives of platform workers: Migration, precarity and resistance.....	220
24. Institutional ethnography: Researching for social change	225
25. Surveillance imaginaries and practices.....	232
26. Labour exploitation: Beyond existing development paradigms.....	239
27. New ethnographic perspectives on racialization processes	245
28. Transnational religious education in Europe: Between integration and differentiation	250
29. Ethnographies of expert capitalism	255
30. Ethnographies of death and grief.....	260
31. Watching the watchers: Policing and ethnography of the coercive state	272
32. Tasting and judging “natural” wines and artisanal agri-food products	277
33. Ethnographies of expert knowledges in mental health, neurodivergence, and disability	283
34. Ethnography of violence in intimate relationships	318
35. Ethnographies of migrant detention, new forms of confinement and the securitarian turn in migration policies	326
36. Ethnographies of translocality and transnationalism.....	338

PRE-CONFERENCE DOCTORAL WORKSHOP

Mapping, representing, and visualising ethnographic data

9 July, 2:30 to 6:30 p.m. + 10 July, 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Sociology Building, Room 9

In collaboration with:

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Doctoral Network "Reworlding"

The Social Pattern Recognition Laboratory (SPaRe Lab) of the Department of Sociology and Social Research, University of Trento

Participants:

Anya Ovcharenko, University of Exeter

Nikolaos-Ioannis Kanavaris, Hasselt University

Federico Bigaran, ICCA Consortium, Trento

Giulio Bertoluzza, University of Bergamo

Luca Ramello, University of Turin

Antje Jacobs, KU Leuven & University of Melbourne

Júlia Tena Mensa, University of Trento

Somita Sabeti, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Giulia Actis Alesina, University of Turin

Giorgia Dal Fabbro, University of Oxford

Annette Thompson, Brighton University

Roberto D'Alba, University of Padua and Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Phevos Simeonidis, Durham University

Luca Di Clemente, University of Milan

Miria Gambardella, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Alicia Chiodi, University of Trento

Ana Carvalho, University of Limerick

Misbah Rani, Strathclyde University

Corey Johnson, University of Cape Town

Xinquan Wen, Malmö University

Alžběta Kovandová-Bartoníčková, University of Kent

Ghita Bordieri, University of Milano-Bicocca

Rachel Ellis, University of Granada

Andy Peruccon, Malmö University

Hamed Yaghmaeian, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia

PLENARY SESSIONS

Poulami Roychowdhury

Taking democracy for granted: Methodological blind-spots and the reframing of women's empowerment

10 July, 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.

Humanities Building, Auditorium

How do authoritarian democracies manage women's empowerment? This talk thinks through this pressing question by focusing on India. Officially the world's largest electoral democracy and a place where women vote in large numbers, India has experienced rising authoritarianism since 2014. During this period, both the central government and various state governments have attacked women's rights against domestic violence while introducing new legal and extra-legal measures intended to "protect" women's "dignity" in public spaces. Tracing policy makers' shifting priorities and interventions, Roychowdhury argues that women's empowerment is currently being redefined in India in line with Hindu majoritarian agendas.

Through the Indian case, this talk theorizes how and why authoritarian democrats continue to care about the issue of women's empowerment and how they reframe empowerment to suit their needs. By tracing the recent arc of this reframing, the talk also highlights how a researcher's blindspots – in this case, taking democracy for granted – can lead to an under theorization of crucial background conditions that enable contentious politics and social advances for marginalized groups.

Les Back

A view from nearby: Ethnography as sociable people writing

11 July, 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.

Humanities Building, Auditorium

Why is anthropology valuable in today's world? Claude Lévi-Strauss captured his own answer to this question in his third volume of *Structural Anthropology* entitled *The View from Afar*¹. The value of anthropology is to undermine the parochialism of Western thinking and to emphasise the cultural diversity to be found within the hinterlands of the human condition. The task of ethnography – derived from the greek *ethnos* meaning "race, folk, people, nation" and *grapho* "I write" – was to document and compare the portraits of these different human cultures and cosmologies. However, as Lévi-Strauss noted, an ambiguity remained at the heart of this version of anthropology's vocation between a desire to record the variety of humankind and the sense that there are also shared resemblances and structures.

I want to use Lévi-Strauss's reflection as a starting point for re-thinking the value of ethnography in our time and the narrow-minded political culture that has taken hold in large parts of the world. As Zygmunt Bauman commented, our politics is populated by strongmen and women like Donald Trump to Marine La Pen whose answer to a world of divided connectedness is to build walls and retreat behind them. Rather than searching for far-off differences to compare, I want to argue that ethnography – as the art of listening, learning and telling and showing – is well-placed to make sense of how cultures combine, move and are situated in contexts while remaining linked across place and time. The nearby always contains the view from afar but not in quite the same way that Lévi-Strauss meant it. I want to make this argument for sociable people writing by reflecting on my own experiments with doing ethnographies of racism and multiculturalism in London differently and sociably while also reflecting on the promise of co-produced knowledge and its limits.

¹Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The View from Afar*, London: Penguin Books, 1985.

PARALLEL SESSIONS

1. Ethnographies of the contemporary far-right

Convenors: Elisa Bellè (CEE Sciences Po) & Safia Dahani (LaSSP/Sciences Po Toulouse)

Between Respectabilization and Subversion, the Radical Extreme-Right in the Anti-contagion Measures Mobilization. The Case of the Parisian Mobilization (2020-2021)

Godefroy Elisabeth, Centre Émile Durkheim, Sciences Po Bordeaux

elisabeth.godefroy@scpobx.fr

In Europe and the United States, the COVID-19 pandemic triggered mobilizations against public health measures. These mobilizations share common characteristics: weak organizational structure, localized dynamics, the spread of conspiracy theories regarding the pandemic, and social and political heterogeneity (Gerbaudo, 2020; della Porta, Lavizzaria, 2022). The prominence of far-right parties and groups within these movements has been the subject of several studies. In Italy, these elements became particularly active during a second wave of mobilization, targeting vaccines and health passes, rather than solely addressing the social and economic consequences of lockdown measures (della Porta, Lavizzaria, 2022). In France, the Yellow Vests, initially active between 2018 and 2019, constituted a central structure of abeyance (Taylor, 1989) for the mobilization against public health measures starting in 2020 (Della Sudda, Godefroy, Lucas, 2022). This observation relativizes the role of groups such as *Les Patriotes* in the movement's emergence (Bendali, Dafflon, Fillieule, 2024). However, while the mobilization cannot be reduced to a far-right extremist group, the participation of the far right has not been sufficiently highlighted.

This presentation proposes a dynamic and relational analysis (Caiani, della Porta, Wagemann, 2012) of the coexistence, competition, and conflict between the various actors involved in the mobilization (political parties, Yellow Vests, anti-pass/vax grassroots groups, etc.) in Paris. Specifically, it examines the diverse forms of participation by radical extreme-right activists (Casajus, 2023) and their relationships with other components of the movement. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to the understanding of far-right politics in the context of the pandemic (Castelli Gattinara, Pirro, 2018; Pirro, Castelli Gattinara, Froio, 2024).

In Paris, heterogeneity is evident in the divisions between distinct demonstrations. On one side, the political party *Les Patriotes* organizes protests, where the presence of extremist groups such as *Les Zouaves* or *Civitas* has been noted. On the other side, Yellow Vests organize their own marches but are divided among themselves. Some Yellow Vests, whose ideological affinities generally lean closer to the left, organize the "Yellow Vests and Angry Citizens" march, with demands focusing on the economic and social repercussions of public health measures. Other Yellow Vests, who split from the former group and derisively label them as "empty fridges," articulate demands against the "health dictatorship" and the "corruption of the media," while advocating for "Fréxit," reflecting the influence of the UPR (Union Populaire Républicaine).

Radical extreme-right activists who join the Yellow Vests do so with a subversive agenda (clashes with law enforcement, purported alliances with the "far left"). They promote a discourse of "dedemonization" toward the Yellow Vests. Meanwhile, activists participating in marches organized by F. Philippot are drawn to their "respectable" nature, in contrast to the Yellow Vests, from which most were expelled in 2019 (Godefroy, 2024). They also aspire to radicalize the movement's rhetoric, for instance, by promoting an anti-Semitic interpretation of the pandemic – a stance that organizers attempt to distance themselves from.

This presentation is based on data collected as part of doctoral research on the Yellow Vests movement between 2018 and 2022 in Paris. Specifically, observations were conducted in 2020-2021 during various anti-pass demonstrations (Yellow Vests, *Les Patriotes*). Semi-structured interviews (n=30) were also conducted with various organizers, activists, or Yellow Vests with affinities for the radical extreme-right, lasting between one and five hours. The qualitative research protocol implemented to study this "ugly movement" facilitates an emic approach, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the internal diversity of the anti-contagion measures mobilization (Avanza, 2018).

References

- Avanza, Martina
2018 « Plea for an Emic Approach Towards “Ugly movements”: Lessons from the Divisions within the Italian Pro-Life Movement”, *Politics and Governance*, 6, 4, pp. 112-125.
- Bendali, Zakaria, Dafflon, Alexandre, Fillieule, Olivier
2024 « Understanding the protest movements against the COVID-19 public policy in France as a moral panic” in Tartari, Morena, Scarcelli, Cosimo Marco, Rinaldi, Cirio (Ed.), *Folk Devils and Moral Panics in the COVID-19 Pandemic*, London, Routledge, pp. 48-62.
- Caiani, Manuela, della Porta, Donatella, Wagemann, Claudius,
2012 *Mobilizing on the Extreme Right. Germany, Italy and the United States*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Casajus, Emmanuel
2023 *Style et violence dans l'extrême droite radicale*, Paris, Cerf.
- Castelli Gattinara, Pietro, Pirro, Andrea L. P.
2018 “The far right as social movement”, *European Societies*, 21, 4., pp. 447-462.
- Della Porta, Donatella, Lavizzari, Anna
2022 « Waves in Cycle : The protests against anti-contagion measures and vaccination in Covid-19 times in Italy”, *Partecipazione e conflitto*, 15, 3, pp. 720-740.
- Della Sudda, Magali, Godefroy, Elisabeth, Lucas, Clara
2022 « From the Yellow Vest to Anti-Green Pass Protest : continuity, abeyance and spin-off movement in pandemic time”, Roma, *Società italiana di scienza politica*.
- Gerbaudo, Paolo
2020 “The Pandemic Crowd”, *Journal of International Affairs*, 73, 2, p. 61-76.
- Godefroy, Elisabeth
2024 “De l'espoir d'une révolution nationale à l'impasse des manifestations. La participation minoritaire de l'extrême droite radicale à la mobilisation parisienne des Gilets jaunes », in Ravelli, Quentin, Siméant-Germanos, Johanna, Bonin, Loïc, Liochon, Pauline, *Les Gilets jaunes. Une révolte inclassable*, Paris, Éditions Rue d'Ulm, p. 105-114.
- Pirro, Andrea L. P., Castelli Gattinara, Pietro, Froio, Caterina
2024 “Far-right contentious politics in times of crisis : between adaptation and transformation”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 61, 4, pp. 1019-1041.
- Taylor, Verta
1989 “Social Movement Continuity : The Women's Movement in Abeyance”, *American Sociological Review*, 54, 5, pp. 761-775.

Mainstreaming the Anti-Gender Crusade. Notes from Pro Vita & Famiglia Onlus in Italy

Silvia Biasetton, University of Padua

silvia.biasetton@phd.unipd.it

Over the last decade, populist far-right parties across Europe have pursued reactionary and traditionalist political agenda, questioning gender and sexual equality, reproductive and LGBTQI+ rights (Lavizzari, 2024). At the same time, the political weight of anti-gender movements has grown, and their narrative has served as a 'symbolic glue' (Kováts and Pöim, 2015) between catholic activists and far-right parties and movements (Donà 2015; Lavizzari and Prearo, 2019; Prearo, 2019; Reinhardt, 2023). Central to the anti-gender agenda is indeed a strong “opposition to gay and lesbian rights, reproductive rights, gender deconstructivism, and sex and gender education in schools” (Reinhardt et al., 2023, p. 1274) and the framing of a political project that preserves the relationship between family and nation. However, it is important to do not flatten the anti-gender mobilizations neither on the Catholic Church – their creator – nor on far-right parties – their instrumental allies – as it is a creature that lives its “own and multiple lives” (Paternotte, 2023, p. 31).

Scholars of the field have focused on the 'mainstreaming' (Mudde, 2024) or 'normalization' (Krzyżanowski, 2020) of the far-right, especially with regard to migration and integration issues (Ekman, 2022) or investigated the going mainstream of the anti-gender cause from the far-right actors' point of view (Volk, 2023). Less attention has been paid on how anti-gender did narrative happened to become mainstream. How did a narrative based on homophobic and transphobic ideas became usable by institutional politics? Did it change over time to be more compelling to a wider audience? And how is this narrative conveyed? These broad questions are few of the issues that guide this contribution which seeks to investigate the communicative repertoires of the anti-gender movements in Italy, focusing on Pro Vita & Famiglia Onlus (PV&F) as case study.

PV&F is the leading anti-gender association in Italy at the moment, its spokespersons are participating in public debates on national television, it is promoting campaigns against 'alias careers' (the possibility for each student

to have their gender identity recognized by their school or university institution), campaigns against abortion, against queer and gender studies courses in universities along with many others. PV&F is the result of the union of two associations, Pro Vita (PV) born in 2012 and La Manif Pour Tous Italia born in 2013 and transformed into Generazione Famiglia (GF) in 2015, after the World Congress of Families hosted in Verona in 2019. Taking into account the structure of the association over time, this contribution will focus on two time frames: first, it will provide an overview of how the anti-gender discourse changed over time by analyzing written documents, pamphlets, booklets, produced by PV, GF and PV&F; then focus on the present, in particular on how PV&F disseminates its anti-gender narrative during public events, through fieldnotes collected during PV&F's public events (book launches, seminars, conferences, and others) between June 2024 and today. The aim of this contribution is to provide an in-depth analysis of anti-gender mobilizations in Italy, understanding how its ideological core has changed, highlighting the contact points with the discourses of the Italian far-right. At the same time, this contribution attempts to provide an overview of the overlapping fields between the far-right and anti-gender organizations, reconstructing the relationships among these actors in the hybrid spaces of public events. The restitution of this research will also take into account the difficulties encountered in entering and being in the field, starting from self-reflective notes collected during the field as a transfeminist activist and as a young researcher in the field of gender and sexuality studies.

References

- Donà, Alessia
2020 «What's gender got to do with populism?», in *European Journal of Womens's Studies*, 27, 3, pp. 285–292.
- Ekman, Mattias
2022 «The great replacement: Strategic mainstreaming of far-right conspiracy claims», in *Convergence*, 28, 4, pp. 1127–1143.
- Kováts, Eszter, Poim Maari (Ed.)
2015 *Gender as symbolic glue: The position and role of conservative and far right parties in the anti-gender mobilization in Europe*, Foundation for European Progressive Studies.
- Krzyżanowski, Michał
2020 «Normalization and the discursive construction of “new” norms and “new” normality: discourse in the paradoxes of populism and neoliberalism», in *Social Semiotics*, 30, 4, pp. 431–448.
- Lavizzari, Anna
2014 «The anti-gender movement and the populist radical right in Italy: A symbiotic relationship», in *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 1, pp. 1–27.
- Lavizzari, Anna, Prearo Massimo
2019 «The anti-gender movement in Italy: Catholic participation between electoral and protest politics», in *European Societies*, 21, 3, pp. 422–442.
- Mudde, Cas
2024 «From the Margins to the Mainstream: A Personal Reflection of Three Decades of Studying and Teaching Far-Right Politics», in *Journal of right-wing studies*, 2, 1, pp. 139–151.
- Paternotte, David
2023 «Victor Frankenstein and his creature: The many lives of 'gender ideology'», in *International Review of Sociology*, 33, 1, pp. 80–104.
- Prearo, Massimo
2019 «Family Day, movimenti e mobilitazioni anti-gender: un progetto politico neocattolico», in *Genesis: Rivista della Società Italiana delle Storiche*, 18, 1, pp. 21–43.
- Reinhardt, Susanne
2023 «Discourse coalitions against gender and sexual equality: antifeminism as a common denominator between the radical right and the mainstream?», in *Feminist Media Studies*, 23, 6, pp. 2831–2848.
- Reinhardt, Susanne, Annett Heft, Elena Pavan
2024 «Varieties of antigenderism: the politicization of gender issues across three European populist radical right parties», in *Information, Communication & Society*, 27, 7, pp. 1273–1294.
- Volk, Sabine
2023 «Rallying 'round the Drag: Anti-gender Mobilization and the Mainstreaming of the Far Right», in *European Societies*, pp. 1–20.

The gendered mainstreaming of populist radical right politics in France. Embracing the neoliberal gender regime

Francesca Scrinzi, University of Glasgow, UK

francesca.scrinzi@glasgow.ac.uk

A growing literature points to the complex relationship existing between PRR (populist radical right) politics and gender, and highlights the role played by gender issues in the mainstreaming of nativist and populist ideas. These parties have been traditionally seen as male-dominated 'men's parties', voted by a majority of male voters and espousing gender-conservative views. Yet, while PRR ideologies remain masculinist and heteronormative, in Western Europe the PRR attempts to 'normalize' its public image, succeeding in attracting growing numbers of women voters (Mayer 2022). Reflecting changing models of femininity/masculinity and expectations around gender, the PRR elaborates more pragmatic positions on the family and mobilizes issues of gender equality to target the racialized Others, depicting migrant men as misogynist and violent (Meret and Siim 2013).

Based on a two-year qualitative (biographical interviews with party members and representatives, observations, and Critical Frame Analysis applied to party documents) study, this paper analyses PRR gender ideology in the *Rassemblement national* (RN, France), showing how it has evolved over time, including in correspondence with leadership changes. In France as in other contexts, the mainstreaming of PRR ideas was crucially sustained by racialized views of gender underpinning the discourse of various political actors beyond the RN, including the conservative right. The paper then conceptualizes such developments in PRR gender ideology by locating them in the broader context of neoliberal globalization.

Over the 2000s, in the RN ideology, the issue of (racialized) violence against women has acquired growing visibility at the expense of the traditional family issue, which was previously more prominent. Similarly, the issues around which the PRR attempts to mobilize women activists has evolved over time too, as women's party subgroups/campaigns have moved from defending the heterosexual family to focusing on (racialized) violence against women. Women's substantive representation in the party has thus increased, with a particular link to the 'racialization of sexism' (Scrinzi 2024). The RN has increasingly framed gender through the notion of individual women's rights and more specifically of 'freedoms' or 'liberties' of women – ambiguously claiming to champion women's freedom to choose motherhood over waged work, or to choose not to have an abortion, but most importantly claiming to champion their freedom from the threat of violence, supposedly perpetrated by migrant/racialized men. While the hypersexualization of racialized men as a threat to native/white women has a long history, this contemporary racialization of gender-based violence combines traditional definitions of femininity with liberal and individualized definitions of gender equality. PRR discourses on racialized violence against women depoliticize the gender conflict with native men through its 'externalization' outside the national community. Violence against women is de-gendered, as its connection with gender collective identities and inequalities is obscured.

Drawing on Walby's (2009) social complexity theory, the paper locates such changing PRR framing within the broad gendered and racialized social transformations associated with neoliberal globalization. These combine a crisis of social reproduction with the expansion and intensification of women's work, rather than a re-familialization of women. In addition, neoliberal globalization involves major changes in the domain of violence, marked by the securitization of institutional responses to violence.

PRR gendered and increasingly normalized ideologies have evolved to match these transformations. While it maintains that women are the main care providers, the RN has accommodated the neoliberal requirement of women's full employment, and, in line with the authoritarian features of neoliberalism, frames gender-based violence in a securitarian fashion. PRR gender politics has moved towards lesser opposition to the inclusion of women into employment while foregrounding control over women's bodies and sexuality. A new emphasis has grown to surround violence – as a women's issue – as opposed to (domestic) economic relations, while women's subaltern inclusion into the employment has been normalized.

In other words, the paper delineates how the PRR in France has moved away from a more traditional familistic ideology and from supporting a 'domestic gender regime' to embracing the neoliberal 'public gender regime' (Walby 2009), and deploying a new 'neoliberal feminist' discourse centred on women's freedoms.

References

- Mayer, Nonna (2022) 'The impact of gender on votes for the populist radical rights'. *Modern & Contemporary France* 30(4): 445–460
- Meret, Susi, and Siim, Biirte (2013) 'Gender, populism and politics of belonging'. In: Birte Siim, Biirte, and Mokre, Monika, eds. *Negotiating Diversity in an Emergent European Public Sphere*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 78–96.
- Scrinzi, Francesca (2024) *The Racialization of Sexism. Men, Women and Gender in the Populist Radical Right*, London: Routledge.
- Walby, Sylvia (2009) *Globalization and Inequalities*. New York: Sage.

To each area, its own radicalism. Lega Salvini Premier's multiple ideological articulations across localities

Ghita Bordieri, University of Milano-Bicocca

ghita.bordieri@unimib.it

As populist radical right (PRR) parties gain influence in both political and administrative elections, an increasing number of studies have begun to focus on subnational political arenas. These arenas are often considered key to the mainstreaming of radical parties, given that the municipal level is seen as more pragmatic and less ideologically driven (Barber 2014; Cann 2018; Lucas 2021; Oliver 2012). Recent research from France and Italy highlights the complex relationship between mainstreaming and deradicalization. Rather than leading to deradicalization, mainstreaming often appears as a process of "cleaning" the surface, particularly with regard to local discourses (Paxton and Peace 2021) and the political actions undertaken at the local level (Bellè and Faury 2024).

Building on the idea that local politics has "a distinct articulation of parties' ideological frameworks compared to national politics" (Bellè and Faury 2024), this article extends this notion further by exploring how different localities call for distinct articulations of party ideology that can vary significantly from one locality to another. Drawing on interviews and ethnographic data from my doctoral dissertation on Lega Salvini Premier (2021–2023), I examine three different regions of Italy. I argue that not only do these localities differ in terms of ideology and the degree of radicalism on key issues pursued by the party, but also that the party actively pursued multiple articulation strategies to suit the local political context, playing on multiple local interpretations of the same ideological issues. This local diversity allowed the party to maintain unity during the process of nationalization of the party and to maintain different degrees of radicalism where needed.

References

- Barber, Benjamin R.
2013 *If mayors ruled the world: Dysfunctional nations, rising cities*. Yale University Press.
- Bellè, Elisa, and Félicien Faury.
2025 « Going Local, Going Mainstream? Ethnographic Study of Two French Cities Governed by the Rassemblement National » in *Government and Opposition* 60, 1, pp. 125–140.
- Cann, Damon M.
2018 «The structure of municipal political ideology». in *State and Local Government Review* 50, 1, pp. 37–45.
- Lucas, Jack.
2023 « The ideological structure of municipal non-ideology » in *Urban Affairs Review*, 59, 1, pp. 275–293.
- Oliver, J. Eric, Shang E. Ha, and Zachary Callen.
2012 *Local elections and the politics of small-scale democracy*. Princeton University Press.
- Paxton, Fred; Peace, Timothy.
2021 « Window dressing? The mainstreaming strategy of the rassemblement national in power in French local government » in *Government and Opposition*, 56, 3, pp. 545–562.

Two Roads to Anti-Muslim Radicalization. Culturalized Semi-Liberalism and Conservative Identitarianism Within the Far Right-Wing Youth in France

Max-Valentin Robert, ESPOL (European School of Political and Social Sciences) – Catholic University of Lille

max-valentin.robert@univ-catholille.fr

A strong hostility towards Muslims currently tends to constitute a common feature unifying this ideological family of Western far right-wing movements and political parties. However, in spite of this shared particularity, a growing part of the literature on far right-wing radicalization underlined the heterogeneity within the anti-Islamic movement. In the case of France, the anti-Muslim far-right seems to be structured around two opposite political families: identitarian conservatives and culturalist semi-liberals. Relying on the analysis of 39 semi-structured interviews – which were conducted by the author from January 2020 to December 2021, in Paris and Lyon areas, during the ERC-funded *PRIME Youth Project* (led by Istanbul Bilgi University) – with young far right-wing activists and sympathizers aged between 18 and 30, I suggest to explore this ideological duality within the French anti-Islamic movement. Indeed, I hypothesize that, on the one hand, some of our interviewees would be hostile to Muslim immigration because of a reactionary ideological frame (characterized by a cultural identification with the Catholic heritage, and by an essentialized antagonism between the Christian Europe and the Muslim Middle East), whereas on the other hand, another category of participants would tend to express anti-Islam views by referring to so-called « progressive » Western values, in a dynamic of culturalized liberalism directed against the alleged sexism and moral conservatism of Muslim immigrant-origin citizens. Then, I propose to analyze this ideological duality by exploring two topical bones of contention within the anti-Muslim French far-right: the left and cosmopolitanism. I hypothesize that a strong anti-leftism and a clear opposition to cosmopolitan values will be prevalent in the rhetoric of identitarian conservatives, whereas culturalist semi-liberals will express a less critical viewpoint toward left-wing figures and organizations, and express much more ambivalent stances towards cosmopolitan values. I could therefore assume that these two « sub-samples » would be characterized by a shared anti-Islam enmity, but motivated by divergent ideological frames, which could potentially feed future divides within the far-right.

References

- Allen, Chris
2014 « Britain First: The 'Frontline Resistance' to the Islamification of Britain », in *The Political Quarterly*, 85, 3, pp. 354-361.
- Awan, Imran,
2014 « Islamophobia and Twitter: A Typology of Online Hate Against Muslims on Social Media », in *Policy & Internet*, 6, 2, pp. 133-150.
- Benveniste, Annie, Etienne Pingaud,
2016 « Far-Right Movements in France: The Principal Role of Front National and the Rise of Islamophobia », pp. 55-79, in Gabriella Lazaridis, Giovanna Campani, Annie Benveniste (Eds.), *The Rise of the Far Right in Europe. Populist Shifts and 'Othering'*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 55-79.
- Bernardez Rodal, Asuncion, Paula Requeijo Rey, Yanna G. Franco,
2022 « Radical right parties and anti-feminist speech on Instagram: Vox and the 2019 Spanish general election », in *Party Politics*, 28, 2, pp. 272-283.
- Berntzen, Lars Erik,
2020 *Liberal Roots of Far Right Activism: The Anti-Islamic Movement in the 21st Century*, Abingdon, Routledge.
- Cervi, Laura,
2020 « Exclusionary Populism and Islamophobia: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Spain », in *Religions*, 11, 10, pp. 1-21.
- Cleland, Jamie, Chris Anderson, Jack Aldridge-Deacon,
2018 « Islamophobia, war and non-Muslims as victims: an analysis of online discourse on an English Defence League message board », in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 41, 9, pp. 1541-1557.
- Doerr, Nicole,
2021 « The Visual Politics of the Alternative for Germany (AfD): Anti-Islam, Ethno-Nationalism, and Gendered Images », in *Social Sciences*, 10, 1, pp. 1-15.
- Farris, Sara R.,
2017 *In the Name of Women's Rights. The Rise of Femonationalism*, Durham, Duke University Press.
- Froio, Caterina,
2018 « Race, Religion, or Culture? Framing Islam between Racism and Neo-Racism in the Online Network of the French Far Right », in *Perspectives on Politics*, 16, 3, pp. 696-709.
- Mack, Mehammed A.,
2017 *Sexagon: Muslims, France, and the Sexualization of National Culture*, New York, Fordham University Press.
- Saeed, Tania,
2016 *Islamophobia and Securitization: Religion, Ethnicity and the Female Voice*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

“The Cultured Thug”. The Far-Right, Physical Culture and Masculinity

Joshua Farrell-Molloy, Malmö University

joshua.farrell-molloy@mau.se

Radical ideologies often provide adherents with an important feeling of personal meaning. For the far-right, this sense of purpose is something that can be intensely embodied through the practices and aesthetics of physical culture. Indeed, in recent years, two newly emerged communities centred around physical culture have become important actors within the far-right ecosystem. Firstly, the so-called ‘Right-Wing Bodybuilder’ digital subculture which revolves around bodybuilding, has built a white nationalist lifting culture in which far-right ideology is spread alongside pseudoscientific alternative health and nutrition advice and conspiracy theories (Farrell-Molloy & Leidig 2022). Secondly, transnational networks of ‘Active Clubs’ focusing on organising combat sports training and tournaments have rapidly become the fastest growing transnational movement (Ritzmann, 2023). Both of these movements distil a broader trend across the far-right, which aligns personal development with physical strength as an aspirational model for young men in reaction to what has been termed the crisis of masculinity (Copland, 2023).

In this study, I utilise a netnographic approach on platforms X and Telegram, to conduct a comparative contextual analysis on how both communities cultivate meaning-making around personal development and fuse the practice of physical culture to their ideology. The prevalent use of netnographic analysis in research on online extremism demonstrates its usefulness for gaining an in-depth understanding of subcultural practices involved in far-right community-building, especially on alt-tech platforms (Collins, 2024; Ebner, 2023; Tuters, 2019; Askanius and Keller, 2021). This approach allows for a deep dive into two little-explored fringe communities, and through delving into their various overlaps, explores how highly individualised pursuits have been transformed into communalised activities, integral for shaping the identities of participants.

The article illuminates the development of a “far-right physical culture” as a distinct strand of far-right ideology, in which an ideological world-building has taken place around physical fitness has constructed a lifestyle-anchored extremism. I unpack their major ideological tributaries, from Friedrich Nietzsche to Yukio Mishima, and examine how far-right physical culture performs as an ideological agent, promoting intellectual and spiritual development, as well as just physical self-improvement, through establishing a distinct masculine archetype and role model.

References

- Copland, Simon (2023). Weak men and the feminisation of society: Locating the ideological glue between the manosphere and the far-right. In J. Goetz & S. Mayer (Eds.), *Global perspectives on anti-feminism: far-right and religious attacks on equality and diversity* (pp. 116-136). Edinburgh University Press.
- Farrell-Molloy, Joshua, & Leidig, Eviane (2022, October 10). The emerging raw food movement and the ‘Great Reset’. *Global Network on Extremism and Technology Insights*. <https://gnet-research.org/2022/10/10/the-emerging-raw-food-movement-and-the-great-reset/>
- Collins, Jonathan (2024). The gift of Gab: A netnographic examination of the community building mechanisms in far-right online space. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2023.2296514>
- Askanius, Tina, & Keller, Nadine (2021). Murder fantasies in memes: fascist aesthetics of death threats and the banalization of white supremacist violence. *Information, Communication & Society*, 24(16), 2522-2539.
- Ebner, Julia (2023). *The identity-extremism nexus in virtual groups: the impact of online group alignment on radicalisation towards violence* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Oxford].
- Tuters, Marc (2019). LARPing & liberal tears. Irony, belief and idiocy in the deep vernacular web. In M. Fielitz & N. Thurston (Eds.), *Post-digital cultures of the far right: online actions and offline consequences in Europe and the US* (pp. 37-48). <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839446706-003>.
- Ritzmann, Alexander (2023). Hiding in Plain Sight. The Transnational Right-Wing Extremist Active Club Network. Counter Extremism Project, https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/2023-09/Hiding%20in%20Plain%20Sight_The%20Transnational%20Right-Wing%20Extremist%20Active%20Club%20Network_Sept%202023.pdf.

2. Migration and the transition to adulthood

Convenors: Enrico Fravega & Sebastiano Benasso (University of Genoa)

The «capability to become adult». Young people's constrained freedom to leave Emilia-Romagna for Germany and the UK

Eleonora Costantini, Fondazione Marco Biagi Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia
eleonora.costantini@unimore.it

The inherent complexity of the migration phenomenon has necessitated the development of numerous theoretical models. Nevertheless, these models appear to lack a comprehensive and interdisciplinary grasp of the contemporary migration multidimensionality (De Haas, 2021). A dichotomy has emerged over time between two predominant paradigms: the neoclassical-functionalist and the historical-structural. These models exhibit distinct explanatory nuances and varied levels of analysis of migratory phenomena.

The neoclassical-functionalist paradigm conceptualises migration as the result of rational individual choices, oriented towards the maximisation of economic benefits. In this model, individuals and households compare potential benefits, such as job opportunities and better living conditions, with the costs and risks associated with migration, opting for the solution that maximises overall benefits. Conversely, the historical-structural paradigm, in its various interpretations, underscores the pivotal role of economic and social structures, along with the dynamics of power and exploitation, in shaping migratory patterns. This perspective asserts that migration is not solely influenced by economic and power inequalities, but also functions to perpetuate and reinforce these inequalities, both within societies and between nations (*Ibidem*).

The limitations of both approaches become evident when considered in relation to the multifaceted nature of contemporary migration phenomena. Specifically, they encounter difficulties in offering a compelling explanation of human agency, defined as the ability of individuals to make autonomous decisions within the broader constraints of the structural environment. Moreover, both approaches encounter challenges in adequately capturing the multifaceted nature of the migrant, not as a rational actor engaged in cost-benefit optimisation strategies, nor as a passive victim, subordinated to global capitalist forces (Carling, Collins, 2018). In recent decades, particularly within the field of sociology, numerous efforts have been made to formulate integrated models combining pre-existing theories in order to offer a more articulated and complex perspective on the migration phenomenon. The proposal by De Haas (2021) is of particular interest, as he conceptualises human mobility as a process linked to individual agency and the improvement of personal well-being. The author integrates development and migration issues within a multilevel framework, recognising the importance of conceptualising human mobility as an intrinsic part of the broader processes of economic, political, cultural, technological and demographic change, embodied in the concept of development (De Haas, 2010a).

In other words, migration is a social process that cannot be considered in isolation from the broader processes of transformation of which it is an integral part (De Haas, 2010b). Within the framework of human capabilities and development (Sen, 1999), migration is not regarded as an independent variable influencing development. Instead, it is considered an endogenous variable, an integral part of change itself and a factor that can generate further change (De Haas, 2010a; De Maria, 2020). Human mobility is thus conceptualised as «people's capability (freedom) to choose where to live», admitting the choice to move as well as to stay (De Haas, 2021 p.2).

This paper discusses the results of a qualitative research conducted on young people born in Emilia-Romagna and emigrated abroad, employed in Germany and the United Kingdom at the time of the interviews. This mobility is defined by De Haas as «free migration», characterised by a high degree of both positive and negative freedom, relatively unconstrained, and traditionally explained through neoclassical or human capital theory. It is regarded as a paradigmatic case for a more general reflection on different types of mobility. The principal aim of this study is to explore how the interaction between individual agency and socio-economic context influences the decision-making process in the migration choice. Specifically, the study seeks to explore how personal aspirations and capabilities (Sen, 1990; Appadurai, 2004; De Haas, 2021) may shape the opportunities and constraints associated with the choice to migrate.

A total of 25 mobility experiences were collected through semi-structured interviews, anchored in the narrative device of choice. The findings indicate that the migration choices of the young people interviewed are not linear; instead, these are defined in the interaction between individual desires, constraints, and opportunities arising from the social context and the subjective perception of these external factors (in terms of subjective value).

The results of the research provide, first and foremost, a useful empirical basis for the study and interpretation of the phenomenon of human mobility according to a people-centred approach, which is situated at the intersection of the macro and micro levels. The nexus between these two levels of analysis is pivotal in the development of a multidimensional understanding of migration choices, thus proposing a more integrated and people-centred perspective.

At the macro level, the data collected provide an understanding of the broader economic, political and social forces that influence young talent's mobility choices. These include labour market policies, global and regional economic conditions, economic and social inequalities, and globalisation dynamics. At the micro level, the research findings highlight how migration decisions are influenced by individual aspirations, perceptions of opportunity, and personal and contextual capacities to implement life plans. It is important to note that migration choices are not solely a response to economic conditions, but also a reflection of aspirations for self-fulfilment, professional growth, quality of life, and enhanced social and cultural conditions.

Those who choose to migrate do so in relation to motivations that they do not decline in an absolute way, but according to their biographical trajectory (not something absolutely right but right for themselves). The processual nature of mobility choices is evident in the dynamic dimension of the migration project, which manifests in the evolution of decisions made by those who choose to migrate, particularly if young. These decisions are shaped by changes in context and personal ambitions, thereby offering a multifaceted perspective on mobility experiences.

The decision of young Italians to migrate is not driven exclusively by economic motivations or the pursuit of employment opportunities. Rather, migration becomes a means to pursue their own well-being, a life project encompassing both material needs and aspirations for personal growth and self-actualisation. Therefore, migration becomes a way to act their freedom to become adults.

This point of view opens up new perspectives on international migration, also in relation to young people moving between the Global South and the Global North.

References

- Appadurai, Arjun
2004 «The Capacity to Aspire: Culture and the Terms of Recognition», in Rao V., Walton M. ed., *Culture and Public Action*, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto, pp. 59-84.
- Carling, Jorgen, Collins, Francis
2018 «Aspiration, desire and drivers of migration», in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(6), pp. 909-926.
- De Haas, Hein
2010a «Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective», in *International Migration Review*, 44(1), pp. 227-264.
- 2010b *Migration transitions. A theoretical and empirical inquiry into the developmental drivers of international migration*, IMI working paper 24.
- 2021 «A theory of migration: the aspirations-capabilities framework», in *Comparative Migration Studies*, 9(8), pp. 1-35.
- De Maria, Francesco
2020 *Potenziale migratorio come categoria di analisi della Mobilità Umana. Una ricerca educativa quali-quantitativa sui giovani della Costa d'Avorio*. Tesi di dottorato, Università degli Studi di Firenze, Firenze, Italia.
- Sen Amartya
1990 «Justice: Means versus Freedoms», in *Philosophy&Public Affairs*, 19, pp.111-121.

Migration and Subjectivation. The biographical trajectory of young entrepreneurs from South Italy

Sandra Vatrella, Department of Social Science, University of Naples "Federico II"

sandravatrella@yahoo.it

This contribution presents some of the results that emerged from the broader PRIN research programme Mapping Youth Futures: Forms of Anticipation and Youth Agency (MYF) which "aims to identify and analyze

how young people in Italy today engage with the future and how this forms young people's current lives, strategies, and multiple transitions" (mappingyouthfutures.it), in order to understand how young Italians 'navigate' the future (Mandich, 2024).

This aim – specifically with regard to the research unit at the University of Naples Federico II – was pursued, among others, by interviewing 40 young people aged 25–34 who are involved in various forms of entrepreneurship (start-uppers, cultural and social entrepreneurs, agricultural and craft entrepreneurs).

Subject and research aim. Against the backdrop briefly outlined, our analysis focuses on the complex and multifaceted relationship between migration and processes of subjectivation. With this aim, the biographical trajectory of young entrepreneurs from South Italy was analysed by paying particular attention to the (compulsory) choices of mobility they undertook, and the ways such choices intertwined with those of entrepreneurship (i.e. the way this entanglement emerges and develops) in order to understand the forms of subjectivation they would finally achieve: in summation, the way young people construct themselves and manage their entrepreneurial subjectivity, also by interpreting, directing and/or subverting the direction of journey and its reasons.

Theoretical framework. This research aim is pursued consistently with the Foucauldian approach, which mainly means, considering migration as an investment: an element through which the process of self-construction develops towards the improving of 'human capital'. In other words, that "Individual's ability to move around [...]" (Foucault 2008: 230), against the backdrop of the neoliberal regime of truth. Accordingly, the migrant takes the shape of "an entrepreneur of himself who incurs expenses by investing to obtain some kind of improvement" (ibidem) which is produced by an individualizing strategy that seeks the preservation of competition in a formal game between inequalities (Donzelot, 2008: 120). Key players in these dynamics are the individuals from the Global South, who are compelled to abandon the social contexts from which they originate – contexts that lag in the 'chronophagic race' for production and productivity (Pellegrino, 2019: 82, our translation), and that have lost the market competition, are then left *without a future*. In short, they are called both to migrate, and to consistently make their subjectivity. In this sense, the processes of subjectivation of young people from the Global South emerge from a strategical interplay between techniques of government and techniques of the self (Cremonesi et al., 2016) Foucault defined as: "*The practices which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, to transform themselves to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality* (Foucault 1988, 17)". Therefore, particular attention is devoted to how individuals experience some 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 1988) to transform themselves into subjects, in a play between being subjected "and the ever-present possibility of subjectivations in autonomy (counter-conducts, critique, parrhesia, refusal, revolution)" (Serpieri, 2018, p. 151).

Research strategy. In accordance with the theoretical framework briefly outlined, we employed a research strategy that reinterprets the interview technique, by combining the biographical approach to life histories (Bertaux, 2016) with the hermeneutic perspective (Montesperelli, 1998; 2014), alongside Foucauldian reflections on the technologies of the self. In this regard, we initially engaged with Foucault's reflections on the ethics of the care of the self, developed in the 1970s and 1980s. Subsequently, we translated the technologies of the self (and updated them) into operational definitions, which we conceived and applied in two key ways: 1. As a strategy for eliciting narratives intended to provoke an *exagoreus*: the verbalization of an individual's life story, designed to reveal the dual nature of these technologies – both as practices that the speaker employs in constructing their narrative (mimesis) and as linguistic manifestations (*hermeneia*) of the subjectivation process. 2. As an analytical framework for identifying the technologies of the self and examining how these technologies combine and intertwine, allowing the pathways of subjectivation to emerge from the text.

Main results. This strategy enabled us to identify three distinct forms of subjectivation that differently intercept and intertwine migration and entrepreneurship: exile, nomadism, and pilgrimage (Serpieri, Vatrella, 2024). The first one is composed by young digital entrepreneurs whose migratory and professional path unfolds along a labyrinthine route, it is an itinerary as confusing and confounding as their own narrative, which develops between political vocation and acquisitive ambitions – the will to be and the will to have. Here the enterprise becomes a way by means of which the process of ethopoiesis is finally realized as a 'nomopoiesis', i.e. in the attempt to recompose the aporias of a self divided between public interests and private profits; political commitment and personal success. The second group refers to a cohort of young academic entrepreneurs, whom we term "nomads," as their mobility is characterized by a journey along a challenging, uphill path that

they willingly pursue. This path is motivated not only by the scientific passion they cultivate but also by the economic rationale to which they seem to be equally devoted. In this context, the ethopoiesis of the Nomad is realized through a gnoseopoiesis that celebrates the labors of γνῶσις (gnosis) – a still occult, ambiguous form of knowledge accessible only through the long ascetic journey the Nomads have undertaken and of which they are the product. The third group is that of Pilgrims, young people who work in the field of social enterprise whose process of subjectivation develops along a circular route. It is a trajectory that ends at the exact point where it begins: the places of birth and migration, the same places that these young people finally elect as their reason for living and doing business. It is precisely in this endeavor that we can discern the way social entrepreneurs constitute themselves as ethical agents; while resorting to the technologies of the self, they promote and establish an active relationship between the governance of others and the eco-poetic governance of the self (Marzocca, 2017).

References

- Bertaux, Daniel
2016 *Le récit de vie*, Paris, Armand Colin.
- Cremonesi, Laura, Irrera Orazio, Lorenzini Daniele
2016 *Foucault and the Making of Subjects*, London, Rowman & Littlefield Publisher.
- Donzelot, Jacques
2008 «Michel Foucault and Liberal Intelligence», in *Economy and Society* 37(1), pp. 115–34.
- Foucault, Michel
1988 *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, in L. H. Martin, H. Gutman and P.H. Hutton (eds), London, Tavistock Publications.
- Foucault, Michel
2008 *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978–1979*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mandich, Giuliana
2024 *Navigare il futuro. Una survey sui giovani in epoca pandemica*, Milano, Bocconi University press Egea.
- Marzocca, Ottavio
2017 *Foucault ingovernabile. Dal bios all'ethos*, Milano, Meltemi.
- Montesperelli, Paolo
1998 *L'intervista ermeneutica*, Milano, Franco Angeli.
- Montesperelli, Paolo
2014 *Comunicare e interpretare. Introduzione all'ermeneutica per la ricerca sociale*, Milano, Egea-Bocconi University Press.
- Pellegrino, Vincenza
2019 *Futuri possibili. Il domani per le scienze sociali di oggi*, Verona, Ombre Corte.
- Serpieri, Roberto
2018 «Post-Education and Ethical Government», in *Materiali Foucaultiani*, 13-14, (VII), pp. 149-187.
- Serpieri, Roberto, Vatrella Sandra
2024 *Tecniche del sè e soggettivazione. Confessioni di giovani imprenditori*, Milano, Franco Angeli.

Youths in transitons, beyond reception borders. An agentive analysis of Egyptian youths' tactics and trajectories across Italy

Ilaria Bilancetti, University of Milano-Bicocca

i.bilancetti@campus.unimib.it

Minor migrants who arrive in Europe without their parents are recognized as “unaccompanied foreign minors” (UFMs) and are entitled of special protection by state authorities. UFMs benefit of a system of reception that provides hospitality, legal support, tutorship, language courses and vocational training. Despite that, the rate of defection from the system’s guidance and protection is sensibly high, with a higher tendency for those who can rely on a network of co-nationals offering hospitality and job opportunities. Ethnographers who did research with mobile youths, agree on the fact that a prolonged stay within the system of reception, whose practices are constructed around notions of child protection and vulnerability, can be challenging for those who feel invested of a family mandate and urge for financial autonomy (Chase, Allsopp 2021, Mai 2018, Palmisano 2019, Sano’ 2017, Walker 2023). With these premises, the withdrawal from the system in favour of co-nationals’ rapid prospects, can be interpreted as an attempt to regain control over migratory projects and assert adulthood.

Framing on the problematic nexus “agency-marginality”, when mobile youths chose to rely on their informal networks, exercise a form of agency that recalls DeCerteau’s (1980) notion of “tactics.” In DeCerteau’s theorization, tactics are a practical-evaluative forms of agency employed by people at the margins who defy spatial control enacted “by the law of a foreign power” (1980:37) and take advantage of readily available opportunities. Tactical agents learn how to react rapidly to the environment’s inputs through manipulation and improvisation; as a consequence, the sum of their actions take the form of a chaotic “trajectory” that may not reflect the logical continuity of a plan. Embracing this perspective, youths’ “undisciplined mobilities” (Mai 2018: xiii) appear as a creative combination of tactics oriented toward short-term attainable goals.

In the discussion, I will present the preliminary findings of a PhD field study that, while tracing mobile youths’ tactics, aims to identify subjective, and *inter*-subjective factors that condition their transitions to adulthood. Given that the experience of spatial mobility is strongly linked to transition (Benasso et al., 2019, Thomson et al., 2005), the observation of youth’s trajectories in a migratory context can give insights on how the path toward adulthood is negotiated between competing transition regimes. Taking distance from humanitarian discourses on child migration and loneliness, the study conceives mobile youths as networked beings, whose agentic selves are embedded in transnational temporalities and whose transitions are influenced by diverse values, priorities and role models. With a focus on transnational ties and peer mutuality, the research explores how culturally situated notions of adulthood are reproduced -or contested, in a foreign environment. How mobile youths select and manipulate available opportunities while enhancing individual aspirations, embracing peer’s leverage and meeting family expectations? Which values, perspectives and priorities are more relevant in their decision-making processes?

The research takes as case study Egyptian youths in Milan, as Egyptian nationals constitute by far the largest group of UFM’s in Italy and benefit of housing and job opportunities made available by the well-established Egyptian community in Lombardy (CESPI 2024). The fieldwork investigates youths’ mobilities *further and beyond* their period of staying in the reception system, focusing on their initial phases of autonomy and trying to shed lights on the contested role that the network of co-nationals has in facilitating their independent, adult life in Italy.

The process of data collection is funded on ethnographic approaches to the study of mobility (Elliot et al., 2017) and it is structured over a synergic combination of narrative interviews and focus groups. The combination of the two methods provides an integrated analysis of individual and collective biographies, exposing the relationship between the subjective and inter-subjective dimension of mobility and transition. Interviews constitute the privileged channel to explore desires and aspirations through the reflection on present actions (Collins 2017) and encourage participants to piece together their movements and give coherence to their actions. Simultaneously, focus groups among peers with shared experiences allow to go beyond individual biographies, showing how mobilities characterized by intense co-presence and bonded by friendship and reciprocity may overlap into a joint trajectory. This methodological approach can be advantageous in the study of patterns of transitions to adulthood, as it exposes how the “synchronization of the flows of consciousness” (Leccardi 2014:13) with shared symbols and unified perspectives, exercises a direct impact on the process of identity making.

Taking into account the difficulties in accessing the field, building trust and fulfil data collection with rigour and confidentiality, the presentation will provide a reflexive account of the early stages of fieldwork, with a particular focus on ethical concerns and practical complexities that emerge while doing research with youths in a migratory context.

References

- Benasso Sebastian, Castellani Simone, Cosetta Anna, Dittrich Christiane., Walther Andreas.
2019 “Transmission Belts: On how young adults in Germany and Italy make meaning of mobility in transitions to work and adulthood” in *Social Work & Society*, 17, 2, pp. 1-17.
- CESPI
2024 *I MSNA Egiziani in Italia*. Approfondimento n. 18.
- Chase Elaine, Allsopp Jennifer
2021 *Youth Migration and the Politics of Wellbeing_ Stories of Life in Transition* Bristol University Press.
- Collins Francis
2017 “Desire as a Theory for Migration Studies: Temporality, Assemblage and Becoming in the Narratives of Migrants” in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44, 6, pp. 964-980.
- De Certeau Marcel
1980 *The Practice of Everyday Life* University of California Press.

- Elliot Alice, Norum Roger, Salazar Noel B.
 2017 *Methodologies of Mobility. Ethnography and Experiment* Berghahn Books.
- Leccardi Carmen
 2014 "Time of Society and Time of Experience: Multiple Times and Social Change" in *Kronoscope*, 14,110, pp. 10-24.
- Mai Nicola
 2018 *Mobile Orientations. An Intimate Autoethnography of Migration, Sex Work, and Humanitarian Borders*. The University Chicago Press.
- Palmisano Danilo
 2022 *Come Soli dentro al Mare. Storie di Minori Migranti* Roma Tre Press.
- Sanò Giuliana
 2017 "Inside and Outside the Reception System. The case of Unaccompanied Minors in Eastern Sicily" in *Etnografia e Ricerca Qualitativa*, I, pp. 121-142.
- Thomson Rachel, Taylor Rebecca
 2005 "Between Cosmopolitanism and the Locals: Mobility as a Resource in the Transition to Adulthood" in *Young. Nordic Journal of Youth Research*,13, 4, pp. 327-342.
- Walker Sarah
 2023 "The (Unaccompanied) Minor as Mobility: The Tactics of Young African Migrants in Italy to Contest Spatio – Temporal Control" in *Children's Geographies* 21,6, pp. 1106-1118.

Defying border policies. Maghreb migrations as a rite of passage

Filippo Torre, University of Genoa

filippo.torre@edu.unige.it

With the establishment of the Schengen Area and the consolidation of Fortress Europe, migration from the Maghreb across the Mediterranean has undergone significant change. The imposition of visa requirements for entry into European countries has compelled many Maghreb migrants to adapt to restrictions on freedom of movement in various ways, leading to the emergence of new migration routes, patterns, and meanings. Since the 1990s, increasingly restrictive policies and heightened border control have given rise to the production of the *harraga* (literally, "those who burn" the border), a generation of predominantly young men and, to a lesser extent, women, who employ makeshift boats to leave Morocco, Algeria, or Tunisia in pursuit of better opportunities (Pandolfo 2007; Souiah 2013; Harris 2015). The tightening of Mediterranean border and the shrinking opportunities for regularisation have also driven a diversification of migration routes and destinations, while simultaneously eliminating the feasibility of circular or commuting movements between the two shores of the Mediterranean. Contemporary migration from the Maghreb to Europe can no longer be adequately explained through theories of "migratory chains" (Arab 2013) or concepts such as the "migratory circuit," (Capello 2008) as family and religious solidarity have weakened (Persichetti 2003). This has created a profoundly precarious social space, within which Moroccans, Algerians, and Tunisians are forced to unfold their mobility projects.

Today, numerous *harraga* leave North Africa without a definitive destination or specific plan. Many aim solely to reach Europe, even without a clear idea of their final destination. Their perception of Europe is frequently envisioned from the outset as one integrated territorial space, transcending national belongings (Schapendonk 2020). For those who manage to reach Europe safely, it is hard to find a stable place to settle. They are forced into continual movement, and even after arriving in Europe, they do not stop being *harraga*. Despite the reintroduction of Schengen internal borders since 2015, they find themselves making tactical use of the European space across national borders to offset their inherent structural disadvantage in accessing resources. Despite the decision to migrate being predominantly a personal, young, and male endeavor, families continue to play a pivotal role in supporting and nurturing the migratory aspirations of potential *harraga*. While family support does not disappear entirely, its role varies: some families are unaware of the migration plans, but in many cases, *harraga* receive familial backing to gather the financial resources needed for their departure. Families often "invest" in the migration of young males, who are then expected to fend for themselves. Having family members in Europe can provide a sense of security, but many *harraga* intentionally avoid relying on family networks to preserve their independence, by privileging instead the social situations and relations encountered along the journey, in which relations of friendship, intimacy and collaboration are constructed. Faced with the manifold challenges of crossing political, legal, and social borders, Maghreb youth increasingly consider irregularised migration as a means of proving and testing their adulthood, both to themselves and to

their families and social circles (Monsutti 2007; Altin 2021). With the growing difficulty of securing the economic resources needed to achieve the traditional markers of adulthood (such as marriage, homeownership, and consumer goods) the migratory journey is perceived as an accelerated pathway to social recognition, where “burning” the border is equivalent to “burning” the steps. The summer returns of emigrants to their countries of origin, often marked by displays of material success, such as large cars and gifts for relatives, project an idealised image of migration to those who remain behind. These returns obscure the hardships, sacrifices, and failures that frequently define the experiences of Maghreb migrants in Europe. Mainstream narratives often depict migrants as naïve dreamers, entranced by fantasies of a Europe overflowing with wealth and opportunity; however, many young migrants view the rare success stories within their peer groups as a material possibility to social emancipation and economic advancement, far more attainable than the nonexistent opportunities in the Maghreb, where they frequently describe feeling as if they are already dead. This contribution is based on a multi-sited ethnographic research conducted in Morocco, Tunisia and along the French-Italian Alpine route. Starting from the construction of ethnographical relationships along the Alpine route, the researcher has kept bonds, ties, and contacts with the interlocutors, by visiting them in different places along their journeys across Europe and in the contexts of origins and transit. In Morocco, the research was mainly conducted in the popular neighbourhoods of Casablanca and Meknes, while in Tunisia it took place in the region of Mahdia. The findings of this contribution are the results of a trajectory ethnography (Schwarz 2020) with people travelling from the Maghreb to Europe, analysing the evolution of their migration routes as they unfold.

References

- Altin, Roberta
2021 «The Floating Karst Flow of Migrants as a Rite of Passage through the Eastern European Border», in *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 26, 5, pp. 589–607.
- Arab, Chadia
2013 *Les Aït Ayad: La Circulation Migratoire Des Marocains Entre La France, l'Espagne et l'Italie*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes.
- Capello, Carlo
2008 *Le Prigionieri Invisibili. Etnografia Multisituata Della Migrazione Marocchina*, Milano, FrancoAngeli.
- Harris, Jonathan
2015 «El Harka: Perceptions of the Migration-Development Nexus in Post-Revolution Tunis», in *Population, Space and Place*, 21, 6, pp. 493–505.
- Monsutti, Alessandro
2007 «Migration as a Rite of Passage: Young Afghans Building Masculinity and Adulthood in Iran», in *Iranian Studies* 40(2):167–85. doi: 10.1080/00210860701276183.
- Pandolfo, Stefania
2007 «‘The Burning’: Finitude and the Politico-Theological Imagination of Illegal Migration», in *Anthropological Theory*, 7, 3, pp. 329–63.
- Persichetti, Alessandra
2003 *Tra Marocco e Italia. Solidarietà Agnatica Ed Emigrazione*, Roma, CISU.
- Schapendonk, Joris
2020 *Finding Ways through Eurospace. West Africans Movers Re-Viewing Europe from Inside*, Berghahn, New York.
- Schwarz, Inga
2020 «Migrants Moving through Mobility Regimes: The Trajectory Approach as a Tool to Reveal Migratory Processes», *Geoforum*, 116, pp. 217–25.
- Souiah, Farida
2013 «Les politiques migratoires restrictives: une fabrique de harraga», in *Hommes & migrations*, 1304, pp. 95–101.

3. Domestic ethnography in marginalised and shared dwelling spaces: relationships, dilemmas, and the micro-macro link

Convenor: Paolo Boccagni (University of Trento) & Eduardo Barberis (University of Urbino)

Domestic ethnography in state-run reception. Control, resistance, and (self)representation in shared dwelling spaces for asylum seekers and refugees

Caterina Borelli, Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage, Ca' Foscari University (Venice)
caterina.borelli@unive.it

This proposal examines how the state infiltrates and pervades the lives of asylum seekers included in institutional reception programmes. It draws from extensive fieldwork conducted in a reception centre in north-eastern Italy, where I had been the coordinator in the past. Observing the organisation of shared everyday life under state hospitality has shown how the state acting as the host exerts a great degree of control on apparently insignificant and intimate aspects of individuals' lives, ruling over temporalities, movements and bodily functions, overriding their privacy and denying their decision-making ability. I frame my reflections on the literature on hospitality as a practice of sovereignty and control over the stranger and an expression of the moral superiority of the host, to whom the guest maintains a subordinate position and deep indebtedness (Pitt-Rivers, 2012 [1977]; Herzfeld, 1987; Rozakou, 2012). Even when state hospitality takes on the more humane guise of reception in private, gate-less apartments, it is still a technology of care and control (Malkki, 1992), sometimes even surveillance (Borelli, 2024/a). Everything from cohabitation rules to food provision policies seems designed to infantilise and tame beneficiaries by discomfort (Darling, 2011). That structural discomfort impacts how individuals manage their everyday routines and the relationships they establish with one another in the context of forced cohabitation. Sometimes, the reaction is solidarity; sometimes, it is competition and conflict (Borelli and Vuilleumier, forthcoming). Nonetheless, it is crucial to also account for the micro-acts of resistance and insubordination the subjects involved in this specific kind of hospitable relationship – the receivers but also the givers of aid – carry on to counter the state's intrusive presence and regain minimal control over their lives. In my presentation, I will account for these two aspects of cohabitation under a regime of state hospitality (control vs resistance), and I also will bring forward a methodological reflection on, on the one hand, positionality and self-reflectivity and, on the other, the resorting to creative methods to collect from-within visions on these aspects. I will present the preliminary results of an ongoing project involving refugees living in state reception that photographer Camilla de Maffei and I are conducting. Through co-creation workshops, participants can use photographic and other visual tools to construct their own narratives around themes such as home and hospitality. The idea is to generate a safe space for self-expression and self-representation and, in this context, with its immediacy, affordability and availability, photography seems the best option as it overcomes verbal language and other barriers against which words – spoken or written – would instead clash. However, some significant setbacks have already forced us to ponder whether it is sufficient to provide technical means of self-expression to overcome power imbalances, shyness, and structural uncertainty and thus foster genuine participation. My presentation will address these and other ethical and epistemological issues that have emerged up to this point as part of a broader reflection on the possibility offered to research by hybridising anthropology and photography (Borelli, 2024/b).

References

- Borelli, Caterina
2024a "Meeting the Smugglers. Decolonising the mind, questioning the border", in *Allegra Lab*, <https://allegralaboratory.net/meet-the-smugglers-decolonising-the-mind-questioning-the-border/>
Borelli, Caterina
2024b "On hybridisation. Three exercises in crossbreeding anthropology and photography", in *Anthropology and Photography*, special issue of *Civilisations*, edited by Pierre Petit and Mikaela Le Meur, Vol. 72, 2023, pp. 83-98.
Borelli, Caterina and Louis Vuilleumier
Forthcoming. "Food in Asylum: Where the Code of Hospitality and the Quest for Autonomy Collide", in *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale*.
Darling, Jonathan
2011 "Domopolitics, governmentality and the regulation of asylum accommodation", in *Political Geography*, 30(5), pp. 263-271.
Herzfeld, Michael

- 1987 "‘As in Your Own House’: Hospitality, Ethnography, and the Stereotype of Mediterranean Society", in David Gilmore (ed.), *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, pp. 75–89. Washington, DC: American Anthropological Association.
- Malkki, Liisa
- 1992 "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees", in *Cultural Anthropology*, 7(1), pp. 24–44.
- Pitt-Rivers, Julian
- 2012 [1977] The Law of Hospitality. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2(1): 501–517.
- Rozakou, Katerina
- 2012 'The biopolitics of hospitality in Greece'. *American Ethnologist* 39(3): 562–577.

Homesick while still at home. Could conducting domestic ethnography in a potentially lost home trigger interspecies futures?

Weronika Kozak, Hasselt University

weronika.kozak@uhasselt.be

I will argue one of the most intriguing consequences of situating domestic ethnography within transitory environments such as migrant communities lies in the profound difference it instigates in domestic imaginaries and homemaking practices. Stereotypically, home is perceived as a steady point of reference, a 'stable, unmoving, intangible, untouched and almost untouchable, unchanging, deep-rooted' place. (Perec, 1974, 91) Investigating non-normative contexts where home is no longer here, but still connects us with an idealised condition elsewhere, unsettles this rather static imaginary and transforms it into a fluid and continuously changing process instead. (Boccagni, 2022) But how can a loss of home – not merely a physical object, but also an identity, a way of living – result in something beyond nostalgia or liquefaction of domestic imaginaries?

In this contribution, therefore, I will reflect on a situation when home is not yet gone, but *might be* lost soon – in a context threatened by climate change – more specifically, by water. What is home to those who are already homesick despite still remaining there? (Albrecht et al., 2007) Could domestic ethnography become a more speculative and active practice, allowing to deal with climate uncertainty, vindicating more-than-human actors, often perceived as intruders directly responsible for climatic misfortunes, and revealing home as an interspecies entity instead? Might undertaking domestic ethnography in such a context point to alternative more-than-human futures?

To reflect on those questions, I will discuss my research in which I am adopting domestic ethnography to understand anxieties among farmers located in Haspengouw, Belgium, hostile towards implementing a new water management scheme addressing frequent floods and droughts they are experiencing, as it would require them welcoming water onto their farms. This results in a paradoxical state, as, in the farmers' eyes, making room for water will fundamentally alter their idea of home – yet unnoticed, their home progressively dissolves and draws closer towards water anyway, becoming an increasingly shifting and uncertain phenomenon. Is it possible to translate watery hostility into more-than-human hospitality through domestic ethnography? This question becomes the premise for this contribution and provokes several dilemmas and methodological considerations. What kind of questions should I ask in order for domestic ethnography to become a tool inspiring to make room for otherness and unsettle home? Can water, instead of only being perceived as an intruder, play a part in this process, teaching fluidity, receptivity and affect? I will also reflect on insights gained from preliminary conversations I already had and think how they might inform the approach for domestic ethnography and serve as a starting point for imagining the relationship with water otherwise. This leads to a final, simultaneously ethical and speculative, reflection – could a simple effort of listening and understanding worries and fears encourage farmers to enter into dialogue with an uninvited guest and spark more hospitable future homemaking practices?

References

- Albrecht, Glenn, Gina-Maree Sartore, Linda Connor, Nick Higginbotham, Sonia Freeman, Brian Kelly, Helen Stain, Anne Tonna, and Georgia Pollard.
- 2007 «Solastalgia: The Distress Caused by Environmental Change», in *Australasian Psychiatry* 15, 1, pp. 95–98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10398560701701288>.
- Boccagni, Paolo

2022 «As If It Were Home», Video recording. Presented at the Haunted by Homes, May 5. <https://doi.org/10.25620/e220505>. visited 24\01\2025.

Perec, Georges

1974 *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, London, Penguin.

The Methodological Dilemmas of Including "Vulnerable Populations in Marginalized Shared Housing Research. Case Study of Roma Women in Private Hostels

Kateřina Čanigová, Masaryk University

canig@mail.muni.cz

The paper investigates the phenomenon of "poverty business" and the state-led "fight against the poverty businessmen" in the Czech Republic. Positioned within social anthropology, the study examines how recent shifts in state policy – prioritizing action against exploitative poverty business practices over direct support for individuals in poverty – affect Roma women. Poverty business refers to exploitative practices within substandard shared and temporary housing in private hostels (Kupka et al., 2021 ; Čanigová, Souralová, 2024). While the state's social welfare policy has shifted focus from social assistance to combating poverty business practices, this reorientation has often worsened conditions for those it aims to help, further restricting access to essential welfare benefits (Kóczé 2020). I examined the adaptive strategies employed by Roma women as they navigate structural discriminatory barriers, revealing both their resilience and their responses to the exploitative conditions they face in shared housing units (Lancione 2019). By centering Roma women's experiences, I sought to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the poverty business while advocating for inclusive research practices and social justice-oriented approaches.

Fieldwork was conducted in Brno, a city known for its devolving political approaches to poverty and housing policy. The ethnographic data includes 28 qualitative interviews with Roma women, 6 additional interviews with social workers, local politicians, a lawyer, and an activist, as well as participant observation in the homes of poverty businessmen and with an activist group targeting housing policy in Brno. In a methodology is employed a visual worksheets method, based on arts-based and participatory research techniques, which is developed specifically for this fieldwork (Čanigová, 2022). This method was designed to ethically include "vulnerable" populations in the research process and to inspire others to redesign their methodological approaches to be more participative and inclusive. The research emphasizes the inclusion and active participation of Roma women, aiming to counteract traditional hierarchies in academic inquiry and amplify their voices while critically examining the benefits and limitations of the concept of "empowerment."

Based on the fieldwork, I will address the panel's questions, such as: What are the methodological challenges of fieldwork in shared living arrangements, and how can this contribute to a better understanding of such arrangements, including shared, temporary and/or informal ones? How do ethnographers manage questions of trust and consent, while documenting and representing the everyday lives of dwellers in precarious or marginalized housing?

However, several aspects remain unanswered in my research, and I hope to explore them further: How can researchers work with participants who are "vulnerable" without exposing them to greater harm or further marginalization? How can we mitigate hierarchies between researchers and participants from marginalized backgrounds? How can ethnographers study shared housing environments while centering Roma women's experiences and advocating for social justice? How can we analyze the broader role of institutions without negatively impacting the microenvironment or endangering "vulnerable" participants?

¹ The term "vulnerable" is in quotation marks because it can be both positive and negative, being labeled as such may limit participants' opportunities, rights, or voices, and overprotection can lead to disempowerment (Atkinson, 2007) and exclusion of vulnerable based on the deontological principle of autonomy (Drewett, A., O'Reilly, M., 2021).

References

Atkinson, Jacqueline M.

2007 Protecting or Empowering the Vulnerable? Mental Illness, Communication and the Research Process. *Research Ethics*, 3(4), 134-138. <https://doi.org/10.1177/174701610700300410>.

Čanigová, Kateřina

2022 "Will You Work with Me?": Visual Worksheets as Facilitators of Inclusive, Collaborative, and Empowering Interviews with Vulnerable Populations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Available at: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/16094069211069444>.

Čanigová, Kateřina, Souralová, Adéla

2024 Coping with housing precarity: Roma women's responses to housing insecurity in the Czech Republic. *Housing Studies*, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2024.2418837>.

Drewett, Allison., O'Reilly, Michelle

2023 Examining the value of using naturally occurring data to facilitate qualitative health research with 'seldom heard' 'vulnerable' groups: A research note on inpatient care. *Qualitative Research*, 23(3), 825–835. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941211039971>.

Kupka, Petr, Walach, Václav, Brendzova, Alica.

2021 The poverty business: landlords, illicit practices and reproduction of disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Czechia. *Trends in Organized Crime*. 24. 1–19. [10.1007/s12117-020-09402-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-020-09402-x).

Lancione, Michele

2019 The politics of embodied urban precarity: Roma people and the fight for housing in Bucharest, Romania, *Geoforum*, 101 (2019), pp. 182–191.

Kóczé, Angéla

2020 Gendered and Racialized Social Insecurity of Roma in East Central Europe. In: van Baar, H., Kóczé, A. (eds) *The Roma and Their Struggle for Identity in Contemporary Europe*, Berghahn, 124–149.

The Full House and the Empty House. Spectral masculinities and conflicting styles of domesticity in a low-income neighborhood of urban Chile

Consuelo Araos, Universidad de Los Andes, Chile

caraos@uandes.cl

Matías Aravena, Universidad Católica de Chile

mxaravena@uc.cl

This paper delves into a case study from ethnographic research on domestic configurations in low-income neighborhoods of Santiago. Our inquiry begins with a striking and counterintuitive finding concerning a three-generational matrifocal household – an arrangement commonly found in marginalized urban areas of Chile (ref). On the same plot, two houses coexist: the front house, a precarious wooden structure, is overoccupied, with a grandmother and plot owner, two daughters, and four grandchildren sharing a single room, while the backyard house, a sturdier cement and brick construction, remains empty. This situation challenges the prevailing norm of rapid circulation and reoccupation of vacant residential spaces in self-built peripheral urban settings (Pérez and Araos, 2024).

The ethnographic analysis unfolds to make sense of what initially appears to be an absurd contradiction. We argue that crucial issues related to the entanglements between the emergence of kinship relations, domestic life, and the material transformation of houses as dwelling environments underlie this opposition.

Our first finding reveals that the opposition between the full house and the empty house is linked to two significant forms of physical absence among family members: on the one hand, the only son – murdered two years ago during a violent prison fight – and on the other, the youngest daughter, who left the backyard house a year ago to live with her in-laws. Additionally, narratives about the construction and habitation of both houses reveal a clear gendered division: the front house was built and inhabited by the women, whereas the backyard house was constructed by the youngest daughter's husband and subsequently inhabited by her, their children, and her successive partners.

We provide a detailed account of how, through concrete daily practices of "house-ing" (Biehl and Neiburg, 2021), the women transform these deeply felt absences into ghostly presences – experienced as "warm" and familiar in the full house, and "cold" and hostile in the empty one. These domestic spaces embody deeper spectral dimensions of masculinity that continue to haunt the women's everyday lives. The ghostly presences they perceive and interact with are intimately tied to the histories of these dwellings – manifesting two enduring forms of spectral masculinity: the son-brother who never ceases to be, and the husband-father who never fully becomes. These figures, rooted in the long past of many generations, shape how the women engage with their domestic environment, marking the houses with contrasting emotional attachments and values.

Drawing on new anthropological approaches to practical kinship and domestic dwelling (Carsten, 2004), our analysis introduces an original dialogue between the theoretical perspectives of "haunting" (Miller, 2001;

Frosch, 2012; Gordon, 2008) and "spectrography" (de Pina-Cabral, 2019). This approach allows us to explore how the women's contrasting feelings and narratives about physical absences and ghostly presences expose deeper tensions in the creation and maintenance of a meaningful existence under specific structural constraints, possibilities, and expectations (Han, 2011). Furthermore, the study highlights the paradoxical role of men, whose presence or absence – as husbands, fathers, sons, or brothers – carries different and often conflicting meanings for the women left behind. Ultimately, our work frames domesticity as both a set of practices and a spatial process through which kinship is enacted and reimagined.

This presentation aims to contribute to the broader discussion of kinship and domestic ethnography in marginalized contexts in two significant ways. First, we explore how ethnographic accounts of hauntings and ghostly presences provide an analytical lens for integrating different levels of analysis – linking personal narratives with structural processes. By centering the concept of styles of domesticity, we incorporate temporality and spatiality in analyzing the co-emergence of kinship and specific dwelling environments. Second, we argue that a close ethnographic focus on domesticity in low-income neighborhoods in Santiago challenges conventional interpretations of cohabitation as merely a consequence of structural political and economic constraints, such as relocation policies, economic scarcity, and urban marginalization.

References

- Biehl, Joao, Federico Neiburg
2021 Oikography: Ethnographies of House-ing in Critical Times. *Cultural Anthropology*, 36, 4, pp. 539–547.
- Carsten, Janet
2004 *After Kinship*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
- de Pina-Cabral, João
2019 My mother or father: person, metaperson, and transcendence in ethnographic theory. *J R Anthropol Inst*, 25: 303–323.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.13027>
- Gordon, Avery
2008 *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Han, Clara
2011 "Symptoms of Another Life: Time, Possibility, and Domestic Relations in Chile's Credit Economy", *Cultural Anthropology*, 26, 1, pp. 6–32.
- Frosch, Stephen
2012 Hauntings: Psychoanalysis and Ghostly Transmission, *American Imago*, 69, 2, pp. 241–264
- Miller, Daniel
2001 "Possessions", in Daniel Miller (Ed.), *Home Possessions*, Berg, pp. 107–121.
- Pérez, Miguel, Araos, Consuelo
2024 Autoconstrucción e (inter)subjetividad política. Prácticas y semánticas en las periferias del Gran Santiago. *Revista EURE – Revista De Estudios Urbano Regionales*, 150, 2, s.p.

What forms of shared living? Research methodologies for domestic cultures of precariousness

Emiliano Esposito, Università di Trento

emiliano.esposito@unitn.it

Silvia Antinori, Università di Trento

silvia.antinori@unitn.it

Chiara Davoli, Università di Urbino

chiara.davoli@uniurb.it

The phenomenon of cohabitation is difficult to treat with the tools of statistics, as stated by two ISTAT researchers interviewed, and therefore only limited data are available on the phenomenon. Estimates based on standard samples would risk lacking scientific consistency and would not reflect the complexity of the phenomenon.

Census and sample surveys on various aspects of life, namely leisure activities and housing choices, consider households as the reference population, defined on the basis of three main requirements, such as affective and family ties, cohabitation and sharing of expenses and common management of economic resources.

However, this methodological criterion has a significant limitation: it is unable to capture the variety of housing forms and modes that are increasingly emerging in our country. To overcome these methodological limitations, more qualitative and in-depth research approaches are needed.

Shared living, in fact, is a non-homogeneous phenomenon that is characterised by the marked variety of forms it can take with reference to the profiles of the actors involved, the type of relationships established in the domestic space, the motivations that lead to this housing option, the title of enjoyment of the accommodation and the characteristics of the dwelling (Cafora, 2024; Bergan et al., 2021; Heath et al., 2017; Zhang and Gurran, 2021; Costa and Minora, 2023; White and Madden 2024).

The opacity, fluidity and variety of the phenomenon therefore lead to the consideration of a research methodology that is qualitative as necessary to read the different experiences of shared living and contribute to a multifaceted understanding of the process. In-depth interviews or in-depth fieldwork ethnographies that adopt the 'house' (/shared) as an analytical frame, in fact, allow the reading of the interweaving of social, cultural, economic dynamics that characterise the phenomenon; to examine at practices and imaginaries, linking the micro level to the meso, to the macro.

These methodologies prove essential on several levels: firstly, they contribute to knowledge of the various experiences of shared living, shedding light on the various forms of housing and living – even in the radical sense (for example, even in homelessness shared home-making practices are recognisable). Secondly, they allow for the reading and analysis of changing social configurations, relational processes, ideas and meanings of home and its use (also in relation to the city/territory and other geographies), linking, for example, home and work or other factors; the reading of forms of marginalisation and the housing tactics of reaction; the effects on the sense of self and on the subjectivities of the people who live such housing experiences.

To explore forms of cohabitation, on a micro level, we focused on subjective and relational dynamics. We investigated how people manage daily routines, how they construct and maintain boundaries within the shared space, and how they negotiate the use of common spaces, etc. At the meso level, we tried to place the phenomenon of cohabitation in the broader social and cultural context. Here, we questioned how the external context – which includes economic, cultural and social factors – influences the individual life course and the choice to share a dwelling. At the macro level, we examined the role of housing policies and institutional strategies. In particular, we asked how public policies, or the absence of them, can incentivise, limit or shape the phenomenon of shared living. Based on our analysis, we classified the phenomenon of co-housing using certain conceptual coordinates:

- The reason for the choice (forced or voluntary);
- The time (short or long term);
- The function (reproductive, productive or solidarity);
- The territorial dimension (large cities, small towns, rural areas).

The multidimensionality of the approach has allowed us to identify three case studies, united, despite their great diversity, by their embodying forms of housing precarity – the privileged object of our investigations.

The first case study explores the phenomenon of flat sharing among adults aged between 25 and 50, working and residing in the city of Rome, through in-depth semi-structured interviews.

The second case, by means of ethnographic investigation, looks at the sharing of living space in a public housing complex undergoing a process of urban regeneration in Naples.

The third case will try to reflect, through the analysis of ethnographic materials, on issues concerning homeless subjects – both in contexts of urban marginality and within reception centres – in the city of Rome.

What emerges from the three empirical cases highlights the contribution that the use of qualitative research methods makes to the understanding of shared living as a variegated, opaque and in some cases off the radar of academic and political debate. The first contribution is on the exploratory level. A qualitative methodology, anchored in what goes on in the everyday terrain of living, allows us to capture the multiplicity of experiences, meanings and imaginaries that make up shared living space and time. Exploring such variety would allow us to explore on the taxonomies of shared living. What systems of meaning and value are attributed to the experience of sharing 'home'? How can such a reconfiguration on the heuristic level of shared living contribute to enriching the definition of the standards of analysis on which institutional surveys of the phenomenon are structured in Italy? Finally, what contributions can a more nuanced reading of the phenomenon make at the level of (public) housing policies?

References

- Bergan, T. L., Gorman-Murray, A., Power, E. R.
2023 «Co-Living, Gentlemen's Clubs, and Residential Hotels: A Long View of Shared Housing Infrastructures for Single Young Professionals», in *Housing, Theory and Society*, 40, 5, pp. 679-694.
- Cafora S.
2024 *Collaborare e abitare. Il diritto alla casa nelle metropoli per le nuove generazioni*, in *Scenari*, Fondazione Giacomo Feltrinelli.
- Costa, G., e Minora, F. A.
2023 *Coabitazioni solidali. Politiche, programmi e progetti*, Roma, Carocci.
- Heath, S., Davies, K., Edwards, G., Scicluna, R.
2017 *Shared housing, shared lives: Everyday experiences across the lifecourse*, Londra, Routledge.
- Maalsen, S.
2020 «'Generation Share': digitalized geographies of shared housing», in *Social & Cultural Geography*, 21, 1, pp. 105-113.
- White, T.
2024 «Beds for rent», in *Economy and Society*, 53, 1, pp. 67-91.
- White, T., Madden, D.
2024 «Housing ideology and urban residential change: The rise of co-living in the financialized city», in *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 0308518X241230446.
- Zhang, D., Setola, N., Chen, Y.
2024 «Analysis of Cross-Generational Co-Living Space Configuration in Residential Communities – Case Study in China and Italy Based on Space Syntax», in *Buildings*, 14, 2, p. 346.

4. Civil society and care practices

Convenors: Paola Bonizzoni & Giacomo Lampredi (University of Milan)

NGOs and the Italian Welfare System. Civic Care Amidst Crises and Transformations

Carlotta Mozzana, Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca

carlotta.mozzana@unimib.it

Eugenio Graziano, Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca

eugenio.graziano@unimib.it

In the past decade, the Italian welfare system has undergone significant transformations, influenced by recurring crises of social, economic, and political nature. These crises have seen the involvement of new actors, among which Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have emerged as key players. Initially focused on emergency response in the migration sector, NGOs have progressively expanded their reach into traditional welfare areas, addressing issues such as youth unemployment (NEETs), educational poverty, food assistance, and social support. This paper aims to explore the evolving role of NGOs in the Italian welfare landscape through the lens of "civic care," examining their contributions to the generation of goods and services that intersect with institutional frameworks.

Drawing on qualitative research that includes document analysis, budget reviews, and in-depth interviews with key NGOs such as Save the Children, Action Aid, and Emergency, this study investigates how these organizations have positioned themselves as both service providers and agenda setters. NGOs have increasingly adopted strategies of knowledge production, data dissemination, and public agenda-setting, thereby shaping the framing of social issues and influencing policy priorities. Their role in constructing narratives around social problems has not only informed public opinion but also driven institutional responses. A key aspect of this transformation is the increasing entrepreneurialization of the third sector, where NGOs navigate between market-driven imperatives and their traditional advocacy roles. The marketization of the sector has led NGOs to adopt managerial practices, performance-based evaluation criteria, and competitive fundraising strategies. While these approaches can enhance efficiency and innovation, they also pose significant challenges to the core mission of social solidarity and universal welfare. The pursuit of funding and resources often forces NGOs to align their objectives with donor priorities, which may not always align with the needs of the most vulnerable populations. Furthermore, the competition for resources can create fragmentation within the sector, leading to a focus on short-term, project-based interventions rather than long-term systemic solutions.

The analysis also considers the potential of civic care practices in fostering new forms of social solidarity and participation. While NGO interventions and practices can be interpreted through the lens of "civic care," their narrow focus, compounded by the way NGOs produce knowledge – often relying on specific metrics and data to frame social issues – may result in fragmented interventions that fail to address the broader structural and systemic issues of social welfare. The absence of a comprehensive vision can lead to gaps in care, leaving certain vulnerable groups underserved and perpetuating inequalities. Additionally, the growing influence of NGOs in policy-setting raises concerns about accountability and the democratic legitimacy of welfare governance.

Ultimately, the paper seeks to contribute to the broader research agenda on civic care by providing insights into the transformative potential of NGOs in shaping a more inclusive and responsive welfare system in Italy, while also highlighting the risks of further fragmenting the welfare landscape.

Elites and the "suffering others". Teaching philanthropy in a privileged Parisian school

Victor Devisme, IDHE.S – ENS Paris-Saclay

victor.devisme@ens-paris-saclay.fr

How do privileged children learn to relate to and think about others? Research in political socialization has shown that, for over a century and in most European countries, citizenship education (CE) was designed to draw clear boundaries between the national community and those considered “others” (Ideland and Malmberg 2014). CE played a key role in fostering a sense of national belonging while also reinforcing patterns of exclusion and the production of “otherness.” These studies have typically adopted the nation-state as the natural unit of analysis, reflecting CE’s historical role in constructing national identities.

However, in France – as in countries like Britain (Gholami 2017) – the curriculum has undergone significant changes. In response to recent concerns, such as school bullying, CE now aims to connect more directly with students’ lived experiences. This approach emphasizes empathy, gift-giving, and reflection on one’s own social position, drawing on the developmental idea (rooted in Piaget ([1931] 2011)) that solidarity should be experienced rather than simply taught. As a result, a broad range of “care” practices are being integrated into the CE curriculum. Unlike earlier versions, these new guidelines place less emphasis on national duties and responsibilities, and instead promote the idea that becoming a good citizen begins with becoming a good person.

This presentation explores how privileged children relate to the imagined figure of the “suffering other” (Boltanski 1993; Fassin 2011). Drawing on nine months of ethnographic fieldwork in an elite public school in Paris, it examines how citizenship education has been transformed into a form of philanthropic education, and how this shift is enacted in everyday school practices. The presentation will argue that, despite efforts to bridge social divides and challenge feelings of entitlement among privileged children (Khan 2011; Sherman 2017), philanthropic education is a socially exclusive process (Gaztambide-Fernández and Howard 2013). Rather than blurring boundaries between social classes, it appears to reinforce them – establishing a clear division between “us” and “them” (Hoggart 1970) and reifying the figure of the “other,” whether framed as “the poor,” “the suffering,” or “the sick.” This division does not fully overlap with national boundaries and has a stark class dimension.

The presentation will narrow down to how what I call strategies of *intervention* are fostered among privileged children. In an article about parenting practices in progressive wealthy families, Sherman (2017) argues that parents employ both strategies of *exposure* (teaching children about social, environmental, racial inequality) and strategies of *constraint* (limiting children’s access to luxury goods and services to encourage more “normal” behaviour). The presentation will build on this framework to show that philanthropic education fosters both strategies of exposure and intervention – making children both *more aware* and *more active* in worldly issues. I will show that these processes are deeply gendered: girls tend to display care and attentiveness while boys often adopt attitudes of distance and cynicism. Following sociologists of gender and education, I will argue that the way children think about others in philanthropy classes is closely shaped by their gender and class performances (Bettie 2000).

With regards to the panel’s concerns, the presentation will address several potential points of inquiry.

First, the presentation will highlight the significant gap between the philanthropy curriculum as designed and how it is practiced. This disconnect is especially striking in a program meant to encourage student activism. I argue that the construction of “otherness” in this program stems from both the curriculum itself and how it is implemented. For example, the program defines poverty through a narrow set of familiar figures – the beggar, the endangered animal, the child without water – which simplifies and limits children’s understanding. This exclusivity is reinforced by teachers’ choices and the students’ privileged social backgrounds, as well as in-class performances. These in-class performances can be referred to as a gendered “face work” and are decisive in evaluating whether students believe and adhere to the class. This has implications regarding the transmission of care practices.

Second, the presentation will examine what makes “civic care” truly civic. While the public school setting provides fertile ground for developing civic values, I argue that it is not sufficient. The shift from civic education to a focus on “good personhood” tends to recast collective belonging and solidarity as individual acts of empathy. This individualization of care promotes personal responsibility for the common good, often at the expense of collective commitments. I will also reflect on what is specific to the French public education context and consider which findings might apply more broadly to other European settings.

Finally, the presentation will assess the type of volunteer ethos cultivated through the program. I argue that the class promotes “elite” forms of volunteering (Voyer 2023), emphasizing values and contributions aligned with students’ future career paths. For example, I will show that students interact with volunteers with

"expertise" rather than "care". This approach contrasts with grassroots or "civil society" models of volunteering (Eliasoph 2011), therefore producing a cautious yet exclusive vision of civic engagement. I will conclude by opening a discussion on how volunteering operates as a social practice shaped by power relations and gendered dynamics.

References

- Bettie, Julie. 2000. "Women without Class: Chicas, Cholas, Trash, and the Presence/Absence of Class Identity." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 26(1):1–35.
- Boltanski, Luc. 1993. *La Souffrance à distance. Morale humanitaire, médias et politique*. Éditions Métailié.
- Eliasoph, Nina. 2011. *Making Volunteers. Civic Life after Welfare's End*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Fassin, Didier. 2011. *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present*. University of California Press.
- Gaztambide-Fernández, Rubén A., and Adam Howard. 2013. "Social Justice, Deferred Complicity, and the Moral Plight of the Wealthy." *Democracy and Education* 21(1):7.
- Gholami, Reza. 2017. "The Art of Self-Making: Identity and Citizenship Education in Late-Modernity." *British Journal of Sociology of Education*.
- Hoggart, Richard. 1970. *La culture du pauvre: étude sur le style de vie des classes populaires en Angleterre*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.
- Ideland, Malin, and Claes and Malmberg. 2014. "'Our Common World' Belongs to 'Us': Constructions of Otherness in Education for Sustainable Development." *Critical Studies in Education* 55(3):369–86.
- Khan, Shamus. 2011. *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Piaget, Jean. [1931] 2011. "The Spirit of Solidarity in Children and International Cooperation (1931)." *Schools: Studies in Education* 8(1):74–89.
- Sherman, Rachel. 2017. "Conflicted Cultivation: Parenting, Privilege, and Moral Worth in Wealthy New York Families." *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 5(1):1–33.
- Voyer, Andrea. 2023. "Elite Integration Through Volunteerism: The Case of a New York City Parent-Teacher Association." Pp. 117–35 in *Civil Society Elites: Exploring the Composition, Reproduction, Integration, and Contestation of Civil Society Actors at the Top*. Springer International Publishing.

Pro-refugee volunteering as neoliberal self-care. Volunteering, self-realisation and the promise of societal improvement

Gaja Maestri, Aston University (Birmingham, UK)

g.maestri@aston.ac.uk

Pierre Monforte, University of Leicester (UK)

pm260@leicester.ac.uk

In the last decades charities and grass-roots groups have developed across Europe to organise acts of care towards migrants. Especially after the so-called 2015 refugee crisis, these acts were presented as a response to a "crisis of compassion" (Sirriyeh, 2018) and materialised into initiatives such as organised hosting networks, language courses, food and clothes donations, legal assistance or rescue missions at the European borders. In this paper we critically assess how the notion of 'care' is mobilised by pro-refugee charities and volunteers, not as an orientation towards refugees (as opposed to hostility) but as a relationship between individual volunteers and their selves and communities.

Scholars have observed "a discursive explosion of care" (Care Collective, 2020, Chatzidakis, & Littler, 2020) within contemporary corporate capitalism. Care as a concept refers to socio-material and affective practices that attend to the needs of living beings to ensure their sustainability and flourishing (Ibid.; Martínez-Jiménez, 2023). Within neoliberal societies, discourses around care have also increasingly included practices of 'self-care', i.e., "a person's responsibility over the sustainability and flourishing of their own life" (Martínez-Jiménez, 2023, p.2817). In this paper, we explore how pro-refugee volunteering is marketed and experienced as a form of self-care, which can support individual self-realisation and betterment by, for instance, enabling volunteers to embody compassionate values, develop new skills, and battle feelings of political powerlessness. Furthermore, within a neoliberal political discourse centred on individual entrepreneurship and autonomy (Binkley 2014, Harvey 2005), individual behaviours are regarded as key in achieving collective outcomes. Pro-refugee volunteering is therefore not only presented as a practice of individual self-care, but consequently as a form of more collective care too: by engaging with activities that can support individual growth, volunteers also support the thriving of more caring and compassionate communities, and hence care more generally for future society and generations too. For example, in both charities' and volunteers' accounts, pro-refugee

volunteering is presented as contributing to counter some of the major social problems characterising Western societies, e.g., xenophobia, social hostility, and loneliness, promoting instead social cohesion.

In our analysis, we will draw on refugee-support organisations' document analysis and 169 in-depth interviews with volunteers engaged in the Refugees Welcome movement in England, France, and Italy. Data were collected between 2017 and 2019 and therefore do not reflect the changes that the sector underwent during the Covid pandemic. Our paper nevertheless aims to draw wider reflections on the nature of pro-refugee volunteering within a neoliberal discourse centred on the idea of individual enterprise and responsibility. We will first show how charities emphasise the benefits of pro-refugee volunteering, not only for migrants, but also for host societies in general and for individual volunteers in particular. These include the building of more cohesive and welcoming communities, and the possibility for individual volunteers to experience, amongst other things, enriching inter-cultural encounters and to improve their social life by forging new friendships. We will then discuss how individual volunteers incorporate an attention to self-care in their personal narratives on volunteering. For example, we will show that many highlight how volunteering enables them to keep using their professional skills after retirement or how, especially among younger volunteers, it can help them acquire new skills that could support career transitions or future job aspirations. Volunteers also emphasise how pro-refugee volunteering enable them to embody their personal or family values and dispositions, and how they seek for socially rewarding experiences by forging new emotional bonds with refugees. At the same time, these positive experiences can be undermined by the inevitable difficulties that volunteers encounter in their daily practices of refugee support, which can lead to frustration, uneasiness, and weariness. We will therefore illustrate both charities' and individuals' practices of self-care in these cases, which include participation in mutual aid groups, psychological support, or even pausing or changing volunteering activities.

Overall, by showing how pro-refugee volunteers enact a depoliticised individual project of individual self-realisation that can help better society in non-disruptive ways, our paper presents a critique of 'care' as a neoliberal governing discourse that weakens the political transformative potential of refugee-support action.

References

- Binkley, Sam
2014 Happiness as enterprise: An essay on neoliberal life. Albany, NY: Suny Press.
- Care Collective, The
2020 The care manifesto: The politics of interdependence. New York: Verso Books.
- Chatzidakis, Andreas & Littler, Jo
2022 An anatomy of carewashing: Corporate branding and the commodification of care during Covid-19. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 25(3-4), 268-286.
- Harvey, David
2005 Neoliberalism. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Martínez-Jiménez, Laura
2023 Postfeminist neoliberalization of self-care: a critical discourse analysis of its representation in Vogue, Cosmopolitan and Elle. *Feminist Media Studies*, 23(6), 2814-2830.
- Sirriyeh, Ala
2018 The politics of compassion. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

Solidarity as practical intervention: an alternative reception framework? Exploring the structure, operations and "offers" of self-defined solidarity groups, organisations and projects in the context of migrant reception

Rachel Ellis, Universidad de Granada

e.rellis@go.ugr.es

This paper builds on current investigation into "solidarity humanitarianism" (Rozakou, 2017), which has focused on 2015 as the epicentre of Europe's so-called "refugee crisis". Whilst this depiction of a "crisis" is itself arguably problematic, it does provide crucial background to the study of solidarity response in contemporary Europe. The unprecedented reaction of local then international volunteers, provided a counter-narrative to traditional humanitarian practices and service delivery, dominated by state institutions, Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs) and International Nongovernmental Organisations (INGOs), whilst simultaneously filling what were deemed gaps, or even failings, of the same actors. Facilitated by social media and crowdfunding platforms,

these “ordinary” people engaged in Search and Rescue (SAR) operations, distributed necessities, organised logistics and provided emergency care. Solidarity seemed to extend beyond theory and rhetoric; it underpinned and shaped activities, informing practicalities and *modus operandi*.

The research objective is thus to explore how organisations, groups and individual “solidarians”, particularly those working in the distribution of food and non-food items (NFIs), understand and apply a “solidarity approach” to the reception of displaced people in Lesbos, Greece and Nicosia, Cyprus. It focuses on how these actors translate the concept of solidarity into action and activity, the practicalities this entails and ultimately, whether there is actual or potential impact beyond the interventions’ stated beneficiaries. This paper seeks to go beyond considerations of the emergency framing of 2015 and investigate the practical application of “solidarity” from 2016 to present day. It asks whether these “offers” and activities of self-defined solidarians provide displaced communities viable alternatives to mainstream state, IGO and INGO-managed options. Having outlined the object of study and objectives, the paper presents the theoretical framework and key concepts, methodology and tools of analysis followed by the results, conclusions and recommendations for further development.

The theoretical framework of this paper is interdisciplinary, drawing on multiple fields including, but not limited to, geography, social anthropology and international development studies. “Solidarity humanitarianism” provides the key analytical concept. Coined by Rozakou in 2017 referring to the Greek island of Lesbos in 2015, the term recognises the practical role “solidarians” undertook “in organising reception for border-crossers, in rescue operations, in providing services and goods” (Rozakou, 2017, p. 102). The nature of this “solidarity humanitarianism” in Greece and other locations in Europe, notably in Germany, from summer 2015 through the 2016 implementation of the EU-Turkey deal, is well documented (Mauk, 2017; Serntedakis, 2017; Kiess et al. in Lahusen, Grasso, 2018; Mitchell et al., 2018). Yet, despite demonstrably worsening conditions in reception facilities and increasing accounts of normalised border violence in the mediterranean (Mondéjar Segovia, 2025), there has been little investigation into the work and potential of these solidarity initiatives beyond the “crisis” framing, with even less attention paid to under-represented locations such as Cyprus. This has yielded a knowledge gap surrounding the values and motivations that sustain these activities, the power implications of those involved and, what Chatterton et al. have called the “still missing...detailed empirical accounts of the messy, gritty and real everyday rhythms as activists envision, negotiate, build and enact life” (Chatterton et al., 2010, p. 481).

Another fundamental concept underpinning this enquiry is the language of development and humanitarian spaces. Such “reflections on the language of development evoke bigger questions about the world-making projects that they define and describe” with development “buzzwords” further sustaining this “worlds-in-the-making” endeavour (Cornwall, Eade, 2010, pp. 16, 1). Understanding the language of development is therefore crucial in the context of solidarians’ definitions of themselves, their work and the concept of solidarity itself, as part of the humanitarian world-making process, whether aligning or directly countering mainstream, institutional approaches.

Methodologically, the analysis employs a qualitative perspective. In addition to participant categorisation as part of the selection process, interviewees were also encouraged to self-identify with terms that resonated. This participative strategy was therefore itself designed to “disrupt...the imbalances of power between researcher and researched” (Edwards, Brannelly, 2017, p. 272). Participant selection and analysis is informed by the author’s professional experience both in the field, including three years in Lesbos, as well as part of NGO senior management teams.

The analytical tools are individual and group interviews with two participant types: those currently involved and those previously, but no-longer part of self-defined solidarity groups, organisations and projects working in migrant reception. Crucially, all interviewees were in the field at some point during the timeframe in question: 2016 to present. Participants are diverse in terms of ascribed, nominal roles, which include Manager, Coordinator, Staff, Volunteer and Beneficiary. However, given the analytical focus and strategy, they were also asked to self-identify, both within these titles, and any other descriptive labels that resonated with their involvement.

As a result of this analysis, the paper first outlines solidarity initiatives’ organisational structures, highlighting the relevance within these spaces of non-hierarchy, the role of volunteers, and differing perspectives around employing paid staff. The results also describe the operations, services and “offers” of said projects, arguing that in the context of distribution, groups and organisations that self-define as being “in solidarity with”

displaced people, as opposed to “delivering charity or aid to”, ascribe greater importance to *how* they conduct and coordinate their work than *what*, materially, they give.

The paper’s results focus on three central points of tension found between what can be understood as solidarians’ political-moral-ideological values and their experienced reality in the field. The final part of the analysis explores how solidarians navigate these tensions in which they simultaneously understand their actions as different from, even a rejection of, the “depoliticised managerialism” (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 8) of traditional humanitarian work, with implications for new methodologies of care-centred, civil society support whilst operating within the same spaces; (re)imagining, and possibly even perpetuating, existing hierarchies and power dynamics that they themselves ultimately denounce.

The conclusion of this paper highlights the impact of these solidarity-based interventions for recipient communities, as well as society at large. It emphasises the importance of further critical analysis into ground-up, civil society alternatives to mainstream, institutional reception facilities with potential benefits for all.

References

- Cornwall, Andrea, Deborah Eade (Eds.)
2010 *Deconstructing Development Discourse: Buzzwords and Fuzzwords*, Rugby, Practical Action Publishing Ltd.
Chatterton, Paul, Jenny Pickerill
2010 «Everyday activism and transitions towards post-capitalist worlds», in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 35, 4, pp. 475-490.
Chouliaraki, Lilie
2013 *The Ironic Spectator: Solidarity in the Age of Post-Humanitarianism*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
Edwards, Rosalind, Tula Brannelly
2017 «Approaches to democratising qualitative research methods», in *Qualitative Research*, 17, 3, pp. 271-277.
Kiess, Johannes, Christian Lahusen, Ulrike Zschache
2018 «Solidarity Activism in Germany: What Explains Different Types and Levels of Engagement?», in Christian Lahusen, Maria Grasso (Eds.), *Solidarity in Europe: Citizens' Responses in Times of Crisis*, Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 43 – 72.
Mauk, Ben
2017 «102 villagers, 750 refugees, one grand experiment», in *The Guardian*, 19 April 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/apr/19/102-villagers-750-refugees-one-grand-experiment>, visited 10\05\2023.
Mitchell, Katharyne, Matthew Sparke
2018 «Hotspot geopolitics versus geosocial solidarity: Contending constructions of safe space for migrants in Europe», in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 0, 0, pp. 1-21.
Mondéjar Segovia, María
2025 «Entrevista: Hibai Arbide: "He documentado casos de guardacostas que han empujado a migrantes al agua con las manos atadas"», in *El Periodico*, 4 March 2025, <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/internacional/20250304/hibai-arbide-migrantes-guardacostas-grecia-union-europea-devoluciones-caliente-114632495>, visited 25\04\2025
Rozakou, Katerina
2017 «Solidarity #Humanitarianism: The Blurred Boundaries of Humanitarianism in Greece», in *Etnofoor, Solidarity*, 29, 2, pp. 99-104.
Serntedakis, Giorgos
2017 «'Solidarity' for Strangers: A Case Study of 'Solidarity' Initiatives in Lesbos», in *Etnofoor, Solidarity*, 29, 2, pp. 83-98.

Civic care, radical care, and underlying inequalities. An analysis of civil society activism and care practices towards, by, and with migrants across ethnographic contexts

Elisa Lanari, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity

lanari@mmg.mpg.de

Drawing on ethnographic research in different contexts – suburban USA and small-town Italy, this presentation reflects on the radical potential and inequalities inherent in different forms of “civic care” enacted by, for, and with migrants and other racialized individuals.

I begin by analyzing examples from my research in a historically white and wealthy suburb of Atlanta, Georgia, USA, a context characterized by a highly privatized model of municipal governance. There, non-profit organizations and upper-middle class volunteers played a key role in delivering services and creating social programs for impoverished Black and Latinx residents. Based on my experience as volunteer and ethnographer inside these organizations, I discuss how gendered and racialized inequalities were revealed and partially reproduced during everyday interactions between volunteers and help-seekers. White women volunteers, in

particular, were routinely praised for their ability to combine compassionate action with entrepreneurial spirit (cf. Muehelebach, 2012; Hyatt, 2001) and seen as embodying the moral standards of deservingness with which aid recipients were expected to conform. I contrast these public celebrations of middle-class volunteerism – evident also from interviews, media and archival material – with other types of community work which, in turn, tended to be invisibilized. These included the labor of Latina women who volunteered inside their children’s schools, cared for derelict neighborhoods and their residents. Building on Black and Chicana feminist theorizing about m(other)work (Caballero et al., 2019; Collins, 1994), I analyze this feminized labor as a strategy of “radical care” that allows marginalized communities to survive in contexts shaped by institutional neglect, histories of segregation, and targeted disinvestment (Hobart, Kneese 2020). This radical potential, I argue, also lies in the fact that Latina women refused to give in to institutional co-optations of their labor and, instead, used it to build counter-spaces of sanctuary and support for everyone dealing with everyday racism and illegalization. Through their community work, these women ultimately came to feel more empowered to speak up against local policies and stake claims to political inclusion despite their legally precarious status (Lanari, 2022). I use the concept of “radical care,” implying a potential to remake and reimagine worlds otherwise (Hobart, Kneese, 2020; McTighe, Raschig 2019), as a connecting thread to my second set of examples. These are taken from ethnographic research focusing on civil society mobilizations supporting migrants and asylum seekers in small Italian mountain towns. Shifting the focus from the initial period of arrival to the post-reception period, my research examined how various civil society actors – private citizens, employers, co-ethnics, activists, third sector organizations – continued to support foreign “newcomers” years after their first arrival in the region, and how they did so in a context of stretched budgets, limited institutional capacities, and multiple social, demographic, environmental, and health crises. Individuals with migration histories often mentioned “lucky” encounters with Italian-origin residents as turning points in their lives and key factors in their decisions to settle in this depopulating region. They used lexicons of friendship and kinship to refer to the relationships borne out of these encounters, and noted how these connections had been crucial in the process of finding housing, employment, and sometimes even regularize their status. Italian-origin participants often resorted to the vocabulary of care, especially *mutual care* – involving both humans and natural environments – to describe their commitment to these relationships, seeing everyday acts of kindness and connection as especially important to nurturing the social fabric of depopulating small towns. At the same time, interlocutors across backgrounds acknowledged the vast power differentials and neo-colonial legacies that inevitably shaped these relationships and forms of support. I build on these examples to raise a set questions concerning how care is unevenly distributed based on perceptions of moral worth; how solidarity and civil society activism can be sustained and evolve over time; and, finally, how we can shift our analytical gaze away from an emphasis on social innovation to focus on the quiet labor of maintaining and repairing social infrastructures (Mattern 2018). As scholars, we should remain attentive to the inequalities underlying practices of “civic care” and, at the same time, ways for rethinking a society of differentiated rights and racialized exclusions through radical forms of care and political imagination (Ticktin 2020).

References

- Caballero, Cecilia, et al. (Eds).
 2019 *The Chicana Motherwork Anthology*, Tucson, University of Arizona Press.
 Hill Collins, Patricia
 1994 “Shifting the Center: Race, Class and Feminist Theorizing about Motherhood.” In Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Grace Chang, Linda Rennie Forcey (Eds), *Mothering. Ideology, Experience and Agency*, New York, Routledge, pp.371-389.
 Hobart, Hi’ilei Julia Kawehipuaakahaopulani, Tamara Kneese
 2020 “Radical Care: Survival Strategies for Uncertain Times” in *Social Text* 38, 1, 142, pp. 1–16.
 Hyatt, Susan
 2001. “From Citizen to Volunteer: Neoliberal Governance and the Erasure of Poverty.” In Judith Good, Jeff Maskovsky (Eds), *The New Poverty Studies: The Ethnography of Power, Politics, and Impoverished People in the United States* New York, New York University Press, pp.201-235.
 Lanari, Elisa
 2022 “Speaking up, Rising above: Latina Lived Citizenship in the Metropolitan US South” in *Citizenship Studies* 26, 1, pp. 38–54.
 Mattern, Shannon
 2018 “Maintenance and Care” in *Places*, November 2018. <https://placesjournal.org/article/maintenance-and-care/>
 McTighe, Laura, and Megan Raschig
 2019 “Introduction: An Otherwise Anthropology.” In *Theorizing the Contemporary, Fieldsights*, July 31. <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/introduction-an-otherwise-anthropology>

Muehlebach, Andrea

2011 "On Affective Labor in Post-Fordist Italy" in *Cultural Anthropology* 26, 1, pp. 59–82.

Ticktin, Miriam

2020 "Building a feminist commons in the time of COVID-19," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 47, 1, pp. 37–46.

«It's not just the relationship (...) it's the whole community around it». The experience of volunteers in buddy programs between care and brokerage

Michela Sempredon, University of Parma

michela.sempredon@unipr.it

Chiara Marchetti, Ciac Onlus

chiara.marchetti@ciaconlu.org

Eugenia Blasetti, University of Parma

eugenia.blasetti@unipr.it

Buddy schemes programs have been widespread for over a decade (Balaam 2015; Lai et al. 2017) both in Italy and in other European countries. Through a "matching" process, activated by a third-sector organization, between a buddy volunteer (usually Italian) and a buddy refugee (Stock 2019), their objective is to support and expand refugees' social networks in order to foster their inclusion in the hosting society.

In Belgium, where buddy schemes programs have been existing since 2011, the Flemish government has recognized them a strategic policy tool and they are part of the 4th pillar of migrant inclusion policies. In Italy, the Community Matching – the name under which buddy schemes have recently spread in our country, also thanks to UNHCR advocacy – has already been included in the Charter for Integration, signed by 11 Italian cities, and in some lines of the new programming of the Ministry of the Interior's Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (FAMI), which, through European funds, finances actions for the integration of third-country nationals.

Given the limited literature on these specific forms of volunteering, drawing on recent works of Mortier et al (2024) and Marchetti (2024), this paper aims to reflect on the transformative potential of care (de la Bellacasa, 2012; Drtobohm, 2022) in the context of buddy schemes programs in order to contribute to the debate about buddy schemes and, more specifically, to investigate whether they foster (or not) the development of social networks and social capital beyond the dyadic relationship between volunteers and refugees.

As Stock (2019) explains, these voluntary practices can be interpreted as practices of supporting the "other," not necessarily based on reciprocity. They can contribute to the overcoming of barriers between native and refugee people while, at the same time, reinforce them generating hierarchical and racializing relationships with exclusionary outcomes, as well as promoting familistic forms of welfare that risk legitimizing state's abdication from its responsibilities.

There is a tendency to think that it is mainly volunteers who foster refugee people's access to forms of socio-cultural and economic capital (Mortier et al 2024), acting as "brokers of social networks" (Obstfeld et al 2014). However, this is not always the case, and the opposite is often also true.

This paper, therefore, aims to analyse buddies relationships in order to observe their evolution over time, beyond the end of the project, to understand whether and how they lead to the development of networks not only for refugees but also for volunteers and whether these networks are composed of "strong" or "weak" ties (Granovetter 1973) and, consequentially, whether they constitute "bridging" or "bonding" networks.

What are the necessary conditions for new networks and diversified forms of social capital to develop, in a non-unilateral way? Mortier et al. (2024) highlight factors that can be associated on the one hand with the individual dimension, such as buddy refugees' profile and agency and, on the other hand, with governance factors such as the ongoing coordination and monitoring of buddy schemes.

Our empirical research confirms the relevance of these factors, but it also highlights others elements that contribute to the development of networks, both for volunteer and refugee buddies, related to: (a) expectations and meaning that buddies attribute to their relationships and the importance of the "care" dimension, including its temporal dimension (whether the program is activated upon refugees' arrival or upon the end of their institutional reception programme; whether meetings between the buddy volunteer and the buddy refugee

are more or less frequent and also occur beyond the end of the program), (b) support, monitoring and care of buddies by the organization managing the program, including their involvement in other activities aimed at refugees' inclusion on one hand, and at raising awareness of migration issues, on the other.

The paper draws on qualitative empirical material which includes 18 interviews conducted since April 2024 and still ongoing, both with buddies volunteer and buddies refugees in Parma, as part of the PRIN Volacross research project; and of 24 interviews with buddy pairs (tot. 48 participants, in Turin, Naples, Milan, Rome, Parma, Palermo, Bergamo, Padua) conducted by Ciac Onlus between April and October 2023.

References

- Balaam, Marie Claire
2015 «A concept analysis of befriending», in *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, vol. 71, n. 1, pp. 24-34
- Drotbhom, Heike
2022 «Care beyond repair», *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190854584.013.411>
- Granovetter, Mark
1973 «The strength of weak ties», *American Journal of Sociology*, vo. 78, n. 6, pp. 1360-1380
- Lai Daniel W.L., Shankar Janki, Khalema Ernest
2017 «Unspoken Skills and Tactics: Essentials for Immigrant Professionals in Integration to Workplace Culture», *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 18, pp. 937–959, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-017-0513-5>
- Marchetti, Chiara
2024 *Uno più uno non fa due. Promuovere comunità interculturali: il community matching tra rifugiati e italiani*, Editpress, Firenze, Italy
- Mortier Gaëlle, Oosterlynck Stijn, Raeymaeckers Peter
2024 «The Key to Success? Social Network Brokerage in Buddy Programmes for Newly Arrived Migrants in the Flemish Region of Belgium», in *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-024-01180-7>
- Obstfeld David, Borgatti Stephen, Davis, Jason
2014 «Brokerage as a process: decoupling third party action from social network structure» in D. Brass, G. Labianca, A. Mehra, & S. P. Borgatti (Eds.), *Research in the Sociology of Organizations* (pp. 135–159). Emerald Group Publishing Limited
- Puig de la Bellacasa, Maria
2012 «Nothing comes without its world: thinking with care», *Sociological Review*, 60 (2), pp. 197-216
- around it”: The experience of volunteers in buddy programs between care and brokerage».

Caring for the homeless. A transformative civic care practice in Brescia

Monica Amadini, Research Centre on Family and Childhood Education – Catholic University of the Sacred Heart
monica.amadini@unicatt.it

Annalisa Pasini, Research Centre on Family and Childhood Education – Catholic University of the Sacred Heart
annalisa.pasini1@unicatt.it

General description. The complexity of the 'homelessness' phenomenon, which combines components of housing deprivation and social unrest, according to strongly processual dynamics (Consoli, Meo, 2020), increasingly highlights the need for multidisciplinary readings. The experience of the homeless is indeed characterised by a multiplicity of forms of marginality (Pleace, 2016). In reference to the reality of Brescia, the city – which in 2023 boasted a population of 200,691 citizens, of whom at least 552 were homeless¹ – has numerous services for serious adult marginality. In particular, the 'Cabina di regia' ('control room') on Severe Marginalisation convenes nine actors of the third sector together with representatives of the municipality to jointly develop projects for the homeless. In this context, since 2018, the Association 'Un Medico X Te' has been operating by offering free health services to homeless people. In 2023, the Association commissioned the Research Centre on Family and Childhood Education of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart to conduct a research study on the health needs of homeless people in Brescia and the most effective approaches to address these needs, with the aim of ensuring more effective care for this vulnerable group. This request was made in recognition of the challenges faced by homeless individuals in accessing healthcare services due to a combination of bureaucratic, logistical and social barriers.

Objectives. The survey therefore aimed to explore the following topics:

- the distinctive features of homelessness in Brescia;
- the dynamics of 'sliding into poverty';
- elements of resilience/strategies for escaping from street life;
- effective ways of establishing a relationship with homeless people;

- the meanings of health and healthcare in the subculture of the homeless population in Brescia.

Finally, the researchers supported the Association, following a maieutic approach (Dolci, 1996), in reviewing its *modus operandi* with homeless patients, which led to the drafting of a code of conduct.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology The theoretical framework of reference is that of the pedagogy of fragility (Lizzola, 2006). Reading 'homelessness' within this theoretical framework implies a specific positioning of the phenomenon. Homelessness, understood as an experience of marginalisation, is read as a condition that is not only individual, but also social, and thus requires interventions at both the individual and the contextual level (Gnocchi, 2009). It is also required to be analysed through the category of existential meaning (Lizzola, 2009): the necessary process of revisiting the past, aimed at recovering questions of meaning, is the *conditio sine qua non* for the person to begin to open up a new biographical path (Bertolini, Caronia, 1999). On the basis of these assumptions, the research adopted an ethnographic methodology (Bove, 2019). It provided for the realisation of preparatory meetings and then focus groups with health and social education workers in the field of severe adult marginality in the Municipality of Brescia, as well as observations and participatory observation sessions in low/medium threshold services and finally interviews with homeless people.

Results. With reference to the present subject matter, the research provided the following findings: 1. the unrest underlying the condition of homelessness is extremely complex. The homeless population encountered is characterised by the coexistence of a variety of problems, including addiction, mental illness, the migration of unaccompanied foreign minors and the high level of vulnerability of the female subpopulation; 2. the impact of bureaucracy on the lives of homeless people, on the tasks of health and social workers, on the policies of the services themselves, is seen in a negative light, almost as a kind of insurmountable obstacle; 3. the professionalism of the socio-educational actors is very solid. In addition to the "official protocols" of the Table of Serious Adult Marginalisation, they have set up an informal network for the exchange of information and resources, also on an experimental basis, thus prefiguring a new, more flexible and "timely" way of working; 4. with reference to health, in the subculture of the homeless population in Brescia, health care is perceived as effective and positive. Moreover, it often represents an opportunity for a quicker and more decisive social intervention: this in turn leads to a critical reading of the bureaucracy that weighs down the chain of social services.

The association's code of conduct is therefore based on the understanding that such a complex condition requires a rethinking of the usual ways of communication and relationship with the patient: all practices have therefore been reviewed for their real sustainability in the lives of homeless patients.

Discussion. In this experience, the transformative role of civil care in shaping shared social practices can be seen, first of all, in the interdisciplinary research-study action promoted by the Association together with the Research Centre and in the dialogue with the various actors involved in the management of services for the homeless: this "*modus operandi*" is indicative of a practice that is, if not innovative, certainly "alternative" to the "traditional" approach based on rigid sectors of competence. It stems from the realisation that such a complex phenomenon can only be tackled in an integrated manner. Civic care, in this case facilitated by a third sector organisation, can also play a role in 'collaborative advocacy', working with institutions to develop better responses to the care system itself. Another transformative gain is the instance of 'caring for the caregivers', i.e. health and social workers, who are often as invisible as the homeless themselves. On the contrary, the research highlighted the importance of enhancing their professional knowledge, as it is capable of guiding care practices in a critical and functional way.

Finally, the association's development of such a code of conduct represents a kind of a new shared social reflexive practice. It could further contaminate the practices of other services in order to implement increasingly effective care for the homeless.

1. The count is made on citizens with a fictitious residence. It does not take into account the presence of other homeless who are not registered (Data from Statistics and Data Study Centre of the Municipal Registry Office of the City of Brescia).

References

Amadini, Monica

2021 "Reflexivity" in Colombo, Maddalena, Gilardoni Guida (Eds) *Intercultural Issues and Concepts. A Multi-Disciplinary Glossary*, Bruxelles, Peter Lang, (p. 185-198).

Amadini, Monica, Pasini Annalisa

2025 "How can educational research assume an intersectional approach? A case study on homelessness in Brescia", in Scuola democratica (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Third International Conference of the journal Scuola Democratica. Education and/or Social Justice*. Associazione "Per Scuola Democratica". Vol. 1: Inequality, Inclusion, and Governance. (pp. 85-92).

- Bove, Chiara
 2019 *Il metodo etnografico*. In Mortari, Luigina, Luca Ghirotto (Eds.), *Metodi per la ricerca educativa*, Roma, Carocci, (pp. 101-142).
 Comune di Brescia
 2024 *Dati aggiornati sulla popolazione residente del Comune di Brescia al 01/01/2024 divisa per quartieri e per genere*.
<http://dati.comune.brescia.it/dataset/popolazione-residente-per-genere-01-01-2024>
 Consoli, Teresa, Antonella Meo
 2020 *Homelessness in Italia. Biografie, Territori, Politiche*, Milano, FrancoAngeli.
 Dolci, Danilo
 1996 *La struttura maieutica e l'evolerci*, Scandicci, La Nuova Italia.
 Gnocchi, Raffaele
 2009 *Homelessness e dialogo interdisciplinare. Analisi a confronto tra modelli diversi*, Roma, Carocci.
 Lizzola, Ivo, Walter Tarchini
 2006 *Persone e legami nella vulnerabilità. Iniziativa educativa e attivazioni sociali a partire dalla fragilità*, Milano, Unicopli.
 Lizzola, Ivo
 2009 *L'educazione nell'ombra. Educare e curare nella fragilità*, Roma, Carocci.
 Mortari, Luigina
 2007 *Cultura della ricerca e pedagogia*, Roma, Carocci.
 Parsell, Carmel
 2023 *Homelessness: A Critical Introduction*, Cambridge, United Kingdom, Polity Press.
 Pleace, Nicolas
 2016 "Researching Homelessness in Europe: Theoretical Perspectives" in *European Journal of Homelessness*, 10, 19-44.

Between Space Care and Memory Valorization. The Pionta Case

Francesca Bianchi, University of Siena

francesca.bianchi@unisi.it

Gozde Yildiz, University of Siena

gozde.yildiz@unisi.it

For some time now, the scientific community has been witnessing a renewed focus on the concept of care. Indeed, following economic crises, the Covid-19 pandemic and numerous risks and dangers (including climate change), this sociological category seems to be enjoying renewed interest in study and research. Among the many points of reflection, the need to develop an ethics of care has emerged as a conception of social relationships that transcends contexts defined by traditional references.

Thanks to the ability to think more broadly and collectively, care is considered as a new paradigm (Pulcini, 2020; Barnes, 2015; Lynch, 2022).

As demonstrated by numerous practices capable of critically envisioning new scenarios and repairing existing ones, through emancipatory and transformative logics, care characterizes daily life. Care facilitates our existence bringing with it significant value as well as great generative power (Pulcini, 2020). These forms of action offer an intriguing shift in perspective and, in some respects, original effects of change, reorienting the motivations and ideals of both individuals and institutions. They aim to overcome stagnation and resistance in favor of a commitment to renewing the social order (Bianchi, 2023).

This gives rise to a concept of care understood in a socio-ecological sense, defined as "a practice of transforming relationships between human beings and living and non-living systems" (Fragnito, Tola 2021, p.12). This approach represents a form of social and political planning aimed at fostering alliances among different forms of subjectivity. The aim is to redesign modes of coexistence beyond the paradigm of production and the market and generate alternative and more fruitful worlds.

Increasingly, the needs for well-being, the protection of common goods and care now involve public spaces through urban redevelopment projects (Mela, 2020). Attention to such spaces entails fostering social interaction by creating conditions in which individuals feel part of a shared experience (Arena, Iaione, 2012). Spaces provide excellent opportunities to enhance the memory of common goods, which can help rediscover social elements of shared connection and participation among the population. Numerous initiatives are currently underway to preserve the values of urban landscapes and cultural heritage (Mela, 2020). Revitalizing neglected areas, parks, buildings or poorly utilized services, represent essential practices, given the growing public sensitivity toward common goods and the environment, particularly in the face of disengagement by

public actors. Citizens are active not only in driving spatial transformation but also in realizing and managing the reclaimed spaces for communal use, giving voice to significant exercises in *performative democracy* (Mela, 2020).

In processes of reappropriation and redefinition of spaces and the production of places, citizens can create meaningful connections with the territories where people live (Tota, 2023). This helps to build an alternative world redesigning the scope of civil society's actions. From this perspective, historic hospitals, whether closed or abandoned, hold enormous potential, not only due to their architectural structures, but also as strategic elements in a project for a contemporary city understood as an act of care.

In general, initiatives are typically centered on the relationship between abandoned hospitals and open spaces and more typically, on public space in a framework of close urban integration.

This contribution aims to explore a specific practice of care by analyzing the events surrounding an area once occupied by the Neuropsychiatric Hospital of Arezzo. The Pionta Park, which hosted the healthcare institution from 1901 to 1990, is characterized by significant green spaces as well as notable historical and archaeological remains. In recent years, social actors and institutions have been engaged in a complex process of urban social regeneration to restore the area as a site of "new" and "renewed" collective care.

Owned and managed by the University of Siena, the Municipality of Arezzo and the Tuscany South East Local Health Authority (ASL Toscana Sud Est), the site is rich in historical and social memories (Baioni, Setaro, 2017; Bianchi, 2023). For approximately two decades, the area has hosted some of the University of Siena's academic activities, preserving buildings and spaces from the original asylum structure. It has been transformed into a campus for research and advanced education attracting around 2,000 students annually. Despite the constant risk of becoming an empty shell stripped of its identity, it is precisely the memory of the hospital as a place of both confinement and care that has become the key asset for reimagining the structure as a new resource.

The Pionta Park has a strong historical, cultural and social identity. It is actively used by the university community but has traditionally been less frequented by local residents, despite being a beautiful green area, less than a ten-minute walk from the city's historic center.

For this reason, various stakeholders are engaged in a collective and shared urban care project, devising design strategies aimed at revitalizing the site to enhance its memory and its relationship with the surrounding area, leveraging the territory's aggregative potential. The Pionta, thus represents a space where a process of care is being implemented, addressing both people and places. It serves as a context for everyday life and a hub for generating ideas on managing a public park, effectively becoming an open-air laboratory for the Tuscan city.

References

- Arena Gregorio, Iaione, Christian
a cura di, 2012, *L'Italia dei beni comuni*, Roma, Carocci.
- Baioni, Massimo, Setaro Marica, a cura di
2017, *Asili della follia. Storie e pratiche di liberazione nei manicomi toscani*, Pisa, Pacini.
- Barnes, Marian
2015, *Beyond the dyad: exploring the multidimensionality of care*, in Brannelly, L., Ward, N. (eds.), *Ethics of care: Critical advances in international perspective*, Bristol, Policy Press.
- Bianchi, Francesca
2023, *Perché prendere la cura sul serio. Pratiche di attenzione nella vita quotidiana*, Napoli, Salerno.
- Fragno, Maddalena, Tola, Miriam
a cura di, 2021, *Nella zona nevralgica del conflitto: note su femminismi e cura*, in *Ecologie della cura. Prospettive transfemministe*, Napoli-Salerno, Ottothes.
- Lynch, Kathleen
2022, *Care and capitalism*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Mela, Alfredo
2020, *La città postmoderna. Spazi e culture*, Roma, Carocci.
- Pulcini, Elena,
2020, *Tra cura e giustizia. Le passioni come risorse sociali*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino.
- Tota, Annalisa
2023, *Ecologia del pensiero*, Torino, Einaudi.

Care as a Policy Approach to Housing Justice and Health Equity

Lidia K.C. Manzo, Universitas Mercatorum Roma

lidia.manzo@unimi.it

Housing is not merely a commodity; it is a socio-material infrastructure that upholds dignity, fosters social cohesion, and supports public health. Within the framework of care, housing justice transcends the simple provision of shelter and emerges as a matter of rights and collective responsibility. Advocacy for adequate housing encompasses critical dimensions – safety, comfort, sustainability, and political representation – underscoring its multidimensional nature. The COVID-19 pandemic magnified the consequences of housing inadequacies, particularly for low-income and vulnerable households living in overcrowded or unsafe conditions. These environments heightened physical health risks while exacerbating mental health crises.

This paper builds on insights from the EU-funded research project CITY-OF-CARE (Manzo, 2020) to explore how embedding care as a policy approach can address housing justice and promote health equity. Drawing on ethnographic and participatory research conducted across Ireland and Italy, the project underscores the urgency of policy interventions to address housing vulnerability and its intersections with social, economic, and health inequities.

The Role of Care in Housing Policy. Care is both an ethical responsibility and a practical framework, representing a collective capacity to create conditions in which individuals and communities can thrive. Tronto's (1993) concept of "giving care" underscores the responsibilities of responsiveness and accountability, particularly in public policy. Within this framework, housing justice becomes inseparable from care practices that address vulnerability and systemic inequities. Daly (2021) and Lynch (2022) emphasize care as a justice-oriented framework, urging policymakers to integrate care into public provisioning. Smith's (2005, 2012) work reinforces the centrality of care in policy, demonstrating how housing conditions, markets, and governance directly influence resident well-being.

The 'City of Care' framework emerges as a transformative approach to housing policy, connecting the principles of care to the lived realities of residents in social housing. It recognizes that physical, emotional, and psychological vulnerabilities are compounded by socio-economic disadvantages. By establishing participatory frameworks, the 'City of Care' prioritizes dignity, voice, and rights in housing and urban policies. As Power (2019) asserts, housing conditions and governance structures play a vital role in fostering equitable urban environments, where care is treated as a foundational principle.

Lessons from CITY-OF-CARE: Ireland and Italy. The CITY-OF-CARE project explored interconnected care practices within vulnerable urban communities in Ireland and Italy. In Dublin's Liberties neighborhood, the project worked with residents of the Oliver Bond estate, where substandard living conditions – dampness, overcrowding, and structural neglect – violated residents' housing rights. Through participatory research involving residents, local organizations, and policymakers, the project revealed the necessity of embedding care into regeneration efforts to prioritize health and social justice.

Similarly, in Milan, research highlighted the intersection of care, housing policies, and urban inequalities, demonstrating the need for systemic change. The 'City of Care' framework provided a roadmap for embedding care practices into housing policy, showcasing how participatory, health-oriented approaches could transform vulnerable communities.

Toward an Ethics of Care in Policy. The 'City of Care' framework integrates care into housing and urban policies through four key components (Manzo and Grove, 2024):

Acknowledging the Carelessness Crisis. Systemic neglect and underinvestment in social housing have created a "carelessness crisis." This component calls for urgent care-oriented policies to address the deterioration of social housing and its adverse effects on residents' well-being.

Promoting Health in All Policies (HiAP). Housing is a critical determinant of health. The HiAP approach integrates health and housing policies to ensure holistic well-being. Evidence shows that health disparities are influenced by factors beyond traditional healthcare, such as urban planning, transport, and economic policies (Braubach, 2011; Sharpe et al., 2018).

Empowering Community Infrastructure. Building collective agency is essential for driving change in vulnerable communities. Women-led social support networks, for example, have proven effective in advocating for improved living conditions and fostering community resilience.

Prioritizing Affordable Housing. Addressing housing justice requires policies that emphasize both the quality and quantity of adequate housing while centering public health and social equity. Inclusive, equitable approaches are essential to tackling the root causes of housing disparities.

The insights from CITY-OF-CARE highlight the transformative potential of integrating care into housing and urban policies. By prioritizing dignity, health, and social justice, the 'City of Care' framework fosters collaboration among residents, stakeholders, and policymakers, paving the way for a new paradigm in housing policy – one where care and justice are at the forefront of urban governance. This work will argue that housing justice cannot be achieved without embedding care as a guiding principle, urging policymakers to embrace transformative, cross-sectoral strategies that center care in public policies.

References

- Braubach, M.
2011 «Key challenges of housing and health from WHO perspective», in *International Journal of Public Health*, 56, 6, pp. 579–580.
Daly, M.
2021 «The concept of care: Insights, challenges and research avenues in COVID-19 times», in *Journal of European Social Policy*, 31, 1, pp. 108–118.
Lynch, K.
2022 *Care and Capitalism: Why Affective Equality Matters for Social Justice*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
Manzo, L. K. C.
2020 *CITY-OF-CARE: Women caring networks in urban poor communities: The gendered dynamics of resistance under the pressure of financialization*, EU Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowship (Grant Agreement no. 890603), www.cityofcare.org.
Manzo, L. K. C., & Grove, H.
2024 «Inadequate social housing and health: The case of Oliver Bond House, The Liberties, Dublin», in *Open Research Europe*, 3, pp. 211, <https://doi.org/10.12688/openreseurope.16767.2>.
Power, E. R.
2019 «Assembling the capacity to care: Caring-with precarious housing», in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 44, 4, pp. 763–777.
Sharpe, R. A., Taylor, T., & Fleming, L. E.
2018 «Making the case for 'whole system' approaches: Integrating public health and housing», in *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 15, 11, pp. 2345.
Smith, S. J.
2005 «States, markets and an ethic of care», in *Political Geography*, 24, 1, pp. 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2004.10.006>.
2012 «Explaining the link between housing and health: All or nothing?», in *Housing, Theory and Society*, 29, 1, pp. 40–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14036096.2012.624884>.
Tronto, J. C.
1993 *Moral boundaries: A political argument for an ethic of care*, New York, Routledge.

Beyond “friendly listening”. Online peer support within local service settings as entanglement of civic care and public responsibilities

Urban Nothdurfter, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano

urban.nothdurfter2@unibz.it

Eleonora Melchiorre, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano

eleonora.melchiorre@unibz.it

Maria Alessandra Molè, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano

mariaalessandra.mole@unibz.it

This paper examines the implementation of an anonymous online peer-to-peer support service as a practice of civic care promoted within the prevention and outreach strategies of local social and health care services in Italy. Adopting a care perspective, the paper discusses the findings of an in-depth qualitative investigation of online peer-to-peer support practices and their ambiguous entanglement with institutionalised forms of public care.

Background, context and purpose. In the post-pandemic landscape, young people have emerged as one of the groups most affected by emotional and social fragility and exposed to mental health related risks (Kauhanen et al., 2023). At the same time, they are often underrepresented both in political discourse and public policies while their help-seeking behaviour is changing and increasingly relying on stigma avoiding forms of support in their digitalised lifeworlds (Gulliver et al., 2010). This underscores the urgency to break down barriers of

access to services and to develop innovative approaches and tools aimed at reaching out to young people and at intersecting and addressing their needs by low-threshold support offers (Contena et al., 2019; Shidhaye, 2023; Aguirre Velasco et al. 2025).

Against this background, a national project was designed in Italy to promote and integrate online peer counselling in local service settings. Based on a peer-to-peer approach, the project is aimed at providing an anonymous space in which young people can access empathetic non-judgmental listening and openly exchange with volunteer peer counsellors. At the same time, the project is implemented within local service settings and meant also to provide a useful bridge towards social and health care services.

Founded in 2011 with the support of the Ministry of Health, this project is the first online peer support service in Italy designed for young people aged 14 to 25 and sustained by volunteer peers under the supervision of social and health care professionals. Recognised by the WHO as a good practice for suicide and depression prevention, the service is currently active in 17 local service settings across 13 regions.

The project is an interesting case of civic care entangled with outreach strategies of institutionalised forms of public care. The project opens new spaces and caring practices that are challenging traditional boundaries in manifold ways and potentially bridging traditional service settings and lifeworld contexts of young people. Young people volunteering as online counsellors assume an important function and responsibility providing anonymised support that exceeds the sphere of the private and is involved in the prevention and outreach strategies of institutional actors in charge of public care responsibilities.

Methods. Within a wider research project on digitally mediated practices of public care, in-depth qualitative case studies examined the local implementation and, indeed, interpretation of the project in different local service settings. Through a qualitative methodology combining onsite visits, both onsite and online interviews with peer volunteers and professionals, digital ethnography and conversation analysis, the case studies investigated the involvement and implementation of online peer support in local service settings by exploring different perspectives, observing accessibility and encounter practices and analysing anonymous online support conversations between service users and peer volunteers.

Findings and discussion. The findings show both potentials and limitations of online peer support and its involvement in the prevention and outreach strategies of local services. Providing interesting insights into practices of what can be interpreted as “institutionalised civic care”, the findings are discussed from a critical and care-informed perspective to shed light on the ambiguous entanglements of this kind of support with the offer of social and health care services. In particular, the discussion focusses on the promotion and meanings of what is emphasised as “friendly listening” within contexts of public care. Driven by a desire to provide emotional support and alleviate peer isolation, young volunteers act as friendly listeners and catalysts of solidarity. Drawing on an Aristotelian concept of friendship as a political virtue that ethically orients collective life toward the common good, it is examined to what extent and under what conditions this type of friendship can evolve into authentic and collective forms of civic engagement and community care (Mortari et al. 2021). At the same time, the findings show that volunteer peers may find themselves managing emotionally complex situations without adequate resources. Referring to a critical feminist perspective on care as a public concern and responsibility in crisis (Tronto, 2013; Fraser 2017; Dowling, 2022), the discussion also critically highlights this exposure of young volunteers to a wide range of needs and even complex situations asking whether peer volunteers risk having (too much) responsibility shifted onto them and being turned into stopgaps in a system that fails to reach out to young people and to be present in their lifeworlds. These considerations revolve around the questions of de-privatisation and re-privatisation of care and the challenge of combining forms of civic engagement and care with a publicly mediated assumption of care responsibilities. While the project for sure exemplifies a successful collaboration between institutionalised service settings and civic engagement, it remains essential to ensure that peer volunteers receive proper training and support and that their activities are integrated into broader and coordinated outreach and prevention strategies. At the same time, the analysis highlights the potentials of civic care as a valuable resource for social transformation and regenerating collective goods.

References

- Contena, B., Maccherini, M., Alemanno, S., Taddei, S.
2019 «Online peer help: Its quality in an online service for adolescents», in *Applied Psychology Bulletin*, 67, pp. 13-23.
Gulliver, A., Griffiths, K. M., Christensen, H.
2010 «Perceived barriers and facilitators to mental health help-seeking in young people: A systematic review», in *BMC Psychiatry*, 10, 1, p.

113.

Aguirre Velasco, A., Silva Santa Cruz, I., Billings, J., Jimenez, M., Rowe, S

2025 «What are the barriers, facilitators, and interventions targeting help-seeking behaviours for common mental health problems in adolescents? A systematic review», in *FOCUS*, 23, 1, pp. 98-118.

Shidhaye, R.

2023 «Global priorities for improving access to mental health services for adolescents in the post- pandemic world», in *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 50, Article 101661.

Mortari, L., Pizzato, F. A., Ghirotto, L., Silva, R.

2021 «Pratiche educative per la promozione del civic engagement», in *Encyclopaideia – Journal of Phenomenology and Education*, 25, 60, pp. 9-24.

Fraser, N.

2017 «Crisis of care? On the social-reproductive contradictions of contemporary capitalism», in T. Bhattacharya (Ed.), *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression*, London, Pluto Press, pp. 21-33.

Dowling, E.

2022 *The care crisis: What caused it and how can we end it?*, London, Verso Books. Tronto, J. C.

2013 *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice*, New York, New York University Press. Kauhanen, L., Wan Mohd Yunus, W. M. A., Lempinen, L., Peltonen, K., Gyllenberg, D., Mishina, K.,... Sourander, A.

2023 «A systematic review of the mental health changes of children and young people before and during the COVID-19 pandemic», in *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 32, 6, pp. 995-1013.

Challenging Institutional Abandonment. Grassroots Solidarity and Care Practices in Athens and Thessaloniki

Chiara Martini, Università degli Studi di Milano

chiara.martini@unimi.it

Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in mainland Greece – specifically in Athens and Thessaloniki –, this study examines the practices of grassroots collectives and organizations engaged in providing different types of support to migrants. In these two cities, due to the ongoing failure of authorities and institutions to provide essential services to people in need, especially following the 2015 “long summer of migration” (Hess and Kasperek, 2017), local and international grassroots solidarity groups have developed diverse forms of assistance for people in transit or blocked by the asylum system and border regime. These grassroots initiatives emerge as a response to what Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2017) terms “strategic and organized abandonment” – the calculated neglect by institutions and authorities for the well-being and survival of marginalized groups. In the Greek context, organized abandonment manifests in insufficient housing, the impossibility to access services, the denial of healthcare, bureaucratic inertia, and bordering processes. In response, grassroots solidarity practices not only provide material support but also articulate a critique of these systems, – even if not always in a contentious way –, subverting structures of exclusion and oppression.

The present contribution focuses on urban spaces as sites where border regimes are simultaneously reproduced and resisted. In Athens and Thessaloniki, along the years, grassroots groups and organizations have affected the urban landscape creating diverse and diffused pockets of solidarity and care, challenging a general and scattered apparatus of exclusion and control (Raimondi, 2019; Tsavdaroglou, 2020). Along the years, they have created a range of solidarity infrastructures, from occupied squats and social kitchens to community centers and safe spaces, that have facilitated new dimensions of communal living and sharing, focusing on relational practices and collective agency. Through dialogical interaction, mutual support, and shared experiences, these spaces cultivate counter-hegemonic imaginaries of inclusion and belonging that directly confront the exclusionary imperatives of migration governance. In contrast to the “humanitarian reason” and approach, often criticized by various scholars (Fassin, 2012; Malkki, 1996; Pallister-Wilkins, 2022), they actively foster alternative forms of recognition, inclusion, and alliance, countering the prevailing logic of criminalization and the generation of lives considered devoid of value.

The study thus focuses on two self-managed community spaces in Athens and Thessaloniki that exemplify the important and critical role of grassroots infrastructures in enacting solidarity and care practices. These spaces extend beyond the mere provision of material assistance – such as food distribution, clothing donations, and health clinic or legal desk –, as they actively try to reconfigure social relations and power dynamics. The proposed activities often do not present overt political questions, but they propose an alternative vision of

togetherness, showing different possibilities of building alliances, creating bridges, and strengthening bonds. By fostering environments predicated on dignity, agency, and relationality, these spaces serve as sites where to challenge the dehumanizing logics of the border and asylum regime.

The inherently political nature of care and aid in these contexts has been underscored by recent scholarship. According to recent studies (Milan and Martini, 2024) such practices transcend conventional humanitarian paradigms, engaging directly with structural issues of exclusion, precarity, and scarcity. This reconceptualization of care aligns with feminist scholarship, particularly Joan Tronto's (1996) assertion that care is a fundamentally political and transformative practice. By relocating care from its traditional confinement within the private sphere – where it has been historically feminized and devalued (Glenn, 2000) – to the domain of public and communal responsibility, grassroots initiatives challenge hegemonic constructions of care and its role within systems of governance. Accordingly, the centrality of care has emerged prominently in studies of solidarity practices along the US-Mexico border, framed as "abolitionist care" by Medel (2017), where care is viewed as an abolitionist gesture of direct action with political power that counters the logics of criminalization and the devaluation of life to protect and maintain borders. The politicization of the concept of care (Tronto, 1996) illustrates how caring practices are not merely acts of personal compassion but are crucial for building coalitions and inclusive communities that recognize and address systemic and intersectional inequalities.

The concept of feminist hospitality, as articulated by Maurice Hamington (2010), further enriches the analysis of these solidarity practices and spaces. Feminist hospitality extends the ethics of care into the realm of social and political relations, emphasizing principles of inclusivity, reciprocity, and embodiment. Unlike traditional notions of hospitality, which often reinforce hierarchical and asymmetrical host-guest relations, feminist hospitality reimagines these dynamics through egalitarian and reciprocal frameworks. In the case of the specific grassroots solidarity spaces at the center of this analysis, feminist hospitality is operationalized through practices that dissolve rigid distinctions between "host" and "guest," fostering relationships grounded in mutual respect and shared humanity. For example, decision-making processes within these spaces are often collaborative, ensuring that all participants, regardless of their status, have an equal voice. Communal activities such as shared meals and cooperative maintenance of the space exemplify reciprocity and collective care, challenging the depersonalized and instrumentalized approaches characteristic of institutional responses to migration. By centering on lived experiences and agency, these practices actively contest dehumanizing narratives that reduce migrants to objects of management and control.

By taking in consideration this analytical framework, this contribution will illuminate grassroots responses to systemic neglect and exclusionary politics, demonstrating how alternative forms of care and mutual aid can challenge institutional abandonment, offering new ways of fostering community and building relationships. Through their emphasis on interdependence, reciprocity, and shared responsibility, these grassroots spaces challenge dominant paradigms and open new possibilities for imagining and enacting community across lines of difference.

References

- Fassin, Didier
2012 *Humanitarian reason: A moral history of the present*. University of California Press.
- Gilmore, Ruth Wilson 2017 "In the Shadow of the Shadow State." *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, edited by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, New York, USA: Duke University Press,
- Glenn, Evelyn Nakano
2000 "Creating a Caring Society." *Contemporary Sociology* 29 (1): 84–94.
- Hamington, Maurice
2010 "Toward a Theory of Feminist Hospitality." *Feminist Formations*, 22(1), 21–38.
- Hess, Sabine, Kasperek, Bernd
2017 "De- and Restabilising Schengen: The European Border Regime After the Summer of Migration." *Cuadernos Europeos de Deusto* 56
- Malkki, Lisa
1996 "Speechless emissaries: Refugees, humanitarianism, and dehistoricization." *Cultural Anthropology*, 11(3), 377–404
- Medel, China
2017 "Abolitionist Care in the Militarized Borderlands." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 116, Duke University Press
- Milan, Chiara, Martini, Chiara
2024 "Bringing care in: The meaning of care in refugee solidarity movements." *Journal of Refugee Studies*, feae026
- Pallister-Wilkins, Polly
2022 *Humanitarian Borders. Unequal mobility and saving lives*, Verso Books
- Raimondi, Valeria
2019 "For 'common struggles of migrants and locals'. Migrant activism and squatting in Athens." *Citizenship Studies*, 23:6, 559-576,

Tronto, Joan C.

1996 "Care as a Political Concept." *Revisioning the Political. Feminist Reconstructions of Traditional Concepts in Western Political Theory*, edited by Nancy J. Hirschmann and Christine Di Stefano, 139–56. Routledge.

Tsavaroglou, Charalampos 2020 "The Newcomers' Right to the City: Producing Common Spaces in Athens and Thessaloniki." In M. E. Leary-Owhin, & J. P. McCarthy (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Henri Lefebvre, The City and Urban Society* (pp. 411-421)

5. Lines, traces, streets. Writing urban ethnography

Convenors: Andrea Mubi Brighenti (University of Trento) & Andrea Pavoni (DINAMIA'CET, University Institute of Lisbon)

Night rhythms ethnography against official narrations. Exploring intimate writing and rhythmic conflicts in Palermo's nocturnal public spaces

Eléonore Jactat, University of Palermo

eleonorejactat@outlook.fr

While self-reflection has gained increasing importance in the social sciences and urban studies, academic conventions continue to limit the expression of emotional and embodied fieldwork experiences through intimate writing. Drawing from feminist and decolonial epistemologies, this article explores the reciprocal relationship between the production of situated knowledges (Haraway, 1988; Raffles, 2002) and the narrative forms that carry it (di Campli & Boano, 2022; Anzaldúa, 1987). Through an ethnographic study of Palermo's central Vucciria district and the notion of rhythm, it investigates the conflicts that shape palermitan nightscapes and their representations.

This contribution is based on ethnographic research conducted, on the one hand, during 2024–2025, and on the other, on narratives of engagement with the site spanning from 2018 to 2025, combining self-narratives and the stories shared by others. The methodology aims to grasp how rhythms – bodily, social, narrative – make and unmake places (Lefebvre, 1992). It builds on AbdouMaliq Simone's notions of everyday rhythms and rhythms of endurance (Simone, 2010), emphasizing how urban life unfolds across visible and invisible durations, shaped by economic pressures, institutional constraints, and collective negotiations.

Focusing on the *Vucciria*, the article examines both the rhythms of those who inhabit the area at night and the rhythms of the stories that circulate about it – stories that often oscillate between presence and disappearance of the place in Palermo's urban imagination. Through this dual lens, it identifies the symbolic and historical depth of the Vucciria, the inequalities and solidarities expressed in nocturnal frictions (Pain, 2009; Datta, 2016), and the gaps between ordinary lived experiences and dominant media-touristic or political narratives (Robinson, 2006).

The first part offers a critical review of literature on intimate writing, decolonial planning, and night studies, reframing the latter with a focus on methodology (Shaw, 2014; Bonte, 2020). It argues that writing with affect is a political gesture, challenging the supposed neutrality of dominant discourses that reproduce spatial hierarchies tied to race, gender, and class. The second part engages with the layered, sometimes conflicting narratives encountered in the field: those of night-owls, night workers, residents, and storytellers, juxtaposed with city governance measures and media discourses seeking to "sanitize" or exoticize the area. The night, marginalized in both social and academic terms, is even more precarious in this downtown space, where clashes between institutional rhythms and those of informal nocturnal life become palpable.

By emphasizing the temporal dissonances that structure this urban fragment – between the rhythms of authorities, nightlife, daily routines, and the city's long-term vision – the paper highlights the tensions and solidarities that emerge through and against dominant narrations. The author's own intimate engagement with the space, shaped by both affects and academic constraints, becomes a tool to trace these frictions.

References

- Anzaldúa, Gloria
1987 *Borderlands/La Frontera : The new Mestiza*, San Francisco, Aunt Lute Books.
- Bonte, Marie
2020 "Faire du terrain dans l'univers noctambule de Beyrouth. La distance comme négociation et comme assignation", in *Emulations. Revue de sciences sociales*, 33, 33, pp. 111-128.
- Datta, Ayona
2016 "The Intimate City: Gender, Violence and Urban Space in India", in *Urban geography*, 37, 3, pp. 323-342.
- di Campli, Antonio, Boano, Camillo
2022 *Decoloniare l'urbanistica*, Palermo, Lettera Ventidue.
- Haraway, Donna
1988 "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective", in *Feminist Studies*, 14, 3, pp. 575–599.
- Lefebvre, Henri

- 1992 *Éléments de rythmanalyse. Introduction à la connaissance des rythmes*, Paris, Éditions Syllepse.
- Pain, Rachel
- 2009 "Globalized Fear? Towards an Emotional Geopolitics", in *Progress in Human Geography*, 33, 4, pp. 466–486.
- Raffles, Hugh
- 2002 "Intimate knowledges", in *International Social Science Journal*, 54, 173, pp. 325–335.
- Robinson, Jennifer
- 2006 *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development*, London, Routledge.
- Shaw, Robert
- 2014 "Beyond Night-Time Economy: Affective Atmospheres of the Urban Night", in *Geoforum*, 51, 1, pp. 87–95.
- Simone, AbdouMalik
- 2010 *City Life from Jakarta to Dakar: Movements at the Crossroads*, London, Routledge.

Walking with urban tales. Collecting icono-textual, graphic and art-based narratives in the city

Giada Peterle, University of Padua

giada.petele@unipd.it

Tania Rossetto, University of Padua

tania.rossetto@unipd.it

If we consider cities as archives of stories, how can we embrace a creative narrative approach in order to collect them? As urban researchers we are often considered collectors of memories, imaginaries, testimonies and data, in other terms, we are often intended as careful listeners of stories told by others. Yet rarely this practice of collection is seen from a more active perspective, one that considers researchers as authors of original, not necessarily objective stories: these stories may be autoethnographic and collective, social and intimate, personal and political, realistic and fictional at the same time. In his writings on the modern city, Walter Benjamin compared his own practice of research to that of the collector, whose attention towards the small traces, fine details and hidden voices allows him to find a way through urban complexity. Not by chance, the street is where this practice of collection takes place, and walking is the slow and mobile perspective that makes it possible to write urban stories. This lesson seems to be still productive today, as it suggests thinking about urban research as a storytelling practice that takes place along the streets. If the city is a narrative palimpsest, then its streets are physical pathways that turn into potential storylines that ask to be performed. If we consider research as a practice of storytelling (Lewis 2011), some questions emerge: what story is being told and who is telling it? From what position, for whom, and, eventually, in what form? Also, if we recognise our role as storytellers, we should ask ourselves: what story am I telling and how? From what position am I speaking and for whom? What narrative and stylistic choices shall I make in order to make my story more engaging and accessible? In fact, as soon as research is read as a set of stories, then questions about the narrator's point of view (individual or plural), tone of voice and style emerge. Furthermore, if research is storytelling, the presence of the researcher's I is not necessarily hidden: on the contrary, their subjectivity (and narrative agency) may be "distributed" (Simpson, 2017) across human and non-human entities, in verbal (Caracciolo, 2019) or visual ways (Hunt, 2014). In other terms, we may become protagonists or characters in others' stories of research. Choices concerning these narrative (formal, stylistic, narratological) aspects are definitely part of our own research process.

This contribution discusses urban research as storytelling starting from these questions and coming from the perspective of two cultural geographers working with creative, narrative and visual methods as a way to collect urban ethnographies on the move. It is structured in two sections: the first introduces the transdisciplinary background from which the empirical examples, presented in the second section, stem from. The first part offers a theoretical and methodological discussion that brings different fields of research together, such as (literary) urban studies, literary and narrative geography, mobility studies, visual studies and comic-based research, to mention but a few. We observe how more traditional ethnographic methods may be informed and mixed with visual, creative, and art-based methodologies. The second section aims to further discuss these questions through empirical examples, many of which are conducted within the framework of a current PRIN PNRR 2022 research Project titled WALC – Walking Landscapes of Urban Cultures. These examples engage with

different art-based methodologies to explore “the art of walking” in the city (Evans 2012) through art-based ethnographic research methods: these include ethnographics and autographics, namely the use of graphic narratives as an auto-ethnographic research practice; urban sketching; drawing while walking; photo-walking; urban walking-with the human and more-than-human. In particular, we will ask ourselves: how does the “spatial event of writing” (Saunders 2013) take place and how does the relational context inform our urban ethnographies? How does the use of iconotextuality change our ethnographic account? In particular, we will interrogate the stories of the city of Padua through reflections coming from two creative ethnographic practices: a graphic walkshop with an illustrator-researcher; a photo-walk, performed with a photographer-researcher. Both these verbo-visual writing events help us discuss the potentialities and limitations of art-based methodologies and art-research collaborations to conduct ethnographic research in the city.

Walking with urban mobile infrastructures, talking with buildings, sketching our mobile bodies, photographing while walking. All these methods aim to adopt a creative and narrative approach to the urbanscape, hoping to translate points into narrative nodes and pathways into plotlines (Anderson 2014). This way, the act of passing through the city corresponds to a narrative performance that brings to the composition of graphic narratives, photo essays, urban sketches that inform our ethnographic research.

References

- Amin, Ash
2014 «Lively infrastructure», in *Theory, Culture & Society*, 31, 7-8, pp. 137-161.
- Caracciolo, Marco
2019 «Object-Oriented Plotting and Nonhuman Realities in DeLillo’s Underworld and Iñárritu’s Babel», in E. James and E. Morel (Eds), *Environment and Narrative: New Directions in Econarratology*, Columbus. Ohio State University Press, pp. 45-64.
- Cardoso, Tânia Alexandra
2024 «Illustration on the move: Embodied practices of walking and drawing in the city», in Christian Ersten and Nick Shepherd (Eds.), *Walking as Embodied Research. Drift, Pause, Indirection*, Abingdon, Routledge, pp. 201-212.
- Evans, David, (Ed.)
2012 *The art of walking: a field guide*, London, Black Dog Publishing.
- Harvey, Penny, and Hannah Knox
2016 «The enchantments of infrastructure», in Dimitris Dalakoglou and Penelope Harvey (Eds.), *Roads and anthropology. Ethnography, Infrastructures, (Im)mobility*, Abingdon, Routledge, pp. 63-78.
- Hunt, Mia A.
2014 «Urban photography/cultural geography: spaces, objects, events», in *Geography compass*, 8, 3, pp. 151-168.
- Larkin, Brian
2013 «The politics and poetics of infrastructure», in *Annual review of anthropology*, 42, pp. 327-343.
- Lewis, Patrick J.
2011 «Storytelling as research/research as storytelling», in *Qualitative inquiry*, 17,6, pp. 505-510.
- Middleton, Jennie
2011 «Walking in the city: The geographies of everyday pedestrian practices», in *Geography Compass*, 5, 2, pp. 90-105.
- Saunders, Angharad
2013 «The spatial event of writing: John Galsworthy and the creation of Fraternity», in *Cultural geographies*, 20,3, pp. 285-298.
- Simpson, Paul
2017 «Spacing the subject: thinking subjectivity after non-representational theory», in *Geography compass*, 11, 12, pp. 1-13.
- Springgay, Stephanie and Truman, Sarah E.
2017 *Walking methodologies in a more-than-human world: WalkingLab*, Abingdon, Routledge.

True love is to die for. Tattooing and its professionalisation between resistance, subcultures and urban contexts

Norma Baldino, University of Cagliari

norma.baldino@unica.it

Tattooing, from being a marginal and stigmatised practice, has turned into a widespread and socially accepted phenomenon, while maintaining a strong symbolic value (Bourdieu 1979, Shilling 1993, De Mello 1993, Maroto 2011). Analysed by sociology through the lens of subcultures, interpreted as part of a symbolic resistance to the dominant culture (Hall and Jefferson 1976, Hebdige 1979) and of identity belonging and self-determination of the body (Pitts 2003), tattooing embraces a field of study ranging from cultural theory to urban sociology. Indeed, the tattooed body becomes a “territory of resistance” (Le Breton 2016), in which the individual

expresses an identity built on do-it-yourself (DIY) culture and working-class pride in a society that tends to discipline them (Foucault 1975; Thompson 2015). Despite its transformation over the years, tattooing has maintained a strong connection with urban youth cultures and the musical subcultures of punk, skateboarding, and graffiti writing, becoming a visual language that plays a specific role in the construction of a visible identity in urban contexts and spaces (both public and private) where one can recognise oneself.

The aim of this paper is to ethnographically reconstruct a specific tattoo community in Italy starting from the life experiences of tattoo artists. The participant observation conducted in Cagliari from 2022 to the present in five tattoo studios, along with the life stories of 13 tattoo artists, has allowed us to ethnographically reconstruct, in space and time, the tattooing network through the experiences of its members. By observing the workspaces, it was possible to understand the pathways of community recognition in the urban context through professional legitimisation within an insular setting. The life stories has allowed us to grasp the identity, gender, subcultural and organisational aspects of the tattoo community in its complexity often reduced to stereotypes and clichés.

The ethnographic narrative focuses on both the professional dimension and the everyday and local processes of tattooing in its urban context, with the intention of connecting the personal and collective dimension, exploring the meaning of spaces and bodies through their representation.

References

- Bourdieu, P.
1979 *La Distinction. Critique sociale du jugement*, Minuit, Paris
- DeMello, M.
1993 *The Convict Body: Tattooing Among Male American Prisoners*. In *Anthropology Today*, 9(6): 10-13
- Foucault, M.
1975 *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*. éditions Gallimard, Paris.
- Hall, S., Jefferson, T.
1976 *Resistance through rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain*. New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers
- Hebdige, D.
1979 *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Le Breton, D
2016 *Only Skin Deep: On Tattooing Practice Today*. Hermès, La Revue, No 74(1), 132-138.
- Maroto, M. L.
2011 *Professionalizing Body Art: A Marginalized Occupational Group's use of Informal and Formal Strategies of Control*, *Work and Occupations*, 38: 101-138.
- Pitts-Taylor, V.
2003 *In the flesh: the cultural politics of body modification*. 1st Palgrave Macmillan ed. New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Shilling, C.
1993 *The body and social theory*. Sage Publications, London.
- Thompson, C. J., Hirschman, E. C.
1995 *Understanding the Socialized Body: A Poststructuralist Analysis of Consumers' Self-Conceptions, Body Images, and Self-Care Practices*. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(2), 139–153.

Lines, traces, streets. Ghosting the city. Ethnography as Hopeful and Hopeless Task

Salvatore Poier, University of Pittsburgh (USA)

poier@pitt.edu

Tracing the steps of the walkers is a way to describe how ethnographers retrace hopelessly a map of a world that doesn't exist the moment we've seen it. Yet we continuously engage with this Sisyphean task of telling and retelling the object that always mutates.

In the process of writing ethnographies about the city we are doing multiple things at once. We are reporting *facts* – that is, events in the world that require a tone of objectivity and detachment. But we are also recounting *figments*, stories we *think* are true, and they might be from a very specific perspective – ours. We are theorizing behaviours and justifying actions, making sense of the masses' mess. But we are also *inscribing* such theories in the unaware people (and other forms of being) of the city. We are telling a tale of a concretion – the event(s) that sedimented in our mind, the grain of sand around which we built our pearls.

As de Certeau puts it about walking, "To walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper", we can slot in "ethnographic writing" instead. "To write ethnographies of the city is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper." The *proper*, though, is never there – especially when we finish writing, its ghostly presence is even stronger.

The ghost of the city is the matter of ethnographies. We engage with realities that do not exist any longer. We theorize behaviours that exist mostly in our minds. We settle for a narrative that is deeply personal, despite its countless attempts to objectivize itself. Because ethnography is not engaging with objects, rather with subjects – the people we study, and their interaction with ourselves.

In this intervention, I will use the uncertainty of the underworld at the service of writing – and of writing ethnographies. Ghosts hint at presences and yet they stay silent unless we see those hints. Ghosts dress up according to the eras' fashion, such as we theorize and write following the most recent trends. Ghosts disappear in the trap of ghostbusters, but only after they convinced us of their pertinacious presence, such as when we leave a field to retreat in our offices to write. Ghosts trace out lines of causality, so we can retrace their tribulations and free them to finally die, such as we dig deep in our informants' stories to make sense of our standing in the world.

In this ghostly pursuit of scientific value, I wonder if our ethnographic endeavors should even claim scientific relevance. As with ghosts, the value of the alchemic reaction of the complexity of social life with ourselves is worth the read.

References

De Certeau, Michel,
1984, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkley: University of California Press.

Archives of errant refuge. Site-writing Khandwala, Trieste

Stefano Mastromarino, The Bartlett's Development Planning Unit, UCL (UK)

stefano.mastromarino.23@ucl.ac.uk

The following contribution explores writing as a figurative and reflexive tool to analyse multiple spaces and practices of urban makeshift refuge conceptually and materially. Building on ethnographic research on what people on the move call 'Khandwala' in Trieste, I aim to expand the call towards further exploration around writing as a form of architectural inquiry and situated spatial practice. I identify my positionality as in-between an architect, refugee support worker, activist and PhD candidate investigating makeshift refuges in Italy's bordering regime. For me, writing is, at the same time, a form of textual drawing, a reflexive tool, and an autotheoretical stratagem to delve between the material and the semiotic. From these premises, this paper will question how writing can prompt spatial reflections in places and conditions that are continuously rearranged, performed and imagined by multiple engagements. In reverse, how do we translate multiple identities and fragmented histories into writing, as a form of representation and a situated practice that opens possibilities to future variations?

I refer to this work as a piece of site-writing, a spatial practice which is not limited to mere description and analysis but becomes part of the site by co-creating meaning through the writer's physical, relational, and affective engagement with place (Rendell, 2010). Influenced by a broad strand of feminist architectural writers engaging with writing as a liberatory expression (Cixous, 1998), a way to approach and question site histories (Bloomer, 1993), and an operational act of making space (Frichot, 2018), I situate my writing through the tension of my positionality in the field, as architect, support worker and researcher. Consequently, writing is employed to assemble the act of observing, deconstructing, and co-imagining spatial legacies, becoming more than just representation, but rather a form of autotheory (Fournier, 2021). More concretely, I delve into the in-between of the verbal and visual, borrowing from what Benjamin defines as the *Denkbild*, the "thought-image" made up of fragments of thought transposed in the tension between conceptual evocation and grounded imaginary (Benjamin, 1968).

Empirically, the paper will focus on a building typology, well-known in Trieste by the name of "Khandwala" (from Pashto: ruin, broken house). Khandwala was first used to refer to Silos, a building used as a makeshift

refuge by thousands of people transiting or seeking asylum in the Italian border city since 2014. Silos was built as a granary warehouse in the 19th century, then used as a gathering place for Jews before detention during Mussolini's regime and finally as an Istrian and Dalmatian refugees' collection centre (Altin, 2020). After a fire caused severe damage to its structures and roofing, the building fell into a status of abandonment in the 1990s. Through its ruins, people on the move and people seeking asylum transiting in Trieste built makeshift dwellings and essential facilities, giving form to spaces of care, protection and autonomy beyond the exclusionary politics of shelter in the city. Throughout these years, the place has taken the name Khandwala, renamed by the people who, through its brokenness, had found a possibility of inhabitation until June 2024, the day it was evacuated. Since then, this place has not ceased to exist; it has rather moved a few meters away, to other abandoned warehouses in the area of Porto Vecchio, equally renamed as Khandwala. At the moment, the area is the object of urban renewal plans justifying eviction and displacement plans of those who have once again found here shelter and forms of mutual care.

My contribution will share findings from ongoing research on refuge-making spatial practices in Trieste. Fieldwork is being carried out with multiple field visits from April 2024, accessing the sites through personal connections and support activities with grassroots organisations. Khandwala is studied through participant observation, unstructured conversations and participatory mapping, documenting sheltering arrangements before and after evictions. Therefore, my contribution will unfold as a montage of fragments of observations, conversations, architectural analyses and ethical considerations in the mentioned sites. Inspired by works that used montage to write between urban (Benjamin, 1985; 1999) and personal situated identity (Anzaldúa, 1987), my site-writing will reflect on the entangled relations that make the figure of refuge continuously performed and imagined. I will adopt reporting tools inspired by support experience to observe the sites as material, relational and affective arrangements: this will take the form of spatial inventories, contact notes and records of concern.

To conclude, this paper attempts to translate multiple engagements with the site into spatial writing. By delving into the layered narratives and lived realities of Khandwala, I question how writing, as a situated practice, can co-produce meaning and propose alternative imaginaries in the face of exclusionary urban renewal agendas and border regimes. This exploration seeks to foreground the ethical and methodological complexities of engaging with sites and stories of displacement, while also contributing to feminist architectural inquiry that views writing as a form of intervention and spatial transformation. Therefore, the paper aspires to bridge spatial theory and practice, using site-writing to simultaneously document, deconstruct, and co-imagine the entangled legacies and futures of refuge-making. Using a psychogeographical approach in the ethnographic study of Khandwala, I will show, and reflect on, fragments of site-writing work made during my field activities. I will arrange together lists of objects used to make shelter, conversations with inhabitants and solidarity actors and reflexive notes drawing on my encounters, the analysis of reports and institutional (in)action. In doing so, I aim to inspire further engagement with writing architectures of displacement and refuge, contributing to ongoing conversations on how to narrate the multiple, precarious, ever-changing realities of migrant inhabitation while challenging dominant narratives of development, reception and exclusion.

References

- Altin, Roberta
2020, "Silos in Trieste, Italy: A Historical Shelter for Displaced People" in *Structured of Protection? Rethinking Refugee Shelter*, edited by Tom Scott-Smith, New York, Berghahn Books, pp. 199-209.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria
1987, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, San Francisco, Aunt Lute Books.
- Benjamin, Walter
1968, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", in *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn, New York, Schocken Books, pp. 253-264.
- 1985, *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, London, Verso.
- 1999, *The Arcades Project*, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Cambridge, MA, Belknap Press.
- Bloomer, Jennifer
1993, *Architecture and the Text: The (S)cripts of Joyce and Piranesi*, New Haven, Yale University Press.
- Cixous, Hélène
1998, *Stigmata: Escaping Texts*, London, Routledge.
- Fournier, Lauren
2021, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press.
- Frichot, Hélène
2018, *Writing Architectures: Ficto-Critical Approaches*, London, Bloomsbury.

The political choice of clarity, writing to communicate: Making an urban ethnography in Manfredonia

Valentina Acquafredda, University of Foggia
valentina.acquafredda@unifg.it

This paper aims to reflect on urban anthropological research on the processes and cultural practices through which places acquire their meaning. This research is being carried out in Manfredonia (Foggia), as part of the PRIN PNRR project "Quasi ruins: place, nostalgia and future in late-industrial towns". Participating in the conference would allow me to engage in a dialogue with different fields of knowledge that, although traditionally distinct, are deeply connected to urban anthropology. It would also be an opportunity to "read" together the challenging experience of research in the coastal town of Manfredonia, a gateway to the Gargano but whose morphology is closer to that of the Tavoliere delle Puglie. In fact, this liminality has been chosen as the defining feature of the town's existence (Resta 2009). Once considered a vibrant part of the cultural and political landscape of northern Puglia, Manfredonia has been the centre of three industrialisation processes – albeit largely unproductive and, above all, failures – that have severely compromised its agro-marine and tourism development and jeopardised its ecological health (Malavasi 2018). However, this has not sparked widespread debate or real awareness within the community.

By observing and participating in the daily life of the inhabitants of Manfredonia, whom I met and interviewed about the meaning of the city's places (Feld and Basso 1996), a concept that has become a buzzword over time (Cross 2017), it became clear that their representation of the city oscillates between the typical schema of *laus loci* or the paroxysmal repetition of a funeral lament. On the one hand, there is the branded and codified celebration of the sea, the good food and its natural and archaeological beauties, described as a unique feature of the region. However, it often seems like a Cinderella compared to nearby Monte Sant'Angelo, the cradle of two UNESCO World Heritage Sites and the nemesis of Vieste, the quintessential tourist destination of the Gargano. On the other hand, the town seems to have donned the clothes of a widow, using lamentations about ruins, unfinished projects, the dirtiness of the territory by local administrations and other inhabitants as a literary technique, as well as a way of signifying everyday life, the relationship with its places and the desire of its inhabitants to either stay or leave. The dualities of Manfredonia have indeed been the subject of various dystopian or poetic narratives, as well as analyses promoted by local scholars and researchers who have made Manfredonia their field of study. For example, Francesca Scionti (2009), quoting Ulf Hannerz (1992), describes it as a constant oscillation between being a porcupine and a fox, similar to Berenice in Italo Calvino's *Le città invisibili* (1972). She represents a succession of different cities over time, alternately just and unjust, with changes already in motion before they come to fruition. Alberto Sobrero (2009), who has systematically used literature in his writings, not as an unconditional surrender to the literary unreason, but as a tool to effectively explain and narrate his research, quoting

Calvino, describes the work of the anthropologist as being in constant tension between the order and precision of a crystal and the unique and irreplaceable multiplicity of the experiences of the flame. It is precisely this flame that the moth traverses in *The Conference of the Birds* and which gives the title to Ivan Severi's (2019) chapter in his book on public anthropology.

In particular, my contribution emphasises the need to overcome the esotericism of research communication that pervades Farid Attar's work and, more generally, scholarly production aimed at serving the academic world. It is communicative clarity that the ethnographic writing of Manfredonia aims at, not by changing the medium to photos and videos, which superficially seem more immediate and accessible to the audience, but by using writing itself to perform the most "natural" and political gesture of all: making oneself understood by one's interlocutors. It must be a kind of writing that moves forward and pauses, that explains and guides understanding, that courageously unravels the knot of one's own epistemological choices and heuristic selections, and that does not hide behind a facade of plurality or collectivity, nor the deceptive

power of quotation marks, as if the researcher would disappear at that moment, leaving space and time only for the interlocutor. The intention is to create a writing that reflects the inexorability and lingering of the waves of a calm sea that touches all of Manfredonia, waves that retreat and return, capturing the rhythm and the gaze that shape the time of the documentary narrative by the brothers Marco and Andrea Nasuto, *Made of Limestone* (2014). It means narrating with a boustrophedonic cadence that allows us to break the unresolved dichotomous narrative of the city, to move from beginning to end and instead turn the end into a beginning, as Tim Ingold (2018) understands the practice of writing that gives shape to his idea of anthropology as an art of inquiry that is both speculative and experimental, and in this sense contrasts with descriptive ethnography. Writing to communicate, even if it is meticulous and slow, does not become a synonym for heaviness. On the contrary, it allows us to pave the way for other, slower ways of knowing and to bring to light new debates in the history of research – debates that are often reduced to mere quotations – rather than hiding behind overly dense conceptual words. Telling the story of Manfredonia, building its ethnography, means experiencing anthropology “from this side”, in its most natural public dimension, as both research and restitution of the city (Grassi et al. 2024). In fact, in a context accustomed to this kind of reflection produced in and on the town – where research is expected as an attempt to have an impact on local politics and the daily life of a community considered increasingly atrophied – anthropology and social sciences, especially in these spaces densely populated with diverse perspectives and traditions of study, stake the credibility of their social dimension.

References

- Cross, Jennifer Eileen
2017 “What is sense of place”.
Feld, Steven, Basso, Keith H.
1996 *Senses of place*. School for Advanced Research/Sar prGrassi, Paolo, Pozzi, Giacomo, Rimoldi, Luca
2024 «L'antropologia urbana italiana. Un inquadramento diacronico». *PALAVÉR*, 13(2), pp. 15- 46.
Hannerz, Ulf,
1992 *Esplorare la città. Antropologia della vita urbana* (1980), Bologna, Il Mulino.
Ingold, Tim
2018 *Anthropology: Why it matters*. John Wiley & Sons.
Giulia, Malavasi
2018 *Manfredonia: storia di una catastrofe continuata*. Jaca book.
Resta, Patrizia
2009 *Di terra e di mare: pratiche di appartenenza a Manfredonia*. Armando Editore, pp. 7-11.
Scionti, Francesca
2009 «Andar per terra», in *Di terra e di mare: pratiche di appartenenza a Manfredonia*, pp. 113-175. Armando Editore.
Severi, Ivan
2019 *Quick and dirty. La sfida dell'antropologia pubblica e applicata*. Editpress
Sobrero, Alberto
2009 *Il cristallo e la fiamma: antropologia fra scienza e letteratura*. Carocci.

Reflection, Fifty Years After His Death, on Pier Paolo Pasolini's Interpretation of the Phenomenon of the Roman Borgate Between the 1950's and 1970's

Emanuele Stochino, Università di Milano

emanuele.stochino@unimi.it

This abstract briefly underlines Pier Paolo's reading of the Roman *borgate*, during the twenty-year period in which he lived in Rome. In 1975, a Spanish television journalist asked Pasolini which art form he preferred and felt most at ease with, and Pasolini replied that it was poetry. Since Pasolini's artistic production embraced multiple forms: poetry, prose, journalistic reportage, plays, and painting, the journalist's question had not been casual. Indeed, in all of Pasolini's works the poetic aspect of both the enchantment and the profound sadness of life events is clearly present (Venturi, 2020).

When Pasolini arrived in Rome from Casarza del Friuli in 1950, he was in dire straits financially and therefore, he found himself living in rather neglected neighbourhoods. Livio Garzanti was highly impressed by Pasolini's novel *Ragazzi di vita*, which when published by Garzanti in 1955, sold well all over Italy. In a didactic manner,

the book documented both the social relationships and the economic and cultural hardships in which the *borgatari* lived. That is, it clearly depicted lifestyles that were considered deviant by the bourgeoisie and thus, unworthy of narration. When writing the book, Pasolini had used extremely direct and unmediated language, the very-same language spoken daily by the *borgatari* in that period, and it was due to this linguistic register that many academics and critics were scathing of the novel (Tricomi, 2003).

Owing to the fame and financial security which he had now achieved, Pasolini and his mother were able to move to more salubrious neighbourhoods, finally settling in Eur. Despite the various moves, Pasolini continued to frequent the Roman *borgate* until his death in 1975. He also made two films, *Accattone* (1961) and *Mamma Roma* (1962), both of which were set in these areas in the 1960s.

"In the first few years of the 1950s economic boom, Italian society, hitherto agricultural and artisanal, that is, paleo-industrial, transformed itself into a neo-capitalist society adopting the values of the bourgeoisie and rejecting their cultural origins, leading to a period of rapid change among the common population." (Brancato, 2015. P. 97)

Pasolini christened this socio-anthropological change the "anthropological mutation of Italians" and identified this anthropological mutation of values even among the *borgatari*. He noticed that those residing in those areas were losing their "innocence" and their pride in belonging to their social class. Up until the mid-sixties, Pasolini continued to believe, perhaps somewhat naively, that the urban proletariat, even though deviant, was the last remaining social class to uphold tradition and customs (Sinlanpace, 1981). This illusion then dwindled to the point that Pasolini stated: *"Italian culture...has changed... the old class culture, with its sharp divisions: culture of the ruling or popular class, culture of the ruling or bourgeois class, has been replaced by a new inter-class culture: which is expressed through the Italian way of being... Whoever has manipulated and radically or anthropologically changed the large masses of Italian peasants and workers is a new power that is difficult for me to define."* (Pasolini, 2013, p. 59).

In the movie *Mamma Roma*, cultural change is hinted at by the protagonist, a former prostitute whose name Pasolini used as the film title. Mamma Roma invests a large part of her earnings to buy an INA-house and pay for her son's studies to enable him to pursue a profitable and socially acceptable career. However, the film ends tragically when all of Mamma Roma's efforts are thwarted by her son's death in prison.

Preferentially, from the end of the 1960s onwards, Pasolini addressed his works to a specific audience: *"Owing to this swift social transformation, Pasolini highlighted that the audience he had idealized during the 1960s no longer existed and so, going beyond Gramsci's 'National-Popular', Pasolini set out to produce works for an 'elite' in contraposition to the masses whom he looked upon as being 'anti-democratic, alienated and alienating' by definition..."* (La Porta, 2012)

In the face of the controversy raised by the term *elite*, Pasolini clarified that he was not using the word to: *"...label a privileged class wielding cultural power, but rather to describe a democratic 'elite' also present among intellectual working-class minorities."* (Cinema 70)

Pasolini's reading of the urban *borgatario* proletariat can be understood as an anthropological reading of social change. His books *Ragazzi di Vita* and *Una Vita Violenta* are a pure indirect description of the values and traditions of some of those living in the rundown *borgate* where schooling was poor, the birth-rate high, and crime was rife. By depicting: *"the primordial world of the suburbs and the life of the beings lost within them..."* (De Giusti, 2015, p.17), through the camera lens, Pasolini was able to narrate life in the *borgate* to a wide audience without the spectacularization of the *borgatario*.

References

- Brancato, Oriana
2015 «Pasolini e le forme della tragedia», Tesi di laurea, Pisa, Università degli Studi di Pisa.
- De Giusti, Luciano
2015 «Preludio della passione secondo Pasolini», in Roberto Chiesi and Luciano De Giusti (Ed.), *Accattone l'esordio di Pier Paolo Pasolini raccontato dai documenti*, Bologna, Edizioni Cineteca di Bologna, pp. 9-47.
- La Porta, Filippo
2012 Pasolini, Bologna, Il Mulino.
- Pasolini, Pier paolo
2012 Pasolini, Scritti corsari, Milano, Garzanti.
- 1970 Rai production "Intervista a Pasolini", visited 24/01/2025, <https://youtube.be/4GYVCMoKQo>, 01\10\2007.
- 1981 «Pasolini's Gramsci», in *MNL*, 96, 1, pp. 120-137.
- Sinlanpoa, Wallace.
- 2003 «Pier Paolo Pasolini», in *Belfagor*, 58, 4, pp. 427-461.

Tricomi, Antonio

Venturi, Maria Teresa

2020 «Io vivo fra le cose e invento, come posso il modo di nominarle. Pier Paolo Pasolini e la lingua della modernità», Firenze, Firenze University Press.

Psychogeographic Analysis of Walking and Spatial Appropriation at University Campuses in Turkey. Walking Interviews as Ethnographic Tools to Compare the Alle at Van Yüzüncü Yıl University and Ankara Middle East Technical University

Yasemin İlkay, Van Yüzüncü Yıl University

yasemin.il kay@gmail.com

Hilmi Ekin Oktay, Van Yüzüncü Yıl University

Street constitutes the context of walking practice in urban space, which influences the rhythms and routines of urban everyday life and also shapes the spatial pattern of public spaces. *The body* exists within these spatial and temporal patterns while contacting *with* and *at* urban space through its movements and stops. As a spatial practice, *walking* results in a set of cognitive representations in relation with differentiated forms and mechanisms of spatial appropriation apart from the physical reality of urban space. Traditional spatial and sociological analyses (such as land-use analyses, questionnaires, in-depth interviews, focus groups, field-notes, etc.) lack a potential wholistic understanding of the *soul* of urban space and everyday life. At that point, *psychogeography* occurs as an alternative field of enquiry to capture hidden meanings and mechanisms of urban spatial practices.

Psychogeography investigates the impact of environment upon the feelings and attitudes of human beings, so as a field of enquiry it is located at the intersection of geography and psychology. Covery (2011) argues that this field appeared as a literary flow in 1950s within the movement of Situationists; then gained a protest meaning and developed within a political stance, struggling with the hegemonic socio-spatial discourses. Focusing on the impacts of physical space on perceptions and practices of citizens, psychogeography examines the *dérive* (spatial and cognitive deviations) and *palimpsest* (re-written cognitive layers consisting of memory and nostalgia); through these deviations the individual experiences spontaneous daily encounters via his/her body which may transcend the 'now' and 'here' situation. Therefore, these two veins of enquiry have a potential to grasp the soul and hidden mechanisms of urban space and everyday life (Sarı, 2013; Şahin Yeşil, 2016). Moreover, urban planning can have an opportunity to examine the gap between the physical map and mental/psychological map; psychogeographic methodologies enable to (re)map the processes and mechanisms of place attachment and spatial appropriation to guide the planners, designers and urban politicians (İlkay, 2023).

University campuses are specific urban districts and fruitful themes to investigate both walking practice and forms of spatial appropriation. And also, *alle* as an extension of street in campuses has a critical constructive role within the walking practice and gives clues to capture the social, mental bonds of the students and academicians to their university. Within this research, two university campuses are focused, Middle East Technical University (METU) is constructed in Ankara in 1960s, with a designed *alle* and Van Yüzüncü Yıl University (YYU) is constructed in 1980s (although it was a spatial project of Atatürk, the founder of Turkish Republic); its *alle* was added in 2017. The main question of this paper is: how spatial appropriation via walking practice differentiates at these two universities.

To investigate spatial appropriation of the individuals, conducting *walking interviews* (Evans and Jones, 2011) and collecting *cognitive maps* (Smith and Aranha, 2022) appeared to be the most suitable and fruitful methodology to reveal the *dérives* and *palimpsest* of the interviewees within place attachment. Evans and Jones (2011) examine the measurable difference between the data gathered from walking and sedentary interviews. They present a comprehensive literature review on walking and talking techniques and they indicate the advantages of walking interviews; and they argue that walking interviews have a potential to "access a local community's connections to their surrounding environment" (Evans and Jones, 2011: 857). Moreover, walking interviews are discussed to produce richer place narratives (Evans and Jones, 2011). Carpiano (2009) investigates the technique of go-along interview and focuses on its advantage to be a 'variation of qualitative

interviewing techniques' and has a possibility "to understand people's experiences of local residential context" (Carpiano, 2009: 263). Lastly, in her classical study, Kusenbach (2003) presents the go-along method as an ethnographic research tool within a title of *street phenomenology*; she presents five themes of go-along as (1) environmental perception, (2) spatial practice, (3) biographies, (4) social architecture, and (5) social realms. She argues that go-along methods combine the in-depth interview and the technique of field notes, which indicates an ethnographic study; as a result, she demonstrates that go-alongs have a potential to gather a knowledge on space which transcends 'now' and 'here', while walking with the interviewee, spontaneous encounters result in (re)production of richer narratives.

As a pilot study of a comprehensive research project in the field of human geography, within this paper 3-4 walking interviews will be conducted in each university (6-8 totally) and 3-4 walking and sedentary interviews will be conducted with the academicians who experienced both campuses [eventually 10-12 interviews for two universities are targeted]. During these interviews the cognitive maps will be collected to analyse the rhythms of urban everyday life, perception of Lynch's (2010 [1960]) components of urban images (paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks) within the processes of place attachment Seamon (2013) proposed. Eventually, the psychogeographic maps of two universities will be compared and contrasted to investigate the forms and depth of appropriation via walking the alle of campuses. The alle of METU (in Ankara) is assumed to witness a heterogenous, rich and deep appropriation since it is designed wholistically at the beginning of construction of the campus; however, the alle in YYÜ (in Van) is presumed to have a relatively low and discontinuous attachment and walking practice.

References

- İlkay, Yasemin
2023 «Psychogeography in Planning: A New Methodological Approach via Representations of 'Body', 'Urban Space' and 'Walking'». *ICONARP International Journal of Architecture and Planning*, 11(2): 584-603. <https://doi.org/10.15320/ICONARP.2023.255>.
- Carpiano, Richard M.
2009 «Come Take a Walk with Me: The "Go-Along" Interview as a Novel Method for Studying The Implications of Place for Health and Well-Being». *Health & Place*, 15: 263-272.
- Covery, Merlin
2011 *Psikocoğrafya: Londra Yazıları*, Kalkedon Yay., İstanbul. [Covery, M. (2006). *Psychogeography*. Harpenden, UK: Pocket Essentials].
- Evans, James and Jones, Phil
2011 «The Walking Interview: The Methodology, Mobility and Place». *Applied Geography*, 31(2011): 849-858.
- Kusenbach, Margarethe
2003 «Street Phenomenology: The Go-Along as Ethnographic Research Tool». *Ethnography*, 4(3): 455-485.
- Lynch, Kevin
2010 *Kent İmgesi*, Türkiye İş Bankası Yay., İstanbul. [Lynch, K. (1960). *Image of the City* (1960). Massachusetts Institute of Technology & Harvard College].
- Sarı, Jale
2013 *Kenti Deneyimleme Aracı Olarak Psikocoğrafya* (Unpublished Ms Thesis). Istanbul Technical University, Institute of Science and Technology, Department of Architecture, İstanbul.
- Seamon, David
2013 «Place Attachment and Phenomenology, The Synergistic Dynamism of Place». In *Place Attachment* (eds. Manzo and Wright), Routledge, London & New York, pp. 11-22.
- Smith, Jeffrey S. and Aranha, Ricardo
2002 «Cognitive Mapping as a Method to Assess People's Attachment to Place». *Geographical Review*. 112:1, 6-26, Doi: 10.1080/00167428.2020.1774880.
- Şahin Yeşil, Sinem
2016 «Psikocoğrafya ve Bir Şehir Gezginin Anıları». *Monograf/Edebiyat Eleştirisi Dergisi*, 2016/5: 124-149.

6. Despicable public personas: dynamics of infamy in digital culture

Convenors: Stefano Brilli (University of Urbino) & Oscar Ricci (University of Milano-Bicocca)

Beyond the alt-right infamy. Disinformation and hate speech from medical professionals during the Covid-19 pandemic in Italy

Federico Pilati, University of Milano-Bicocca

federico.pilati@unimib.it

While academic discourse often associates disinformation and hate speech primarily with alt-right movements, conspiracy theories, and denialism, this research examines these very same phenomena focusing on medical discourse and institutional communication during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study challenges the prevalent assumption that disinformation and inflammatory rhetoric are exclusive to specific political orientations, investigating how these communication patterns manifested in mainstream discourse during the pandemic. Our research builds upon established methodologies in discourse analysis, expanding their application to examine what we identify as "medical disinformation" – the spread of catastrophic predictions and misleading information aimed at legitimizing containment measures. This phenomenon, though noted by prominent epidemiologists like Martin Kulldorff, John Ioannidis, and Jayanta Bhattacharya, remains understudied in academic literature.

Drawing from a comprehensive dataset of 9,378 Facebook content posted by influential medical professionals and health organizations spanning from January 2020 to December 2023, we circumscribed targeted sub-datasets focusing on specific keywords related to data presentation, contagion narratives, and epidemic curve discussions. This approach allowed us to examine how scientific discourse was reified and weaponized.

The research addresses two primary areas: First, we analyze online disinformation strategies regarding SARS-CoV-2 and containment measures, focusing specifically on instances where scientific data was misrepresented to generate fear or justify restrictive policies. This includes examining the reification of epidemic curves, the misinterpretation of exponential growth patterns, and the spread of urban legends about the virus. Second, we investigate forms of hate speech, blaming, and political incivility emanating from so-called virologist influencers, analyzing how their online communication contribute to polarization and the degradation of public discourse.

Our findings reveal ambiguous patterns of information manipulation across the political spectrum, challenging the traditional narrative that associates disinformation primarily with anti-establishment or right-wing sources. We identify three specific rethorical mechanisms used to reinforce institutional messaging. The research also examines how legitimate scientific data was sometimes distorted to support predetermined political positions, regardless of ideological orientation. This study contributes to the broader understanding of how reputation politics and moral labeling operate in contemporary digital environments. By examining how different actors employ similar tactics of inflammatory rhetoric, we provide insights into the role of cultural hegemony in scientific communication.

Our findings suggest that the mechanisms of disinformation and hate speech transcend traditional political boundaries, operating instead as tools wielded by various actors to achieve specific social and political objectives. The research has significant implications for understanding how digital platforms and algorithmic visibility influence public discourse, particularly during health crises. It also provides valuable insights into how different social groups assign moral labels and respond to controversial public personas, contributing to ongoing discussions about the nature of contemporary public recognition and the role of digital media in shaping public discourse.

References

Miconi, A., Pezzano, S., Pilati, F., & Risi, E.

2024 «"As the infection curve show". Data-fetishism and reification of the medical discourse on Facebook during the Covid-19 epidemic», in *Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia*, 65, 4, pp. 831-862.

Pilati, F., & Anselmi, G.

2024 «From the "Rally 'round the Flag" to the Emergence of a (Counter) "Digital Movement of Opinion". A Quali-quantitative Analysis of Twitter Debate on the COVID-19 "Lockdown" in Italy», in *Comunicazione politica*, 25, 1, pp. 61-84.

Pilati, F., & Anselmi, G.

- 2023 «The AstraZeneca affair. How the junk news regime affected the public debate on the COVID-19 vaccination controversy in Italy», in *Tecnoscienza–Italian Journal of Science & Technology Studies*, 14, 1, pp. 105-122.
- Pilati, F., & Miconi, A.
- 2023 «The “Green Pass” Controversy in the Italian Twittersphere: a Digital Methods Mapping. In *Partecipazione e conflitto*, 15, 3, pp. 549-566.

Decoding Celebrity Nationalism. Cultural Governance and Public Perception in China's Entertainment Industry

Lingxiao Chen, Emory University

lingxiao.chen@emory.edu

In 2021, the Chinese Association of Performing Arts issued a directive outlining 15 prohibited actions for entertainers, foremost among them any behavior deemed to “endanger national unity, sovereignty, and territorial

integrity”(https://news.cctv.com/2021/02/06/ARTIkGjJReN7e0iiqRiPhvH210206.shtml?spm=C96370.PPDB2vhvSivD.EZ4sRtXz56aB.2). Other violations include nonpolitical transgressions such as drunk driving, drug abuse, soliciting prostitution, tax evasion, and extramarital affairs. Noncompliance results in bans ranging from a year to a lifetime, effectively removing celebrities from the public eye. This formalization of governance, while loosely worded, reflects the Chinese government’s longstanding efforts to shape public values and maintain ideological control over the entertainment industry.

While prior scholarship has documented the Chinese state’s co-optation of the entertainment industry (Sullivan and Kehoe 2018; Xu and Yang 2021), less is known about how ordinary people perceive these efforts. This project shifts the analytical gaze from top-down control to bottom-up reception. I focus on everyday internet users – key audience of the celebrity culture – and ask: How do Chinese internet users interpret celebrities’ nationalist performances? What do these interpretations reveal about broader public understandings of nationalism and state legitimacy?

To answer these questions, I conducted 50 semi-structured interviews with Chinese internet users of diverse backgrounds between July 2024 to February 2025. Interviewees range from 18 to 35 years old and represented a diversity of geographic, class, and occupational backgrounds among “social media natives” (Salte 2022). I employed a sequential interviewing method, treating each interview as a case that informed subsequent interviews, thereby providing an increasingly accurate understanding of the topic until attaining saturation (Small 2009). Each interview lasted between 1.5 to 2.5 hours, with follow-up interviews conducted as needed. Immediately after each interview, I wrote reflective memos and generated preliminary findings to guide literal and theoretical replications (Small and Calarco 2022). My key questions included: Have you noticed that celebrities express nationalist sentiments during international conflicts? How do you interpret the motives behind such expressions? What are your views on celebrities’ moral transgressions? Should certain behaviors remain private, or do they warrant public bans? Do you believe that nationalist displays can help repair their image?

I analyzed the data using MAXQDA and applied an abductive approach to “systematically cultivate surprising findings” (Timmermans and Tavory 2022:1). I began with open coding to identify all possible puzzles, patterns, and exceptions within the data. I then shifted to focused coding, honing in on promising themes such as the authenticity of celebrities’ nationalist sentiment, the places of origin of celebrities, and internet users’ exposure to international news sources. I conducted follow-up interviews as needed, reporting findings back to the interviewees for validation and improvement.

I draw on Bourdieu’s theory of habitus and field to theorize how these orientations take shape. Emerging from this process are four audience dispositions – grassroots nationalists, beneficiary nationalists, resigned conformists, and reflexive critics – mapped along two dimensions: access to non-state information and perceived experience of social or political inequality. These categories help explain how people process state messaging embedded in cultural forms. Among the interviewees, there is consensus acknowledging the lack of authenticity in these actions, viewing them as business strategies essential for maintaining stardom rather than spontaneous and heartfelt advocacy. Despite this, supporters still find such expressions desirable and emphasize that overt alignment with the government hold more importance than genuine beliefs. They

prioritize endorsing official narratives and promoting China's global influence over sincerity, highlighting the significance of "face culture" and collective reputation in understanding nationalist practices (Xue 2024). This mindset also indicates that their market expectations for authenticity are often superseded by ritualistic conformity enforced by the state. Conversely, critics perceive these expressions as manifestations of the state's overarching ideological control. With limited public sphere for direct criticism of the government, critiquing ostensibly apolitical celebrities' expressions becomes a veiled and safer channel for addressing broader societal grievances, such as social inequalities and limited upward mobility. These divergent views closely correspond with broader understandings on nationalism and patriotism: supporters typically conflate the notions of the government, the Party, and the country, whereas critics distinguish these entities and hold more nuanced positions.

This study contributes to the study of celebrity culture, public opinion formation, and authoritarian governance by bringing audience reception to the foreground. It shows that state ideology, when refracted through celebrity culture, is neither monolithic nor uniformly absorbed. Instead, it is decoded through habitus: internalized, filtered, rationalized, or resisted in everyday life.

References

- Márquez-Reiter, Rosina, and Michael Haugh. 2019. "Denunciation, Blame and the Moral Turn in Public Life." *Discourse, Context & Media* 28:35–43. doi: 10.1016/j.dcm.2018.09.001.
- Small, Mario Luis. 2009. "'How Many Cases Do I Need?': On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field-Based Research." *Ethnography* 10(1):5–38. doi: 10.1177/1466138108099586.
- Small, Mario Luis, and Jessica McCrory Calarco. 2022. *Qualitative Literacy: A Guide to Evaluating Ethnographic and Interview Research*. Univ of California Press.
- Sullivan, Jonathan, and Séagh Kehoe. 2019. "Truth, Good and Beauty: The Politics of Celebrity in China." *The China Quarterly* 237:241–56. doi: 10.1017/S0305741018001285.
- Timmermans, Stefan, and Iddo Tavory. 2022. *Data Analysis in Qualitative Research: Theorizing with Abductive Analysis*. University of Chicago Press.
- Xu, Jian, and Ling Yang. 2021. "Governing Entertainment Celebrities in China: Practices, Policies and Politics (2005–2020)." *Celebrity Studies* 12(2):202–18. doi: 10.1080/19392397.2021.1912109.
- Xue, Ye. 2024. "The Psychosocial Foundation of China's State-Led Nationalism." *Contemporary Politics* 1–20. doi: 10.1080/13569775.2024.2330167.
- Zhao, Yun, Tina Eyraud, Yaowen Xue, Muhammad Imran, Kai Wang, and Xiaotong Sun. 2022. "Nexus between Social Responsibilities of Young Cinematic Celebrities and Public Recognition: Evidence from China." *Frontiers in Psychology* 13:945634. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.945634.

"It's a shithole, but I loved the people". Passport bros and the socio-linguistic construction of nationality in the manosphere

Guilherme Giolo, Erasmus University Rotterdam

giolo@eshcc.eur.nl

Matteo Rinaldi, Erasmus University Rotterdam

rinaldi@eshcc.eur.nl

Theoretical Framework. Hardly anywhere else in the intricate mélange of subcultures composing the manosphere are nationality and culture more centrally discussed than amongst the self-described "passport bros": men who promote remote working and travelling to (predominantly) the Global South looking for women who are more "feminine" and submissive than their Western counterparts (Descalsota, 2023). In the subreddit *r/thepassportbros*, over 38.000 users share questions like what the best countries are to find traditional women "as a Russian speaker" or discuss whether or not moving back to the US or Europe with their newly-wed Asian wife might "westernize" her.

For many passport bros, this wandering pursuit of love and sex is an actual lifestyle, with stories abounding of men quitting their jobs in favor of an enabling nomadic lifestyle of internet gigs and precarious remote working. Favored by a combination of extremely disproportionate currency conversion rates and low living costs,

romantically dissatisfied Western men of various nationalities take off to locations like Colombia, Thailand, or Eastern Europe seeking “true love”.

Passport bros extend and question the widely held notion that the manosphere is populated by mostly marginalized, unsuccessful and poorly educated young men (Han & Yin, 2023). Preliminary analysis of Reddit data reveals that many passport bros are well-off men of varying ages with substantive savings or highly specialized jobs, capable of living and working several months abroad. To the gender, sexuality and relationships grievances common across the manosphere (Sharkey, 2022), passport bros seem to have found in international dating an antidote.

Western men have long travelled to the Global South and other low-income destinations seeking (non-)transactional sexual gratification, a phenomenon referred to as sexual tourism (Marrazzo, 2005). Passport bros, however, seek not only carnal pleasure, but also lifelong companionship, while displaying strong antagonism towards Western women. Their discussions about why and how to seek foreign partners represent rich data to explore urgent questions about gender ideals, cultural commodification, and the role of internet culture in promoting sexual exploitation. Such insights lie in the frameworks of thought passport bros use to discuss nations, cultures, gender relations. Thus, we ask: *how do passport bros construct and negotiate their own and foreign cultures and national identities?*

Data and Methods. We conducted qualitative analysis of Reddit threads (N=103) from the subreddit r/thepassportbros, the most popular forum for passport bros discussions on Reddit (over 38,000 members). We collected all threads with more than 10 upvotes in 2024, as Reddit’s upvoting function highlights important discussions within the community. The sample underwent inductive thematic analysis identifying (a) the conversation topics most common across the sample and (b) frameworks of thought most used to make sense of and discuss foreign cultures and national identities. We also closely examined their vernacular, paying attention to this dimension during our qualitative analysis.

Findings. Regarding the topics passport bros are most interested in discussing, we observed three macro categories of threads. *Destination Selection* (N=58) groups threads about travel destination suggestions based on budget, preference for certain types of women. *Relationship Questions* (N=33) contains questions about dating foreign women. *Lifestyle Advice* (N=12) includes discussions about the passport bro lifestyle itself, such as moving abroad or transitioning from college to the “nomadic” life. Within these macro topics, four (often overlapping) frameworks of thought were commonly employed to discuss foreign cultures, gender and national identities.

Nation and Relationship Goals describes users linking nations to relationship goals, constructing stereotypes about countries. For instance, a user seeking non-drinking cultures is told the Philippines might suit, as “Asian girls definitely drink less than western women.” The vernaculars “Easy Mode” or “Hard Mode” categorize countries by perceived difficulty in seducing women. One user suggested the Philippines as “Easy Mode,” since most women “speak English and there is already a significant proportion of Christians.”

Class Discussions and Economic Leverage highlights reflections on social structures or financial disparities. In a thread about moving to China as a Black man, a user says, “dark skin is seen as a feature of the peasant class. China is the last place I’d advise a brother to come to as there’s a lot working against us.”. Another thread includes a post stating, “Your USD goes so far there, and women respect a guy who can provide, unlike here.”

Cultural Parallels shows passport bros comparing nations to justify opinions. In a thread on reasons for finding women abroad, one user argues, “The west is not ‘normal’ in the way we form and maintain relationships (of any kind).” A commenter comparing nations on their “westernization” writes, “Colombian women dress provocatively and are known to be flakey, entitled, promiscuous, and high maintenance.”

Self-reflection reveals passport bros considering their own cultural standing to assess their reception abroad. For instance, in a post about standing out in another country, a user warns that “If you lead with money, you will have the wrong type of women lined up around the block waiting to take advantage of you.”

Observing the above, the passport bros phenomenon illustrates how the manosphere transcends its Western origins, functioning as a multicultural and transnational domain where culture, national identities and gender are actively negotiated. Echoing broader manosphere ideologies (Sharkey, 2022), passport bros critique Western feminism and modern cultural shifts, yet they also challenge these assumptions by while leveraging economic disparities to pursue idealized relationships abroad. These findings enrich existing studies of the manosphere by highlighting its role in shaping not only digital subcultures but also transnational ideologies.

References

- Descalsota, M (July 23, 2023). I'm a passport bro who travels the world to date foreign women. *Business Insider*. <https://www.businessinsider.com/digital-nomad-passport-bro-bromad-how-to-guide-love-abroad-2023-6?international=true&r=US&IR=T>
- Han, X., & Yin, C. (2023). Mapping the manosphere. Categorization of reactionary masculinity discourses in digital environment. *Feminist Media Studies*, 23(5), 1923–1940. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2021.1998185>
- Marrazzo, J. M. (2005). Sexual tourism: Implications for travelers and the destination culture. In *Infectious Disease Clinics of North America* (Vol. 19, Issue 1, pp. 103–120). W.B. Saunders. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.idc.2004.10.008>
- Sharkey, G. (2022). Failure to thrive: incels, boys and feminism. *Continuum*, 36(1), 37–51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2021.1958160>

Make Men Great Again. Manfluencers and the Art of Despicable Reputation

Manolo Farci, Università degli Studi di Urbino Carlo Bo

manolo.farci@uniurb.it

Manfluencers are digital content creators who target male audiences by blending lifestyle advice, self-help content, and ideological messaging. Through videos and podcasts, they dispense guidance on topics ranging from interpersonal relationships to mental health and material success, while promoting regressive gender ideologies and misogynistic worldviews (Bates 2021). Their growing influence among young male audiences demonstrates how controversial personas can leverage digital platforms to transform socially problematic content into profitable entertainment formats (Haslop et al. 2024; Regehr et al. 2024).

This study positions manfluencers within Gary Alan Fine's framework of "difficult reputations," examining how these figures navigate and capitalize on moral condemnation. Despite (or because of) their controversial status, they successfully operate as ideological mediators between private and public spheres (Dignam, Rohlinger 2019). By transforming individual discontent into broader sociopolitical narratives, they create spaces where personal development and metapolitical recognition intersect (Illouz 2008; Brown 2019; Maly 2024).

Through ethnographic analysis, this research investigates how online communities engage with these "despicable" personas, revealing the complex dynamics between algorithmic visibility, moral polarization, and gender identity (Marwick, Caplan 2018; Munn 2019). Their success particularly resonates with adolescent males navigating contemporary masculinity crises, offering simplified narratives that attribute personal struggles to societal changes in gender roles (Banet-Weiser 2018; Dignam & Rohlinger 2019). This phenomenon not only raises critical questions about platform responsibility and the attention economy's role in amplifying controversial content but also highlights deeper societal concerns about male youth vulnerability to extremist ideologies in an era of shifting gender norms and increasing social uncertainty (Reeves 2023; Kimmel 2017)

References

- Banet-Weiser, Sarah 2018 *Empowered: Popular Feminism and Popular Misogyny*. Duke University Press Books, Durham, NC.
- Bates, Laura 2021 *Men Who Hate Women: From Incels to Pickup Artists: The Truth About Extreme Misogyny and How It Affects Us All*. Simon & Schuster, London.
- Brown, Wendy 2019 *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism: The Rise of Antidemocratic Politics in the West*. Columbia University Press, New York.
- Dignam, Pierce A., Rohlinger, Deana A. 2019 Misogynistic Men Online: How the Red Pill Helped Elect Trump. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 44(3), pp. 589-612.
- Haslop, Craig, Ringrose, Jessica, Cambazoglu, Ibrahim, Milne, Becca 2024 Mainstreaming the Manosphere's Misogyny Through Affective Homosocial Currencies: Exploring How Teen Boys Navigate the Andrew Tate Effect. *Social Media + Society*, 10(1), pp. 1-11.
- Illouz, Eva 2008 *Saving the Modern Soul: Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-help*. University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Kimmel, Michael 2017 *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*. Nation Books, New York.
- Maly, Ico 2024 *Metapolitics, Algorithms and Violence New Right Activism and Terrorism in the Attention Economy*. Routledge, UK.
- Marwick, Alice, Caplan, Robyn 2018 Drinking male tears: Language, the manosphere, and networked harassment. *Feminist Media Studies*, 18(4), pp. 543-559.
- Munn, Luke 2019 *Alt-right pipeline: Individual journeys to extremism online*. First Monday, 24(6).
- Reeves, Richard V. 2023 *Of Boys and Men: Why the modern male is struggling, why it matters, and what to do about it*. Swift Press, United Kingdom.
- Regehr, Kelly, Shaughnessy, Caroline, Zhao, Mark, Shaughnessy, Nick 2024 *Safer scrolling: How algorithms popularise and gamify online hate and misogyny for young people*. UCL IOE, University of Kent.

Ashes of Decency. On Irony, Infamy and Digital Contestation During Collective Tragedy

Timsit, Vincent, EHES

vincent.timsit@gmail.fr

When Notre-Dame de Paris caught fire in April 2019, an unexpected phenomenon emerged on social media platforms. Controversies quickly arose, targeting several high-profile individuals accused of exploiting the tragedy for personal visibility. This article examines the roles of infamy and irony in shaping public reactions to the actions of Jack Lang (former Minister of Culture), Alexis Corbière (La France Insoumise deputy), and Christophe Castaner (Minister of the Interior at the time). Through their controversial selves and staged photographs amidst the fire's devastation, these political figures became focal points of public scorn and were framed as despicable public personas for their perceived opportunism and lack of decency.

Central to this analysis is the dual role of infamy as both a cement for public disdain and a driver of attention accumulation. While Lang, Corbière, and Castaner's behavior were condemned as egocentric and inappropriate, they simultaneously attracted widespread attention, reaffirming them as symbols of moral failure. This dynamic is amplified by the participatory nature of digital platforms, where user-generated critiques allow individual actions to evolve into collective controversies. Using digital ethnography, this study explores the shaping of infamy as an attention mechanism. By associating themselves with Notre-Dame during its destruction, these figures sought to connect their public personas with the event's and the cathedral's symbolic weight. Interpreted as a sinful quest for narcissistic self-aggrandizement, their conduct sparked critiques that both heightened their visibility and solidified their reputations as despicable public personas.

Through a typological analysis of public discourse and sociological theories of value, the paper also explores the role of irony as a tool of moral correction and collective regulation. Online critiques relied heavily on humor and satire to highlight the triviality and perceived vanity of these politicians' actions. Social media users reframed their conduct to emphasize the contrast between the gravity of the Notre-Dame fire and their self-centered gestures. The irony further accentuated the disparity between the grandeur of the cathedral and the "smallness" attributed to Lang, Corbière, and Castaner. As a revered cultural heritage site, Notre-Dame became a moral yardstick against which these public figures were judged. Their actions, seen as violations of communal grief and decency, fueled broader debates about the expectations for public personas during moments of shared tragedy.

This research sheds light on how infamy operates as both a tool for attention accumulation and a means of moral judgment in the digital age. The participatory nature of social media not only amplifies reputations—whether positive or negative—but also seems to facilitate cycles of moral outrage that shape the construction of despicable public personas. By analyzing these dynamics in the context of the Notre-Dame fire, the paper proposes a nuanced understanding of how irony, morality, and digital culture intersect in the formation and negotiation of reputational narratives.

References

- Heinich, Nathalie
2012 *De la visibilité, excellence et singularité en régime médiatique*, Paris, Gallimard.
Cardon, Dominique
2019 *Cultures numériques*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po.
Fabre, Daniel
2013 *Émotions patrimoniales*, Paris, éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme.

The Rising of Bandito Influencers. Fame and Criminality in the Cross-Platform environment

Nicola Bozzi, University of Greenwich

n.bozzi@greenwich.ac.uk

Stefano Brilli, Università degli Studi di Urbino Carlo Bo

stefano.brilli@uniurb.it

The role of the media in labeling criminals is a central issue in the study of the social construction of deviance. Media exposure both includes and excludes criminals through othering strategies (Greer, Jewkes, 2005), such

as the spectacularization of deviance (Gamson, 1998; Grindstaff, 2002) and media rituals of shaming and rehabilitation (Couldry, 2003; Boudana, 2014). Celebrity studies have particularly focused on the intersection between fame and criminality (Penfold-Mounce, 2010), examining how the 'celebrification of the criminal' and the 'criminalization of the star' blur the lines between fame and infamy.

However, most of these analyses have centered on mass media, where a criminal's portrayal is shaped by centralized and professionalized media dynamics. Less attention has been given to how these narratives are transformed in the social media landscape, where self-representation, audience participation, and brand sponsorships play a crucial role in a lawbreaker's rise to fame. This environment has been further altered by the growing emphasis on ephemeral content and live streaming (Gemini, Brilli, 2023), which complicates content moderation and lowers barriers to online performativity.

This paper explores the criminal persona as a visibility strategy within influencer culture, analyzing how deviant online celebrities are framed and leveraged across different media in today's cross-platform ecosystem.

The first part of the paper draws on criminology, celebrity studies, and internet studies literature to explore scholarly discussions on celebrity, criminal deviance, and the 'gangsta identity' in digital culture (Bozzi, 2021). The second part examines two 'criminal influencers' whose fame surged during the 2020 lockdown in Italy: Algero Corretini, also known as '1727wrlldstar', and Massimiliano Minnocci, also known as 'Er Brasiliano.' These figures exemplify what we refer to as bandito influencers, where the Italian term 'bandito' denotes both 'street thug' and 'banned' from a specific space or group.

Corretini and Minnocci share several traits: they both cultivate street credibility, construct their personas around the 'borgataro' vernacular, have criminal records for violent behavior, gained fame through viral videos depicting illegal acts, and have achieved success as influencers, with appearances on mainstream television and radio programs. Despite these similarities, the two figures diverge significantly in how they responded to media exposure. While Minnocci's mainstream visibility has largely been framed through a narrative of rehabilitation and departure from criminal life, Corretini's criminal trajectory was amplified alongside his rising popularity, ultimately leading to his self-destruction and more serious acts of violence, particularly towards his partner.

This paper therefore aims to examine the platformization and celebrification of criminal deviance, emphasizing that self-representation on social media does not necessarily lead to de-stigmatization. On one hand, criminal discourse and aesthetics often become essential for audience engagement. On the other hand, the labeling of criminals on social media is a decentralized and multifaceted process that is difficult to fully control through self-branding.

References

- Boudana, Sandrine
2014 «Shaming Rituals in the Age of Global Media: How DSK's Perp Walk Generated Estrangement», in *European Journal of Communication*, 29, 1, pp. 50-67.
- Bozzi, Nicola
2021 «Dramatization of the@ GANGSTA: Instagram Cred in the Age of Glocalized Gang Culture», in Wiest, J. B. (Ed.), *Theorizing Criminality and Policing in the Digital Media Age*, Bingley, Emerald Publishing Limited, pp. 69-88.
- Couldry, Nick
2003 *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach*, London, Routledge.
- Gamson, Joshua
1998 *Freaks Talk Back: Tabloid Talk Shows and Sexual Nonconformity*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Gemini, Laura, Stefano Brilli
2023 *Gradienti di liveness. Performance e comunicazione dal vivo nei contesti mediatizzati*, Milano, FrancoAngeli.
- Greer, Chris, Yvonne Jewkes
2005 «Extremes of Otherness: Media Images of Social Exclusion», in *Social Justice*, 32, 1, pp. 20-31.
- Grindstaff, Laura
2002 *The Money Shot: Trash, Class, and the Making of TV Talk Shows*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Penfold-Mounce, Ruth
2009 *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, New York, Springer.

“Hi everyone I am Yilong Ma”. Deepfakes, doppelgangers and despicability in global media circuits

Gabriele de Seta, University of Bergen

gabriele.seta@uib.no

In 2022, a Chinese man bearing a striking resemblance to Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk started posting short videos of himself on platforms like the microblogging service Sina Weibo and the short video app Douyin (the Chinese version of TikTok). In these videos, the man introduced himself as Yilong Ma, and often walked or sat around a car in the Chinese countryside while dressed in a three-piece suit, saying a few simple sentences like “Hello everyone, I am Yilong Ma”, or “I love you” in a basic, heavily accented English. The videos became moderately viral on Chinese platforms until they were noticed abroad, especially through the international popularity of TikTok, and several media reports described the amusing existence of a “Chinese Elon Musk”. A few of the most popular videos posted by Yilong Ma were reposted to platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, triggering a mixture of amusement, surprise, skepticism, and discriminatory reactions from users. In one of these videos reposted on YouTube, while sitting in a pavilion with a catchy pop song in the background, Yilong Ma offers the viewer a coke, toasting with a heavily accented “chers”. The top comments, all in English, are all one-liner jokes: “My boy runs out of English quickly”, or “Hi dark web, I’d like to buy Elon Musk clone #99”. Coasting on the global media presence and controversial public relevance of Elon Musk, his Chinese lookalike became an online celebrity of a peculiar kind – one producing repetitive and monothematic content that attracts a wide variety of responses ranging from friendly and supportive commentary about China and Elon Musk himself to stereotyped mockery of Chinese copycatting or of poor English pronunciation. Yilong Ma quickly responded to this popularity by amping up his performance, adding more elements to his videos (like celebrity rubber masks, meme cutouts, wads of cash, and printed out images of cryptocurrency logos) directly addressing Elon Musk and Tesla. In 2023, the CEO himself was made aware of Yilong Ma on social media, and responded to a video in which the man was pretending to have a boxing match with a cardboard cutout of Mark Zuckerberg, by saying that he would love to meet his Chinese doppelganger. In turn, Yilong Ma responded by taking up Elon Musk’s wish and declaring himself ready to meet him: “Elon Musk is coming to China, I drive Tesla to pick him up. Money! Money! I love you”. Over two years, Yilong Ma’s content has been repeatedly taken down and reuploaded across platforms, and has oscillated between parody and praise to cryptocurrency endorsement and advertising. In response to his popularity, many have speculated about the fact that Yilong Ma might, in fact, not be a lookalike but a Chinese person using a deepfake tool to swap his face with that of Elon Musk. After years of content cross-posted on multiple platforms, responses to his persona range from dedicated fandom to occasional mockery, including quite extreme positions such as the support cryptocurrency investment schemes, praise or even worship of Elon Musk, and discriminatory or racist commentary. In mid-2025, the latest storyline in the Yilong Ma lore is about an upcoming livestream in which the Chinese doppelganger will finally chat with Elon Musk. This presentation traces the circulation of Yilong Ma’s content across multiple platforms over three years, from his beginnings to the most recent developments, describing how the emergence of this account is connected to the popularity of Elon Musk in China as well as his controversial status internationally; through an analysis of the narrative repertoire developed by Yilong Ma across platforms, I discuss the convergence of transnational celebrity impersonation, national and ethnic representation, tech geopolitics, and the social construction of despicability.

Despicable therefore demonetized. How anti-mainstream icons solicit support

Giovanni Boccia Artieri, Università degli Studi di Urbino Carlo Bo

giovanni.bocciaartieri@uniurb.it

Stefano Brilli, Università degli Studi di Urbino Carlo Bo

stefano.brilli@uniurb.it

Elisabetta Zurovac, Università degli Studi di Urbino Carlo Bo

elisabetta.zurovac@uniurb.it

The contemporary digital landscape is characterized by a complex interplay of public, semi-public, and private spaces (Boccia Artieri et al., 2021), interconnected by dynamic processes of content and user migration. Despite growing academic interest in this phenomenon, the relationship between “fringe platforms” (de Winkel, 2023), mainstream digital spaces, and legacy media remains underexplored. This paper contributes to this area of research as part of the broader CORIT project, supported by the Next Generation EU Program. The overarching goal of CORIT is to investigate the development of narratives capable of influencing and, at times, destabilizing the hybrid Italian media ecosystem. Within this framework, the paper focuses specifically on the rise of anti-mainstream public figures within the Italian Telegramsphere and examines how they construct frames to position themselves as persecuted outsiders of the mainstream.

Fringe platforms, as described by de Winkel (2023), are alternative digital environments intentionally designed to critique and deviate from the ideological foundations and operational practices of mainstream platforms. These spaces, while often smaller in scale, foster tight-knit ideological communities and facilitate the spread of problematic content, including disinformation, to mainstream media (Schulze et al., 2022). Telegram, in particular, has emerged as a unique case study due to its emphasis on privacy and security. These features make it an ideal environment for the exploration of controversial ideas and the proliferation of conspiracy narratives (Schulze et al., 2022; Herasimenka 2022). Research has shown that Telegram functions as a platform where alt-right groups coordinate (Walther and McCoy, 2021) and where disinformation circulates extensively (Herasimenka 2022).

The analysis in this paper highlights how fringe platforms act as incubators for public figures who deliberately construct their identities in opposition to mainstream norms and institutions. Unlike mainstream platforms, which enforce content moderation policies and deplatform users who violate their guidelines (Rogers, 2020), fringe platforms provide an alternative space where marginalized creators can maintain visibility and build their following. This dynamic attracts users who are drawn to these creators’ narratives and who actively amplify their popularity within and beyond fringe spaces.

A key mechanism through which anti-mainstream figures build their following is by reframing moral condemnation as proof of their legitimacy. The process of demonetization, for example, is used to strengthen populist narratives of anti-elitism. Such figures depict mainstream platforms and institutions as greedy and oppressive gatekeepers, while presenting themselves as victims forced to rely on free labor for their communities (Castanho Silva et al., 2017). This narrative resonates with what Eslen-Ziya (2019) describes as hybrid emotional echo chambers, where shared frustration over inequality and perceived injustice is deeply embedded in the group’s collective identity. Within these spaces, emotional dynamics often take precedence over rational discourse. Belief in misinformation, for instance, is driven by emotional, rather than cognitive, responses, where in-group viewpoints are positively reinforced and hostility is directed toward out-groups (Sanchez & Dunning, 2021).

This paper investigates how anti-mainstream public figures construct frames that portray them as dangerous dissenters targeted by the establishment. Through ethnographic research on Italian Telegram groups, the study explores how these individuals use their perceived marginalization to increase their visibility, foster affective solidarity, and generate economic capital. Central to this analysis is the trope of the “mainstream media outcast,” a narrative that recasts disdain and exclusion by mainstream platforms as evidence of authenticity and legitimacy within fringe communities.

The research is guided by the following key questions:

1. How do anti-mainstream public figures frame themselves as victims of mainstream persecution to legitimize their actions and ideologies?
2. How do these figures monetize their marginalization, and how are these monetization practices framed and legitimized within their communities?

The methodological approach combines ethnographic observation with digital scraping techniques. Starting from lists of Telegram channels and groups compiled by debunkers, the research employed a snowball sampling method to map the network of Italian Telegram spaces that disseminate problematic content. Using tools such as 4Cat and the Telethon Python library (Urman & Katz, 2020), the study collected and analyzed:

1. posts containing news and related comments
2. mentions of monetization or funding mechanisms
3. references to cross-platform content, such as YouTube videos.

Ethnographic observation played a critical role in identifying keywords and emic categories, which reflect how groups legitimize their monetization strategies and construct shared meanings around their narratives.

Early analysis reveals several key patterns:

1. Anti-mainstream figures actively construct narratives in which the label of “despicable” by mainstream media is reframed as a marker of authenticity and evidence of their capacity to challenge the status quo. These narratives employ populist rhetoric, portraying mainstream platforms as elitist gatekeepers that suppress dissent.
2. Condemnation by external actors is interpreted as validation of the authenticity and ideological integrity of these figures.
3. Monetization strategies align with the broader trends of platformized cultural production (Poell et al. 2021). These strategies, including voluntary donations, premium content, and merchandise sales, are often framed within communities as acts of resistance and solidarity, strengthening in-group cohesion.
4. Despite their marginalization, anti-mainstream figures maintain significant visibility capital that extends beyond fringe platforms. Cross-platform content circulation allows them to influence mainstream discourse, further solidifying their position as outcasts who wield cultural and ideological power.

This study contributes to the understanding of the mechanisms through which moral condemnation, visibility, and monetization intersect in digital spaces. By focusing on the strategic framing of “despicability” as a resource, the research highlights the fluidity of moral categories and challenges binary distinctions between fringe and mainstream environments. The findings underscore the permeability of these spaces and their interdependence in shaping public discourse.

By examining the framing tactics of anti-mainstream figures, this paper sheds light on the broader dynamics of digital fame, populist rhetoric, and the economic and cultural mechanisms that sustain online infamy. It calls for further interdisciplinary inquiry into the intersections of morality, visibility, and monetization in the digital public sphere.

References

- Boccia Artieri, Giovanni, Stefano Brilli, Elisabetta Zurovac
2021 Below the radar: Private groups, locked platforms, and ephemeral content – Introduction to the special issue, in *Social Media+ Society*, 7(1).
- Castanho Silva, Bruno, Federico Vegetti, Levente Littvay
2017 The elite is up to something: Exploring the relation between populism and belief in conspiracy theories, in *Swiss Political Science Review*, 23, pp. 423–443.
- deWinkel, Tim
2023 Fringe platforms: An analysis of contesting alternatives to the mainstream social media platforms in a platformized public sphere (Doctoral dissertation, Utrecht University)
- Eslen-Ziya, Hande, Aidan McGarry, Olu Jenzen, Itir Erhart, Umut Korkut.
2019 From anger to solidarity: The emotional echo-chamber of Gezi park protests, in *Emotion, Space and Society*, 33, 100632.
- Herasimenka, Aliaksandr
2022 Movement leadership and messaging platforms in preemptive repressive settings: Telegram and the Navalny Movement in Russia, in *Social Media+ Society*, 8(3).
- Poell, Thomas, David B. Nieborg, Brooke Erin Duffy
2021 Platforms and cultural production. John Wiley & Sons.
- Rogers, Richard
2020 Deplatforming: Following extreme Internet celebrities to Telegram and alternative social media, in *European Journal of Communication*, 35(3), pp. 213-229
- Sanchez, Carmen, David Dunning
2021 Cognitive and emotional correlates of belief in political misinformation: Who endorses partisan misbeliefs? In *Emotion*. 21(5), 1091.
- Schulze, Heidi, Julian Hohner, Simon Greipl, Maximilian Girgnhuber, Isabell Desta, Diana Rieger
2022 Far-right conspiracy groups on fringe platforms: a longitudinal analysis of radicalization dynamics on Telegram, in *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 28(4), 1103-1126.
- Urman, Aleksandra, Stefan Katz
2022 What they do in the shadows: examining the far-right networks on Telegram, in *Information, Communication & Society*, 25:7, pp. 904-923.
- Walther, Samantha, Andrew McCoy
2021 US extremism on Telegram: Fueling disinformation, in *Conspiracy Theories, and Accelerationism. Perspectives on Terrorism*, 15(2), pp.100–124.

Partisan Comedians, Cancel Culture, and Outrage as Platform Currency

Nicola Bozzi, University of Greenwich

n.bozzi@greenwich.ac.uk

In his book *South Park Conservatives: The Revolt Against Liberal Media Bias* (2005), Brian C. Anderson discussed examples like Vice magazine, talk radio, and South Park as symptoms of a widespread decline in what he considered a left-wing consensus across mainstream media, triggered by a decentralisation of media that was yet to take the shape of the social media platforms we now know. A couple decades later, after phenomena like #gamergate, the alt-right, the #metoo movement, and the subsequent popularisation of “cancel discourses” (Ng, 2022) centred on terms like “cancellation” and “deplatforming”, it seems entertainment and political communication have converged even more, and comedy has been identified as an especially pivotal element in this process. In particular, right-wing comedy has become an urgent subject of scholarship (e.g. Sienkiewicz & Marx, 2022), with figures like Joe Rogan driving social media traffic from general MSM skepticism into radicalisation pipelines. The relationship between podcasting comedians and cancel culture has been identified as a cultural facilitator of platformisation (Bozzi, 2024) and, with the right-turn of platform companies that followed the recent US elections, this increasingly means this community of free speech warriors is increasingly embedded within the US Right.

This presentation builds on the aforementioned studies, as well as theories about the emergence of platform personality as infrastructure (Rosamond, 2023), to further explore the importance of a controversial persona and the leveraging of “cancel discourses” in elevating a range of conservative comedians within Joe Rogan’s entourage. The main case study is Tony Hinchcliffe, whose live podcast Kill Tony champions a nostalgic form of roast comedy. While already filling arenas with his own show, Hinchcliffe rose to unprecedented notoriety after making a joke at the expense of Puerto Rico at a Republican rally just days before the Trump election. Ironically (but entirely unsurprisingly), the “cancellation” that followed furthered his public profile and eventually even led to a 30-minute comedy special published on Elon Musk’s X platform. The episode sparked several conversations among comedians about the relationship between comedy and politics, but also raises important research questions around comedy and platforms. Namely:

How does Hinchcliffe’s infamous comedic persona navigate his “influencer imaginary” (Arriagada & Bishop, 2021) and make sense of both the idea of “cancel culture” and his own sky-rocketing success? How does this discursive reconciliation play into the politicisation of platforms as non-political infrastructures that should thus not invest in moderation and be accountable for users’ speech?

My research is based on the extensive examination of public interviews with Hinchcliffe, JRE episodes, and commentary from a constellation of YouTube commentators that critique Rogan’s entourage. In the presentation, I argue podcasting comedians like Hinchcliffe play an important cultural role within platformisation: by provoking and reifying “cancel culture” as a form of platform critique, they update the relevance of “platforming” as a cultural imperative and the necessity of platforms as an infrastructural necessity. While framed as non-political, this form of discourse is embedded within a politics that favours platform entrepreneurs like Elon Musk, as opposed to companies framed as more censorious like YouTube. Importantly, within the Rogansphere, Hinchcliffe represents an anchor to uncompromising comedic ethos, while Rogan himself has shifted from a libertarian skeptic to an increasingly tame interlocutor for platform capitalists like Musk, Zuckerberg, as well as investors like Marc Andreessen, who frequent his podcast JRE as an agenda-setting arena.

The presentation aims to contribute to scholarly debate around the political influence of podcasters, the right-wing turn of US platform capitalists, and the discursive role of comedy as both the catalyst for an international value-based community and a socio-politically-situated milieu strongly linked to ideologies like US-exceptionalism and the Austin, TX tech industry.

References

Anderson, Brian C.

2005 *South Park Conservatives: The Revolt Against Liberal Media Bias*. Washington, DC, Regnery Publishing.

Arriagada, Arturo, Sophie Bishop

2021 «Between Commerciality and Authenticity: The Imaginary of Social Media Influencers in the Platform Economy», in *Communication, Culture and Critique*, 14, 4, pp 568–586.

Bozzi, Nicola

- 2025 «Platforming the Joe Rogan Experience: Cancel Culture, Comedy, and Infrastructure», in *TV and New Media*, 26, 1, pp. 74-87.
 Ng, Eve
- 2022 *Cancel Culture: A Critical Analysis*. London, Palgrave Macmillian.
- Rosamond, Emily
- 2023 «Youtube Personalities as Infrastructure: Assets, Attention Choreographies and Cohortification Processes.», *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory*, 24, 2, pp. 254–82.
- Sienkiewicz, Matt, Nick Marx
- 2022 *That's Not Funny: How the Right Makes Comedy Work for Them*. Berkeley, CA, University of California Press.

7. «Work is not just work»: Ethnographies on migrant workers' health in Europe

Convenors: Veronica Buffon (University of Messina) & Camilla De Ambroggi (University of Padua)

Layered responsibility for migrant workers' health condition and health care provision under seasonal recruitment programmes. The daily practices in rural clinics in Huelva

Angels Escriva, University of Huelva

angeles.escriva@dstso.uhu.es

Marta Molina, University of Huelva

marta.molina@dstso.uhu.es

Jose Manuel Jiménez, University of Granada

jmjimenez@ugr.es

This paper discusses the challenges of providing health care to migrant workers from the perspective of unresolved and unevenly distributed responsibilities. On the basis of fieldwork material collected in clinics in the Spanish province of Huelva, we aim to show cases and context for answering a series of questions: a) what are the determinants of migrant farmworkers' visits to clinics and GP offices during the berry-picking season; and furthermore, b) what are the facilities as well as the barriers they encounter for adequate health care provision? Secondly, in order to explore the nature and level of responsibility of the subjects involved (medical and administrative staff, agricultural company, workers and compatriots, NGO staff, and others), c) what are the relational dynamics that emerge during medical visits?

Within the framework of a longitudinal study, the methodology of participant observation allows us to analyse both behavioural and discursive practices and to identify the triggers that, in the worst cases, explain the lack, recklessness or insensitivity of medical and administrative actions. For 3 years, the research and activist team has visited rural and small-town clinics in Huelva between February and June, in order to contact both migrant farm workers and the staff that provide their services in the NHS. Primary care centres have become one of the most relevant places for observation and conversation, mainly informal and casual, with migrant and non-migrant patients, medical and support staff. The ethnography of clinics during the months of the agricultural season has proved to be a crucial tool to study how power relations and work routines interact to result in the provision, or lack thereof, adequate health care for migrant workers.

We recognise that there are different logics that help to understand how the national health system considers and addresses the health issues of migrant workers. To this end, the paper approaches the concept of layered responsibility by: a) focusing on the performativity of different actors situated at medical practice; b) shifting analyses from micro dynamics to structural forces of governing migration and welfare distribution, and vice versa.

Occupational health and violence in greenhouses. An ethnographic study of migrant workers' experiences in the Fascia Trasformata/ Transformed Littoral Strip (Sicily)

Veronica Buffon, Università di Messina

veronica.buffon@unime.it

Giuliana Sanò, Università di Messina

giuliana.sano@unime.it

Due to its high flexibility and informality, agriculture is one of the most decisive sectors in reproducing unqualified, low-paid and exploited workers (Corrado, De Castro, Perrotta, 2017). The combination of unfavourable working conditions, the risks associated with high work rhythms, and the use of chemicals and pesticides make the agricultural sector among the dirtiest, most dangerous and demanding (Cole, Booth 2007). In this context, 'health surveillance' is considered mandatory. However, overshadowed by the rhetoric of hospital emergencies, the complex realities of workplace emergencies (such as informal and precarious work),

housing issues and environmental risks faced by agricultural workers tend to disappear from the aims of public and occupational health interventions.

Investigating occupational health, in fact, implies considering these aspects as a whole: the working conditions typical of 3-d sectors and workplaces, which have these characteristics (wearisome, dangerous and harmful); unhealthy housing conditions; the isolation, segregation and remoteness of agricultural workers from urban areas and thus also from social and health services and facilities. Consequently, this workforce often does not even have access to health services.

Still little explored within anthropological fields, the combination of these aspects results in what is described as 'occupational violence' (Singer, 2024). This term is used to represent the complexity of a violence that is expressed at the occupational level and therefore within work contexts, but which like all forms of violence is articulated along the axis of gender, 'race' and migratory background and stratifications.

The invisibility and normalisation of risks in the agricultural sector are produced and reproduced by the internal and external perception of workplaces, which sees occupational accidents as isolated and extreme events, while occupational illnesses – statistically almost non-existent – are often considered ordinary, unavoidable and difficult to attribute to work activity alone. In the probabilistic risk assessment and management of agricultural work, time plays a decisive role.

On the one hand, the precariousness and flexibility of agricultural work have a real impact on the routinisation of workers' movements and postures, which become occasional and expose workers to accidents; on the other hand, the slow exposure to chemicals both inside and outside workplaces reduces the chances of preventing and tracking the inclination of pathologies.

The routinisation of work movements and postures, the high production rhythms and the compression of work and life-times divert attention from the complexity and stratification of causal relationships (Pizza, Ravenda 2016) in favour of classificatory simplifications and taxonomic reductions.

Drawing on ethnographic work with migrant farm workers in the Transformed Littoral Strip (TLS), Italy's largest greenhouses in the Ragusa Province, we propose a reflection on the normalization of bodily suffering experienced by migrant workers exposed to the "occupational hazards" of greenhouse farming. We focus on the emergence and manipulation of different temporalities and the ambiguities arising in healthcare interventions. In an effort to discuss and problematize the local interpretation of "occupational health" in greenhouses, we aim to reflect on the discursive construction of the "risk factor" and the characteristics that attribute "causal legitimacy" to various factors. By adopting a perspective that includes the working lives of patients, as well as the subjectivities of migrants, occupational physicians, union representatives, and social and healthcare workers, we seek to examine the temporal dimensions and contradictions of "health surveillance." Our goal is to contribute to the debate on migrant workers' right to health and on the inequalities within the welfare system

References

Cole, Jeffrey E., Booth Sally S.

2007 *Dirty Work: Immigrants in Domestic Service, Agriculture, and Prostitution in Sicily*, Lanham
Lexington Books.

Corrado, Alessandra, De Castro, Carlos, Perrotta, Domenico (Ed.)

2017 *Migration and Agriculture. Mobility and Change in the Mediterranean Area*, New York
Routledge.

Pizza, Giovanni, Ravenda, Andrea F.

2016 «Introduzione, Esperienza dell'attesa e retoriche del tempo. L'impegno dell'antropologia nel campo sanitario», in *Antropologia Pubblica*, 2, 1, pp. 29-45.

Singer, Merrill

2024 «Occupational Syndemics & The Anthropology of Work, "Society for Anthropology of Work"» in
<https://saw.americananthro.org/pub/pxfx0pnr/release/1>

Navigating the Care Crisis: Regulatory Changes, Work Organisation, and the Well-being of Care Workers in Long-term Care Facilities

Camilla De Ambroggi, Università di Torino

camilla.deambroggi@unito.it

Noemi Martorano, FISPPA Università di Padova

noemi.martorano@unipd.it

Valeria, Piro, FISPPA Università di Padova

valeria.piro@unipd.it

The topic of elderly care has increasingly become central to political debates not only in Italy but across Europe, particularly following the Covid-19 pandemic, which exposed structural deficiencies in the sector (Ranci, 2023). These deficiencies have emerged after decades of neoliberal transformations in the economy that have led to the commodification and marketisation of care (Higgs, Jones, 2009; Folbre, Nelson 2000), now shaped by a model prioritising profit maximisation at the expense of care quality and the working conditions of employees (Daly, Lewis 2000). The ageing population, as evidenced by Eurostat projections that estimate 29.3% of the European population will be aged over 65 by 2060 (Ranci, Pavolini 2013; Eurostat 2011), has prompted various European states to regulate elderly care with differing policy approaches, objectives, and characteristics. This context has given rise to what is termed the “care crisis” (Johnson 2023): a structural shortage of personnel in care facilities, stemming from the growing precarisation of workers and the resulting high turnover.

While there is a wealth of quantitative research analysing the effects of economic and regulatory changes on the quality of elderly care (Hussein et al. 2005), as well as on the working conditions and well-being of care workers (Eriksson et al. 2022), qualitative studies exploring the relationship between regulatory policies, the modalities of care provision, and the working conditions and health of long-term care personnel remain limited. This study aims to contribute to this analysis through qualitative research conducted between April and July 2024 in several residential care homes (Residenze Sanitarie Assistenziali, RSA) in the Veneto region of Italy, encompassing both public and private facilities. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 20 social care workers (OSS), or former OSS now working as nurses, employed in public and private facilities. Additional interviews were conducted with directors of public and private facilities (6), OSS coordinators (2), in-house psychologists (2), and trade union representatives (4).

Adopting the perspective of the workers – viewed as the foremost experts on their own work and health – the study seeks to illustrate how regulatory changes have influenced work organisation, rendering it not only more complex, devalued, and physically and mentally demanding, but also exacerbating tensions among the various stakeholders involved in the employment relationship, its regulation, and its oversight.

In this regard, the study examines not only the physical aspects of the work (such as lifting patients and assisting with personal hygiene) but also the emotional labour required and the strategies workers adopt to enhance their well-being. To this end, the research draws on Hochschild's seminal concept of emotional labour (1983) to understand how workers are trained and encouraged to manage their emotions, as well as to analyse the impact of emotional labour on their perception of care and their role. Furthermore, the concept of organisational misbehaviours (Karlsson, 2012) is employed to explore the resources and coping strategies developed by workers in their professional environments.

The presentation will initially focus on the regulatory framework and the transformations it has brought about in the organisation of OSS work. Subsequently, it will examine the impact of these changes on the physical aspects of the job (such as lifting heavy weights, maintaining specific postures, and working in challenging environments characterised by dirt, unpleasant odours, and discomfort), as well as the relational and emotional dimensions required in this field. Finally, the study will explore how workers develop different strategies to “feel better” and find gratification depending on their varied experiences and career trajectories. The overarching objective is to investigate not only how the work process affects workers' health but also, conversely, how workers' health influences the work process.

References

Daly, Mary, Lewis, Jane

2000 «The concept of social care and the analysis of contemporary welfare states», in *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 5, n.2, pp. 281-298.

Eriksson, Elisabet et al.

2022 «Job satisfaction and wellbeing among migrant care workers in nursing homes: An integrative review», in *Nursing Open*, vol.10, pp. 3486-3505.

Eurostat

2020 *Ageing Europe. Looking at the lives of older people in the EU*, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union.

Folbre, Nancy, Nelson, Julie

2000 «For love or money – or both?», in *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 14, n. 4, pp. 123-140.

Higgs, Paul, Jones, Ian. Rees.
 2009 *Medical sociology and old age: Towards a sociology of health in later life*, London, Routledge.

Hochschild, Arlie R.
 1983 *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*, Berkeley, University of California Press.

Hussein, Shereen, Manthorpe, Jill
 2005 «An International Review of the Long-Term Care Workforce: Policies and Shortages», in *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*, vol. 17, n. 4, pp. 75-94.

Karlsson, Jan
 2012 *Organizational Misbehaviour in the Workplace Narratives of Dignity and Resistance*, London, Palgrave.

Ranci, Carlo
 2023 *Cronaca di una strage nascosta. La pandemia nelle case di riposo*, Milano, Mimesis.

Ranci, C., Pavolini, E. (eds.)
 2013 *Reforms in Long-Term Care Policies in Europe*, New York, Springer Science and Business Media.

Johnson, Eleanor
 2023 «The costs of care: An ethnography of care work in residential homes for older people», in *Sociology of Health and Illness*, vol. 45, pp. 54-69.

8. Labour and exploitation in the contemporary waste industry

Convenors: Hanen Chebbi (Institut Pasteur/ECUMUS) & Simone Di Cecco (École française de Rome, Institut Convergences Migrations)

Waste sinners and waste crimes¹. An ethnography of Labour, Plastic Waste, and the Politics of Circularity in Minh Khai, Vietnam

Lene Granzau Juel-Jacobsen, The Danish School of Media and Journalism

lgj@dmjx.dk

Torn shopping bags, empty plastic bottles, damaged bubble wrap, and surplus plastic lids and straws represent types of waste often seen as a burden – and in some cases, even deemed illegal. In Vietnam, however, this same plastic waste fuels a profitable industry that provides livelihoods for thousands (Ministry of National Resources and Environment, 2021).

This paper presents the results of a preliminary field study conducted in Minh Khai village in northern Vietnam. It examines the relationship between labour, plastic waste, and the politics of circularity in the Global South, closely tied to sustainability efforts in the Global North. The study frames Minh Khai as a prism through which to explore waste labour, informal economies, and environmental inequality within a globalized recycling chain, offering a critical lens for understanding the cumulative harms of both formal and informal plastic recycling. Over the past 30 years, Minh Khai has thrived on plastic waste. The village is littered with heaps of refuse and towering mountains of plastic that rise taller than most people. Black smoke coils from makeshift furnaces where plastic waste is sorted, ground, and melted into pellets. Residents work and live amid these mountains of waste, toxic smoke, and precarious infrastructure. Recycling is to a great extent done manually and with the help of discarded Chinese machines and improvised techniques, under harsh, hazardous, and often questionable conditions. Workers sort plastic, wash it, grind it into smaller pieces, and melt it (extrusion), after which it can be shaped into new products or pellets, typically sold at low prices to Chinese producers or middlemen (Thapa et al., 2023), (Nguyen 2023).

Recycling plastic provides a livelihood for Minh Khai, also known as 'the plastic village', offering more stable and profitable work than traditional farming. Despite persistent odours and clear evidence of severe health consequences, residents often prefer working with plastic. The income from recycling allows parents to fund their children's education and nurture hopes of upward social mobility. The foul-smelling, black, and carcinogenic smoke from melting plastic has grimly become a symbol of hope. Through the accounts of residents and workers, this paper traces how global recycling narratives are lived, negotiated, and contested at the local level.

Green hopes, black smoke. Waste is a paradox: both worthless and potentially lucrative. In a circular economy, the perception and management of waste play a central role. Waste is not merely residual; it is actively produced through systems of consumption and disposal, revalorized through recycling markets that link the Global North to the Global South (Savini, 2019; Valenzuela, Böhm, 2017; Liboiron, 2021). This dynamic often reproduces colonial logics and the circular waste infrastructure of capitalism facilitates the commodification of waste and enable new forms of 'accumulation through contamination,' where profit is extracted from degradation (Demaria, D'Alisa, 2013; Armiero, De Angelis, 2017).

In this opportunistic landscape, plastic flows that would be illegal or unwanted elsewhere become economic lifelines in Minh Khai. However, the cost for waste workers to participate in the circular economy is significant: pollution of both the local and broader environment, including exposure to microplastics, toxic substances, fumes, and health risks that few workers in, say, Europe would tolerate. Many workers, often lacking formal training or protective gear, regularly inhale toxic smoke and handle contaminated materials by hand. Waste work is not peripheral to the circular economy – it lies at the very centre. Yet, the workers who sustain this economy remain politically and economically marginalized. While the health effects may not be immediate, they silently accumulate over time, causing chronic respiratory illnesses, skin conditions, and suspected cancers. These harms exemplify slow violence (Nixon, 2011) – violence that unfolds gradually rather than spectacularly. The thick smoke, microplastic contamination, and long-term health issues are linked to global value chains and geopolitical inequalities. It is a form of violence that rarely makes headlines but often alters lives in Minh Khai.

This slow violence is legitimized and obscured by the discourse of sustainability itself. Imported plastic waste is often framed as part of 'green growth' and the 'circular economy' – a supposedly win-win model that promises both environmental sustainability and economic opportunity (Vietnam Briefing 2023). Yet, in practice, it also reproduces colonial patterns of externalizing risk and harm. While the Global North celebrates its recycling quotas, villages like Minh Khai bear the environmental and bodily costs. In this context, the circular economy sustains green imaginaries in the North at the expense of livelihoods and landscapes in the South. It is both a source of income and of systemic harm.

Waste crimes of waste sinners. The concept of 'waste crime' should be expanded from illicit activities of trade and disposal of hazardous materials and evasion of environmental controls (INTERPOL, 2002) to include ambiguous zones of legality and necessity. In Minh Khai, waste practices blur the lines between deviance and duty, environmental harm and economic hope. The informal handling of waste is a pragmatic part of life, providing for families and offering better futures for children. Waste workers operate within a 'moral economy' of survival and aspiration, where complicity and resistance intertwine. The grey zones of legality are not simply spaces of corruption or violations; they reflect the complex realities of the circular economy, which, for many workers, holds fewer promises than it claims.

Local 'waste sinners' are not deviant, laissez-faire employees but citizens and workers enmeshed in an unequal global system that places environmental burdens disproportionately on communities in the Global South, forcing them to shoulder the costs of someone else's sustainability. The plastic waste work in Minh Khai is both remunerated and illegalized, shaped by international agreements and environmental rhetoric, yet it remains essential to the very circular economy that claims to mitigate global harm. In this context, waste crime becomes part of the broader circular economy narrative, where the costs of sustainability are outsourced and obscured through transboundary waste flows and regulatory loopholes. On any given workday, workers bear the waste, the risks, and the blame.

By foregrounding the voices and labour of plastic waste workers of Minh Khai, this ethnography challenges sanitized portrayals of circularity, highlighting the social contradictions embedded in capitalist approaches to sustainability.

1 "INTERPOL (2022) refers to "waste crime" as an umbrella term describing a range of criminal activities involving the trafficking and/or the illegal management of potential contaminants and resulting in environmental pollution. It includes the following non-exhaustive types of crime: waste crime; marine pollution crime; fuel, oil and gas smuggling and illegal refineries; illegal use and trade in chemicals and plastic; and carbon trading crime" (INTERPOL, 2022, p. vi).

References

- Armiero, Marco, De Angelis, Massimo
2017 'Anthropocene: Victims, narrators, and revolutionaries', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 116(2), pp. 345–362.
- Demaria, Federico, D'Alisa, Giacomo
2013 'Dispossession and contamination: Strategies for capital accumulation in the waste market', *Lo Squaderno*, (29), pp. 37–39.
- Do, Thang Nam, Ta Dinh Thi
2022 'Vietnam's Environmental Policy: A 30-year Critical Review', in Zhu, Zheng (ed.), *Security, Development and Sustainability in Asia*, Singapore, World Scientific, pp. 113–134.
- INTERPOL
2022 *Strategic report: The nexus between organized crime and pollution crime*.
- Liboiron, Max
2021 *Pollution is colonialism*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
2021 *Current status of waste and plastic scrap management in Vietnam*.
- Nixon, Rob
2011 *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Harvard University Press.
- Nguyen, Kim Gia
2023, November 23 *Turning the Tide: Vietnam's War Against Plastic Waste*.
- Savini, Federico
2019 'The economy that runs on waste: accumulation in the circular city', *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, 21(6), pp. 675–691. doi:10.1080/1523908X.2019.1670048.
- Thapa, Kalpana, Vermeulen, Walter J. V., De Waal, Marjolein M., Deutz, Pauline, and Nguyễn, Hong Quang
2023 'Towards a just circular economy transition: The case of European plastic waste trade to Vietnam for recycling', *Circular Economy and Sustainability*, 1(3), pp. 1–3.
- Valenzuela, Francisco, Böhm, Steffen
2017 'Against wasted politics: A critique of the circular economy', *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization*, 17(1), pp. 23–60.
- Vietnam Briefing

Untouchables. The intersection of caste-based exclusion, economic exploitation, and ecological neglect of Solid Waste Workers in Pakistan

Misbah Rani, University of Strathclyde

Kendra Briken, University of Strathclyde

Globally, the waste management industry plays a critical role both as an economic factor but also what is discussed as environmental sustainability. For the global solid waste workers workforce (SWW) though, there is ample evidence they remain exposed to hazardous working conditions and the stigma of 'dirty work'. The suggested paper engages with the lived expertise and experiences of solid waste workers (SWWs) in Pakistan. Based on ethnographic research, the paper discusses how the accumulated knowledge of SWW and their communities is dismissed in recent debates in ecological transition policies, and how policymakers equally omit integrating frugal innovation into their planning to enhance working and, as we argue, by the same token, living conditions for SWW communities.

Pakistan generates approximately 49.6 million tons of solid waste annually, with an annual growth rate exceeding 2.4%. Despite this, only 60% of waste is collected, and less than 10% is recycled, highlighting the inefficiency and inequity of existing waste management systems (International Trade Administration, 2024). Despite their critical role in managing this growing waste crisis, SWWs remain largely invisible and marginalized. Historically tied to caste-based labor systems, sanitation work in Pakistan is predominantly undertaken by members of religious minority communities, including Christians and Scheduled Caste Hindus (Butt, 2019). These workers face entrenched social stigmatization due to cultural hierarchies associating sanitation work with impurity and untouchability (HRCP, 2024). This stigma perpetuates a cycle of poverty and exclusion for SWWs, who are often denied access to education, healthcare, and upward social mobility. The perception of SWWs as "dirty" or "unclean" and "chuhras" (The Untouchables), reflects the deep-rooted caste-based discrimination within society (Sohail, 2022; Butt, 2019). This social stigma exacerbates their marginalization and shapes their subjective relationships with dominant ecological discourses. While ecological narratives emphasize recycling and sustainability, SWWs are often excluded from these conversations despite their critical role in resource recovery. Drawing on Comby's (2015) work on the ecological discourse, this paper presents first insights into how this study examines how SWWs perceive their roles within these narratives and how they navigate the contradictions between their lived realities and societal expectations. Ecological transition measures, such as the introduction of waste segregation policies and digital technologies like trash robots, are transforming traditional occupations within the waste industry. While these measures aim to improve efficiency and safety, they often fail to consider the socio-economic and cultural contexts of workers. For instance, the smart tools implementation in urban centers has created new tasks that might be often inaccessible to informal workers due to a lack of training or resources. This has led to further fragmentation within the workforce; formal workers are comparatively upskilled while informal workers are pushed further into precarity. Moreover, these technological advancements are sometimes perceived as threats by SWWs, who fear job displacement or loss of income. The paper also highlights the precarious nature of employment in this sector. Many SWWs are employed on short-term contracts or as informal workers without job security or legal protections. For instance, a survey among Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) employees revealed that 98% of non-regular workers feared job termination at any time (Aqeel & Gill, 2021). Additionally, Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) standards are either absent or poorly enforced. Workers frequently enter manholes and unclog sewer lines without protective equipment, exposing themselves to toxic gases and life-threatening conditions. In 2019 alone, 70 sanitation workers in Lahore died on duty due to such hazards (Aqeel & Gill, 2021). These alarming statistics underscore the urgent need for systemic reforms to ensure worker safety and dignity. Further to this, informal recyclers or "waste pickers" often operate alongside formal SWWs but remain outside regulatory frameworks. This duality creates both competition and collaboration between these groups. Informal workers play a vital role in recovering recyclable materials from landfills or streets but are often excluded from formal recognition or benefits. Conversely, formal SWWs

sometimes rely on informal recyclers to manage tasks beyond their official duties. These interactions reveal complex power dynamics within the waste sector that merit closer examination. The research employs a qualitative framework to ensure a comprehensive understanding of SWWs' lived experiences. In-depth interviews with SWWs from Islamabad, Pakistan provide insights into individual narratives, while focus groups explore collective experiences and shared solutions. Participant observation at waste collection and recycling sites allows for an immersive understanding of the sector's daily realities. This multi-method approach foregrounds the voices of workers, emphasizing their agency and resilience despite systemic marginalization. By integrating the political economy of the waste industry, and making use of symbolic interactionism, the paper offers a first step towards a more nuanced analysis of the Pakistani waste sector and its limitations and scope for a shift towards an inclusive and 'just' ecological transition. This focus enables an exploration of the systemic barriers perpetuating occupational hazards and provides a lens for understanding how workers navigate their roles within the waste management system. The paper suggests, that, moving forward, postcolonial perspectives are to be included by situating Pakistan's waste industry within global hierarchies of labor and resource extraction. This approach allows to critique Western-centric narratives that portray ecological transitions as universally beneficial while ignoring their uneven impacts on marginalized communities in the Global South. Together, the attempted approach allows to inform actionable recommendations for policy and practice, ensuring that interventions are culturally relevant, contextually grounded, and socially equitable. The findings contribute to broader debates about labor exploitation under capitalism and its intersection with ecological transitions. They reveal how capitalist imperatives shape not only the organization of work but also societal perceptions of value within the waste industry. Tasks associated with recycling or composting are framed as environmentally virtuous yet remain poorly compensated – a paradox that reflects deeper contradictions within green capitalism.

In conclusion, this paper suggests a nuanced analysis of the working conditions faced by SWW in Pakistan's waste industry. By addressing issues such as stigmatization, labor exploitation, informal economies, and environmental slow violence, it contributes valuable insights into the complex interplay between work organization and sustainability goals. The findings underscore the need for inclusive policies that prioritize worker welfare alongside environmental objectives – highlighting pathways for systemic change within one of society's most overlooked yet essential sectors.

References

- Aqeel, M., Gill, S.
2021 Performance Audit Report on Collection of Solid Waste by Waste Management Companies in Pakistan. Retrieved from: <https://agp.gov.pk/SiteImage/Policy/Final%20Draft%20PAR%20of%20WMCs%202023-24%2009.09.24%203.22%20pm%20PDF.pdf>
- Butt, W. H.
2019 «Beyond the object: caste and the organization of work in Pakistan's waste economy», in *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 95, pp. 18-33.
- Dawn
2024 Pakistan's National Sanitation Policy has become outdated, says HRCP. Retrieved from: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1839511>
- Hilal Publications
2024 Solid Waste Management in Pakistan – Hilal Publications. Retrieved from: <https://hilal.gov.pk/view-article.php?i=8873>
- Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)
2024 Human Rights Commission Call for Justice and Policy Reform to Resolve Pakistan's Sanitation Crisis. Retrieved from: <https://hrp-web.org/hrpweb/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2024-hazardous-matters.pdf>
- Human Rights Commission of Pakistan
2024 Hazardous Matters: Examining the Right to Safe and Dignified Work for Sanitation Workers. Retrieved from: <https://www.worldreligionnews.com/religion-news/human-rights-commission-call-for-justice-and-policy-reform-to-resolve-pakistans-sanitation-crisis/>
- International Trade Administration
2024 Pakistan – Waste Management. Retrieved from: <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/pakistan-waste-management>
- National Commission for Human Rights Pakistan
2024 Risks of Sanitation Work in Pakistan. Retrieved from: https://nchr.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Risk_of_Sanitation_work_in_pakistan_Report.pdf
- Sohail
2022 What About Waste Workers? Retrieved from: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/internationaldevelopment/2022/08/04/what-about-waste-workers/>
- WaterAid Pakistan

2024 Solid Waste, a Hazard or an Economic Opportunity for Pakistan? Retrieved from: <https://www.wateraid.org/pk/blog/solid-waste-a-hazard-or-an-economic-opportunity-for-pakistan>
 Yousafzai, M. T., Nawaz, M., Xin, C., Tsai, S. B., & Lee, C. H.
 2020 «Sustainability of Waste Picker Sustainopreneurs in Pakistan's Informal Solid Waste Management System for Cleaner Production», in *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 267, 121913.

Recyclage des rebuts textiles à Lomé. Organisation du travail et contradictions de l'économie verte

Ayimpam Sylvie, Aix Marseille Université

ayimpams@yahoo.fr

Dans un contexte global marqué par la montée en puissance de l'économie circulaire et la nécessité de gérer l'empreinte écologique des textiles, la filière du commerce international de la fripe occupe une place singulière. À Lomé (Togo), les transformations récentes de cette filière, sous l'effet de la fast fashion, ont conduit à la délocalisation partielle des activités de tri des vêtements usagés, auparavant concentrées dans le Nord global. Ces mutations offrent une opportunité unique d'étudier les dynamiques de travail dans un secteur emblématique des tensions entre durabilité environnementale et justice sociale.

Cette contribution repose sur une enquête ethnographique réalisée entre 2022 et 2024, combinant des entretiens avec des travailleurs-trieurs, des managers, et des importateurs, ainsi que des observations dans les magasins de tri. Elle vise à analyser trois aspects principaux : l'organisation informelle du travail dans ces magasins, les savoir-faire développés par les trieurs, et les conditions précaires et vulnérables dans lesquelles ces activités se déroulent.

Les résultats montrent que, bien que le tri génère des opportunités d'emploi dans un contexte de faiblesse de l'emploi formel, les travailleurs-trieurs à Lomé subissent une précarité marquée par l'absence de protection sociale, des rémunérations faibles et des risques pour leur santé. Cependant, ces travailleurs développent des compétences spécifiques dans l'art du tri, basées sur une expertise sensorielle et tactile. Paradoxalement, leur travail essentiel à l'économie circulaire reste sous-évalué et peu reconnu.

En mobilisant le concept de « dirty work » (Gregson et al., 2016), cette étude met en lumière les contradictions inhérentes à l'économie verte, où les discours sur la durabilité occultent souvent les réalités du travail manuel, particulièrement dans les pays du Sud global. La mise en dialogue du cas de Lomé avec des études menées au Royaume-Uni, en Tunisie et à la frontière États-Unis/Mexique permet d'identifier des similitudes et des différences dans les pratiques de tri et les conditions de travail à travers différents contextes.

En conclusion, cette communication propose de réfléchir aux tensions entre les idéaux de l'économie verte et les réalités du travail dans le secteur du recyclage. Elle plaide pour une reconnaissance accrue des travailleurs de la filière et une meilleure prise en compte des dimensions sociales de l'économie circulaire.

References

Abimbola Olumide

2012 The international trade in second-hand clothing: managing information asymmetry between West African and British traders. *Textile*, vol. 10, n° 2, p. 184-199.

Anstett Élizabéth, Ortar Nathalie

2015 *La deuxième vie des objets. Recyclage et récupération dans les sociétés contemporaines*. Paris, éd. Petra.

Appadurai Arjun

2020 *La vie sociale des choses. Les marchandises dans une perspective culturelle*. Dijon, Les Presses du réel.

Ayimpam Sylvie

2016 La valorisation du rebut. Le recyclage commercial de la fripe en contexte de crise. *Techniques & Culture* [En ligne], n° 65-66, p. 264-279. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/tc/8034> – DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/tc.8034>

Beaune Jean-Claud. (dir.)

1999 *Le déchet, le rebut, le rien*. Seyssel, Champs Vallon.

Bertolini Gerard

2006 Les vêtements d'occasion et leurs pérégrinations. *Géographie et cultures* [En ligne], n° 56. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/gc/8709> – DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/gc.8709>

Bertolini Gerard

1978 *Rebuts ou ressources ? La socio-économie du déchet*. Paris, Entente, 152 p.

Boticello Julie

- 2012 Between classification, objectification, and perception: Processing Second-hand Clothing for Recycling and Reuse. *Textile*, vol. 10, n° 2, p. 164-183.
- Bouju Jacky, Ouattara Fatoumata
- 2002 *Une anthropologie politique de la fange. Conceptions culturelles, pratiques sociales et enjeux institutionnels de la propreté urbaine à Ouagadougou et Bobo-Dioulasso* [En ligne sur HAL]. Rapport Programme gestion durable des déchets et assainissement urbain, SHADYC Marseille-GRIL Ouagadougou. URL: <https://hal.science/hal-00687649v2>
- Bredeloup Sylvie, Lombard Jérôme
- 2008 Mort de la fripe en Afrique ou fin d'un cycle ? *Revue Tiers Monde*, n° 194, p. 391-412.
- Brooks Andrew
- 2013 Stretching global production networks: The international second-hand clothing trade. *Geoforum*, n° 44, p. 10-22.
- Gregson Nicky, Crang Mike, Botticello Julie, Calestani Melania, and Krzywoszynska Anna
- 2016 Doing the 'dirty work' of the green economy: Resource recovery and migrant labour in the EU. *European Urban and Regional Studies* [En ligne], vol. 23, n° 4, p. 541-555. URL: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/0969776414554489> – DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0969776414554489>

9. Distant neighbours: Urban ethnography through temporary practices and digital connections

Convenors: Sebastiano Citroni & Massimiliano Raffa (University of Insubria)

A netnographic analysis of the effects of digital associationism on urban relations. The case of the residents' committee STOP Degrado Padova

Anna Capretta, Università degli Studi di Padova

anna.capretta@studenti.unipd.it

Touristification, studentification, gentrification and diffusion of night-time economy: these are just some of the processes that have been producing significant transformations in contemporary cities. Following a neoliberal turn that encompasses all domains of social and urban life, cities become actors of a global market and aim at attracting social groups that are willing and able to spend and consume, thus undergoing rebranding processes. This tendency has a direct impact on the socio-demographic composition of the urban population: especially in city centres, an increase of temporary city users such as tourists and university students, a decrease of long-time residents and the exclusion of marginalized groups can be observed. These transformations have a direct impact on urban relations, particularly at the neighbourhood level, where conflicts for the use of the urban space and time by different social groups arise.

The present research aims at investigating these changing social relations, focusing on the case of an anti-decay residents' committee in the city of Padua, Italy. This committee, called *STOP Degrado Padova*, carries out its activity of reporting cases of urban decay mainly taking place in the city centre through the use of a Facebook group chat. By studying online conversations being exchanged daily in this group, it is possible to analyze the effects of the material and discursive practices enacted by the committee on the definition of new and often conflicted urban relations. In particular, the aim is to investigate whether this form of digital associationism acts as a "school of democracy", improving urban relations and cooperative practices for the use of the urban space, or reinforces the *status quo*, thus fostering conflicts, discrimination and social exclusion (Citroni, 2022; Mols & Pridmore, 2019).

The choice of focusing on a group of residents dealing with urban decay derives from the fact that in the past decade, a punitive paradigm of urban security has been the main tool adopted both by local and national institutions to address the issue of growing inequalities in cities, promoting policies which respond to social exclusion and marginalization through the use of surveillance, penal and administrative law, and police intervention (Crocitti, 2022; Selmini, 2020). This goes in line with the neoliberal turn mentioned above, which has significantly contributed to the decline of the welfare state and to the reduction of the available means to effectively tackle social and economic problems.

Given this link between national and local processes of transformation, the present research aims at combining different levels of analysis, by adopting a qualitative and diffractive methodology which develops through the use of various techniques and theoretical approaches (Petrilli, 2024). Urban sociology, critical criminology, science and technology studies and neo-materialist feminism inform the present empirical work, which is conducted through documentary analysis and netnography, the results of which have been examined through thematic analysis. By combining these different methods it is possible to investigate both the theoretical and normative aspects informing the construction of urban security policies at the national and the local level, and the situated, everyday practices of the residents' committee taken into consideration. The first part of the present research is mainly descriptive, offering an analysis of the policy framework in the Italian and Paduan context and then focusing on the specificities of *STOP Degrado Padova* and its modes of association, which are mediated through the use of a digital platform. In particular, the discursive construction of the concept of urban decay is examined, showing that it is referred to acts of vandalism (mainly littering and graffiti), the presence of unwanted objects or (marginalized) people in the urban space, and behaviors related to the (*mala*)*movida* such as heavy drinking, noise pollution, and petty crimes. The use of a Facebook group, where members can share personal thoughts, photos and videos, contributes to address the material dimension of urban life, focusing on the negative effects of decay and *movida* on the physical and mental health of long-time residents, who often express anger and exasperation. This anger is directed towards specific targets: young people (especially students) and local institutions, starting from the municipal administration which is accused

of ignoring residents' requests while serving the interests of "new powerful" actors, namely bar owners and the university governance.

The second part of the present research takes an interpretive approach, showing how from this construction of urban decay and this particular way of framing social relations inside the city comes a form of everyday associationism which does not contribute to the creation of social cohesion or the strengthening of neighbourhood relation. On the contrary, it leads to the creation of a homogeneous community of long-time residents which excludes other social groups living in the city. Practices of stigmatization, discrimination and marginalization based on race, age and class are informed by the use of the same securitarian approach adopted by national and local institutions. Members of the committee see the use of law and police intervention as the only means for addressing what they perceive to be a threat to their security and wellbeing, without showing interest in creating participative forms of community intervention. For this reason, the research concludes that this specific form of associationism, which develops around the issue of urban decay through the use of a digital platform, does not work as a "school of democracy" but reinforces a securitarian and punitive *status quo*.

References

Citroni, Sebastiano

2022 *L'associarsi quotidiano. Terzo settore in cambiamento e società civile*, Milano: Meltemi.

Crocitti, Stefania

2022 Le politiche di sicurezza urbana in Italia, in T. Pitch (a cura di). *Devianza e questione criminale. Temi, problemi e prospettive* (pp. 207-223). Roma: Carocci.

Mols, Anouk, & Pridmore, Jason H.

2019 "When citizens are "actually doing police work": The blurring of boundaries in WhatsApp neighbourhood crime prevention groups in The Netherlands. *Surveillance & Society*, 17(3-4), 272-287.

Petrilli, Enrico

2024 *Diffrangere la (mala)movida. Rappresentazioni e materialità del degrado. Etnografia e ricerca qualitativa*, 1, 43-65.

Selmini, Rossella

2020 *Dalla sicurezza urbana al controllo del dissenso politico. Una storia del diritto amministrativo punitivo*. Roma: Carocci.

The material politics of key boxes. Labor and placemaking in the Airbnb city

Quinn O'Dowd, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

kodowd2@illinois.edu

While Airbnb was initially advertised as an alternative to hotels in the spirit of home-sharing, it is well established that the proliferation of Airbnb contributes to neighborhood gentrification and rising rents (Amore et al., 2023; Ardura Urquiaga et al., 2020; Celata et al., 2020; Katsinas, 2021). These consequences are further intensified by the formalization of hosting on Airbnb, a process by which platform labor comes resemble to the more traditional services it was initially meant to disrupt. Formalized hosts on Airbnb, usually operating as property management companies, are able to extend the scope of Airbnb by operating multiple, full-time vacation rentals. Although formalized hosts use the Airbnb platform to transform apartments into short-term rentals, these processes are often concealed, as building exteriors are left largely unchanged. Despite this, key boxes, the small metal boxes that enable contactless check-ins, are a visible symbol for neighborhood residents and activists to identify the presence of Airbnb accommodations. Thus, these seemingly mundane objects become politicized in debates around who the city is for (Barry, 2013). Nevertheless, key boxes do not represent a homogenous Airbnb landscape, but rather unique key box arrangements denote particular strategies of formalized hosting. Accordingly, in this paper I argue that key boxes not only suggest the presence of an Airbnb accommodation, but that they also indicate a certain organization of labor. In this paper, I explore three distinct modes of key box arrangement – individual key boxes, static key box clusters, and interior key boxes-- to argue that key boxes are temporary formations indicative of the formalization of hosting on Airbnb. By highlighting the heterogeneity of key box arrangements, I demonstrate how the materiality of Airbnb cannot be divorced from the labor involved in producing platform-based short-term rentals.

This article is based on 11 months of ethnographic research in which I participated in community events, attended lectures, went on Airbnb excursions, and stayed in Airbnbs in Prague, Czechia. For four months of

this period, I worked a total of 400 hours for a professional Airbnb management company, SmartStay. SmartStay managed over 70 Airbnbs in Prague, employed between 25-30 people, and was listed as a Superhost on Airbnb. At SmartStay, I was employed as an operator, my work entailed communicating with guests on the Airbnb application, coordinating check-ins, cleaning apartments, and preparing schedules for other cleaners. In addition to in person participant observation, I conducted digital ethnographic research; I conceive of this aspect of the project not as a supplement to my physical world data collection, but rather conceptualize digital spaces as distinct sites that inform the materiality of the physical world (Cohen, 2007). Much of my time working for SmartStay involved being online, either on the Airbnb application, in one of our company's various WhatsApp groups, or entering information into Google Sheets, as such I paid particular attention to the ways in which the various technologies used by SmartStay's workers shaped the organization of work at the company. I also followed open neighborhood groups on social media, checking daily for any postings about Airbnb or neighborhood concerns, collecting relevant posts for content analysis.

Like many cities, Prague is faced with the Airbnb-ification of its residential spaces; as of October 2024, Prague has 9,066 active listings on Airbnb, with 3,320 of those listings concentrated in the central neighborhoods of Prague 1 (Inside Airbnb, 2024). Comprised of the city's historic core, Prague 1 is a district full of gothic, baroque, renaissance and art nouveau architecture, and is made up of the city's oldest neighborhoods, Old Town, New Town, the Jewish Quarter, the Castle District, and the Lesser Quarter. In 2019, it was reported that a quarter of the apartments in Prague 1's Old Town neighborhood were being used as short-term rentals (Johnston, 2019); although the pandemic did diminish the intensity of Airbnbs in the neighborhood, a 2024 report by the Prague Institute of Planning and Development found that 16% of the apartments in the Old Town were being used as Airbnbs (Sýkora, 2024). Additionally, 88.9% of the Airbnbs in Prague 1 are offered by multi-listers (Inside Airbnb, 2024); a host having multiple listings is usually seen as an indicator that hosting is carried out by a property management company. In contrast to the classic characterization of the Airbnb host as an individual who rents out their extra space, property management companies like SmartStay employ multiple workers, all with different degrees of personal engagement with the Airbnb platform. It is through these workers and their human managers that platform-based processes, such as the spread of Airbnb, comes into being. As such, it is crucial in Airbnb saturated cities to pay attention not only to the removal of apartments from the long-term rental market, but also the labor relations that make it so. The key box, and the particular ways in which it appears in urban space is a bellwether of the labor relations involved in the production of Airbnb.

Although seemingly intangible, digital platforms have the capacity to alter our connection with the spaces around us through their organizational capacities (Richardson, 2020), however, these organizational capacities only exist when they are brought into relationship with human labor. Key boxes are not neutral containers peppered throughout city streets, but rather represent both the increase of Airbnb listings in the neighborhood as well as the changes in the organization of labor on the platform. The transformation of urban neighborhoods via Airbnb is only possible through the intersection of top-down platform-based processes as well as localized on-the-ground organization of labor. I argue that focusing on the material arrangements of key boxes helps to how these seemingly disparate processes converge. Ultimately, I am concerned in imagining an Airbnb regulatory landscape that focuses on the return of habitation to the depopulated city center of Prague, but this can only be possible through an examination of the labor relations that produce such a landscape.

References

- Amore, Alberto, Cecilia de Bernardi, and Pavlos Arvanitis
2023 "The Impacts of Airbnb in Athens, Lisbon and Milan: A Rent Gap Theory Perspective." In *The Planetary Gentrification Reader*, edited by Loretta Lees, Tom Slater, and Elvin K. Wyly. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Ardura Urquiaga, Alvaro, Iñigo Lorente-Riverola, and Javier Ruiz Sanchez
2020 "Platform-Mediated Short-Term Rentals and Gentrification in Madrid." *Urban Studies* 57 (15): 3095–3115. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098020918154>.
- Barry, Andrew
2013 *Material Politics: Disputes along the Pipeline*. RGS-IBG Book Series. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Celata, Filippo, Cristina Capineri, and Antonello Romano
2020 "A Room with a (Re)View. Short-Term Rentals, Digital Reputation and the Uneven Spatiality of Platform-Mediated Tourism." *Geoforum* 112 (June):129–38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2020.04.007>.
- Cohen, Julie
2007 "Cyberspace As/And Space." *Columbia Law Review* 107 (1): 210–56.
- Gourzis, Konstantinos, Georgios Alexandridis, Stelios Gialis, and George Caridakis

- 2019 "Studying the Spatialities of Short-Term Rentals' Sprawl in the Urban Fabric: The Case of Airbnb in Athens, Greece." In *Artificial Intelligence Applications and Innovations*, edited by John MacIntyre, Ilias Maglogiannis, Lazaros Iliadis, and Elias Pimenidis, 560:196–207. IFIP Advances in Information and Communication Technology. Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-19909-8_17.
- Inside Airbnb
- 2024 "Prague." Inside Airbnb. <https://insideairbnb.com/prague/>.
- Johnston, Raymond
- 2019 "One-Quarter of Prague's Old Town Flats Now Rented out for Short-Term Tourist Accommodation." *Expats.Cz*, November 21, 2019. <https://www.expats.cz/czech-news/article/one-quarter-of-old-town-flats-now-rented-out-for-short-term-tourist-accommodation>.
- Katsinas, Philipp
- 2021 "Professionalisation of Short-Term Rentals and Emergent Tourism Gentrification in Post-Crisis Thessaloniki." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 53 (7): 1652–70. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X21988940>.
- Richardson, Lizzie
- 2020 "Coordinating the City: Platforms as Flexible Spatial Arrangements." *Urban Geography* 41 (3): 458–61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2020.1717027>.
- Rubino, Irene, Cristina Coscia, and Rocco Curto
- 2020 "Identifying Spatial Relationships between Built Heritage Resources and Short-Term Rentals before the Covid-19 Pandemic: Exploratory Perspectives on Sustainability Issues." *Sustainability* 12 (11): 4533. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12114533>.
- Sýkora, Jan
- 2024 "Airbnb v Praze: Analýza Stavů a Vývoje Krátkodobého Ubytování v Soukromí 2018–2023." Institut plánování a rozvoje hlavního města Prahy. <https://iprpaha.cz/assets/files/files/9307d16be79b7ca7dbd482f6ea4e3126.pdf>.

(Re)imagining urban belonging through networked gift-giving. Ethno-racial minoritized youth, identity, and community in the digital neighborhood

Tom De Leyn, Hasselt University, Hasselt, Belgium; Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium

tom.deleyn@uhasselt.be

Introduction. Contemporary youth studies increasingly contend with the ways digitalization has reshaped the lived experiences of urban youth, particularly of those navigating socio-economically marginalized or highly gentrified – and thus exclusionary – neighborhoods (Lane, 2018). The field of media and communication, in turn, must move beyond media-centric perspectives to address how digital media are potentially amplifying and challenging gendered, racialized, and classed experiences across these contested urban spaces (De Leyn, 2023; de Souza e Silva et al., 2024). Therefore, this presentation aims to further advance the emerging framework of the digital neighborhood (De Leyn, 2018; Lane, 2018; Sandelson, 2023; Stevens et al., 2017). The digital neighborhood, first coined by Stevens et al. (2017), integrates digital, urban, and youth-centered theories to uncover how networked third spaces reconfigure young people's neighborhoods (De Leyn, 2023; Lane, 2018; Sandelson, 2023). In the presentation, I will elaborate on the specific practice of networked gift-giving (De Leyn et al., 2022) through which ethno-racial minority youth in Flanders (Belgium) construct and reimagine their (digital) neighborhoods.

Methodology. In this 15-month ethnographic project, I participated as a volunteer youth worker in a community organization supporting ethno-racial minoritized youths from low socio-economic backgrounds. While I engaged with approximately 50 young people over the course of the fieldwork, I chose to represent the experiences of a key group of 23 young men (15–25 years) and 9 young women (15 and 19 years) who were the most involved in the research. Most participants identified as Muslim and with ethnicities from the Middle-East, Central Africa and Balkan. The ethical integrity of the project was ensured in close collaboration with the community organization and the institutional ethical review board of Ghent University.

The community organization is located in an initially impoverished neighborhood from a highly gentrified medium-sized city in Flanders (Belgium). The past 15 years, however, the process of gentrification has been steadily developing the neighborhood into a popular residential area for affluent and White families. This context of intensive gentrification has had a profound impact on the young participants of this study. Although the neighborhood is relatively safe compared to urban spaces in larger cities from Belgium, continuous encounters with everyday discrimination and intensive policing of public spaces has been transforming these urban spaces into a hostile environment for minoritized youth. Moreover, the field site quickly extended beyond the geographic boundaries of the urban neighborhood to include networked third spaces formed by

the participants' interactions on social media platforms and within private messenger groups. As such, it is more appropriate to conceptualize the field site as "*more or less mixing, interconnected virtual and physical settings*" constituted by online, offline and hybrid communities. (Lane, 2018; Liu, 2022, p. 4; Markham, 2017).

Results. A group of young men is sitting on a bench next to the public basketball court. A hazy smoke partly covers their faces while they are pointing to my smartphone camera. When I suggest to not smoke while I take the picture, one of the young men, the 20 year old Suleymaan, annoyingly shouts: "*just take the picture, we don't care. It's only for us*". A few hours later, however, Suleymaan posts the picture on Instagram Stories and ask his followers to "*give your opinion*". Suleymaan reposts the received opinions and accompanies them with short but personalized messages. These commentaries are oftentimes affectionate, symbolizing a reciprocal appreciation between Suleymaan and his network. For example, one of the reposted opinions stated "*looking tough [emoji with sunglasses]*", to which Suleymaan replied "*No bro, you are the toughest [hearth emoji]*". As Suleymaan explained, the reciprocal and public exchange of messages on social media is a creative strategy to maintain and display his community in the urban environment: "*We always comment on each other and post these on Insta because it shows that your bros have your back. We are a group of close friends and if you start a fight with me, you will have to deal with all of us*".

The case of Suleymaan is a striking example of what I call networked gift-giving: the reciprocal exchange of affective messages which is being amplified through the visibility afforded by digital platforms. Through networked gift-giving, urban youth strategically navigate the interconnectedness of physical and digital spaces in ways that assert identity, build community, and negotiate belonging in a context of spatial-social exclusion. The affectionate nature of these exchanges, for example, contrasts sharply with stigmatizing but common-place representations of minoritized youths as being threats to urban social cohesion. Moreover, networked gift-giving seems to be a coping mechanism through which the participants show resilience towards institutional and interpersonal exclusion of urban everyday life. Related, but distinctive from networked gift-giving, the ethno-racial minoritized youths also assert their claim to the neighborhood by marking benches and walls with graffiti tags that resemble their social media screennames. These tags serve as digital gateways to the youths' public profiles, further reinforcing their visible representations in the neighborhood. Finally, networked gift-giving provides a vital strategy for maintaining a presence in the neighborhood in contexts where mobility is restricted. This is especially relevant for the young women in this study, whose abilities to freely move throughout the city is often constrained by gendered structures within their households. However, the above practices should not be understood from an overly optimistic perspective. Rather, digital spaces are a double-edged sword as the amplified visibility afforded by networked technologies equally increases institutional – police – surveillance and subject these youths to the capitalistic logic of big-tech platforms.

Reflection and conclusion. Shedding light on networked gift-giving practices highlights how the digital neighborhood emerges as a critical analytical framework for understanding the intersecting dynamics of urban transformation and digitalization, particularly as they are navigated and reimagined by minoritized youth in urban neighborhoods. In particular, I argue that centering the framework of the digital neighborhood foregrounds critical questions over the empowering and disempowering potential of digital media within the context of digitalized, gentrified and exclusionary urban environments.

References

- De Leyn, Tom
2023 Reclaiming agency in the digital neighborhood: An ethnographic exploration of ethno-religious minority youths' performances of the masculine self. in *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 28(6). <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmad037>
- De Leyn, Tom, De Wolf, Ralf, Vanden Abeele, Mariek, & De Marez Lieven
2022 Networked gift-giving: Ethno-religious minority youths' negotiation of status and social ties in a society of distrust. *New Media & Society*.
- De Souza e Silve, Adriana, Campbell, Scott, & Ling Rich
2025 Hybrid space revisited: from concept toward theory. *Communication Theory*, 35(1), 14-24. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qtae023>
- Lane, Jeffrey
2018 *The digital street*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Liu, Ruo-Fan
2022 Hybrid ethnography: Access, positioning, and data assembly. *Ethnography*, 1741-2714.
- Markham, Anette
2017 Ethnography in the digital internet era: From fields to flows, description to interventions. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.) *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1129-1162). SAGE.
- Sandelson, Jasmin
2023 *My girls: The power of friendship in a poor neighborhood*. University of California Press.

Distant neighbours in the same neighbourhood. The contribution of urban ethnography to the study of conflicts in transforming neighbourhoods

Daniela Leonardi, University of Turin

daniela.leonardi@unito.it

In contemporary cities, separate, distant social, physical and symbolic spaces seem to be increasingly constituted. They are characterised by sometimes invisible barriers that end up determining social citizenships, rights and everyday experiences that are increasingly distant even though they are often spatially close.

This reflection stems from one-year post-doctoral research carried out from a comparative perspective in two popular neighbourhoods: Barriera di Milano in the city of Turin, Italy, and the other, Noailles, in Marseille, France. In the two case studies, walking ethnography (O'Neill & Roberts, 2019) was carried out and biographical interviews were collected with some inhabitants without having the mediation of an institution as an entry point. This complicated access to the field but at the same time prevented the research subjects from perceiving the researcher as part of a specific institution. From a methodological point of view, this allowed the researcher to prioritise the point of view of the individual inhabitants. Since in both cases these were two neighbourhoods stigmatised in the public and media discourse, it was unavoidable to gather many contributions from the research subjects regarding their own positioning in the debate concerning their neighbourhood and from there to analyse the processes of labelling by social groups with greater power against those with less power (Elias and Scotson, 1965) and 'voice'. As well as on the processes of social construction of the boundaries of certain places, based on times, on uses considered more or less legitimate, on the perception of safety.

The research highlights how processes of gentrification and urban transformation often exacerbate tensions between different social groups, as long-term residents and newcomers negotiate access to space, resources, and local identity within the same neighborhood. Social, material and symbolic distances can be a *fil rouge* for analysing the experiences of those who live in these spaces of the cities and experience the pressure of inequalities and impoverishment. New divisions are being forged in the city, visible and invisible borders and frontiers are growing (Wacquant, 2022). In this sense, the distance/nearness dichotomy can be declined starting from the representations of the places and people who live in them, constructing narratives that try to coexist and/or conflict with stigma, when they do not interiorise it. Stigma that affects the territories and the inhabitants of these territories, proposing new lacerations in the social fabric, for example along the lines of colour, which replaces what were once existing lacerations between those who came from the south of Italy and those from the north, or the racialised inhabitants who have been present for generations in France from those who, newly arrived, do not speak the local language.

References

- Elias, Norbert, John L. Scotson
1994 *The established and the outsiders*, Sage Publications.
O'Neill, Maggie, Brian Roberts
2019 *Walking methods: Research on the move*, Routledge.
Wacquant, Loïc
2022 *Bourdieu in the city: Challenging urban theory*, John Wiley & Sons.

Civic Engagement and The Urban Politics of Biodiversity. A Qualitative Inquiry on Grassroots Initiatives in Milan

Renato Casagrandi, Politecnico di Milano

renato.casagrandi@polimi.it

Riccardo Emilio Chesta, Politecnico di Milano

riccardoemilio.chesta@polimi.it

Biodiversity has recently emerged as a key issue for the urban governance of the 'smart city' (Nilon et al. 2017). Traditionally conceived as a property of 'wildernesses' within the field of environmental conservation, it is now becoming part of a wider debate investing the green urban regeneration projects. Its definition is thus far from just a scientific concern and it is subjected to various operational declinations linked to urban policies and politics. It can be observed as part of bottom-up citizen discourses and practices of 'right to nature' (urban community gardens) (Blok et al. 2022) as much as part of a top-down strategy of ecological modernization of the urban growth machine (Logan and Molotch, 1987) – as a commodity enriching new forms of soil consumption or green investments. Current programs of urban biodiversity are thus part of the new governance of 'smart cities' that become the more and more mainstream (Angelo, Wachsmuth, 2020). New initiatives regarding urban biodiversity triggers also interesting dynamics regarding the relations among technical experts, citizens, and green politics. Notwithstanding its 'naturalistic' appeal, urban biodiversity is neither a 'technical' nor a 'political' issue but the outcome of a boundary-making process involving social and political dimensions as much as the scientific and collective actors promoting it (Gieryn, 1983).

Along the scientific and technical domain:

- conservation ecologists can have an idea of urban biodiversity that 'protects' currently existing urban voids where nature has spontaneously arisen (dismissed urban factories or railway stations);
- urban planners can promote biodiversity as a key component of a process of green modernization of the city.
- On the other hand, the public interest toward biodiversity implicates:
- business groups promoting new forms of urban growth and thus making of biodiversity a commodity or a service;
- civic initiatives at the local level promotes very different bottom-up practices of a 'right to nature' in the city, that resist these processes and claim for biodiversity as a common good.
- Following these points, the main question driving this paper is the following: if biodiversity is becoming a key asset of the new urban governance, what are the characteristics of the urban politics of biodiversity? How is the problem of nature politicized by the main relevant collective actors within the new green/sustainable/smart city? How does biodiversity become a public good subjected to conflicts and aspirations? How is it possible to speak about a democratic participation on biodiversity?
- The presentation compares evidence from in-depth cases of citizens participation and conflicts in the metropolitan area of Milan. It pinpoints the key challenges and opportunities of the politics of urban biodiversity and link them to the broader attempts to 'democratize the green city'.
- The proposal aims to discuss methodological challenges and opportunities that regards civic engagement on green initiatives in the urban area of Milan, looking at the spatial characteristics of neighborhoods as much as the agency and the cultural practices put in place by citizens. The goal of this work is to provide a sociological explanation of the civic relations developed around urban biodiversity, and how this issue can inform new debates around:
- forms of green gentrification triggering new forms of inequalities and exclusion (Gould and Lewis, 2017),
- the 'right to nature' linked to environmental justice and common good (Gilbert and Phillips, 2003).

References

- Angelo, H., Wachsmuth, 2020. Why does everyone think cities can save the planet? *Urban Studies*, 57(11).
- Blok, A. et al. 2022. The place of greening: comparing civic engagement scenes of urban natures across Danish cities, *City & Community*, Vol. 21(2).
- Gilbert, L., Phillips, C. 2010. Practices of urban environmental citizenships: rights to the city and rights to nature in Toronto. *Citizenship Studies*, 7,3.
- Gieryn, T.

1983. Boundary-Work and the demarcation of science from non-science: strains and interests in professional ideologies of scientists. *American Sociological Review*, 48 (6):781-795
- Gould, K.A., Lewis, T.
2017. *Green gentrification. Urban sustainability and the struggle for environmental justice*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Logan, J.R., Molotch, H.L.
1987. *Urban Fortunes. The Political Economy of Place*. University of California Press.
- Nilon, C.H. et al.
2017. Planning for the future of urban biodiversity: A global review of city-scale initiatives. *BioScience*.
- Rink, D. and Herbst, H.
2011. *From Wasteland to Wilderness – Aspects of a new form of urban nature*. In *Applied Urban Ecology: A Global Framework*. John Wiley and Sons.

Cultural tourism in Las Vegas' Historic Westside. A community-based approach

Marta Soligo, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Claytee White, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

The field: Las Vegas' Westside. During the first half of the 20th century, segregation in Las Vegas led to discrimination and inequality in the African American community, the Westside. Despite facing the many obstacles brought by redlining and too few federal loans to small businesses, the area experienced a cultural and economic revival between 1950 and 1970, with numerous Black business owners and performers like Sammy Davis Jr. and Nat King Cole—who mingled on Jackson Street, dubbed "the Black Strip." These international known stars were not allowed to stay in Strip hotels even if they were selling out shows but lived in boarding houses in the Black community. However, from the 1980s onwards, after segregation ended and a consent decree mandated better jobs for Blacks, middle-class families left the neighborhood that faced a decline due to urban issues, such as gang violence, drugs, and the continued lack of economic investment. As a result, despite hosting significant cultural and historical landmarks, the Westside has been constantly excluded from the broader tourism economy of Las Vegas, one of the most popular destinations in the world. According to local stakeholders, the Westside has important stories to tell, especially in terms of Civil Rights tourism. Thus, residents would like to see some community-based forms of cultural tourism in the neighborhood. Here, an important role is played by Black-owned small businesses in the Westside, which could benefit from tourist visits but that often are at a disadvantage when competing with the larger chains that populate Las Vegas.

Our study. The past few years witnessed an increase in the study of bottom-up, community-based tourism in marginalized areas, with scholars focusing on aspects such as empowerment, redistribution, and social justice (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). Significant in this sense are the United States-focused works of researchers that investigate tourism development in areas that experienced segregation and redlining (Alderman & Modlin, 2013; O'Brien, 2007). Thus, there is an increasing interest among tourism scholars in conducting research in areas that experienced spatial racism (Cook et al., 2018), spatial discrimination (Soja, 2010), and mapping inequality (Nelson, 2021). In such a context, experts aim to understand, through research, community members' experiences, often to amplify their voices (Bellato et al., 2023; Wright & Sharpley, 2018).

In 2022, our research team received a grant centered around the diversification of Southern Nevada's tourism economy and its beneficiaries. The project entailed collaborating with a non-profit organization that helps Westside-based small business owners and youth development. We conducted an ethnographic study that included 40 in-depth interviews with individuals knowledgeable about the Westside and its community, including residents, property owners, community activists, business owners, politicians, and Christian pastors. The goal was not only to understand how spatial inequality and systemic racism shaped the present of the Westside, but also to undertake participatory practices that could leverage ethnography as a way to give back to the community. Here, key was the inclusion of historical material in our analysis, comprising newspaper articles, pictures, maps, and oral histories. A solid awareness of our participants' past helped us better build rapport while being mindful of cultural norms, values, and power dynamics. Moreover, we tried to find ways to give back to the community by providing support and resources, especially in terms of tourism planning. One example was to use our fieldwork to connect Westside small business owners in need with local services or organizations that could provide assistance. Moreover, our study underscores how participatory activities (such

as workshops) helped facilitate community members' involvement in assessing their own needs and resources to plan tourism initiatives. In conclusion, we highlight the key role of qualitative approaches in empowering community members to take ownership of planning practices, transforming them from mere survey-oriented numbers to integral contributors to the overall study.

References

- Alderman, D. H., & Modlin, E. A. (2013). Southern hospitality and the politics of African American belonging: an analysis of North Carolina tourism brochure photographs. *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 30(1), 6–31. 10.1080/08873631.2012.745978
- Bellato, L., Frantzesaki, N., & Nygaard, C. A. (2023). Regenerative tourism: a conceptual framework leveraging theory and practice. *Tourism Geographies*, 25(4), 1026–1046. 10.1080/14616688.2022.2044376
- Clark, T. (2008). 'We're Over-Researched Here!' Exploring Accounts of Research Fatigue within Qualitative Research Engagements. *Sociology (Oxford)*, 42(5), 953–970. 10.1177/0038038508094573
- Cook, L. D., Logan, T. D., & Parman, J. M. (2018). Rural Segregation and Racial Violence: Historical Effects of Spatial Racism. *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 77(3/4), 821–847. 10.1111/ajes.12232
- Giampiccoli, A., & Melville, S. (2018). Community-based tourism development model and community participation. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 7(4) <https://doaj.org/article/8e0c69b271a84d27a97c80e049c5e90f>
- Goyes, D. R., & Sandberg, S. (2024). Trust, nuance, and care: Advantages and challenges of repeat qualitative interviews. *Qualitative Research : QR*, 10.1177/14687941241246159
- Hamal, S. (2020). Trust in Ethnography: Narrating the Difficulties, Rewards and Dilemmas of Entry, Engagement and Exit (3Es) in the Research Field. *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 14, 97–105. 10.3126/dsaj.v14i0.28521
- Hampshire, K., Iqbal, N., Blell, M., & Simpson, B. (2014). The interview as narrative ethnography: seeking and shaping connections in qualitative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 17(3), 215–231. 10.1080/13645579.2012.729405
- Nelson, R. (2021). *Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America*. UC Libraries Forum 2021: *Leading with Innovation, Stronger through Collaboration*. Irvine; California.
- Neufeld, S. D., Chapman, J., Crier, N., Marsh, S., McLeod, J., & Deane, L. A. (2019). Research 101: A process for developing local guidelines for ethical research in heavily researched communities. *Harm Reduction Journal*, 16(1), 41. 10.1186/s12954-019-0315-5
- O'Brien, W. (2007). The Strange Career of a Florida State Park: Uncovering a Jim Crow Past. *Historical Geography*, 35(1), 160–184.
- Sibyl Wentz Diver, & Higgins, M. N. (2014). Giving Back Through Collaborative Research: Towards a Practice of Dynamic Reciprocity. *Journal of Research Practice*, 10(2), 1–13.
- Soja, E. W. (2010). *Seeking Spatial Justice* (1st ed.). University of Minnesota Press.
- Tickle, S. (2017). Ethnographic research with young people: methods and rapport. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 17(2), 66–76. 10.1108/QRJ-10-2016-0059
- Wright, D., & Sharpley, R. (2018). Local community perceptions of disaster tourism: the case of L'Aquila, Italy. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 21(14), 1569–1585. 10.1080/13683500.2016.1157141

I am in their groupchat, but am I in their group? Moving from outside to inside digital spaces and why it is different (and the same) to analog spaces

Marco Sassaro, Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca

m.sassaro@campus.unimib.it

Drawing from personal ethnographic experiences among the digital and non-digital social practices of LGBT+ student organizations in Milan, Italy, I try to understand the phenomenon of “being added” to the digital spaces of people populating our fieldwork as ethnographers.

In approaching my current research among queer people of northern Italy, in fact, I reached multiple activism groups from the city of Milan. While my relationship to these groups and to single individuals among them varied wildly due to my past as a fellow queer activist, a clear step was always taken in my attempts to enter these organizations as a researcher: they added me to a WhatsApp group chat.

The instantaneous passage from “out” to “in” a WhatsApp group comprised of a neatly defined array of members rarely represents traditional ethnographic settings, where levels of access to individuals is gradual and social groups have vague boundaries. Student activist associations in big cities, moreover, represent a kind of social entity characterized by extremely varied degrees of involvement from singular members, a high turnover of participants and a generally “in flux” social cohesion, as students tend to have quickly shifting schedules and their day is rarely spent only in their campus among the same people. Conversely, a group chat is a social space where every member is clearly defined as such by software, while the affordances of WhatsApp as a technology provide each of them with the exact same level of access to the shared communicative space. This field configuration appears to be rarely found in ethnographic efforts which do not include digital spaces:

“offline” ties to our fields, especially in urban environments, are often murky, context dependent and always in flux due to the gradual nature of our relationship to individuals and the absence of strict boundaries among social groups.

In this intervention, I propose to analyze what seem to be the peculiarities of digital spaces, borrowing the concepts of non-graduality and non-continuity from the fields of Science and Technology Studies and Semiotics (Dewdney, Ride 2014; Fischer, 2011; Manovich, 2002; Miller, 2020; Pias, 2016). “Digital” means “numerical” and these scholars see digital architectures, since they are numerical, as being constructed by non-continuous, non-gradual intervals of values (Robinson, 2008): the binary code is a clear example, in fact, as there is no sliding scale between 0 and 1. As coded software, a Whatsapp group chats might always be inherently beyond the possibility of reflecting the graduality and the nuances often embedded in human sociality. In a digital environment, in fact, social realities might inherently have to deal with structures and representational tools which neatly define boundaries, clearly divide and unambiguously provide (or not) access.

What, however, one must be careful about when dealing with these considerations about digital media, is to not overextend them to the whole social context they are dealing with. While it is true that, in my field, WhatsApp group chats could be described in their non-continuity with other clearly separated spaces and in the non-graduality of “being added” to them, it is also true that my relationship with these queer activist groups were otherwise just as ambiguous, multifaceted and nuanced as most other fieldwork configuration in ethnographic canon. While the group chat had a list of members and sometimes even a clearly stated objective, the social groups they referred to were populated by a variable number of individuals (student organizations have a high turnover rate), all of whom I had different degrees of familiarity with.

Where, therefore, do we position non-continuity and non-graduality, “digitality”, in ethnographic practice? Since anthropology is devoted to the study of culture as a whole (Harkin, 2010), how does an anthropologist interpret digital spaces with regards to cultural analysis?

In answering these questions, I expand on what “digital” is, departing from computer-based communication and finding examples of what, in traditional settings, can be described as non-gradual, non-continuous and “digital”. “Digitality” can easily be found outside of computer software (Fischer, 2011); similarly, traditional anthropological canon already includes multiple examples of clearly defined boundaries between social groups and non-gradual shifts in social standing: national borders, secret societies, rites of passage and initiation rituals (Allovio, 2014) are only some instances where one could clearly see similarities with my accounts of digital spaces. By selecting the qualities of digital media and highlighting them outside of computer-based spaces, I argue that ethnography becomes able to accurately position digital media in continuity with all other instances of non-graduality and non-continuity on the field, which could be as significant and culturally enshrined as a rite of passage or as irrelevant as mundane as crossing the entrance of a building.

This conceptual and methodological shift, I argue, will allow ethnographers to refrain from inherently understanding digital media in isolation from “real life”, and more readily enquire whether, in their field, being added to a group chat is to be understood as a well respected “passage” from “out” to “in” a social group, or a much more mundane opening a door.

References

- Allovio, Stefano.
2014. *Riti di iniziazione: antropologi, stoici e finti immortali*. Prima edizione. Milano: Raffaello Cortina editore.
Dewdney, Andrew, and Peter Ride.
2014. *The Digital Media Handbook*. 2. ed. London: Routledge.
Fischer, Thomas.
2011. ‘When Is Analog? When Is Digital?’ edited by R. Glanville. *Kybernetes* 40(7/8):1004–14. doi: 10.1108/03684921111160232.
Harkin, Michael.
2010. ‘Uncommon Ground: Holism and the Future of Anthropology’. *Reviews in Anthropology* 39(1):25–45. doi: 10.1080/00938150903548600.
Manovich, Lev.
2002. *The Language of New Media*. 1st MIT Press pbk. ed. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
Miller, Vincent.
2020. *Understanding Digital Culture*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
Pias, Claus.
2016. *Cybernetics: The Macy Conferences 1946-1953. The Complete Transactions*. Zurich: Diaphanes.
Robinson, Derek.
2008. ‘Analog’. Pp. 21–28 in *Software Studies*, edited by M. Fuller. The MIT Press.

Sustaining Creativity? Institutional Narratives and Grassroots Cultural Practices in a UNESCO Creative City

Massimiliano Raffa, University of Insubria

massimiliano.raffa@uninsubria.it

This presentation outlines preliminary findings from an ongoing ethnographic study in Como, Italy, following its designation as a UNESCO Creative City in 2021. The research offers a critical examination of official narratives of creative city development and their frequent misalignment with the everyday lived experiences and meaning-making processes of local cultural actors. As traditional linear models of production and consumption are increasingly questioned, cultural practitioners – from artisans and theatrical performers to musicians, filmmakers, and international collaborators – adopt temporary practices and digital interactions to redefine community, public space, and cultural identity.

Drawing on critical urban theory and sociological perspectives on cultural production, the study is based on ethnographic observations and in-depth interviews with a strategically diverse group of cultural producers and institutional stakeholders. Informed by Bourdieu's field theory and Becker's 'art worlds' perspective, the analysis considers how these actors construct meaning and contest imposed value hierarchies within their specific socio-cultural contexts. Early results indicate marked disjunctions between top-down policy frameworks and bottom-up artistic practices, with local communities formulating context-based strategies that challenge traditional production models and promote circular, regenerative approaches to cultural work.

The investigation further examines the complex power relations that arise when global cultural policies intersect with local artistic ecosystems. It pays particular attention to issues of fair remuneration, professional development, and the broader challenges of socio-ecological transformation in everyday urban life. By foregrounding the voices of cultural practitioners and their experiential accounts, this study aims to contribute to debates on the instrumentalisation of culture in urban governance and explores new pathways for cross-border and transdisciplinary collaboration.

10. Labour market insertion of young migrants

Convenor: Iraklis Dimitriadis (Scuola Normale Superiore)

Lives after reception. Life and work trajectories of young male migrants in Genova

Luca Daminelli, Università di Genova

luca.daminelli@edu.unige.it

This contribution focuses on the work and life trajectories of young male migrants in their twenties, who have lived in different reception services in the city of Genova – shelters for minors (comunità), reception centres for asylum seekers, protected housing for young adults (alloggi protetti) – where I used to work as a social operator until 2020.

Keeping in touch after the end of the relationship between operator and beneficiaries allowed me, years later, to ask them to be interviewed for research on the various forms of migrant labour exploitation in the tourism and shipbuilding sectors. In recent years, these branches have played a leading role in the Italian economy, but for migrant workers they often involve work profiles that can be defined by the three Ds: *dirty*, *dangerous* and *demanding*. The relationship of trust built up over the years has allowed access to such a sensitive and invisible topic.

Their origins, migration routes, and legal status differ – some have arrived in Italy through family reunification, some by bus alone as ‘unaccompanied minors’, some crossed the Mediterranean to apply for asylum. Yet, having lived in these reception services seems to have acted on them as a level, through processes of labelling and homogenisation that have directed them towards very similar and standardised training and work paths. In fact, job placement circuits such as ‘work scholarships’ (borse lavoro), ‘work education centres’ (centri di educazione al Lavoro) and ‘training apprenticeships’ (tirocini formativi) function as actual *devices for the production of precarious subjectivities* that have to deal with employment conditions characterised by high degrees of informality and low contractual and salary levels. In other words, the class condition and the migratory status of these people have forcibly placed them in aid circuits which, on the one hand, are supposed to support their transition to adulthood and autonomy but, on the other hand, seem to be devices for the production of unskilled labour.

If precarity is a characteristic feature of the labour markets in which young people – even those with Italian citizenship – find themselves, for the interviewees this precarity also extends to the documentary and housing spheres, becoming a true *existential precariousness*.

Based on these premises, the research seeks to answer some questions:

- Within this regime of subjugation, what are the interstices in which young migrants can try to exercise their autonomy and pursue different working and life paths?
- How do the expectations and imaginaries of the young migrants interviewed differ from the actual living and working conditions they experience? Which individual strategies and possible alliances can help to reduce the gap between these two dimensions?

Trapped on low-skilled paths. Analysing obstacles to up/re-skilling for young migrants in Italy

Sara Korbi, FIERI

sara.korbi@fieri.it

Ferruccio Pastore, FIERI

ferruccio.pastore@fieri.it

The integration of young migrants into the labour market is often hindered by a complex interplay of structural constraints, individual hurdles, and intersectionality. In Italy, young migrants frequently face deskilling processes upon arrival, where existing qualifications and prior work experiences are often unrecognised. This leads them to accept employment in low-skilled sectors, regardless of their educational background or professional competencies. Such mismatches between skills and job opportunities not only limit individual

career prospects but also represent a misuse of workforce potential within the Italian labour market (Frattini, Dalmonte, 2024).

This contribution explores how young migrants – particularly beneficiaries of international protection, international students, and women – navigate their current professional situations and consider upskilling and reskilling pathways. It draws on data from interviews to stakeholders and focus groups conducted in Italy as part of the Horizon project “Global strategy for skills, migration and development” (<https://gs4s.eu/>).

The research investigates the perceptions of young migrants regarding their professional situation, their motivations for skill development, and the barriers they encounter. Through a qualitative approach, focus groups were organised with diverse participants, including beneficiaries of international protection, international students, and young migrant women, to collect a range of experiences shaped by legal status, gender, and socio-economic background. The guiding questions addressed participants' satisfaction with their current professional situations, their aspirations and actual intentions to pursue training initiatives, and the conditions under which they would consider entering skill development programmes.

The findings highlight a common interest among participants in professional training as a way to improve their job opportunities and integrate into the labour market. However, this interest is often limited by structural barriers, such as the “poverty trap” and the “hyper-precarity trap”, where the urgent need for income takes priority over long-term investments in education and skills (Borelli, Bochsler, 2020; Schenner et al., 2019). Young migrants frequently struggle to balance earning a living with the demands of training programmes, especially when these require time, financial resources, and flexibility that they often don't have.

Gender is a key factor of inequality, as young migrant women often face multiple specific challenges. These include care responsibilities, cultural expectations, and gendered labour market segregation, which limit their time and access to certain jobs or training (Ruiz, Donato, 2024; Solomone, Frattini, 2022). Beneficiaries of international protection face not only legal barriers and difficulties in having their qualifications recognised but also challenges in learning the local language and finding housing after leaving the reception system (Dotsey, Lumley-Sapanski, 2021; Fasani et al., 2018). International students struggle to balance studying and working, which often leads to delays in finishing their degrees.

Despite these challenges, the focus groups highlight the agency of young migrants in planning their professional future. Many participants enter low-skilled sectors due to the urgent need for immediate income, often to support themselves and their families in their countries of origin. Some consider upskilling and reskilling programmes only if they can secure support during the training period, such as being able to work simultaneously or living in reception facilities that cover housing needs. For others, enrolling in training programmes feels like a leap into the unknown, as there is no guarantee of financial stability during the course or of finding better job opportunities afterward. One key solution identified in the focus groups is the provision of financial incentives during training, which could offer migrants the chance to pause precarious work and fully commit to skill development.

This contribution highlights the importance of designing skill development policies that reflect the real-life challenges faced by young migrants, including socio-economic pressures, legal uncertainties, and the risk of further marginalisation.

References

- Borrelli, L., Bochsler, Y. (2020). Editorial: Governing the Poor – Migration and Poverty. *Zeitschrift für Sozialreform*. 66. 363-385. 10.1515/zsr-2020-0016.
- Dalmonte, A., Frattini, T., Giorgini, S. (2024). The Overeducation of Immigrants in Europe. *Global Strategy for Skills, Migration and Development (GS4S)*. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14071464>
- Dimitriadis, I. (2023). Refugees and asylum seekers in informal and precarious jobs: early labour market insertion from the perspectives of professionals and volunteers, *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, Vol. 43 No. 13/14, pp. 263-277. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-08-2023-0191>
- Dimitriadis, I. (2018). Mercato del lavoro: buone pratiche per l'integrazione cittadina. In M. Villa (a cura di), *Le città globali e la sfida dell'integrazione* (pp. 109-130). Ledizioni LediPublishing [10.14672/67057870]
- Dotsey, S., Lumley-Sapanski, A. (2021). Temporality, refugees, and housing: The effects of temporary assistance on refugee housing outcomes in Italy. *Cities*. 111. 10.1016/j.cities.2020.103100.
- Fasani, F., Frattini, T., Minale, L. (2018) (The Struggle for) Refugee Integration into the Labour Market: Evidence from Europe. *Centro Studi Luca d'Agliano Development Studies Working Paper No. 435*, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3180206> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3180206>
- Frattini, T., Dalmonte, A. (2024), *Immigrant integration in Europe*, 8th Migration Observatory Report, Centro Studi Luca d'Agliano and Collegio Carlo Alberto.

Jørgensen, C., Hautz, H., Li, J. (2021). The Role of Vocational Education and Training in the Integration of Refugees in Austria, Denmark and Germany. *International Journal for Research in Vocational Education and Training*. 8. 276-299. 10.13152/IJRVET.8.3.2.

Ruiz M., Donato S. (2024) Women migrant workers' (WMWS) deskilling. *Open Res Europe* 2024, 4:186 (<https://doi.org/10.12688/openreseurope.18205.1>)

Schenner, J., Cavanna, P., Ollus, N. (2019). Asylum-seekers and the 'hyper-precarity trap' in Austria, Finland and Italy. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*. 25. 102425891881693. 10.1177/1024258918816938.

Solmone, I., Frattini, T. (2022), "The labour market disadvantages for immigrant women", *VoxEU.org*, 30 March.

Producing integration. Work as a tool for the normalization of asylum seekers

Manuel Trevisan, University of Padova

manuel.trevisan.1@phd.unipd.it

Dal Lago (2004), using the term "non-persons," describes the process by which the host country transforms migrants from human beings with flesh and blood into individuals devoid of identity, emptied of their uniqueness and dignity. The general narrative on immigration – as covered by the media and a portion of the political class – portrays immigration as a serious social problem, continuously constructing and reconstructing the foreigner as the enemy (*Ibidem*). To avoid this excluding stigma and rid themselves of the imaginary "false refugee", newcomers must demonstrate adherence to a "model of social action based on individual autonomy and willingness to engage, particularly in the labor market" (Martorano, 2021, p. 203). In this process, a leading role is played by NGO workers. In fact, by internalizing – more or less consciously – the aforementioned imagery, NGO workers guide asylum seekers through a process of "whitening" (Ong 2005), a necessary condition for becoming "good citizens".

This research aims to highlight how, through civic integration programs (Gargiulo, 2018), NGO workers guide newcomers in the process of acquiring a certain level of knowledge about the values and rules prevailing in the host community through two modalities: voluntary work and labor insertion. We demonstrate how the civic integration model leads newcomers toward a process of assimilation – rather than integration – and, in doing so, contributes to their further differentiation, subjugation, and marginalization. We question the conceptualization of civic integration, arguing that, rather than producing inclusion, it teaches subordinate positions directly in everyday life contexts. In the end, to gain recognition as refugees, newcomers – primarily young migrants – must perform a "staging of integration", in which they adopt the role of the "good refugee" and become the neoliberal *homo oeconomicus* that the host country expects. Since the newcomers are predominantly young migrants, the paper also reflects on the intersection between the production of integration and the young age of asylum seekers.

The results presented in this work are based on empirical research conducted between March and October 2021. The material derives from 11 semi-structured interviews, 8 of which were conducted with NGO workers and 3 with asylum seekers. The study is also based on a secondary analysis of the extensive literature on the topic of asylum seekers and the reception system, as well as on the analysis of various ministerial documents on immigration and newspaper articles.

Both voluntary program and labor insertion are phases of the migration career that leads asylum seekers to become the perfect "employable subjects" (Di Cecco, 2019, p. 227) that the host country expects. Free labor and solidarity activities directed towards the local community – generally socially well-regarded – allow for the occupation of public space, showcasing guests as "productive and proactive, not obliged because grateful for being welcomed, and responsible, because oriented towards the common good" (Russo Spena, Carbone, 2018, p. 119). Generally, all activities proposed within the volunteer programs fall into the category of the three Ds: Dirty, Dangerous, and Demanding. Although such programs are often presented by NGO workers to newcomers with the aim of employment – and thus future remuneration – the compensation for volunteer experience does not lie in a potential job opportunity, but in the possibility to present oneself to the host community as a desirable migrant. Bascetta (2015) refers to this as the "political economy of promise".

The process of "whitening" concludes with labor insertion: migrant people, who are often perceived as inherently lazy, inactive, and exploiters of the welfare system, are redefined as individuals capable of being economically productive members of society (Soysal, 2012). Labor insertion occurs through internship activation, which directs newcomers into racialized labor niches (Sacchetto, Chignola, 2017). As a result,

reception centers become places that function as informal placement centers, providing low-wage workers with no guarantees of stability.

References

Bascetta, Marco

2015 *Economia politica della promessa*. Roma, Manifestolibri.

Dal Lago, Alessandro

2004 *Non persone. L'esclusione dei migranti in una società globale*. Milano, Feltrinelli.

Di Cecco, Simone

2019 «Ringraziare per l'ospitalità? Confini dell'accoglienza e nuove frontiere del lavoro migrante nei progetti di volontariato per richiedenti asilo». in Fabini Giulia, Firouzi Tabar Omid, Vianello Francesca (a cura di), *Lungo i confini dell'accoglienza. Migranti e territori tra resistenza e dispositivo di controllo*, Roma, Manifestolibri.

Gargiulo, Enrico

2018 «Integrati ma subordinati. La civic integration tra precarietà e stratificazione». in Carbone Vincenzo, Gargiulo Enrico, Russo Spena Maurizio (a cura di), *I confini dell'inclusione. La civic integration tra selezione e disciplinamento dei corpi migranti*, Roma, Derive Approdi.

Martorano, Noemi

2021 «Da vittime ad Asylum Queen: rifugiate nigeriane e percorsi di integrazione lavorativa», in *International journal of gender studies*, 10, 20, pp. 200-230.

Ong, Aiwa

2005 *Da rifugiati a cittadini: pratiche di governo nella nuova America*. Milano, Raffaello Cortina Editore.

Russo Spena, Maurizio, Carbone, Vincenzo

2018 *Management delle migrazioni, regimi discorsivi culturalisti e politiche di welfare*. in Carbone Vincenzo, Gargiulo Enrico, Russo Spena Maurizio (a cura di), *I confini dell'inclusione. La civic integration tra selezione e disciplinamento dei corpi migranti*, Roma, Derive Approdi.

Sacchetto, Devi, Chignola, Sandro (a cura di)

2017 *Le reti del valore. Migrazioni, produzione e governo della crisi*. Roma, DeriveApprodi.

Soysal, Yasemin

2012 Citizenship, immigration, and the European social project: rights and obligations of individuality. in *The British journal of sociology*, 63, 1, pp. 1-21.

11. Imagining future worlds: New ethnographic perspectives on creative approaches to climate change

Convenors: Lorenzo Domaneschi & Lorenzo G. Zaffaroni (University of Milano-Bicocca)

Training for a Better Future. Climate activism and individualization processes

Camille Allard, Università degli Studi di Milano

camille.allard@unimi.it

Enzo Colombo, Università degli Studi di Milano

enzo.colombo@unimi.it

Mirco Costacurta, Università degli Studi di Milano

mirco.costacurta@unimi.it

The contribution focuses on how youth climate activists represent the future, considering the social imaginaries that orient their perception of risks and opportunities and push them to be active. The social imaginary, understood as the human capacity to transcend what is already given, to outline potential realities oriented towards the future and not yet fully realised, implies the possibility of going beyond what is experienced first-hand. It can be conceived as a specific dimension of culture (Appadurai 2013; Delanty 2024) that refers to the ways in which a group constantly works for and gives meaning to the emergence of the new, to the articulation of the past, present and future, and to the capacity to transcend the already given. The concept of social imaginary is an established part of the toolbox of sociology. As Charles Taylor (2004) observes, the social imaginary does not consist of a set of ideas; it is rather what makes society's practices possible by giving them meaning. Unlike Taylor, however, who tends to consider the imaginary as the 'condition' of thought, superimposing it to a large extent on the concept of culture or common sense, our analysis is concerned with the space of potential criticism of the existing and of thinking-as-the-usual that the imaginary allows (Bottici 2014). Following Castoriadis (1987, 2007), the imaginary and the imagination are conceived as the faculty of radical innovation, creation and training. The imaginary is, in this case, the space within which the ability of critical thought on the existing is exercised, the ability to transcend what has already been given, giving life to 'alternative' realities and preparing for a different future (Milkoreit 2017).

Social imaginary is conceived as an inherently future-oriented concept, especially in relation to climate change and technological acceleration. With environmental crisis and sociotechnical transformations – digital sphere, AI and parallel realities such as metaverse – imaginaries are deeply influenced in the way in which young activists produce new future orientations about the environment (Altstaedt 2024; Davoudi and Machen 2022). The study is based on 70 in-depth narrative interviews with climate change movement activists and PhD students whose research project is connected with environmental issues. The interviewees are aged between 17 and 35 years old.

The interviews focused on the representation of the future in the context of climate change and how such representations – utopian or dystopian – can impact daily behaviour and collective action. The aim is to analyse how and to what extent the imaginative dimensions produced by young people about the future of planet Earth are used by them as a rhetorical resource of denunciation and action, how the imagination produced allows them to define a space of thought, understanding and action capable of opening up new spaces for participation. In this way, imagination contributes to a different and more complete knowledge of the risks associated with climate change and of the possible forms of risk containment. The production of utopian and dystopian images represents in fact a relevant and effective way of disseminating scientific knowledge and political messages, potentially fostering a more acute awareness of risks and greater public participation.

Social imaginaries are closely connected to political action (Shah 2024). By making subjects feel embodied in a social reality that has not yet fully realized itself but is already part of the present, they induce a sense of urgency or immediacy that prompts people to take a position, that orients the perception and evaluation of the situation, and that motivates action and aspirations. Hence, a critical imaginary can emerge on a battlefield where value orientations, emotions, common sense, personal imagination, and the collective social imaginary

unmask the interiorization of a previous imaginary considered dominant and coercive, and where moments of creative production and prefiguration are promoted.

The results presented are part of the research "Young entrepreneurs of creative environmental imagery (YECEI): how young environmental activists and writers of climate fiction conceive, represent and enact values of well-being and enhancement of ecological citizenship"; Prin, call 2022 PNRR, financed by the European Union – Next Generation EU, Mission 4 Component 1 CUP G53D23007150001.

References

- Altstaedt, Sören
2024 «Future-culture: How future imaginations disseminate throughout the social», in *European Journal of Social Theory* 27, 2, pp. 279-297.
- Appadurai, Arjun
2013 *The Future as Cultural Fact. Essays on the Global Condition*, London, Verso.
- Bottici, Chiara
2014 *Imaginal politics: Images beyond imagination and the imaginary*, New York, Columbia University Press.
- Castoriadis, Cornelius
1987 *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- 2007 *Figures of the Thinkable*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- Davoudi, Simin, Machen, Ruth
2022 «Climate imaginaries and the mattering of the medium», in *Geoforum* 137, pp. 203-212.
- Delanty, Gerard
2024 *Senses of the Future. Conflicting Ideas of the Future in the World Today*, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter.
- Milkoreit, Manjana
2017 «Imaginary politics: Climate change and making the future», in *Elementa. Science of the Anthropocene* 5, 62, pp. 1-18.
- Shah, M. Tamanna
2024 «Emotions in Politics: A Review of Contemporary Perspectives and Trends», in *International Political Science Abstracts* 74, 1, pp. 1-14.
- Taylor, Charles
2004 *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Durham, Duke University Press.

CreaTures, Evaluation and Encountering the Eco-Social Collective Imagination

Ann Light, Malmö University and University of Sussex

ann.light@sussex.ac.uk

How are new worlds conjured? Creating sustainable futures needs change to material and economic conditions and systems, but also in the realm of the symbolic – foundational myths, paradigms, imaginaries and systems of meaning – to open new collective horizons for action (Leventon et al. 2021). Creative practices are uniquely suited to help stimulate transformation at these deeper leverage points (Galafassi et al. 2018, Hawlina et al. 2020), through *cultural* interventions. There is growing interest in demonstrating and using the transformative potential of creative practices among policy-makers and funders. Some creative practitioners share this desire. But there is little understanding of how to evaluate the transformative potential of practice designed to inspire new futures. And the creators are not necessarily interested in reproducible and/or scalable results, preferring perhaps to ignite agency and ideas in a small group, offering prefigurative sketches of radically different futures and/or helping design them (Light 2023)¹. One of the key achievements of art is the ability to create unexpected outcomes (Patton 2019) and this clashes fundamentally with standardized evaluation processes that aim at pre-determined outcomes.

Possibly this reflects a paradox – the worlds to be conjured may be only loosely linked to the Global North (post-)industrial accountability-orientated, efficiency-seeking reality of now. The new worlds may invoke the antithesis: existing in a paradigm so different that the pursuit of the means to evaluate them becomes meaningless. Certainly, in my work observing and co-creating processes with participatory artists and designers, one focus for change is the legacy of the colonial-capitalism² and related lack of care. If care and control sit at contrasting ends of a policy spectrum (Stirling 2019), then the act of evaluation may be understood as opposed to the visions of decisive change that inform these collaborators' work.

The research conducted by CreaTures can be seen as a bridge between current colonial-capitalist realities and ones that the project might help foster by embracing a discussion of evaluation both in terms of what should

be evaluated and the politics of assessment. In that respect, the whole project – all three years, 3 million EU euros and ~30 partners of it – has been an act of translation. Light et al argued that there was a fragmented understanding of the potential of creative practice (2019) and CreaTures sought to turn that kaleidoscope into a system sufficiently legible to become a talking point in sustainability circles. This has happened, evidenced by mention of the framework in surprisingly far-flung places: Triodos Bank's Dutch newsletter; the United Nations booklet on creativity and futures; a Natural England presentation on conservation and restoration.

In CreaTures, we defined "creative practices" as the arts, including practices such as design, but we worked only with those who were working with others to imagine a collective transformation of some kind. A transdisciplinary process led to the identification of 9 dimensions of transformative change through creative practice (Fig 1). These 9 dimensions were identified together with creative practitioners, funders, and policy makers in an iterative dialogue (see Vervoort et al 2024 and creaturesframework.org). What has characterised the work throughout is the collective nature at each stage: of the art, the reflection and the research groupings. This, of itself, was transformative (Light et al 2024).

Yet, one is never free of the politics of cultural production. There are substantial power imbalances between those controlling funding and those dependent on it (Avelino 2017). Actors in the cultural sector may be forced to focus on the survival and promotion of their activities (Jancovich and Stevenson 2021), rather than evaluation or care. While the same imagination and critique that is manifested in creative projects should flourish in the evaluation of them, a world that is safe for all kinds of playful encounter and experimentation is already a cultural transformation of sorts.

1 Most interesting to me at present are practices that actively seek to prefigure wholly different *relations* between humans and their worlds, giving a taste of something that people might aspire to – encouraging new meanings, not merely adoption of new token behaviours.

2 As a period, some trace this back as far as Roman property law and detect an intensification of these tendencies in the present appropriative culture of data, computerisation and AI.

References

Avelino, Flor

2017 Power in sustainability transitions: analysing power and (dis)empowerment in transformative change towards sustainability. *Environmental Policy and Governance* 27:505-520. <https://doi.org/10.1002/eet.1777>

Galafassi, Diego, Sacha Kagan, Manjana Milkoreit, María Heras, Chantal Bilodeau, Sadhbh Juarez Bourke, Andrew Merrie, Leonie Guerrero, Guðrún Pétursdóttir, Joan David Tàbara

2018 'Raising the temperature': the arts in a warming planet. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability* 31:71-79. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2017.12.010>

Hawlina, Hana, Oliver Clifford Pedersen, Tania Zittoun

2020 Imagination and social movements. *Current Opinion in Psychology* 35:31-35. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2020.02.009>

Leila Jancovich and David Stevenson

2021 Failure seems to be the hardest word to say. *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 27:967-981. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2021.1879798>

Leventon, Julia, Dave J. Abson, Daniel J. Lang

2021 Leverage points for sustainability transformations: nine guiding questions for sustainability science and practice. *Sustainability Science* 16:721-726. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-021-00961-8>

Light, Ann

2023 In dialogue with the more-than-human: affective prefiguration in encounters with others. *Interactions* 30:24-27. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3599956>

Light, Ann, Jaz Hee-jeong Choi, Lara Houston, Andrea Botero

2024 Enacting Entanglement: CreaTures, Socio-Technical Collaboration and Designing a Transformative Ethos. *ECSCW'24 Comput Supported Coop Work* (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10606-024-09497-8>

Light, Ann, Ruth Wolstenholme, Ben Twist

2019 Creative practice and transformations to sustainability: insights for research. *Sussex Sustainability Research Programme Working Paper #1*. University of Sussex, UK.

Michael Quinn Patton

2019 Transformation to global sustainability: implications for evaluation and evaluators. *New Directions for Evaluation* 2019(162):103-117. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.20362>

Stirling, Andy

2019 Engineering and Sustainability: Control and Care in Unfoldings of Modernity, SPRU Working Paper Series 2019-06, SPRU – Science Policy Research Unit, University of Sussex Business School.

Vervoort, Joost M. et al

2024. 9 Dimensions For Evaluating How Art And Creative Practice Stimulate Societal Transformations. *Ecology and Society*, 29(1):29.

Imaginary wor(l)ds. Creative methods to approach future imaginaries of (im)mobilities and borders in a world of changing climate

Elena Giacomelli, Columbia University, University of Bologna

elena.giacomelli4@unibo.it / eg3336@columbia.edu

Pierluigi Musarò, University of Bologna

pierluigi.musaro@unibo.it

Stefania Peca, University of Bologna

stefania.pecca3@unibo.it

Social imaginaries, as we understand them, are the shared meanings and assumptions through which people experience themselves and the world, develop their values and form their expectations and projects (Castoriadis, 1998; Lennon, 2015; Taylor, 2004). Understanding social imaginaries as a critical dimension of political change (or stasis) means interrogating how they condition, facilitate, and inspire some actions and choices while rendering illogical and impeding others (Musarò, 2019). In this way, social imaginaries impact the future, as a desirable or undesirable space and time to think of concerning current global challenges, such as migration and climate change.

Although the vast majority of climate migration is predominantly within borders of countries, alarmist narratives of climate migrant "invasions" are now a common reason for measures to strengthen and protect national borders in the global North (Boas et al. 2019). Paradoxical as it may be the priority is security (von Lucke, 2021), as reflected in the increasing militarization of borders (Buxton, Hayes 2016), and as the recent Transnational Institute report (Miller, Buxton, Akkerman 2021) reveals: the world's largest emitters of greenhouse gases are spending, on average, 2.3 times more to militarize borders than to take measures to mitigate the climate. The resources spent on militarized and controlled borders are significantly higher than the resources devoted to climate mitigation measures.

The waves portrayed in the media of climate migrants threatening the security of countries in the so-called Global North thus fuel and exacerbate a distorted perception of reality. This distorted discourse disguises the responsibilities of colonialism, extractive industries, and the structural violence of border controls concerning the impacts that the climate crisis has on the lives of people around the world, especially, in the so-called Global South. As Baldwin (2022) underlines, the discourse on climate change and migration generates a particular racial orientation to the topic, which he refers to as the 'white effect': a concept that is intrinsically related to racial neoliberalism. A power relationship that is increasingly expressed through dominant Western Panococene (Giacomelli, 2023) narratives: apocalyptic narratives of climate change meet and intertwine with narratives of migration and thus create an emergence squared, an amplified emergency that causes anxiety and discrimination.

This paper addresses social imaginaries and perceptions of central issues of our times: (im)mobilities, climate change, and the nexus between the two. What are the dominant social imaginaries concerning climate change-induced (im)mobilities futures and how do they shape an ethic of care for others in a world of changing climate? How do they diversify from mainstream media alarmist narratives? What kind of emotions are related to these imaginaries? What kind of future dystopian/utopian world do these imaginaries create?

Through an action-research process carried out with creative methodologies during December 2023-June 2024 and led by the authors, this article tries to answer the above-mentioned questions by unpacking imaginaries connected with climate change-induced (im)mobilities. "Imaginary wor(d)s" is a creative methodology based on techniques of creative writing, developed to let emerging perspectives and imaginaries around an envisioned climate migration story. An attempt to fill the lack of wor(l)ds of this time and this place on climate change induced (im)mobilities, with visions of plenitude through the imagination of (in)desired futures in a society of inequalities.

Collected stories may represent future-present imaginaries on climate (im)mobilities. To analyze them we decide to start from the typology of frames – filters of sense-making – proposed by Ransal-Copper et al. (2015) identified for climate migrants in popular policy and academic debate: victims, security threats, adaptive agents and political subjects.

The idea is to unpack how actors are interpreting and responding to the issue of climate (im)mobilities. We use frame analysis to draw attention to how a variety of actors define the boundaries of climate (im)mobilities, both

intentionally and unintentionally, and how this generates interpretations and directions for perceptions and imaginaries in general. In particular, we identify and discuss how the initial starting frames identified by Ransal-Cooper et al. (2015) are enriched in sense and scope.

While the field of climate migration is growing both in the researchers, media news, and activists/artivsts, there is still much confusion on what we are talking about when we talk about a climate migrant story and what we should advocate for when we talk about climate migration. Currently, there is dynamism in climate (im)mobilities discussion, related to the many fields involved in the topic such as climate and environmental studies and migration and refugees studies. Surely, climate (im)mobilities is not the sum of its single elements, climate change and migration. One plus one is not equal to two, but three, in climate (im)mobilities discourses. In other words, climate (im)mobilities is a separate and distinct phenomena, to be treated consciously of its parts, but as a phenomenon in its own right. While the four framings are frequently hybridized and not always consistently used by the same actors, we contend that they emphasize distinct political, ideological, and practical ideas related to specific interests and normative presumptions. Moreover, each frame can lead to utopian or dystopian future worlds. These imaginaries are also growing, or perhaps rediscovering or restoring, forms of life and background assumptions of themselves, their relations with other earth beings, and with time. The imaginaries are “coping with crisis”, and are identified considering central elements of the story, their geographical location, their temporality, and the role of protagonists. The frames are: climate migrants, more-than-human and the environment as “victims”; the security problem with climate migration isn’t the migration; climate migrants as adaptive agents both in the place of origin and in the country of destination; climate migrants as political subjects. These stories show the need to activate a process of intersectional narratives of (im)mobilities induced by climate change, understood not only in its spatial but also in its temporal, existential (livelihood), and psycho-social dimensions.

References

- Baldwin, Andrew
2022 *The other of climate change: racial futurism, migration, humanism*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield.
- Boas, Ingrid, Carol Farbotko, Helen Adams, Harald Sterly, Simon Bush, Kees van der Geest, Hanne Wiegel, Hasan Ashraf, Andrew Baldwin, Giovanni Bettini, Suzy Blondin, Mirjam de Bruijn, David Durand-Delacre, Christiane Froehlich, Giovanna Gioli, Lucia Guaita, Elodie Hut, Francis X. Jarawura, Machiel Lamers, Samuel Lietaer, Sarah L. Nash, Etienne Piguet, Delf Rothe, Patrick Sakdapolrak, Lothar Smith, Basundhara Tripathy Furlong, Ethemcan Turhan, Jeroen Warner, Caroline Zickgraf, Richard Black, Mike Hulme
2019 «Climate migration myths», in *Nature Climate Change*, 9, 11, pp. 901-903. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-019-0633-3>
- Buxton, Nick, Ben Hayes (Ed.)
2016 *The secure and the dispossessed: how the military and corporations are shaping a climate-changed world*, Transnational Institute: ideas into movement, London, Pluto Press.
- Castoriadis, Cornelius
1998 *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press.
- Giacomelli, Elena
2023 *Panicocene. Narrazioni su cambiamenti climatici, regimi di mobilità e migrazioni ambientali*, Milano, FrancoAngeli.
- Lennon, Kathleen
2015 *Imagination and the Imaginary*, New York, Routledge.
- Miller, Todd, Nick Buxton, Mark Akkerman
2021 *Global Climate Wall: How the World's Wealthiest Nations Prioritise Borders Over Climate Action*, Transnational Institute, <https://www.tni.org/en/publication/global-climate-wall>.
- Musarò, Pierluigi
2019 «Aware Migrants: The role of information campaigns in the management of migration», in *European Journal of Communication*, 34, pp. 629 – 640
- Ransan-Cooper, Hedda, Carol Farbotko, Karen E. McNamara, Fanny Thornton, Emilie Chevalier
2015 «Being(s) framed: The means and ends of framing environmental migrants», in *Global Environmental Change*, 35, pp. 106-115. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2015.07.013>.
- Taylor, Charles
2004 *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Durham and London, Duke University Press.
- von Lucke, Franziskus
2021 «Principled pragmatism in climate policy? The EU and changing practices of climate justice», in *Political Geography*, 86, pp. 102355.

Creative Climate Change Science? A discourse analysis of conflicting scientific accounts about anthropogenic global warming

Fiammetta Corradi, Università degli Studi di Pavia

fiammetta.corradi@unipv.it

When it comes to imagining the future of planet earth, science certainly has something to say, both through its accounts of current processes and its predictions based on models. Even in this field, where there is a majoritarian consensus about the causes and effects of climate change, and the contrarians are a minority, science proves to be a matter of polyphonic discursive constructions or interpretations, competitive storytelling and creative narratives. This work aims at showing it empirically, through a reconstruction of the scientific battle ground about climate change, which, since the 80's, is described by leading scientists as a process of global warming and explained in terms of anthropogenic causes (i.e. the increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere due to the human burning of fossil fuels). More specifically, this contribution counterposes the arguments in support of the current mainstream theory of Anthropogenic global warming (AGW) as exposed in the scientific reports published since 1988 by the United Nations IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) and the arguments against such theory levelled to it by negationists (like Craig 2021, Prestininzi 2022) and scientists from the CLINTEL organization (in particular, the authors of the World Declaration "There is No Climate Change Emergency", 2025). These arguments undergo a systematic discourse analysis carried out applying elements of the Toulmin's Model (1959) and a set of dichotomous categories (descriptive vs explicative; factual vs normative...). In addition, an innovative method to test coherence is displayed and applied to explore the various roles of consistency in scientific argumentations, from heuristic and epistemological usages to covering "logical paint" to persuade of the verisimilitude of scientific accounts. The findings reveal how certainty about each competing scientific account has grown progressively stronger over time, activating – both in communities of mainstreamers and opponents – creative mechanisms of data cherry picking, strategic omissions, and reciprocal critiques of blatant contradiction between theory and evidence, when not outright data manipulation, to assure and reinforce the claim of holding *the* definitive, "objective" scientific truth about climate change.

References

- CLINTEL, Global Climate Intelligence Group, *There is no Climate Change Emergency*, delivered January 2025, from <https://clintel.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/WCD-250104.pdf>
- CLINTEL, *The Frozen Views of IPCC, An analysis of AR6* (edited by Marcel Crock and Andy May), 2023, clintel.org.
- Craig, David, *There is No Climate Crisis*, The Original Book Company, Bournemouth, UK, 2021.
- INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE, <https://www.ipcc.ch/synthesis-report/>
- Analysed Reports: 1990 (FAR); 1995 (SAR); 2001 (TAR); 2007 (AR4); 2014 (AR5); 2021 (AR6); 2023 (WG3).
- Prestininzi, Alberto (a cura di), *Dialoghi sul clima. Tra emergenza e conoscenza*. Rubbettino, 2022.
- Toulmin, S., *The Uses of Argument*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1959.

"Should I stay or should I go". Citizens' perceptions of natural hazards and imaginaries on community futures in Southern Italy

Rocco Scolozzi, University of Trento

rocco.scolozzi@unitn.it

Eliana Fattorini, University of Trento

eliana.fattorini@unitn.it

Giulia Fasoli, Skopia Anticipation Services s.r.l.

fasoli@skopia-anticipation.it

Imaginaries of possible futures for local communities significantly influence individuals' sense of belonging and decisions to emigrate or stay. In other words, the images of future held by local actors play a critical role in shaping the trajectories of their communities. This is particularly salient in small rural settlements in Southern Italy, where various social and natural phenomena, including depopulation, seismic risks, and hydrogeological instability, are posing ongoing challenges.

This research, conducted within the framework of the MITIGO project (Mitigazione dei Rischi Naturali per la Sicurezza e la Mobilità nelle Aree Montane del Mezzogiorno, PNR 2015–2020), adopts a mainly qualitative approach to investigate local knowledge, attitudes toward natural hazards related to climate change (e.g., floods, landslides, and debris flows), and visions for the future of four small municipalities: Albano di Lucania, Campomaggiore, Castelmezzano, and Pietrapertosa, all located in the Basilicata region (Potenza province). These local realities, with a combined population exceeding 8,000 in 1951, have since declined to approximately 3,800, with linear projections suggesting a further reduction to just over 2,000 by 2050 (or even disappearing under non-linear scenarios). The broader aim of the project was to understand the national, regional, and local factors driving this decline and to identify potential levers for counteracting or slowing this trend.

The field research builds on the premise that managing natural hazards – encompassing preparedness, damage mitigation, and recovery – requires a complex interplay of social and technological processes. These processes involve interactions between several stakeholders: citizens, administrators, and decision-makers, who construct, rely on and shape individual and collective imaginaries. These, which may either foster or hinder resilience, are central to understanding how communities perceive natural hazards and navigate their futures.

Fieldwork was conducted across three distinct observation and data-gathering periods between September 2021 and October 2022, amounting to approximately ten days per phase. Employing a mixed-methods approach, with a particular focus on the qualitative component, the study included participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, surveys, and two participatory foresight workshops (Gidley, et al., 2009), referred to as *laboratori di futuri*, or futures workshops. Despite the research design was constrained by the project's predominant focus on landscape engineering and geological studies – of which social research comprised only a small fraction – the study achieved substantial engagement: 30 qualitative interviews were conducted, 23 individuals participated in workshops, and 167 completed questionnaires.

Interviews were conducted following the “seven-question method” (Radcliffe, 2002), a tool widely used in futures studies to identify strategic issues, stimulate reflection about desirable and undesirable futures, and surface divergent or convergent views on future challenges and opportunities. Data from these interviews were analysed using MAXQDA software and qualitative content analysis (Williamson et al., 2018), enriched by insights and concepts from the workshops and survey.

Preliminary findings provide actionable recommendations for designing risk communication initiatives tailored to these and similar communities in inland Basilicata. Enhancing “community resilience” (Berker and Ross, 2013) in this context involves fostering the competence to maintain critical systems under stress, enhance self-sufficiency, adapt to environmental and social changes, and accelerate post-shock recovery. Such resilience depends on factors including risk perception, mutual support among citizens, trust in institutions, and the availability of human and technological resources.

The study highlights that community resilience to climate change is not merely a technical challenge but a socio-territorial and political process. It evolves iteratively, requiring long-term commitment and the integration of local knowledge. The findings also underscore the importance of interdisciplinarity and the inclusion of social sciences perspectives in domains traditionally dominated by engineering, land use planning, and civil protection.

The mixed-methods approach employed in this study has significant potential for replication and comparative analysis in other contexts, particularly in rural and mountain areas vulnerable to climate change (such as the Alps and the Apennines). Exploring the complex interplay between collective imaginaries, community dynamics (e.g., reciprocity and institutional trust), and local resilience requires to answer relatively new research questions and offers a promising avenue for informing forward-looking policies and strategies. These insights can support the development of tailored interventions and communications to address the unique challenges of small, at-risk communities while fostering their capacity to envision and create sustainable futures.

References

- Berkes, Fikret, & Ross, Helen
2013 Community Resilience: Toward an Integrated Approach. *Society & Natural Resources*, 26(1), 5–20.
- Gidley, Jennifer. M., Fien, John, Smith, Jodi-Anne, Thomsen, Dana C., & Smith, Timothy. F.
2009 Participatory futures methods: Towards adaptability and resilience in climate-vulnerable communities. *Environmental Policy and Governance*, 19(6), 427–440. <https://doi.org/10.1002/eet.524>
- Ratcliffe, John,
2002 Scenario planning: strategic interviews and conversations. *Foresight*, 4(1), 19–30.
- Williamson, Kirsty, Given, Lisa. M., Scifleet, Paul

2018 Qualitative data analysis. In K. Williamson & G. Johanson (Eds.), *Research Methods (Second Edition)* (pp. 453–476). Chandos Publishing.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-102220-7.00019-4>.

13. Creative/inventive methods in contemporary ethnographic inquiry

Convenors: Fabio M. Esposito (CNR-IRPPS) & Paolo Landri (CNR-IRISS)

Exploring narratives of exclusion/inclusion through participatory methods. Migrants', refugees' and asylum seekers' experiences in Greece

Ilias Marmaras, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

mbholgr@gmail.com

Nefeli Stournara

nefstournara@gmail.com

Social integration, as it may be defined in any social context, is one of the main issues at stake for all immigration societies. Even if integration is formally defined and even celebrated as a two-way process, when it comes to examining the effective results of relevant policies there seems to be a lack of reciprocity. Integration assessments are conducted exclusively for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers (MRAS). Our research, conducted in the framework of the project "Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees Narrating Integration Experiences – MARNIE" (2023-2025), funded by the Hellenic Foundation for Research & Innovation (ELIDEK), has been trying to reverse this not-so-mutual paradigm, by focusing on MRAS' experiences of integration. Furthermore, our analysis lies in exploring narratives of experiences of everyday encounters within specific social fields, where social integration – or social exclusion – effectively occurs, i.e. social services provided by public, private and non-governmental actors.

Our research does not aim at filling a gap by giving voice to those who are often under-researched. In fact, a significant number of studies focus on MRAS. The innovative part of our approach lies in our willingness to give prominence to MRAS' narratives on their experiences. In this sense, our endeavour does not seek a dense ethnographic account based on our assumptions from the field; it mostly seeks to collect narratives in the form of "raw material", as much and as diverse and disparate as possible. The selection criteria we use, both for individual interviews and for the collective working groups – focus groups with a specific purpose shared with the participants – follow this speculative logic: collect as diverse narratives as possible. The aim is not a representative mapping of existing inclusion/exclusion experiences, but a rich toolbox, from which alternative forms of meta-narratives can emerge. A toolbox which is comprised by the rich content of interviews, fieldnotes that take the form of insightful memo, narrative analysis of stories, analysis of language use and communication patterns to understand cultural norms and identity and all these within the context of recognizing the researcher's positionality and ensuring ethical engagement with participants.

The way we are planning to elaborate the narratives, is that of a digital application with game elements which will be disseminated as an online game for PC, Mac and portable devices. Apart from the stories collected by women working in the red district of the inner-city Athens, or young naturalised Greeks coming from migrant families, and or recognised refugees who pursue successfully their studies in Greece, and so on and so forth, participatory methods engage MRAS in co-building scripts that build up the game. This is the purpose of the above-mentioned working/focus groups: in a mixed, participatory, inter-agency collaborative setting, to jointly reflect, share of experiences, identify key narratives and co-design potential scenarios for the digital narrative gameplay.

This presentation has a two-fold objective: on the one hand, to reflect on used methods, from their inception to their implementation, both in theoretical and practical terms; on the other hand, to explore the ways in which actors' narratives around (differentially shared) experiences can effectively deepen our knowledge on how policies and politics are materialised in the realm of everyday life, as Henri Lefebvre could have put it. An encounter between a service provider and a service beneficiary, in a hospital, in a school, in a bank, or in a shelter, is the common ground where integration policies are tested. The narratives which are produced through and about this encounter can serve as an in-situ assessment of these policies, by the very actors who are involved.

By discerning existing shifts in everyday practices, e.g. increasing barriers for asylum seekers to accomplish essential administrative acts, such as having access to social security, one can revisit the overall migration regime. One can detect areas where the politics of deterrence – if not enmity – become a wide-spread State strategy, where diverse forms of racialisation result in increasing exclusion instead of inclusion. Or, from a more

optimistic view, one can learn about latent forms of everyday solidarity that lead to existing or potential cracks in the deterring border and migration regime.

Going mobile. Methodological reflections on go-along interviews in studying the ethnoracial Othering of immigrants

Radka Klvaňová, Masaryk University

radka.klvanova@mendelu.cz

Alica Synek Rétiová, Masaryk University

retiova@mail.muni.cz

This contribution reflects upon research experiences with go-along interviewing in the study of immigrant experiences with ethnoracial Othering in Brno, a secondary city in Czechia. Go-alongs are mobile interviews that integrate talking and walking through the city. They are interactive and person-centered forms of ethnography (Flick, Hirsland, Hans, 2019). In our research, the combination of interviewing and observing through the shared experience of a city walk represents a useful tool to foster a deeper understanding of how immigrants experience and interact with public space in their everyday lives. Based on ten go-along interviews conducted with immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa and MENA countries living in Brno, we argue that go-alongs provide a useful methodology for accessing the dynamics of racialization and ethnoracial Othering. We reflect on three types of interactions triggered by the go-alongs that facilitate a more complex understanding of ethnoracial Othering in the urban space. First, we consider the interactions between the research participants and the built environment, i.e. their relating to physical objects in the public space such as statues, buildings or restaurants as carriers of meanings. Second, the interactions between the research participants and other social actors in the urban space present an opportunity to observe how they relate to strangers or acquaintances throughout the walk. Third, the interactions between research participants and the researcher may include the selection of the route based on researcher's request or negotiation of the route over the course of the interview. In addition, we discuss the variations in the power asymmetry of go-alongs when compared to "traditional" interviewing. By granting research participants a leading role in the choice of route and engagement with the places encountered, go-alongs shift the power dynamics of the relationship between researchers and participants. This methodological choice feeds into the call for a "reverse anthropology/sociology" (Wagner 1981) that treats research participants as legitimate producers of social knowledge and recognizes their active role in the production of meanings. Our experience with go-alongs shows that the mitigation of power asymmetries can have a twofold effect: whereas certain participants can be empowered and encouraged in sharing their experiences and ideas, others can feel rather uncertain in the guiding position. The participants are put into a vulnerable position when asked to expose their everyday routes to work, leisure time facilities, or the neighborhood they live in. Therefore, careful selection of research participants, as well as establishing a rapport is crucial in go-alongs. In this regard, we see an advantage in the triangulation of data from interviews and go-alongs (Flick, Hirsland, Hans, 2019), not only through verification of participant views or gathering richer data, but also because previous encounters between of researchers and participants support the conversation flow during go-alongs and foster confidence among participants to take the initiative during the walk.

References

Flick, Uwe, Andreas Hirsland, Benjamin Hans

2019 Walking and Talking Integration: Triangulation of Data from Interviews and Go-Alongs for Exploring Immigrant Welfare Recipients' Sense(s) of Belonging, *Qualitative Inquiries* 25(8), 799-810.

Wagner, Roy

1981 The Invention of Culture, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press

Cultural-Affective Spaces of Resistance. Using an Art-Based Ethnography with Sketches to Study the Iranian Diaspora in Italy

Somita Sabeti, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

somita.sabeti@unive.it

This paper explores the triangulation of the arts-based method of observational sketching with more conventional ethnographic approaches in the study of cultural-affective spaces of resistance within the Iranian diaspora in Italy. Positioned at the intersection of diaspora studies, visual anthropology, and participatory research, the paper investigates how observational sketching unfolds in three key spaces – a theatre scene, a coffee bar, and a cineforum – depicting artists, performers, co-creators, and audiences. The art-based method seeks to visualize how these spaces operate as affective sites of resistance, creative expression and negotiation of identity.

While traditional ethnographic methods such as participant observation and semi-structured interviews remain central to the project, this paper foregrounds the incorporation of sketches – particularly in the form of comics – as an arts-based and participatory method. The aim is to critically assess the opportunities and limitations of such methods when used alongside more established qualitative tools. Drawing builds on prior research (Berger 2005; Taussig 2011; Lightman 2014; Varzi 2015; Causey 2016) that situates the visual not only as a reflective mode of inquiry, but also as a dialogic medium through which insights emerge in relation to the subjects under study.

Building on my prior research experience, I am interested in exploring how sketching – particularly in the form of comics – can become a collaborative process where informants actively contribute to the interpretation and representation of their lived experiences. In that earlier research, sketching served as a tool for self-reflexivity and for coping with the ethical discomforts of conducting fieldwork in sensitive contexts involving irregular migrants. During the fieldwork process and beyond, the act of drawing allowed me to continually renegotiate my researcher identity in relation to my personal, emotional and cultural self. The drawings represented a mental conversation with the subject(s) being drawn, or as Berger (2005) puts it “a search for meaning in the context of social relation”. It became a sanctuary that I turned to within which the introspection of my position as researcher in relation to the subject matter took shape, developed and matured through the expression of drawing as a complement to field notes. Drawing is made ‘on location’ and intersects the “inner and outer worlds” – seen, remembered, reflected upon, imagined, drawn (Berger, 2005, p. 70). Through sketching, I found a way to explore how my unconscious biases and personal experiences shaped the researcher-participant relationship. In addition, it seemed important to demonstrate, through pictorial representation, that “I have been there” and “they have been there”. As Taussig (2011) claims in *I swear I saw this*, observational sketching as method is not only a way of proving what was observed, but also a way of disguising and distorting the inherent subjectivity of the ethnographic approach. An equally important aspect of going into the field to draw was that, as a researcher, I became visible to the reader not just through textual descriptions of my situated perspective, but through drawings that complemented textual analysis and positioned me as more than an observer, opening paths to reflexivity.

In the current project, it moves beyond introspection, positioning drawing as a participatory process in which informants are invited to review and reflect on the visual representations of their lived experiences and on the data that emerged from the researcher-participant interviews. This collaborative engagement enables a co-interpretation of field encounters, while also offering a medium to disrupt the authority of text and foreground subjectivity and situated knowledge. Since I am mainly working with artists, I hope that this collaborative process will unfold naturally.

By analyzing both the potential and the challenges of this methodological triangulation – such as negotiating representation, researcher visibility, and ethical concerns *around* the use of drawings in sensitive research – the paper contributes to ongoing debates in migration and diaspora studies about how we produce more inclusive, participatory, and ethically accountable research *with*, rather than *about*, migrant communities (Harris, Roberts, 2011). It also offers a critical reflection on how visual methods may complement, complicate, or enrich conventional ethnographic practices, especially in research involving artistic and politically engaged diasporic communities.

References

- Berger, John
2007 Berger on Drawing. Jim Savage (ed.) Aghabullogue: Occasional Press.
Causey, Andrew
2016 Drawn to See: Drawing as an Ethnographic Method. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
Harris, Jenny, Roberts, Karen
2011 'Challenging Barriers to Participation in Qualitative Research: Involving Disabled Refugees', in B. Temple and R. Moran (eds.), *Doing Research with Refugees: Issues and Guidelines* (Bristol: The Policy Press), 155-167.
Lightman, Sarah, ed.
2014 Graphic Details: Jewish Women's Confessional Comics in Essays and Interviews. New York: McFarland.
Taussig, Michael,
2011 I swear I saw this: Drawings in Fieldwork Notebooks, Namely My Own. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Varzi, Roxanne
2015 Last Scene Underground: An Ethnographic Novel of Iran. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Methodological Inventiveness and Challenges. A Multimodal Qualitative Approach to Investigating Cultural (Re)Production in Complex Settings

Alicia Chiodi, University of Trento

alicia.chiodi@unitn.it

This contribution discusses the inventive methodological framework (Lury, Wakeford, 2012) and associated challenges of an ongoing ethnographic project that examines cultural (re)production in the complex setting of Alpinism. Specifically, the project investigates how individuals learn to climb, interpret and confront risks, and mitigate them through the transfer and acquisition of expert knowledge during alpinism courses organized by the Italian Alpine Club (CAI).

Alpinism, as a field of cultural (re)production, presents a compelling case-study due to its multi-layered complexity – cultural, social, and environmental. Studying cultural (re)production within alpinism courses is equally complex, as it involves examining intricate processes of meaning negotiation and co-construction. Through these processes expert knowledge and practices aimed at risk mitigation are transmitted and acquired – better yet, embodied – “by doing”, through informal relationships among (aspiring) climbers, mentors, and peers organized in rope teams.

Empirically studying these processes is particularly challenging due to the embodied and sensory nature of the climbing experience. Here, social interactions intertwine with physical engagement in the unpredictable mountain environment and the use of specialized equipment and are shaped by contextual factors and related emotions. Furthermore, the processual and dynamic nature of climbing complicates traditional ethnographic observations and demands an inventive methodological approach (Lury, Wakeford, 2012) capable of capturing the multi-layered nature of cultural (re)production in complex settings.

Although empirical studies of complex settings, such as hazardous professions or extreme sports – particularly alpinism, given the challenges of accessing high altitudes (Seigneur, 2006) – often rely on narratives and discourses rather than direct observation, their multilayered complexity requires moving beyond traditional methods. Indeed, both retrospective interviews and participant observation present several limitations. On the one hand, retrospective interviews are detached from unfolding situations, shifting the analysis of meaning-making processes intertwined with action towards interpretations of interpretations (Sandberg, Tsoukas, 2015). Furthermore, engagement in risky activities fully absorbs actors in the experience making it difficult to recall precise details and to verbalize their emotions and experience (Lyng, 1990; Desmond, 2019). On the other hand, participant observation in complex settings is challenging because researchers can detract from focusing on the actual situations unfolding and on important details, leading to observer bias (LeCompte, Goetz, 2007; Mackenzie, Xiao, 2003).

The project aims to overcome these limitations through an inventive multimodal approach (Lury, Wakeford, 2012) that carefully balances a multi-sited (Marcus, 1995) enactive ethnography (Wacquant, 2006) with participatory, creative (Giorgi et al., 2021), and visual methods.

Enactive ethnography positions the researcher as part of the phenomenon under study and their body as a heuristic tool, leveraging their own embodied experience to advance scientific knowledge. It balances

participant observation with observant participation (Wacquant, 2006; Bassetti, 2021) and constitutes a unique approach for exploring complex settings such as extreme sports and high-risk professions. Given these complex environments require physical and emotional engagement and focused attention, the usual ethnographic tools – diaries, jottings, fieldnotes, audio-recordings – cannot be preferred tools/techniques and are used only when possible (e.g., during briefings at the end of the climbing day, during theoretical lessons, etc.). Therefore, they are complemented with the collection of visual data in the form of “climbing videos”, captured using a body camera, where both the researcher and the participants are involved in the creation of these visual data. Additionally, participants are asked to take part in review-interviews of the created videos during which they are prompted to recall their actions, thoughts, and emotions, providing an opportunity to delve deeper into their learning-climbing experience. This technique enables an exploration of how actors bestow meanings to cultural elements, action and interaction, and allows to establish a dialectic between the researcher’s interpretations and those of the other participants, enhancing a reflexive and abductive (Timmermans, Tavory, 2022) process of analysis and the reliability of findings.

The objective of this multimodal approach is twofold: i) to address the challenge of understanding and representing practices that are deeply embodied, interactional, and context-dependent; ii) facilitate a nuanced account of the mechanisms underlying cultural (re)production in complex settings through a process of knowledge co-production. However, it also presents challenges stemming from the complexities of both the setting and its navigation, particularly regarding three key areas: practical data gathering and storage, ethical integrity, and data analysis.

Firstly, conducting fieldwork in remote or wilderness settings poses significant challenges, including logistical, physical, cognitive, and emotional demands. These range from equipment issues, adverse conditions, and safety concerns to the social dynamics and fatigue that limit documentation opportunities, requiring adaptable and ethically sensitive methods to ensure research integrity.

Secondly, consent, confidentiality, and anonymity present challenges, as the complexity of the multimodal approach can overwhelm participants, and audio-visual data are harder to anonymize.

Thirdly, analysing diverse data forms is challenging due to the time-intensive process, discrepancies arising from complex collection environments, and potential gaps or inconsistencies. These issues may limit reliability and lead to misinterpretation, especially without sufficient contextual understanding.

To address these challenges, this contribution explores strategies across the abovementioned key areas. For data gathering and storage, it examines the implementation of structured observation protocols harmonized across methods, reflexive journaling, and continuous triangulation. In terms of ethical integrity, it highlights the use of layered consent processes and the ongoing negotiation of the researcher’s positionality. Finally, for data analysis, it discusses the integration of diverse data streams and the establishment of thematic and temporal markers to ensure systematic and nuanced interpretation.

References

- Bassetti, Chiara
2021 *Corpo, apprendimento e identità. Sé e intersoggettività nella danza*. Ombre corte.
- Desmond, Matthew
2019 *On the fireline: Living and dying with wildland firefighters*. University of Chicago Press.
- Giorgi, Alberta, Pizzolati, Micol, Vacchelli, Elena
2021 *Metodi creativi per la ricerca sociale. Contesto, pratiche e strumenti*. il Mulino
- LeCompte, Margaret D., Judith, Preissle Goetz
2007 «Problems of Reliability and Validity in Ethnographic Research». Pp. 3-39 in *Qualitative Research Volume Two. Quality Issues in Qualitative Research*, Sage Benchmarks in Social Research Methods, edited by A. Bryman. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lury, Clelia, Wakerford, Nina (Eds.)
2012 *Inventive methods: The happening of the social*. Routledge.
- Lyng, Stephen
1990 «Edgework: A social psychological analysis of voluntary risk taking». *American journal of sociology*, 95(4), 851-886
- Marcus, George
1995 «Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography». *Annual review of anthropology*, 24(1), 95-117.
- Mckenzie, Colin F., Xiao, Yan
2003 «Video techniques and data compared with observation in emergency trauma care». *BMJ Quality & Safety*, 12(suppl 2), ii51-ii57.
- Sandberg, Jörgen, Tsoukas, Haridimos
2015 «Making sense of the sensemaking perspective: Its constituents, limitations, and opportunities for further development». *Journal of organizational behavior*, 36(S1), S6-S32.
- Seigneur, Viviane

- 2006 «The problems of the defining the risk: the case of mountaineering». *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, 245-256.
- Timmermans, Stefan, Tavory, Iddo
- 2022 *Data analysis in qualitative research: Theorizing with abductive analysis*. University of Chicago Press.
- Wacquant, Loïc
- 2006 *Body & soul: Notebooks of an apprentice boxer*. Oxford University Press

Podcasting as a creative and transformative research method

Emanuele Fantini, IHE Delft Institute for Water Education

e.fantini@un-ihe.org

This paper contributes to the growing conversation on podcasting as a creative and transformative form of research (Cook, 2023), particularly through self-reflection and auto-ethnography by academic podcasters. This debate has highlighted the relational dimension of podcasting as a research method, thanks to its potential in terms of knowledge co-production between the hosts and their guests (Lowe et al. 2021), and to the emphasis, through the *viva voce*, on the affective, emotional, and 'visceral' register of research (Kinkaid et al., 2019). Inspired by a pragmatic approach, I reflect on the political, methodological, and ethical implications of podcasting as a research practice in two projects: the first on the role of media in water conflicts and cooperation along the Nile River (Fantini and Buist 2021); the second on water and the commons in Italy ten years after the victory of the referendum against the privatisation of water services (Fantini, 2021).

The main argument I wish to make here is that podcasting can be a creative and transformative method to care for relations in research by promoting dialogic conversation. I illustrate this argument by formulating three proposals for the podcast as a method of research and relationship that revolve around the idea of listening (Fantini, 2023).

The first transformative potential of podcasting is about active listening. When recording a conversation for a podcast you have to learn and apply several elements of active listening: discerning when to talk and when to keep silent, interpreting body language, paraphrasing and summarising, asking follow-up questions, and paying attention to emotion by recording not only what people say, but also how they say it (Fantini, 2024).

The second transformative potential is about reflexivity. In editing a podcast, you learn to listen to your own voice as host and to become a more reflexive author by explaining and justifying your editorial choices. Editing a podcast can be a politically sensitive exercise, as you literally give or take away voice. Therefore, it is crucial to be accountable for our choices as authors and editors (Fantini, 2023).

The third transformative potential is related to the audience. Here I reflect on how the podcast can be used to disseminate research unconventionally. The podcast is a slow and intimate medium, through which you literally speak in the ears of the listener, for a much longer time than the average attention that people pay to social media posts or videos. Such a relationship should be cherished, by listening to the audience's voice and collecting and following up on their feedback, to create and nurture a community of interests and practice (Fantini and Buist, 2021).

References

- Cook, Ian
- 2023 *Scholarly podcasting: Why, what, how?*. Routledge.
- Fantini, Emanuele
- 2021, Dove sono finiti i beni comuni? Si dice acqua. Retrived 24 January 2025 from <https://doi.org/10.58079/u62n>
2023. Ascolto, montaggio e condivisione: il podcast come metodo di ricerca e relazione, *Atti del XXXIII Congresso Geografico Italiano*.
- 2024 Podcasting for interdisciplinary education: active listening, negotiation, reflexivity, and communication skills. *Humanit Soc Sci Commun* 11, 1583.
- Fantini, Emanuele, Emilie Buist (
- 2021 . Searching for the Sources of the Nile through a podcast: what did we find?. *Journal of Science Communication*, 20(2), N01.
- Kinkaid, Eden, Kelsey Emard, and Nari Senanayake.
- 2021 "The podcast-as-method?: Critical reflections on using podcasts to produce geographic knowledge." *Geographical Fieldwork in the 21st Century*. Routledge, 78-91
- Lowe, Robert J., Matthew W. Turner, and Matthew Y. Schaefer
- 2021 Dialogic research engagement through podcasting as a step towards action research: A collaborative autoethnography of teachers exploring their knowledge and practice. *Educational Action Research* 29.3: 429-446.

At the intersection of teaching and research. A creative and participatory project on gender, perceptions of safety, and right to the city

Giulia Selmi, University of Parma

giulia.selmi@unipr.it

The objective of this paper is to critically discuss the impact and potentialities of a research-teaching project carried out using creative and participatory methods together with a group of social work graduate students on girls' perceptions of urban safety and the impact on girls' city livability. With the term *research-teaching project* I refer to a project that combines scientific research, academic teaching and community engagement (Pellegrino 2018, Tarsia 2020) in order to overcome the boundaries of the traditional three academic 'missions' and increase the effectiveness of both production, circulation and learning of (new) knowledge. Within this framework, creative methods are particularly useful tools both because of their propensity to be used in participatory ways, and because of their effectiveness in circulating knowledge outside strictly academic contexts (De Cataldo e Russo 2022; Giorgi *et.al.* 2021; Frisina 2016).

The project *Che genere di città?* – carried on in the frame of the standing group *ParTeR, Participatory Teaching & Research* of the University of Parma – was developed as a 'non-securitarian' response to student representatives claims for 'secutiry' in the city and campus, especially for women and girls; and with the key aim of acting upon the mainstream gender models and promoting a culture of equality and non-violence. Drawing upon feminist and critical literature on gender and urban space (Andreola, Muzzonigro 2024; Kern 2021; Valentine 1989, 1990) the project involved 104 students as both participants and co-researchers in a 6-month research and learning journey through qualitative and creative methods. In particular, throughout the project 1 creative workshop, 46 in-depth interviews, 3 art-based focus group and 2 collaborative art-based workshops together with a cartoonist have been carried on so far.

According to Giorgi and colleagues (2021) creative methods can be employed in different research stages, from data gathering to dissemination. In this paper, I will discuss the ways in which we have used creative methods as teaching and community engagement strategy. First I will account for the ways in which a creative workshop (implying drawing, coloring, using maps and stickers) have been used as a tool to learn how to design a qualitative interview outline; second I will analyze how working together with a cartoonist to transform narrative data into visual ones helped students to better learn how to analyze qualitative data itself and carry on participatory validation; finally, I will discuss how illustration and comics have been strategic allies in the community engagement process. I will argue that while employing creative methods in data gathering and dissemination is becoming more and more common in qualitative social sciences, their potentialities in terms of teaching innovation in the social sciences are still underexplored and their attention to reflexivity and accessibility offers valuable insights on how to rethink the nexus of teaching and empirical research

References

- Andreola, Florencia, Muzzonigro Azzurra
2024 *Libere, non coraggiose! Le donne e la paura nello spazio pubblico*, Lettera22, Milano.
- De Cataldo, Alessandra, Russo Concetta
2022 *Metodologia e tecniche partecipative. La ricerca sociologica nel tempo della complessità*, Pearson, Milano.
- Frisina, Annalisa
2016 (a cura di) *Metodi visuali di ricerca sociale*. Il Mulino, Bologna.
- Giorgi, Alberta, Pizzolati, Micol, Vacchelli, Elena
2021 *Metodi creativi per la ricerca sociale. Contesto, pratiche e strumenti*. Il Mulino, Bologna.
- Kern, Leslie
2021 *Feminist city: Claiming space in a man-made world*. Verso Books, London.
- Pellegrino, Vincenza
2018 «L'università «collettiva»: l'evoluzione del sapere pubblico in chiave partecipativa», in *Social Policies*, (3), 407-422.
- Tarsia, Tiziana
2020 «La ricerca partecipata come strumento di riflessività tra servizi e corsi di studi universitari», in *Autonomie locali e servizi sociali*, 43(1), 147-164.
- Valentine, Gill
1989 «The geography of women's fear», in *Area*, 21 (4), pp. 385-390.
- 1990 «Women's Fear and the Design of Public Space», in *Built Environment*, 16(4), pp. 288.

Images as Power. Reflecting on Photo Elicitation and Photovoice Visual Tools

Paola Di Carlo, University of Siena

p.dicarlo3@student.unisi.it

This paper aims to develop a methodological reflection based on two different research projects using visual techniques.

The visual method is considered one of the most inclusive approaches in social research, belonging to the field of "creative methods" (Giorgi *et al.*, 2021). These represent non-traditional techniques that are more oriented towards a "doing together" approach, in which both the construction and the analysis of the research imply a high degree of participation by the subjects involved (*Ibid.*). The construction of knowledge that these techniques seek to achieve is thus based on an understanding of co-creation in participatory research that focuses on both the researcher-participant relationship and the perspectives of the subjects (*Ibid.*). In this respect, the main focus of the research is on the participants' own experiences and perceptions, while at the same time attention is paid to the relationship that is created between the researcher and the research participants (*Ibid.*).

Experiences and perceptions are sought through the sensorial dimension of the subjects involved, including aspects such as the body, emotions, objects, and where the importance of the non-verbal aspect of communication in the research becomes apparent (*ibid.*). In this sense, visual methods allow for the enrichment of phenomenological accounts: "an image can make the account explicit and vividly manifest the material context in which people's life-words are constructed" (Spencer, 2023, p. 62). Therefore, in the process of co-creation of knowledge, this is "generated through creative research [which] is always the result of the interaction between the positioning of the researcher and that of the participants in the socio-spatial, cultural and temporal context in which they find themselves" (Giorgi *et al.*, 2021, p. 43). In other words, the phenomenological approach in visual sociology, which focuses on the emotional power of the visual, "is [...] the elicitation of one's own knowledge through the analysis of photographs that have personal meaning" (Harper, 1988, p. 66).

The visual aspect and the subjective narrative are mutually constitutive in dealing with the challenge of representing individual experience, as well as in determining the interpretive role of the researcher and the social actor. Accordingly, of particular relevance for the purposes of this paper is the "reflexive mode" of visual sociology, in which researchers "build data from the point of view of their subjects" (*Ibid.*, p. 61). However, while participatory research is concerned with situational and situated aspects, agency and power, this type of research method "posits a different relationship between the sociologist, the image, and the subject" (*Ibid.*, p. 64). Indeed, "the subject shares in the definition of meaning; thus the definitions are said to 'reflect back' from the subject" (*Ibid.*, p. 65). While this is difficult to achieve with conventional research, it is easier with photographic techniques (*Ibid.*).

Therefore, also from the ethical perspective of participatory research, visual method seems to be "particularly well suited to investigate the processuality and contingency of social phenomena, to reconstruct the views of social actors, and to make visible and audible the stories and life contexts of marginalized subjects" (Frisina, 2013, p. 21).

The two case studies on which the respective research projects are built include people who are commonly involved in processes of marginalization and social exclusion: Roma people and drug users. In the first case, the visual tool used was photo elicitation. Specifically, as an oral history interview, this was used to explore "community values, attitudes, and beliefs, as well as the meaning that participants attribute to aspects of the local setting" (Barton, 2015, p.197). This is a method commonly used to learn more about family histories and collective memory, in which "[e]licitation interviews connect 'core definitions of the self' to society, culture and history" (Harper, 2002, p. 13). In the second case, the photovoice technique was adopted. The research was carried out in a therapeutic community for drug addicted mothers.

Photovoice is commonly described as a participatory action-research tool designed to stimulate reflexivity, dialogue and social change. In a peculiar way, it allows individuals to clarify for themselves what deserves attention and what needs to be changed (Frisina, 2013). After collecting the photographic material, generated by the participants, two focus groups were conducted to discuss the meanings of the images. Both of these visual tools contributed to the construction of a counter-narration through the use of images, whose

emotionally meaning facilitates the daily narrative of subjects who are often caught up in processes of stigmatization. In the second case, the camera supported a relational closeness that had been sought over time during the fieldwork phase and that had not been easily achieved with all participants. Interestingly, the results of the focus groups not only deepened the meanings discussed in the earlier ethnographic interviews but also confirmed the relative findings. Even in the first case of photo elicitation, where the participants did not produce the photographic material, it nevertheless contributed to a meaningful bond with the interviewees, shortening the distance and aiding in the process of narrating an oral history characterized by denial from those who have always dominated the processes of memory reconstruction.

References

- Barton C. Keith
2015 «Elicitation Techniques: Getting People to Talk About Ideas They Don't Usually Talk About», *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 43, 2, pp. 179-205.
- Frisina Annalisa
2013 *Ricerca Visuale e Trasformazioni Socio-Culturali*, Torino, UTET Università.
- Giorgi Alberta, Micol Pizzolati, Elena Vacchelli
2021 *Metodi creativi per la ricerca sociale. Contesto, pratiche, strumenti*, Bologna, Il Mulino.
- Harper Douglas
1988 «Visual sociology: Expanding sociological vision», in *The American Sociologist*, 19, pp. 54-70.
- Harper Douglas
2002 «Talking about pictures: A case for photo elicitation», in *Visual Studies*, 17, 1, pp. 13-26.
- Spencer Stephen
2023 *Visual Research Methods in the Social Sciences. Awakening Visions*, New York, Routledge.

Re-figuring Le Cascine. More-than-human experiments as counternarrative of urban green in Florence

Panos Bourlessas, SAGAS Università di Firenze

panagiotis.bourlessas@unifi.it

Matteo Puttilli, SAGAS Università di Firenze

matteo.puttilli@unifi.it

Cecilia Pasini, SAGAS Università di Firenze

cecilia.pasini@unifi.it

This paper presents and critically discusses the main results of a creative arts-based workshop designed to challenge dominant discourses surrounding *Le Cascine* park in Florence, Italy. *Le Cascine*, a public park situated on the edge of Florence's UNESCO area, is framed within a partial and homogenising debate focused on notions of safety and security, which shapes, promotes and justifies a "necessity" of the park's regeneration, overlooking substantially the park's diverse actual uses and the meanings that people associate to it. The result is the imaginative construction of *Le Cascine* as a contested space where place-making happens through top-down practices and discourses, and where the everydayness of practices that occur there are selectively left behind or even hidden.

Drawing on literature related to arts-based methodologies and more-than-human approaches, the workshop titled "Attraverso le Cascine" (in English: "Through le Cascine") engaged a diverse group of ten participants to explore a section of the park, collect objects and materials from the ground, and create visual representations of *Le Cascine* issued from personal situated experiences. Experimental geographies (Kullman, 2013) and intentional performances as arts-based methodologies (Gregson, Gillian, 2000, Lieder, 2018, Schechner, 1973, Thrift, 2003) have here the aim to deconstruct the researchers' monopoly of knowledge in doing field work by creating meaningful encounters with the research participants, by mitigating the power gaps in the research process, and by encouraging the production of shared knowledge (Vargiu, 2008). The workshop conceived of as a performative experiment created engagement, involved the participants in the re-imagination of their own urban environment, and encouraged the emergence of affective and embodied aspects of their relation to the

spatialities of the park (Kullman, 2013). The drawing-based approach seemed particularly suitable to work on the experiences and representations of the park. As a figurative technique, drawing allowed us, as researchers, to co-produce situated, embodied and bottom-up knowledge, and release the emancipatory potentialities of the practice. Indeed, the use of this technique shifted the emphasis from what the researchers may have discovered through observation to what the participants know, imagine and feel. Drawings also made it possible to diversify expressive possibilities, dealing with the difficulties associated with verbal communication and the embarrassment that, for instance, an interview can create in the interlocutors with its stimulus-response dynamic (Kearns *et al.*, 2021). These methodological considerations and needs have led to conceiving of the workshop through a dialogue between geographic and artistic knowledge, eventually adapting it to the empirical context of realisation. More-than-human approaches and object-oriented geography (Rossetto, 2019) have been also fundamental to investigate the complexity of the relations in the park, to consider Le Cascine as a messy whole, and to overcome a culture-nature/social-environment divide in participants' perspectives and sensibilities.

Co-created with a local illustrator and visual artist, the workshop employed three illustration techniques – namely, monotype printing, normography, and tampography – to transform the collected materials into drawing tools. The workshop has been temporally and spatially situated, encouraging the participants to engage with the park through an object-oriented immersive walking, and to focus on two different dimensions: the macro-scale of the entire park and the micro-scale of the objects on the ground. The practising of the workshop conceived of as a performance disrupted conventional action repertoires, facilitated new relations with the park's natures-cultures, and generated visual and textual discourses of identification that respond to those of stigmatisation.

By detailing the workshop methodology and its outcomes, the paper critically evaluates the potential and limitations of co-creative experimental approaches in geography, emphasizing how they can broaden the perspectives through which public spaces like Le Cascine are analyzed and reimagined, and counter dominant essentializing and polarizing narratives and discourses. The result is a perspective transformation that allows us to consider not only the controversial social aspects of the city's green public spaces but also its often ignored natural and non-human parts, overcoming an ontological cartesian nature-culture divide, and incorporating natural and non-human elements into the collective narrative. By and large, this perspective encourages the everydayness of the park to emerge, by stimulating a reflection on the multiplicity of experiences and practices enabled by the park.

References

- Gregson, Nicky, Gillian Rose
2000 «Taking Butler Elsewhere: Performativities, Spatialities and Subjectivities», in: *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 18, 4, 433-452.
- Kearns Robert, Kyle Eggleton, Anne van der Plas, Tara Coleman
2021 «Drawing and graffiti-based approaches», in: Von Benzon Nadia, Holton Mark, Wilkinson Catherine, Wilkinson Samantha (Ed.), *Creative methods for human geographers*, Los Angeles/London/New Delhi/Singapore/Washington DC/Melbourne. SAGE, pp: 113-126.
- Kullman Kim
2013 «Geographies of Experiment/Experimental Geographies: A Rough Guide», in: *Geography Compass*, 7,12, pp. 879-894.
- Lieder, K.Frances
2018 «Performing Loitering: Feminist Protest in the Indian City», in: *TDR/The Drama Review*, 62, 3, pp: 145–161.
- Rossetto, Tania
2019 *Object-Oriented Cartography. Maps as Things*. Oxon/New York, Routledge.
- Schechner, Richard
1973 «Performance & the Social Sciences: Introduction», in: *The Drama Review*, 17, 3, pp. 3-4.
- Thrift, Nigel
2003 «Performance and...», in: *Environment and Planning A*, 35, pp. 2019-2024.
- Vargiu, Andrea
2008 «Le diversità nella ricerca-azione partecipata: alcune implicazioni metodologiche e procedurali», in: *Studi di Sociologia*, 46, 2, pp. 205-232.

Creative methods in collaborative urban planning. Pisticci village and Alta Irpinia inner areas experimentations

Gaia Daldanise, IRISS, National Research Council (CNR)

gaia.daldanise@cnr.it

Stefania Oppido, IRISS, National Research Council (CNR)

stefania.oppido@cnr.it

Stefania Ragozino, IRISS, National Research Council (CNR)

stefania.ragozino@cnr.it

Creative methods (CMs) in urban studies enhance a comprehensive understanding of contemporary urban challenges, potentially driving significant changes in outcomes and fostering the capacity for transformative urban development (Wolfram et al., 2016). CMs offer practical insights that facilitate transformative change and inspire innovative, context-sensitive solutions to address local issues (Molderez et al., 2018; Cinderby et al., 2021).

In the current international scenario, the New European Bauhaus emphasizes the role of cultural and creative sectors – that have key role for promoting CMs – in fostering beautiful, sustainable, and inclusive places, rebuilding local identity, and creating productive connections between people and places. In this perspective, CMs in community engagement and planning activate experimental spaces through co-created local services, crossing disciplinary boundaries and integrating research with action. These methods encourage dialogue, trust, and collaboration while adapting to various research stages (Giorgi et al., 2021).

In Italy success stories, such as Case di Quartiere in Turin, BASE Milan, and Matera 2019, demonstrate the flexibility of creative involvement through workshops, festivals, or art events, revealing the potential of creativity in participatory urban planning (Sarkissian et al., 2010). However, participatory planning often struggles due to its focus on consensus-driven, economic outcomes rather than equitable access to infrastructure (Swain et al., 2007).

To promote more equitable access, innovative user-centered approaches, such as Living Labs (Ballon et al., 2015), are increasingly applied in the field of collaborative urban planning. These approaches empower citizens to co-create civic services, supported by co-evaluation processes that incorporate multi-actor strategies (Van Der Meer et al., 2006) in collaborative decision-making.

In this context, community engagement methods are key elements of discussion on creative methods for urban planning including community mapping, workshops, and citizen panels. Artistic approaches such as photography, vox pop, and performing media storytelling enrich these methods, connecting memory, networks, and territory through technologies (Community Places, 2014).

The contribution aims to explore creative methods in collaborative urban planning focusing on some experimentations in Pisticci village (Basilicata region, Italy) and in the Alta Irpinia (Campania region, Italy).

The creative exploratory/digital method of “walk about” – PerformingMedia territorial storytelling of “Urban experience” (<https://www.urbanexperience.it/walkabout/>) – was experimented in Pisticci during the Community branding process (Daldanise, 2020) for identifying alternative vocations through community involvement. Walking has been the primordial act that defined paths, created common spaces, and laid the foundation for early forms of the city, allowing humans to forge significant relationships with the territory (Careri, 2006). The P-stories project aims to establish connections in places through territorial storytelling. It has collected 60 stories, divided into four main categories: geological memory of the territory, creativity linked to the activities of its inhabitants, landscapes, and future visions. These stories are made accessible through ten signs scattered around the city, featuring QR codes and NFC for digital interactions.

An advancement of the project is represented by the “I luoghi di Zonzo #1” format (<https://www.urbanexperience.it/eventi/walkabout-luoghi-zonzo-primo-episodio-pisticci/>), which promotes participatory design through exploratory walks with the community. During the Saint Rocco procession event on August 16, the format addressed the theme of place branding and historic urban landscape, questioning how storytelling can turn into a place brand.

The “walkabout” method (PerformingMedia territorial storytelling created by Urban Experience), led by Carlo Infante, facilitated active and connective involvement. Equipped with radio headsets, participants engaged in dialogue and contributed to reflecting on the role of place branding as a driver for new territorial development policies. The experience combined physical exploration of the places with the use of digital tools, stimulating empathy, attention, and sensitivity in the participants.

From this activity, project ideas for sustainable development in Pisticci emerged, starting from its history and territorial vocations. The report “I luoghi di Zonzo #1” identified five urban regeneration alternatives: V1 Sacred and profane; V2 Agricultural tradition; V3 Landscape and biodiversity; V4 Hospitality and resilient community; V5 Artisan and creative density. This innovative approach has enhanced the territory, promoting participatory planning based on local identity.

The creative approach experimented in Alta Irpinia, inner area of the Campania region, are part of the research activities carried to investigate territorial inequalities between central areas and areas that are becoming increasingly peripheral because affected by marginalisation processes. Starting from 2018, the CNR IRISS research group designed and implemented a public engagement campaign to activate a dialogue about the Irpinian landscape as driver of social, cultural and economic regeneration. To this end, seminar activities, workshops, meetings with institutions, entrepreneurs, and the third sector were developed with the support of community planning tools.

The Irpinia area, as all the Italian inner areas, is suffering depopulation and ageing population. For this reason, the researchers decided to trigger a dialogue with young people about their landscape, carrying out engagement and listening activities in the field of education and training, in collaboration with local associations and schools of the area. The didactic trains organised by the inLocoMotivi association on the historic Avellino-Rocchetta Sant'Antonio railway by the Irpinian Landscape Train represented an opportunity for engaging young people. Two professional high school institutes were involved in order to activate an awareness-raising process, strengthen the sense of belonging and awareness of the values and resources of their territory and explore opportunities in terms of capacity building, professional achievement and local empowerment. Storytelling and art-based methods were applied with the students, both in preparation for the train travel and during the enjoyment of the landscape from the train. The researchers launched an initiative titled “Tell me about the Irpinian landscape” concerned a collection of video interviews and a photo competition, asking the students 1) to make an intergenerational video interview before the train journey with local people who could tell stories, memories, and anecdotes related to the railway and the landscape they passed through 2) to take photographs during their educational train journey experience. The initiative involved around 200 students (14-16 years old) and allowed them to represent Irpinian landscape focusing on 1) strengths of the context (environmental, social and cultural), 2) obstacles and barriers to the enjoyment of the landscape, 3) emotions and impressions experienced while crossing the Irpinian landscape by train.

Starting from the results of this creative experience, a debate started with the students, discussing about the knowledge of their territory, the ability to tell about it, as well as affective ties and the challenges of living in a marginalised area. On the other hand, the researchers encouraged discussion on the opportunity of creating economic, cultural and social innovation by developing skills and competences to enhance landscape for professional realisation in their home territory (Oppido et. al., 2020).

References

- Ballon, Pieter, Schuurman, Dimitri
2015 «Living labs: concepts, tools and cases», in *info*, pp. 17.4.
- Careri, Francesco
2006 *Walkscapes. Camminare come pratica estetica*, Turin, Einaudi.
- Cinderby, Steve, de Bruin, Annemarieke, Cambridge, Howard, Muhoza, Cassilde, Ngabirano, Amanda
2021 «Transforming urban planning processes and outcomes through creative methods», in *Ambio*, 50, pp. 1018-1034.
- Community places
2014 *Community Planning Toolkit – Community Engagement*, <https://www.communitycommons.org>.
- Daldanise, Gaia
2020 «From place-branding to community-branding: A collaborative decision-making process for cultural heritage enhancement», in *Sustainability*, 12(24).
- Giorgi, Alberta, Pizzolati, Micol, Vacchelli, Elena
2021 *Metodi creativi per la ricerca sociale. Contesto, pratiche e strumenti*, Bologna, il Mulino.
- Molderez, Ingrid, Ceulemans, Kim
2018 «The power of art to foster systems thinking, one of the key competencies of education for sustainable development», in *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 186, pp. 758-770.
- Oppido, Stefania, Ragozino, Stefania, Icolari, Donatella, Corvigno, Valentina, Esposito De Vita, Gabriella,
2020 «Patrimonializzazione del paesaggio irpino: verso comunità di paesaggio sperimentando la ricerca-azione», in Proceedings of XXII SIU National Conference, Matera-Bari, 5-6-7 Giugno 2019, Planum Publisher, Roma-Milano.
- Sarkissian, Wendy, Wenman, Christine
2010 *Creative community planning: Transformative engagement methods for working at the edge*, London, Earthscan Ltd Routledge.
- Swain, Christopher, Tait, Malcolm

- 2007 «The crisis of trust and planning», in *Planning theory & practice*, 8.2, pp. 229-247.
 Van der meer, Frans-Bauke; Edelenbos, Jurian
 2006 «Evaluation in multi-actor policy processes: Accountability, learning and co-operation», in *Evaluation*, 12.2, pp. 201-218.
 Wolfram, Marc, Frantzeskaki, Niki, Maschmeyer, Steffen
 2016 «Cities, systems and sustainability: status and perspectives of research on urban transformations», in *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 22, pp. 18-25.

Fieldnotes. Composing ethnography through photographic lenses

Maria Elisa Dainelli, Independent researcher

dainelli.elisa@gmail.com

My proposal will focus on the use of photography as a memory tool in ethnography. The notes and photographs I am going to introduce are the fruit of two and a half years of research as a clinical anthropologist within a European project supporting refugees and asylum seekers in the region of Tuscany. An anthropology 'of the underground' (Beneduce, 2019), therefore, in which I found myself collecting testimonies and processing, within an ethnoclinical setting (Nathan, 2003), patients' stories. My work is profoundly heterogeneous, given the variety of experiences and places of arrival and origin of the participants. It was therefore through the use of images and field notes that my experiences have been assembled.

If ethnography can be thought of as a process of impregnation (Olivier de Sardan, 1995), in which the anthropologist unconsciously acquires cognitive-experiential schemata, I would like to draw attention here to the concept of perduction, proposed from L. Piasere (2002), according to which these same schemata then resonate with information already previously internalised by the ethnographer. This has been my trajectory within ethnoclinics. The images I would like to present to you are therefore the fruit of a conscious and profound elaboration of the stories heard in the sittings, a non-verbal representation of what I experienced being in the field.

As Anna Grimshaw uphold, anthropology (and ethnography) can be seen as a project of visual imagination. In this perspective, photographs can be thought of as a translation of an affect, a matrix of the subjectivity of experience, in which the incorporation, the perduction and emotions, 'being in the field', are translated into images, which in turn can be shared and observed according to their own codes (Edwards, 2015).

The recent critical analysis of the anthropology of the senses (Matera, 2002) has in fact posed the problem of how we perceive what we experience, according to culturally inscribed codes. As Marazzi (2015) argues in *Anthropology of Vision*, in Western culture the eye has a pre-eminent value in the perceptual system. Images, whether they are the product of direct vision or in response to a more complex stimulation (mental image), have a strong evocative power and can therefore become a bridge, direct communication, in the interaction, as in my case, between clinicians and patients.

Thus, the images that composed my field diary are a 'way of seeing', a recording of thought in a synaesthetic manner, as some of the literature on the practices of visual anthropology claims (McDougall, 2006; Marano, 2013). The resulting mosaic presents itself as a possible way of traversing and experiencing 'difficult' terrains such as those of ethnoclinics.

As Jay Ruby (Grasseni, 2006) argued in relation to the film produced by the ethnographer, it presents itself as 'filmic anthropology', rather than 'ethnographic film', to emphasise the relational qualities of access to anthropological knowledge and the approach, ethnographic precisely, based on participant observation. In our case, I propose here a 'photographic anthropology' in which the vision chosen and proposed is the result of 'good ways of thinking' and anthropological knowledge has the political mission of showing a perspicuous structure of meaning.

My contribution will focus on three main objectives: in the first instance, to analyse how it is possible to make use of images as instruments of interaction between therapists (psychologist, anthropologist, linguistic-cultural mediator); in the second instance, how these same images can represent an important element of encounter and relationship at the moment of restitution with the patient; finally, how they, in the drafting of the field notes, can represent central elements of conceptualisation and reflection for the anthropologist, imagining ethnography also as creative and artistic expression (Golomsky, 2024).

References

- Beneduce, Roberto,
2019, Archeologie del trauma. Un'antropologia del sottosuolo, Roma, Laterza
- Elizabeth, Edwards
2015, Anthropology and photography. A long history of knowledge and affect, in *Photographies*, 8:3, pp. 235-252
- Golomsky, Casey
2024, God's waiting room. Racial Reckoning at life's end, Rutgers University Press
- Grasseni, Cristina
2006, Luoghi comuni. Antropologia dei luoghi e pratiche della visione, Bergamo, Lubrina editore
- MacDougall, David
2006, The corporeal image. Film, ethnography and the senses, Princeton University Press
- Marano, Francesco
2013, L'etnografo come artista. Intrecci fra antropologia e arte, Macerata, CISU
- Marazzi, Antonio
2015, Antropologia della visione, Roma, Carocci
- Matera, Vincenzo
2002, Antropologia delle sensazioni, in *Ricerca folklorica*, 45
- Nathan, Tobie,
2003, Non siamo soli al mondo, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri
- Piasere, Leonardo
2002, L'etnografo imperfetto. Esperienza e cognizione in antropologia, Roma, Laterza
- Olivier de Sardan, Jean-Pierre
1995, La politique du terrain. Sur la production des données en anthropologie, in *Enquête*, 1, pp. 71-112

15. Environmental labour ethnographies of workplaces and working-class communities

Convenors: Francesca Gabbriellini (University of Bologna) & Domenico Perrotta (University of Bergamo)

Labour, Imagination and Metamorphosis. The socially integrated Factory 'ex-GKN For Future' as an Industrial Real Utopia

Julia Kaiser, University of Leipzig

julia.kaiser.2@uni-leipzig.de

My presentation revolves around the case of the *Collettivo di Fabbrica GKN*, which I examine and discuss using a combination of critical theory and ethnographic research. The social-ecological alliance around the factory collective in Campi Bisenzio has been attracting a great deal of attention for more than three years now, as it is striving for an ecological conversion of a former automotive supplier and has united tens of thousands in civil society behind the cause.

In the eco-Marxist literature and on the political left, a democratic conversion of industrial production is seen as a way out of the *jobs versus environment dilemma* (Räthzel and Uzzell 2011) in the (automobile) industry (cf. Riexinger 2022, 120; cf. Zeller 2020, 100ff.). I understand democratic conversion to be a 'transformative process in which the cooperation of the workers sheds its capitalist form and develops its emancipatory character.' (cf. Röttger 2010)

The processes that are set in motion when a group of workers commit themselves to the goal of a democratic conversion have so far been little theorized. This is particularly due to the fact that there has been only one significant example before, the case of the blue- and white-collar workers at *Lucas Aerospace* in the UK, which now dates back almost 50 years (cf. Löw-Beer and Sohn-Rethel 1981).

Why is the case of GKN Florence so relevant from a critical theory perspective? My thesis is that, in the context of the fight for sustainable production, a radical questioning of alienated labor is taking place, which is producing a space of the *in-between* that suggests what non-alienated labor might look like. This collective imagination is significant in that it effectively demonstrates a qualitative alternative in a world that seems to have lost the imagination of an economy based on human needs. In the words of Herbert Marcuse, 'capitalist progress [...] not only narrows the environment of freedom, the "open space" of human existence, but also the "desire", the need for such an environment.' (Marcuse 1972, 36) In the context of the struggle for a socially integrated factory, a collective desire for use-value-oriented work has developed, which has produced a variety of imaginations of a new togetherness, a new work, a new politics of the climate movement. This desire for a non-alienated production and the power and functioning of future imaginations must therefore interest critical theory. Secondly, one can Study the Role and the Art of Creating Future Imaginaries for Red-Green-Alliances. Based on the concepts of alienated labor according to Karl Marx (1) and the role of hopes and utopias according to Ernst Bloch and Herbert Marcuse (2), I am dedicating myself to the concrete utopia of the socially integrated factory in Campi Bisenzio by means of an ethnographic study. This is by no means complete. At the conference, I would like to present the first results of several visits to the factory, such as fifteen interviews with workers, scientists and climate activists. Questions guiding my research are: What motivates and empowers the workers and their supporters at ex-GKN to fight for ecological production, or, to quote Ernst Bloch: How did they learn to hope? What are the characteristics of a climate struggle led by industrial workers? What is the role of Future Imaginaries in the struggle? And finally: What processes of social metamorphosis (Mazzone 2023) can be observed?

The observations and interview passages that I would like to present at the conference can be provisionally grouped as follows:

Firstly, I consider the content of the concrete utopia: both the hope and the experience of non-alienated work arise. I reconstruct this both from the perspective of the workers and from the perspective of the scientists. The workers show how much their commitment is driven by the motivation to fight for meaningful work for themselves, but especially for future generations. It becomes apparent that the driving force behind this is the desire to counter the disastrous labor market situation in Italy with meaningful and secure jobs. Many of the

scientists experience working on the conversion plans as an entry into the real world and experience their knowledge as directly useful. There are signs of a *gaya scienza* (Nietzsche), a science that is not guided by destruction and exploitation, but by imagination and humanity (see Marcuse 1972, 53).

Secondly, I consider the place of the concrete utopia: the factory as a backdrop for the proletarian-ecological utopia seems to me to be central to the immense appeal of the conversion struggle. From the workers' perspective, it is crucial that the workers identified strongly with the place even before they were laid off, and how they did so. The historical consciousness of the factory, and the roots of their factory collective seems central to the ability to collectively hope. For forces of solidarity, the factory represents a place that is otherwise off-limits. Finally, concrete practices can also be observed at the scene of the struggle, for example when literature festivals or comedy evenings take place in the middle of an industrial area. Finally, the permanent assembly has become part of the architecture, so that it happens that the police appear not to evict the workers, but to say thank you and return a roadblock that the workers' collective had lent to the police to redirect traffic. Thirdly, characteristics of climate policy by industrial workers can be seen: It is particularly striking how much political practice is characterized by the practical and collaborative nature that also characterizes the lives of the workers. For example, it can be observed that many of the workers are fine with a few colleagues being very active in planning the ecological reindustrialization, while many others speak up only occasionally at the collective meetings and otherwise take care of the infrastructural maintenance of the permanent assembly. This includes running the bar, setting up and dismantling stages, day and night shifts, etc. In addition, the focus is on production, not consumption. The cargo bikes, for example, are not planned to be used privately. However, they do develop a precise idea of which actors could use the cargo bikes in the congested city of Florence. Collective planning seems more relevant than personal consumption.

References

- Löw-Beer, P., Sohn-Rethel, A., and Cooley, M. 1981. *Industrie und Glück: der Alternativ-Plan von Lucas Aerospace*. Perfect Paperback.
- Marcuse, H. 1972. *Versuch über die Befreiung*. Suhrkamp.
- Mazzone, L. 2023. *Le alternative prese sul serio: filosofia sociale, metamorfosi e mutualismo produttivo*. *Cambio: rivista sulle trasformazioni sociali*: 26(2): 3-86.
- Räthzel, N., and Uzzel, D. 2011. „Trade Unions and Climate Change: The Jobs versus Environment Dilemma“. *Global Environmental Change* 21(4): 1215–23. doi:10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2011.07.010.
- Riexinger, B. 2022. „Ein linker Green New Deal. Für eine Mobilitätswende und eine soziale, ökologische und demokratische Transformation der Autoindustrie“. In *Spurwechsel: Studien zu Mobilitätsindustrien, Beschäftigungspotenzialen und alternativer Produktion*. Mario Candeias und Stephan Krull (Ebd.) Hamburg: VSA.
- Röttger, B., and Wissen, M. 2021. „Ökologische Klassenpolitik“. In: *Klassentheorie. Vom Making und Remaking*, Ed. Mario Candeias. Hamburg: Argument.
- Röttger, B. 2010. „Konversion?“ *Zeitschrift Luxemburg* (Heft 5 03/2010), <https://www.zeitschrift-luxemburg.de/konversion/>.
- Zeller, C. 2020. *Revolution für das Klima: Warum wir eine ökosozialistische Alternative brauchen*. München: oekom.

Ways of Re-imagining Labour in the Climate Transition. The solidarity alliances building GKN for Future

Perna Bishnoi, Norwegian University of Science and Technology

perna.bishnoi@ntnu.no

"For self-management to have liberatory potential it needs to fulfil at least two criteria: it must transform work conditions and power relations within the factory, and it must expand its horizon outside the factory to change social relations" (Michael Hardt, *The Subversive Seventies*, 2024).

An audio-visual presentation maps the network of solidarity alliances forged by the ex-GKN workers in Campi Bisenzio, Florence, in their struggle to create the cooperative, GKN for Future. My starting point is that these alliances have been an integral force in building and sustaining a strong environmental-labour movement. What can be learnt from the convergences emerging in this movement, displaying the potential to create a blueprint for future worker-led transformations in the climate transition? How does it offer ways of re-imagining labour, from industrial to knowledge and cultural work? I will reflect on these questions with my ongoing art practice-led research, through the lens of narrative construction, image-making and imagination, framing and re-framing.

On the 9th of July 2021, 422 workers of the GKN Driveline factory were fired by email (Gabriellini, Imperatore, 2023). Their response went far beyond reacting physically, by occupying the factory premises, and legally to the dismissal: by exerting their agency, mobilising their knowledge, skills, capacities and creativity, they took an anticipatory, dis-alienating stance to re-invent their work in a time of unprecedented climate crisis. In the past three years, a reindustrialization plan has been developed that enables to transform production from axle shafts for luxurious cars to solar panels (production and repair) and cargo bikes. A regional law has been passed that would make it possible to form an industrial consortium to facilitate the process of constituting a cooperative and starting production (Gambirasi, 2024). How are they managing to do this? The armoury of strategies deployed is vast: from mass demonstrations and a persistent flow of communication through social media to critical readings of the legal, astute analyses of industrial policy, identifying the technical, social and economic skills needs and renewing the legacies of the labour movement in Italy. But the one thing that stands out as the consistent thread connecting all the above is the dizzying network of solidarity alliances they have activated and initiated. The movement's strength has been to realise that such a transformation could not be done alone. Who constitutes these alliances, what brings them together? And how can we understand their solidarity as concrete actions?

The Collectivo joined forces with a range of environmental and climate groups, like *Fridays for Future*, *Extinction Rebellion*, *Bologna for Climate Justice* and *Ecologia Politica – Pisa*. Knowledge alliances were formed with them, PhD students, professors, engineers, and legal scholars who constituted the wider solidarity research group that have been working tirelessly on the reindustrialization and business plan and anticipating the legal and policy changes required to make this a reality. Furthermore, cooperation with cultural workers – artists, filmmakers, theatre-makers, musicians, publishing cooperatives, archives – has been consistent and unwavering. These cultural alliances were not merely considered as part of campaigning and communication but have been fundamental to shaping the narrative of worker's agency. It was this importance of art and culture in the movement that drew me to it. My entry into this struggle is, in fact, both as a PhD researcher and an artist – a knowledge and a cultural worker – at a critical moment when many artists are re-thinking their relationship to society's challenges and art's role in the climate transition. What are the qualities of art, as an aesthetic work, as affective labour and as a methodology that can contribute within a network of solidarity alliances towards a socio-ecological transformation?

In my interviews, the ex-GKN workers articulated that in the climate and ecological crisis, owning the means of production implies (the possibility of) deciding on what is being produced, how, how much and for whom. *The product is not a product, it is the creation of a social project* – to paraphrase Dario Salvetti, the spokesperson of the Collectivo di Fabbrica, who invoked a different value of production within a capitalist system. Solidarity is central to this vision. In fact, the plan for the formation of the cooperative itself, with public shareholding and a repurposed factory space, gives their allies a continued role, an official responsibility and accountability to the sustainability of the cooperative and the surrounding region. This resonates in the slogan of "socially integrated factory" which is painted on the boundary wall of the occupied premises. Whether artist, academic or automobile worker – we are in an existential conundrum of questioning the value of our labour, and we have to seize this moment to re-imagine it. Even as it unfolds, disrupted by numerous political obstacles, the ex-GKN workers' struggle presents justice, agency and, I would add, creative confidence, as essential for a transformative climate transition. If the Just Transition slogan, "no one left behind" is to be taken seriously, it echoes as an urgent call for a network of solidarity alliances. And perhaps, encoded in this ethical script, lies an aesthetic strategy for a future film.

References

Gabriellini, Francesca, Imperatore, Paola

2023 "An Eco-Revolution of the Working Class? What We Can Learn from the Former GKN Factory in Italy" in "Allied Grounds" Berliner Gazette, visited 5/8/2024.

Gambirasi, Michael

2024 "Gkn: approvata la legge sui consorzi industriali" in Il Manifesto, visited 24/12/2024

(Un)sustainable Work. Pathways for a Just Transition in Two Automotive Sector Plants

Laura Leonelli, University of Milan

laura.leonelli@unimi.it

Pierpaolo Mosaico, Sapienza University of Rome

pierpaolo.mosaico@uniroma1.it

The socio-ecological crisis represents the primary challenge of our time, compelling scholars to identify new pathways toward achieving a sustainable configuration of our ways of living. The field of industrial relations has also opened up to these debates, becoming one of the most prominent arenas for observing the complexity of discussions surrounding the transition. It highlights the intricacies of this process, shedding light on the potential conflicts it generates, and the resulting strategies of action employed by social actors to address them (Dupuy, Pasquier, 2024; Flanagan, Goods, 2022).

The necessary decarbonization of the economy requires a radical rethinking of the regulatory systems governing contemporary labor relations, as these systems are intrinsically tied to a model of development based on infinite growth and resource consumption (Wissen, Brand, 2017). Within this context, workers and their organizations often face the so-called dilemma between labor and the environment (Greco, 2021) – a seemingly unsolvable choice between safeguarding employment and protecting the natural environment.

On one hand, the productive transformation inherent in the transition process necessitates the conversion or abandonment of sectors still deeply relevant in terms of density and unionization levels. On the other hand, it is primarily working-class communities that bear the brunt of the increasingly unequal manifestations of the socio-ecological crisis (Räthzel et al., 2018). Various authors have pointed out that this dilemma is, in fact, a condition created by the specific ways in which the capitalist mode of production organizes the relationship between labor and the environment (Feltrin, Sacchetto, 2021; Wissen, Brand, 2017), rather than an inherent aspect of the transition process itself.

Labor unions, therefore, have multiple opportunities for action, as they represent workers' interests and are central to mediating the relationship between society and nature (Barca, 2012). This dual role positions them as potential key agents of socio-ecological transformation or, conversely, as obstacles to it. It is thus crucial to examine how labor organizations articulate their own transition frameworks and develop corresponding courses of action, contributing to the expanding literature on "just transition".

Considering all this, this study aims to contribute to the debate on the role of workers in the socio-ecological transformation by investigating their actions through two significant disputes: one at the Marelli plant in Crevalcore (September 2023–August 2024) and the other ongoing at the Ex-GKN Driveline plant in Campi Bisenzio (2021–present). Both cases involve Tier-1 suppliers of the Stellantis Group, whose companies were previously sold to foreign investment funds.

In both disputes, the announcement of plant closures was justified by declining production volumes, at least partly attributable to the European decision to phase out internal combustion engines. This has reinstated the so-called labor-environment dilemma (Greco, 2021). On the workers' side, both cases have demonstrated a rejection of the labor-environment dilemma and the proposal of plans for the ecological conversion of the plants. However, they also reveal challenges in moving beyond the immediate protection of employment.

Furthermore, in both cases, the workers' movements attempted to integrate the environmental movement into their mobilization processes. The outcomes of these mobilizations, while generally positive, were distinct: Marelli was acquired by a new company and remains operational, albeit continuing with internal combustion engine production, whereas the Ex-GKN plant remains occupied by workers. Differences also emerge in their organizational and mobilization strategies.

The Marelli dispute followed a more traditional organizational and mobilization pattern, while the Ex-GKN case aligns more closely with the paradigm of social unionism (Ross, 2007). Similarly, the involvement of the environmental movement differed: in the Marelli case, it appeared mainly strategic, with environmentalist support leveraged for specific purposes, whereas in the Ex-GKN case, ecological practices are an integral part of the strategy for action and restructuring.

For these reasons, the two cases provide valuable insights into the strengths and limitations of mobilization and organizational forms capable of redefining the labor-environment dilemma and related strategies for overcoming it.

The following research questions guide this study:

- How have workers in the two disputes developed their own ecological transition representation?
- What factors contributed to a more radical approach at Ex-GKN and a more traditional one at Marelli?
- Which elements of their narratives and practices can facilitate socio-ecological transformation, and which may hinder it?

To address these questions and investigate how the actors involved in these disputes have articulated their representations of the ecological transition, Grounded Theory will be adopted (Strauss, Corbin, 1994). This methodology, by allowing the perspectives of the actors to emerge without categorizing them into predefined theories, appears to be the most suitable for observing the characteristics of the development of a social theory that, as noted in the literature, often shows a gap with the empirical field (Wang, Lo, 2021). In particular, this study will include interviews with union officials from the main unions involved in the Marelli dispute (FIOM, FIM, UILM) and members of the Ex-GKN Factory Collective. The aim is to identify potential worker contributions to socio-ecological transformation strategies.

References

- Barca, Stefania,
2012 «On working-class environmentalism: a historical and transnational overview», in *Interface: a journal for and about social movements*, 4, 2, 61-80.
- Brand, Ulrich, Wissen, Markus,
2017 «The imperial mode of living», in *Routledge handbook of ecological economics*, Routledge, pp. 152-161.
- Corbin, Juliet, Strauss, Anselm,
1994 «Grounded theory methodology», in *Handbook of qualitative research*, 17, 1, pp. 273-285.
- Dupuy, Camille, Pasquier, Vincent,
2024 «Introduction: 50 nuances de vert. La négociation de la transition écologique, une proposition de typologie», in *Négociations*, 40, 1, pp. 7-25.
- Feltrin, Lorenzo, Sacchetto, Devi,
2021 «The work-technology nexus and working-class environmentalism: Workerism versus capitalist noxiousness in Italy's Long 1968», in *Theory and society*, 50, pp. 815-835.
- Flanagan, Frances, Goods, Caleb,
2022 «Climate change and industrial relations: Reflections on an emerging field», in *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 64, 4, pp. 479-498.
- Greco, Lidia,
2021 «Ecologie operaie a Taranto: visioni di compatibilità e transizione del modello di sviluppo», in *Sociologia del lavoro*, 159, 1, pp. 237-258.
- Flanagan, Frances, Goods, Caleb,
2022 «Climate change and industrial relations: Reflections on an emerging field», in *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 64, 4, pp. 479-498.
- Räthzel, Nora, Cock, Jacklyn, Uzzell, David,
2018 «Beyond the nature-labour divide: trade union responses to climate change in South Africa», in *Globalizations*, 15, 4, pp. 504-519.
- Ross, Stephanie,
2007 «Varieties of social unionism: Towards a framework for comparison», in *Just Labour*, 11, pp. 16-34.
- Stavis, Dimitris, Felli, Romain,
2015 «Global labour unions and just transition to a green economy», in *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics*, 15, pp. 29-43.
- Wang, Xinxin, Lo, Kevin,
2021 «Just transition: A conceptual review», in *Energy Research & Social Science*, 82, 102291.

Manufacturing transition. Conflict and consent in two automotive plants in a big city in Southern Italy

Camilla Macciani University of Bergamo

camilla.macciani@unibg.it

Domenico Perrotta, University of Bergamo

domenico.perrotta@unibg.it

Over the last few years, the Italian and European automotive sector has been profoundly affected by some events that have decisively changed it. The most important is probably the launch, by the European Commission, of the "Fit for 55" package, as part of the European Green Deal. In July 2021, the European Commission proposed its strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2035 (compared to 1990

levels): among the guidelines of the package, the Commission stated that “all new cars registered as of 2035 will be zero-emission”: a complete phase out of fossil fuel cars (except for commercial vehicles), in favour of fully electric (and eventually hydrogen) cars.

This announcement fostered radical transformations in the sector, including product and process changes, plant closures, worker redundancies, offshoring of production. At the same time, it has provoked lively and polarising debates (between employees and corporations, among workers, within trade unions, in the media) on many issues, including the legitimacy of the EU decisions, the kind of investments needed for the future of the sector, the role of China in the production of electric cars and, ultimately, how this crisis will affect the whole of mobility and the kind of society we want to build.

This contribution aims to analyze the different views on such “transition”, that have emerged in an industrial area that is home to some of the largest car component manufacturers in Southern Italy, employing several thousand workers.

In particular, we focused on two plants, both belonging to transnational corporations, where, over the last 5-10 years, workers have experienced a decrease in production and employment, albeit in different ways, and where this decline is often (presented as) linked to the “transition” to the production of electric vehicles.

These processes are interpreted very differently by workers.

While all the workers we interviewed seem to agree that transition should not “fall on the shoulders of workers”, and all the workers express concern about environmental damage and crises, these ideas are articulated in different ways with other views. Roughly speaking, a first position fears massive layoffs, questions the very idea that electric cars are less polluting than last generation diesel vehicles (considering also the whole supply chain of batteries and electricity production), and accuses the EU Commission of opening the market to Chinese electric cars, to the detriment of (Italian) workers and (European) companies, at the same time feeling on the same side as their employer (a huge corporation) and without any broader vision of a new kind of mobility for a future society. A second, very different, position calls for a “just” transition, expresses the need to rethink mobility in terms of public transport and promoting decarbonisation, but taking into account the impact this could have on workers; it also identifies the responsibility of companies' industrial policies in defining the future of these companies without considering the EU to be solely responsible for the crisis.

In order to analyse these conflicting views, the following issues appeared among the most relevant ones: 1) the long-term relationships between workers and companies (types of employment and industrial relations); 2) union membership and union history inside and outside the plants, and workers' previous experience of labour conflicts; 3) company strategies and, consequently, workers' labour experience in industrial production related to “new” products, including components for electric vehicles.

Another key element concerns the wider labour market in the region: in this area of Southern Italy, working conditions “outside” the automotive sector are very difficult. Workers know that their – very specialised – skills could be hardly employed in other workplaces; many of them fear that the transition process will force them to look for other jobs and / or to move to other regions.

The paper is based on the first analysis of an ongoing qualitative field study developed by the authors as part of the PRIN 2022 research group “Just transition in the factory. Workers' mobilizations and participatory innovation in emergent Italian experiences”. In particular, we realized 25 in-depth interviews (with workers, shop stewards, union representatives, as well as engineers and local managers), one focus group and one moment of participant observation of a strike and public demonstration.

Integrating pieces of green transition along different segments of the food value chain. Contradictions and challenges within and outside the workplaces

Giulia Magnano, Università di Bologna

giulia.magnano3@unibo.it

Recent decades have seen an increasing number of studies examining the evolving relationship between society and nature, particularly in the context of the green transition and the climate crisis. Numerous national and regional policies, as well as industrial plans, have been implemented with the aim of improving working

conditions and facilitating a transition towards environmentally sustainable economies. However, much of the academic focus has been on the broader social implications of the green transition. Specifically, this includes the creation of new job opportunities and the promotion of social development (Guillibert et al., 2022). On this regard, there's still a significant gap in empirical research regarding the impact of the green transition on labour processes and working conditions (Ibid). The present paper aims to explore the intersections between the growing adoption of environmentally sustainable practices within the agri-food sector and their effects on workers. In addition, it will examine how these dynamics vary across different contexts and along various levels of the organic food value chain. The paper will present key findings from a broader project investigating the transformations driven by the green transition and the rise of organic agriculture within the Italian agri-food value chain.

The empirical research focuses over two primary segments of the production chain: the agricultural enclave of the Transformed Littoral Strip in the Ragusa province (Sicily) and the distribution and logistics sectors, specifically the wholesale agri-food markets of Bologna (CAAB) and Padua (MAAP). A long-term ethnographic study was conducted, including participatory observation within local associations supporting migrant farmworkers employed within local Ragusan greenhouses, alongside workplace ethnography in packaging warehouses employing migrant women. Additionally, interviews were conducted with direct and outsourced workers as well as managerial and administrative staff within the wholesale agri-food markets of Bologna and Padua. The analysis of different levels within the value chain, combined with an ethnographic approach, has favored an in-depth understanding of the transformations within the agri-food sector resulting from the growing interest in sustainable practices, particularly organic agriculture. Findings indicate that the increasing standardization of production and processing practices, driven by the progressive relationships among various actors within the value chain. Specifically, the role of third-party and private certification organizations as private regulatory bodies has led to the verticalization of the supply chain disproportionately benefiting large retailers and distributors, already playing a relevant role in shaping the agri-food market.

The results of the study demonstrate that certain forms of private regulation have emerged from environmental claims, producing contradictory effects for workers within the supply chain. This has resulted in an industrialization of organic production, leading to increased workloads within the greenhouses and the standardization of practices in packaging warehouses. Furthermore, the research highlights notable disparities in how environmental externalities linked to production practices are addressed across different levels of the value chain. For instance, logistical hubs in central industrial areas are engaged in long-term green transition projects that often fall short in improving workers' conditions. Conversely, negative environmental externalities at the production level, such as illegal agricultural waste disposal, are largely overlooked in peripheral areas like the Province of Ragusa. The research employs a multifaceted approach, encompassing diverse supply chain levels, long-term ethnographic methods and in-depth interviews. The research revealed a nuanced understanding of the intricate interplay between labour and green transition, the involvement of local communities in environmental externalities stemming from diverse supply chain activities and the conflicts arising in workplaces due to the integration of sustainable practices.

References

Guillibert, Paul, Stefania Barca, and Emanuele Leonardi (2022) 'A Just Transition to the Circular Economy (JUST2CE)'. Rapporto tecnico Horizon 2020 Framework Programme. <https://just2ce.eu/e-library/>.

Work and working conditions in organic farms. The case of Zagreb

Júlia Tena Mensa, University of Trento

julia.tenamensa@unitn.it

Work and working conditions in agroecological farming are fundamental aspects of the resilience and social sustainability of the enterprise itself and the broader agroecological food system (Volken & Bottazzi, 2024). However, ecological farmers are exposed to a wide range of ever-changing contexts, from climate to economic and political decisions, which affect their work (Darnhofer et al., 2019).

Though limited, existing studies on work and working conditions in vegetable and fruit organic farms offer critical insights (see Magnano et al., 2024). Several factors influence working conditions, including the size and type of farm, crops and activity diversification, and the technical efficiency adopted (Dumont & Baret, 2017; Harrison & Getz, 2015). These factors impact income sufficiency and labour needs (Dumont & Baret, 2017). In general, there frequently is an increased workload in terms of both manual labour and cognitive demands related to the complexity of the practices (Bruce & Som Castellano, 2016; Maas et al., 2020). Producers count on several strategies to manage their work and livelihoods, but trade-offs are made, which might entail worsening their working conditions (Dumont & Baret, 2017).

Moreover, from the family sphere to the local policymakers, farmers maintain multiple relationships which determine their work. Volken and Bottazzi (2024) describe these processes by dividing the farm surroundings into different layers, from the farming system to the broader market and institutions. A common and important network of relationships within agroecology is Alternative Food Networks (AFN), in which multiple stakeholders engage in alternative practices of food. While AFNs provide alternative opportunities for producers, their participation often requires increased labour input (Bruce & Som Castellano, 2016; Dumont & Baret, 2017).

Despite the literature being focused mainly on organic food producers, farm workers are also key actors in organic food production. The working conditions in the agricultural sector are often precarious, with low wages and limited social protections (Galt, 2013; Harrison & Getz, 2015; Weiler et al., 2016). In some contexts, the "moral economy" of AFN normalizes precarious work (Weiler et al., 2016), which reveals the injustice, inequality and vulnerability that still undermine the agroecological sector (Gosetti, 2017).

This research aims to study the specific working conditions of organic farmers and farm workers. The objectives are twofold. Firstly, the research applies Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1977) to ask how farmers conceptualise, discuss, and make sense of their practices concerning their working conditions. Secondly, figurational theory (Powell & Dépelteau, 2013) is employed to understand how these practices are shaped, and influenced by the broader social, economic and political context.

The case study selected is Zagreb, focusing on vegetable and fruit organic farms. Croatia has one of the highest percentages of organic cropland in Europe, yet its organic food consumption remains relatively low compared to other EU countries. In response, the municipality of Zagreb initiated several plans and projects to increase the participation of organic producers in the city as a way to increase the accessibility to organic consumption. The methods for data collection include participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups. Participant observation is conducted on farms, as they are the main sites of production and work organisation. Observation may also take place in other settings such as farmers' markets or during delivery days, depending on where relevant activities occur. Semi-structured interviews are carried out with farm workers, farm managers, food network organisers, and local policymakers to capture different contextual perspectives on working conditions. Focus groups are used to discuss policies and possibilities for making working conditions a central aspect in the construction of an alternative food system.

As the fieldwork is currently ongoing, the available results are preliminary. While it appears that organic farmers share common values for ecological foods and their production, there are some variations in the farm's configuration that impact the working conditions. Factors such as size, systems used, final product, and whether the farm is traditional or entrepreneurial are key, confirming findings in the literature. Organic farms in Zagreb are dependent on manual labour for their production. For this reason, farm workers represent a small, but important group in the functioning of the organic sector in Zagreb. While the working conditions are similar across farms, the employment relationship varies depending on the size and type of farms. Moreover, the new demographics of the rural areas around Zagreb play a significant role in the organic labour force: traditional elder women supplementing pensions, highly educated individuals seeking agricultural experience, and migrants work together in the fields. These relationships not only pose challenges in the organisation of work during seasons but also in the sustainability of the labour force in time.

The work of organic farmers is necessary for each stage of the food chain: from production to delivery. This in- and out-farm work is crucial to understand the different practices that producers engage in daily life. This involves long working hours, physical and cognitive work, small leverage to decide their working conditions and a number of strategies in order to make the farm function. Self-help schemes and little cooperation with other producers accentuate the overwork that organic farmers are submerged in.

Informality is a key feature of the relationships that shape these practices. Organic farmers, depending on geography, type of production, and purpose, engage in a wide range of informal relationships that influence

working conditions in multiple ways. These relationships serve various functions, from securing labour in high season to maintaining communication with consumers. In this context, AFNs are built on informal networks of supply chains, allowing producers to establish efficient, yet unofficial, distribution and selling channels. Overall, this contribution shows how work and working conditions are shaped within and between organic farms, pointing out the set of relationships with other actors and their effects. In doing so, it contributes to the current research on work and labour sustainability beyond the organic farm, and fuels a discussion on labour justice in the broader organic food system.

References

- Bourdieu, Pierre
1997 *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Bruce, Analena; Som Castellano, Rebecca L.
2016 «Labor and alternative food networks: challenges for farmers and consumers», in *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems*, 32(5), pp.403–416
- Darnhofer, Ika; D'Amico, Simona; Fouilleux, Eve
2019 «A relational perspective on the dynamics of the organic sector in Austria, Italy, and France», in *Journal of Rural Studies*, 68, pp.200–212.
- Dumont, Antoinette M.; Baret, Philippe V.
2017 «Why working conditions are a key issue of sustainability in agriculture? A comparison between agroecological, organic and conventional vegetable systems» in *Journal of Rural Studies*, 56, pp. 53–64.
- Galt, Ryan E.
2013 «The Moral Economy Is a Double-edged Sword: Explaining Farmers' Earnings and Self-exploitation in Community-Supported Agriculture» in *Economic Geography*, 89(4), pp.341–36.
- Gosetti, Giorgio
2017 «Sustainable Agriculture and Quality of Working Life: Analytical Perspectives and Confirmation», in *Research in Sustainability*, 9(10), p.1749.
- Harrison, Jill Linsley; Getz, Christy
2015 «Farm size and job quality: Mixed-methods studies of hired farm work in California and Wisconsin», in *Agriculture and Human Values*, 32, pp.617–634.
- Maas, Larisa; Malvestiti, Rosane; Gontijo, Leila Amaral
2020 «Work in organic farming: An overview», in *Ciência Rural*, 50, p.20190458.
- Magnano, Giulia; Falasconi, Luca; Giordano, Claudia
2024 «Exploring the nexus between social and environmental sustainability within EU organic agriculture: A systematic literature review», in *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, 8, p.1502085.
- Powell, Christopher; Dépelteau, François
2013 *Conceptualizing Relational Sociology*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Volken, Sandre; Bottazzi, Patrick
2024 «Sustainable farm work in agroecology: How do systemic factors matter?», in *Agriculture and Human Values*, 41(3), pp.1037–1052.
- Weiler, Anelyse M.; Otero, Gerardo; Wittman, Hannah
2016 «Rock Stars and Bad Apples: Moral Economies of Alternative Food Networks and Precarious Farm Work Regimes: Rock Stars and Bad Apples», in *Antipode*, 48(4), pp.1140–1162.

Workers of the urban depths, sentinels of the environment. Ethnography of Lyon's sewage workers

Geoffrey Mollé, Lyon CNRS-EVS

geoffrey.molle@univ-lyon2.fr

This paper contributes to the emerging field of ethnographies of environmental labour by examining the work of sewage workers in Lyon, France. It shows that their professional practices are risky from a health point of view, but decisive in the management of urban metabolism, and visionary on today's environmental issues. Working in the depths of the city, sewage workers acquire specific and strategic sensory knowledge to fight environmental pollution on the scale of metropolitan regions.

The field of environmental labour research focuses on visible, large footprint industries, such as steel production, petrochemical plants and energy sectors (Räthzel *et al.*, 2021). My contribution focuses on a sector of activity that is invisible beneath the surface of cities. It proposes to extend the geography of environmental labour to the vertical. It is part of vertical/volumetric studies, another emerging field of research counting

several publications on the work of building and maintaining the city at height and depth (Graham, 2016). Ethnographic perspectives are, however, rather rare. We must turn to the anthropology of labour to find scholars specifically dedicated to sewage workers, to understanding their professional world and transcribing their relationship to the world. Many focus on the Indian untouchable caste (Srivastava, 2021), but a few references about sewages workers exist, notably in France and the UK (Reid, 1993; JeanJean, 2006).

These specific scholars focus on the history of the profession and its symbolic charge (Reid, 1993; JeanJean, 2006). The role of sewage workers has evolved with urbanization and technological advances. In the XIX^e century, as industrial cities expanded, sewage systems became crucial for managing waste, preventing epidemics and cleaning up city air by deodorizing public spaces (Corbin, 1982). At the time, sewage workers' labour was characterized by risky manual tasks, often with little recognition or compensation (Reid, 1993; Barles, Guillaume, 1995). Today, sewage workers are better equipped (Jaiswal, 2018). But the advantageous retirement scheme they get in France (at age 50) remains linked to their reduced life expectancy: 97% excess mortality before age 65 (Wild *et al.*, 2006).

Today, the profession goes beyond waste management. It combines technical expertise, urban management and environmental knowledge. Between the ageing of underground infrastructures, accelerated by budget cuts affecting the sector (Marvin, Medd, 2005), and the intensification of the urban heat island phenomenon, which heats up underground water tables (Steiner *et al.*, 2024), the level of toxic gases (Sulfur Dihydrogen, Carbon Monoxides, Ammonia, Carbon Dioxide, Methane) is increasing in the network and rising to the surface. The methodology used for this work is part of the CHART project (*CartographHe sensible liée à la pRoblématique H₂S en Territoire urbain*), financed by the LabEx *Intelligence des Mondes Urbains* in conjunction with the Lyon metropolis. This gas, produced by the anaerobic decomposition of organic matter, is both highly toxic and corrosive. It poses serious health risks, such as respiratory distress and neurotoxic effects, and contributes to environmental degradation through its odorous emissions and corrosion of infrastructures. Defeated by the construction of sewerage systems in London and Paris at the end of the 19th century (Corbin, 1982), the public health problems associated with this gas are indeed making a comeback.

The project brings together two synergistic teams of researchers: (1) a team of engineers specializing in urban hydrology, identifying the factors contributing to the formation and dispersion of H₂S; (2) a team of geographers and anthropologists focusing on the "situated knowledge" (Haraway, 2003) of sewage workers. Through qualitative interviews and focus groups with sewage workers, engineers and project managers from Greater Lyon, as well as participant observations carried out in the sewer networks, I will first show that the sensory practices of sewage workers, in particular their ability to detect toxic gases by smell, provide a rare form of environmental monitoring.

This olfactory expertise, developed with experience through repeated exposure, enables workers to identify hazardous conditions, assess risks and devise control strategies in real time. During fieldwork in Lyon's sewage networks, sewage workers described their ability to differentiate between "safe" and "dangerous" smells, associating specific smells with variations in gas concentration and chemical composition. In a second step, I will show that this expertise is likely to embody support for improved governance of H₂S risk on a metropolitan scale, in line with the objective of achieving sensitive mapping of the spatial distribution of H₂S emissions in a pilot district.

In an era of environmental crises, the profession of sewage workers illustrates the crucial intersections between labour, ecology and social justice. By bringing their experiences and expertise to the fore, this research enriches studies of environmental labour and highlights the transformative potential of ethnographic inquiry.

References

- Barles, Sabine, Guillaume, André
1995 *L'Urbanisme souterrain*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Corbin, Alain
1982 *Le miasme et la jonquille: L'odorat et l'imaginaire social XVIII^e-XIX^e siècles*. Paris: Flammarion.
- Graham, Stephen
2016 *Vertical: The City from Satellites to Bunkers*. London: Verso.
- Haraway, Donna
2003 « *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective* », in Lincoln, Y.S., Denzin, N.K. (Eds.), *Turning Points in Qualitative Research Trying Knots in a Hankerchief*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield
- Jaiswal, Ajeet
2018 "Sewage Work and Occupational Health Hazards: An Anthropological Insight." *Archaeology & Anthropology* : n. pag.

- JeanJean, Agnès
 2006 *Les basses œuvres : une ethnologie des égoûts. Paris, Éditions du CTHS.*
- Marvin, Simon, Medd, Will
 2005 « *Metabolisms of obe-city: flows of fat through bodies, cities and sewers* » in Heynen, N., Kaika, M. and Swyngedouw, E. (eds) *In the Nature of Cities: Urban Political Ecology and the Politics of Urban Metabolism. London: Routledge.*
- Räthzel, Nora, Stevis, Dimitris, Uzzell, David (Eds.)
 2021 *The Palgrave handbook of environmental labour studies, Cham, Palgrave McMillan.*
- Reid, Donald
 1992 *Paris Sewers and Sewermen: Realities and Representations. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.*
- Srivastava, Sumit Saurabh
 2021 "Sanitation: Key Explorations through Multidisciplinary Approach." *Indian Anthropologist.*
- Steiner, Cornelia, Christian Griebler, Eva Kaminsky, Constanze Englisch, Christine Stumpp, et Eszter Nyeki
 2024 « "Heat Below the City" – City-Wide Groundwater Temperature Measurements Reveal Subsurface Urban Heat Islands in Vienna (Austria) », s. d, PROCEEDINGS, 49th Workshop on Geothermal Reservoir Engineering Stanford University, Stanford, California.
- Wild, Pascal, Sauleau, Emilie A., Bourgkard, Eric, Massin, Nathalie
 2006 « *Mortality among Paris sewage workers* ». *Occupational and Environmental Medicine.*

16. Theorising ethnography across disciplines and methodological approaches

Convenors: Ester Gallo & Chiara Bassetti (University of Trento)

Theorizing Through Interviewing in Ethnographic Encounters

Bin Xu, Emory University, USA

bin.xu@emory.edu

Surbhi Shrivastava, Emory University, USA

surbhi.shrivastava@emory.edu

In this methodological study, we analyze and review different ways in which sociologists theorize through interview-based studies, especially those conducted in ethnographic encounters. We review 33 methodological articles and books on interviewing, 885 interview-based empirical studies in leading journals, and 65 book-length, award-winning monographs. When reviewing, we ask three questions: How do the studies generate and develop theories through interviewing? How do they theorize *within* and *across* cases of interviews – in other words, how does the researcher develop a theoretical idea *within* one case of interview and then test the idea in other cases of interviews? Given the affinity between interviewing and ethnography in many projects, how do they position interviewing within an ethnographic research project? We discuss the strengths and weaknesses of three major theorizing approaches to interviewing and their relationship with ethnographic research: deductive analysis such as the extended case method, inductive analysis such as the grounded theory, and abductive analysis. We find that most of them rarely discuss theorizing explicitly. Moreover, even the few writings that address theorizing do not adequately discuss a distinctive feature of interviewing, “cross-case theorizing,” the related issue of case selection, and the theorizing relationship between ethnography and interviewing. To address these gaps, we propose an approach that combines the theorizing agenda with “sequential interviewing” (Small 2009). Our approach emphasizes pilot research, uses literal and theoretical replications as heuristics, and provides an operational and visualization method to estimate the number of interviews and the “saturation” point, and the mixture of interviews with other methods, especially ethnography.

Reference

Small, M. L. (2009). ‘How many cases do I need?’: On science and the logic of case selection in field-based research. *Ethnography*, 10(1), 5-38.

Theorising “Video-based contextual inquiry” in ethnographic research

Brian Due, University of Copenhagen

bdue@hum.ku.dk

Sara Merlino, University of Copenhagen

sara.merlino@gmail.com

Barbara Nino Carreras, University of Copenhagen

bnc@hum.ku.dk

Visual and multimodal ethnographic methods are well developed within human-computer interaction, anthropology, and especially in multimodal interaction analysis (Heath, Hindmarsh, og Luff 2010; Suchman 2007). In recent years, ethnographers have explored collaborative and multimodal forms of data collection and analysis, offering new avenues to co-produce new knowledge and explore everyday practices and sociomaterial relations (Ballesterio and Winthereik 2021). Based on a decade of video ethnographic data collection among people with disabilities, this paper aims to develop further and theorise upon the *video-based contextual inquiry method* (Due 2024) for studying, particularly, the everyday lives of people with disabilities using assistive technologies.

Through ethnomethodological multimodal conversation analysis (Streeck, Goodwin, og LeBaron 2011) in a post-praxiological version that includes the distributed nature of agency and the active role of materials (e.g. Toft and Due 2024), we examine in this presentation sociomaterial practices when people with an impairment are using assistive technologies by including the role of the researcher. The video-based contextual inquiry (VCI) method integrates video ethnography, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis (EM/CA) (Mondada 2014), contextual inquiry, and action research with post-praxeology, emphasising the active role of researcher-participants in data collection to observe the sense-making practices. This methodological development thus seeks to address the need for new theorisation on the role of ethnography, the researcher and the production of scientific knowledge.

Our analysis draws on video excerpts and transcripts in the tradition of EM/CA (Mondada 2018). It focuses on how the ecology of the setting, including the researcher and researcher equipment, produces the situations we are studying. We are mainly relating to and further developing the discussions within ethnomethodology that relate to what Garfinkel described as *vulgar competence*. Garfinkel, in his later work, highlighted the work of Livingstone's in-depth, *unique adequacy* studies on mathematics (Livingston 1986) and Sudnows (Sudnow 1978) on learning to play the piano (Garfinkel 1986, 2022), which also led him to put forth the concepts of vulgar competence and hybrid studies (e.g. 2022, p. 89). Garfinkel uses the term *vulgar competence* to refer to individuals' embodied expertise in everyday situations and specialised fields, such as science and lab studies. Any skilled practitioner has a vulgar competence, which is how they understand their field of work from within. A researcher should try to obtain the same position to describe it in detail. This implies that researchers must develop a similar practical understanding to comprehend what is happening in these settings truly. Garfinkel's concept of *unique adequacy requirement of methods* developed from the 70'ties (Lynch 2022) is closely tied to the notion of vulgar competence, as both emphasise the importance of practical, embodied knowledge in understanding and describing social phenomena.

A key point is that the researcher cannot think of themselves as standing on the side looking in at something but as already, with varying degrees, active members of the studied situations. By emphasising the need for researchers to acquire vulgar competence, Garfinkel implicitly challenges the traditional divide between the researcher as a detached observer and the practitioner as the subject of study. The researcher, then, becomes more of a participantobserver, blurring the lines between these roles (Due 2024; Hofstetter 2021; Pehkonen, Rauniomaa, og Siitonen 2021). In this presentation, we also related to the arguments presented in "New Materialism", acknowledging that knowledge production is situated (Haraway 1988) and that everything present is inherently part of the situation (Barad 2007).

In this presentation, we discuss how the researcher's participation is not only a source of bias but an opportunity to explore how participants orient to the researcher's presence. The researchers' engagement in the ethnographic fieldwork can help facilitate the production and observability of sense-making practices that have practical implications for how environments and technologies are designed and known. The video-based contextual inquiry (VCI) emphasises situated learning when people use technology in real-life settings. It highlights how users adapt to the technology through practical explorations and sense-making practices in everyday life situations, from shopping to the navigation of urban areas. Our study provides novel methodological and theoretical insights to visual anthropology and ethnography and its intersections with EM/CA.

References

- Ballesterio, Andrea, Brit Ross Winthereik.
2021. *Experimenting with ethnography: A companion to analysis*. Duke University Press.
- Barad, Karen.
2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press Books.
- Due, Brian L.
2024. "Computer Vision in Situ: A 'Video-Based Contextual Inquiry' with Blind People Shopping Using Smart Glasses". *Journal of Interactional Research in Communication Disorders*. doi: 10.1558/jircd.27885.
- Garfinkel, Harold.
1986. *Ethnomethodological Studies of Work*. London ;New York: Routledge & K. Paul.
- Garfinkel, Harold.
2022. *Harold Garfinkel: Studies of Work in the Sciences*. redigeret af M. E. Lynch. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Haraway, Donna.

1988. 'Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective'. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575-599.
- Heath, Christian, Jon Hindmarsh, og Poul Luff.
2010. *Video in Qualitative Research*. Los Angeles ; London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Hofstetter, Emily.
2021. "Analyzing the Researcher-Participant in EMCA". *Social Interaction. Video-Based Studies of Human Sociality* 4(2). doi: 10.7146/si.v4i2.127185.
- Livingston, Eric.
1986. *The ethnomethodological foundations of mathematics*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Lynch, Michael E.
2022. "Garfinkel's Studies of Work". S. O i *The Ethnomethodology Program: Legacies and Prospects*, redigeret af D. W. Maynard og J. Heritage. Oxford University Press.
- Mondada, Lorenza.
2014. "The local constitution of multimodal resources for social interaction". *Journal of Pragmatics* 65:137–56. doi: 10.1016/j.pragma.2014.04.004.
- Mondada, Lorenza.
2018. "Multiple Temporalities of Language and Body in Interaction: Challenges for Transcribing Multimodality". *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 51(1):85–106. doi: 10.1080/08351813.2018.1413878.
- Pehkonen, Samu, Mirka Rauniomaa, og Pauliina Siitonen.
2021. "Participating Researcher or Researching Participant? On Possible Positions of the Researcher in the Collection (and Analysis) of Mobile Video Data". *Social Interaction. Video-Based Studies of Human Sociality* 4(2). doi: 10.7146/si.v4i2.127267.
- Schegloff, Emmanuel A.
2007. *Sequence Organization in Interaction: A Primer in Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Streeck, Jürgen, Charles Goodwin, og Curtis LeBaron.
2011. *Embodied Interaction: Language and Body in the Material World*. Cambridge University Press.
- Suchman, Lucy.
2007. *Human-Machine Reconfigurations: Plans and Situated Actions*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sudnow, David.
1978. *Ways of the Hand*. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press.
- Toft, Thomas L. W., Brian L. Due.
2024. 'Material Constraints for Assistant-Supported Learning: The Case of a Visually Impaired Student in Classroom Interaction'. *Social Interaction. Video-Based Studies of Human Sociality*.

Alien Encounters. A Plea for a Phenomenological-Hermeneutic Foundation of Ethnography

Maximiliano Vial, Universidad Diego Portales

Consuelo Araos, Universidad de los Andes

Pedro Orueta, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

This paper addresses a critical challenge in ethnography – what, following Bernhard Waldenfels' compelling formulation, can be described as the problem of "representing alien". We contend that this issue has largely been framed through a representational epistemology, resulting in a persistent and potentially paralyzing paradox: the methodological difficulty of fully capturing that which inherently resists representation. To overcome this impasse, we advocate for a phenomenological-hermeneutic foundation for ethnography – an approach that sees the researcher's presence in the field not simply as an obstacle to understanding the alien, but as a crucial precondition for achieving that understanding.

The ethnographic practice has historically been shaped by the researcher's immersion in the field, epitomised by Malinowski's transformative "fieldwork turn." This shift not only defined the boundaries of ethnography but also exposed the enduring tensions at its core. We can identify two interrelated tensions. On one hand, the principle of presence – being with others as they live – anchors ethnography in the embodied and situated encounters with radical otherness, distinguishing it from other social sciences. On the other hand, the imperative to systematize and represent the alien introduces an epistemological dilemma: the lived experiences that form the basis of ethnographic knowledge resist the objectivity and detachment traditionally associated with scientific rigor. As Nagel's "view from nowhere" gives way to a "view from being-there," the boundaries between subject and object blur, challenging ethnography's epistemic foundations.

Despite the extensive history of ethnographic thought, it remains largely entangled in representational paradigms that foster scepticism and recurrent "crises" of legitimacy. This dilemma becomes even more pronounced when considering that the research object – the alien culture – is fundamentally resistant to representation. As Karl-Heinz Kohl suggests, ethnography operates as a method for the "science of the culturally alien," confronting a dual epistemological impasse. The ethnographer must contend not only with the limitations of representing subjective experiences but also with the inaccessibility of the alien culture itself. Current discussions on ethnocentrism, (de)colonialism, and the ontological status of alterity underscore the urgency of reconceptualizing ethnographic epistemology beyond the constraints of representation.

We argue that the tensions introduced by Malinowski's fieldwork turn should not be viewed as insurmountable obstacles but as essential features of ethnography that can be theoretically legitimized. The phenomenological-hermeneutic approach we propose offers a framework to reconcile these tensions through the concepts of "facticity"; "estrangement" and the "in-between sphere". Essentially we reinterpret ethnography's foundational paradox as a productive dynamic.

In this framework, we take on the early Heidegger's concept of facticity. Where *being there* in daily life, far from undermining knowledge, becomes its basis. Normally, the background of homeness makes the background of meaning implicit, but the *being-there* of the ethnographer serves as a privileged position of "Estrangement" which is, following Merleau-Ponty, typically the phenomenological process to bring meaning constitution back to consciousness in its "nascent state". It is the very confrontation with alien cultures what brings implicit meaning-making processes to the fore. Finally, drawing from Merleau-Ponty and Waldenfels, we claim that the "in-between sphere" positions the ethnographer in the role of what Pina-Cabral calls "intermediation". This means that the ethnography is compelled to navigate the interplay of immersion and representation. By embracing these elements, ethnography legitimizes itself not through the production of truthful representations, but through its unique capacity to illuminate the shared and divergent horizons of meaning that emerge in encounters with the alien.

This approach reframes ethnography's defining tensions as the very source of its epistemic legitimacy, grounding the discipline in the lived and situated realities of fieldwork.

Following the money. Ethnographic contributions to understanding public transfers and social ties

Giulio Bertoluzza, Università di Bergamo

giulio.bertoluzza@unibg.it

This contribution explores the implications of using ethnographic methods, drawing on insights from my ongoing fieldwork on public monetary transfers to people living in poverty. It focuses on the distinctive features of ethnography when the research subject – such as money – lies at the intersection of multiple disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, economics, and psychology. The discussion begins by examining the multidisciplinary nature of money, then proposes a specific epistemological perspective, outlines methodological implications for the fieldwork, and reflects on how ethnography can contribute to both theoretical development and public policy.

The study of money is inherently multidisciplinary. The field often engages with the economic definition of money as a neutral, quantitative medium – an entity that functions solely as a means of exchange, a store of value, and a unit of account (Lagoarde-Segot, 2023). Nevertheless, sociology and anthropology have long examined how money shapes and is shaped by social relationships in both capitalist and traditional societies (Polanyi, 2010; Simmel, 2004). These analyses enable comparisons across different contexts and offer insights that challenge conventional understandings of money (Zelizer, 2012). Moreover, psychological research has also enriched this discussion, shedding light on how money affects human behavior (Mullainathan, Shafir, 2014).

From an epistemological perspective, such a multifaceted topic can be approached by synthesizing elements from different disciplines into a unified framework. Simmel (2004) emphasized a fundamental characteristic of money: its ability to reduce all qualities to quantities, functioning as a universal quantifier. However, contra

Simmel, numerous studies over the past forty years have highlighted the significance of qualitative aspects of money in economic transactions at all levels, despite the homogenizing forces of modern economic systems (e.g., Zelizer, 2012). In line with this perspective, I advocate for adopting transdisciplinary lenses – such as that proposed by Morin (1986) – to reconcile the quantity/quality dichotomy and to analyze monetary transfers in terms of both their quantitative dimensions and their qualitative meanings.

This contribution builds on the ethnographic fieldwork conducted as part of my ongoing doctoral research, focusing on Italy's minimum income scheme, the Inclusion Allowance. The study includes participant observation and unstructured interviews with 40 recipients in Trento and Bergamo. This fieldwork offers a valuable basis for exploring the meanings and uses of money within the Italian institutional and cultural context. To adopt a transdisciplinary perspective, the fieldwork begins with direct engagement in the everyday lives of beneficiaries – through conversations, interviews, and participant observation – and proceeds by following the money (Hart, Ortiz, 2014) through both quantitative and qualitative lenses. On the quantitative side, the analysis examines the adequacy of the amounts received and the types of economic transactions these transfers enable. On the qualitative side, it explores the meanings attributed to monetary support, shaped by both institutional frameworks and recipients' lived experiences. Tracing money in this way makes it possible to reconstruct the broader network of relationships (Desmond, 2017) that monetary transfers activate. During the first part of the fieldwork conducted in Trento, activities included observing interactions between volunteers and beneficiaries, listening to calls with the national social security agency, offering support during moments of difficulty, and accompanying recipients to tax assistance offices or on shopping trips.

In line with Burawoy's call for reflexive science (1998), this contribution introduces theoretical constructs from the outset and continually revisits them in light of emerging empirical findings, following an abductive approach (Tavory, Timmermans, 2014). I show how my ethnographic practice evolves from observation to participation, unfolding across time, locations, and cases (Burawoy, 1998). In doing so, I aim to use ethnography to pursue two objectives: to advance sociological theory on economic transactions and to contribute meaningfully to public discourse on social policy.

The first objective is theoretical. This research takes as its analytical starting point Zelizer's theory of relational work, applied to monetary transfers. Specifically, I investigate the interplay between economic transactions, the meanings of money, the media of exchange, and the social ties as articulated in Zelizer's later work (2012). While her earlier studies already recognized the specific meanings attached to money given to the poor, her more recent formulations offer refined tools for analyzing the relational dynamics between society and its most vulnerable members. Through this lens, the study aims to shed new light on how economic transactions function within the realm of social policy, thereby extending Zelizer's theoretical framework.

The second objective is applied. Ethnography, especially when supported by a transdisciplinary perspective, can inform public policy through a transformative lens. This becomes possible through an engaged ethnographic approach that not only translates research findings for policymakers but also denaturalizes the discursive processes that shape policy formation (Porcellana, 2022). In this regard, the capacity to generate meaning within a complex sea of signs (Glaeser, 2005) is central to ethnography's potential to influence policy change. Ethnography contributes not only by deconstructing dominant policy narratives but also by actively participating in their redefinition. A compelling example is Desmond's ethnography on eviction (2017), which, in my view, exemplifies this transformative potential. Such contributions are especially relevant as policymakers navigate the tensions between scientific evidence – data, theory, analysis – and the pressures of electoral consensus shaped by public narratives.

References

- Burawoy, Michael
1998 «The Extended Case Method», in *Sociological Theory*, 16, 4, pp. 4–33.
- Desmond, Matthew
2017 *Evicted: Poverty and profit in the American city*, London, Penguin Books.
- Glaeser, Andreas
2005 «An Ontology for the Ethnographic Analysis of Social Processes: Extending the Extended-Case Method», in *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, 49, pp. 16–45.
- Hart, Keith, Horacio Ortiz
2014 «The Anthropology of Money and Finance: Between Ethnography and World History», in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 43, pp. 465–482.
- Lagoarde-Segot, Thomas
2023 *Ecological Money and Finance: Exploring Sustainable Monetary and Financial Systems*, Cham, Springer.

- Morin, Edgar
 1986 *La méthode. 3: La connaissance de la connaissance: anthropologie de la connaissance*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil.
- Mullainathan, Sendhil, Eldar Shafir
 2014 *Scarcity: The new science of having less and how it defines our lives*, New York, Picador.
- Polanyi, Karl
 2010 *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (1944), Boston, Beacon Press.
- Porcellana, Valentina
 2022 *Antropologia del welfare: la cultura dei diritti sociali in Italia*, Ogliastro Cilento, Licosia Edizioni.
- Simmel, Georg
 2004 *The Philosophy of Money* (1900), London – New York, Routledge.
- Tavory, Iddo, Stefan Timmermans
 2014 *Abductive analysis: Theorizing qualitative research*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Zelizer, Viviana A.
 2012 «How I Became a Relational Economic Sociologist and What Does That Mean?», in *Politics & Society*, 40, pp. 145–174.

Ethnography as Healing. Trauma-Informed Approaches to Understanding Space and Memory

Gabriele Carmelo Rosato, Pontifical Gregorian University

g.rosato@unigre.it

This contribution examines the transformative potential of trauma-informed ethnography through a case study which investigated the multifaceted effects of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) on survivors' spatiality. The long-term impacts of such trauma often manifest in complex relationships with one's environments (Adams-Hutcheson, 2017), particularly the home (Willis *et al.*, 2016). Drawing on qualitative interviews, visual ethnography, and innovative tools such as verbal maps, the research explores how trauma profoundly alters individuals' emotional and functional relationships with their environments. Conducted over one year with 30 participants, the study integrates a multi-method approach that includes verbal mapping, photographic documentation, and narrative elicitation to explore the enduring impact of trauma on haunted spaces and its implications for healing and empowerment. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants – two male, twenty-three female, and five non-binary individuals – aged 18 to 55. Eight participants identified as belonging to ethnic minorities or having a migration background, while half of the sample reported living with a disability. The research incorporated visual and behavioural experiments, asking participants to create verbal and sketch maps highlighting safety or danger areas within their homes. These maps, updated over time to reflect changes in spatial configurations or relocations, provided a rich visual and narrative layer to the data. The ethnographic approach was not simply additive in method but transformative in orientation. It offered a trauma-informed epistemology grounded in participant experience and co-construction of meaning, challenging the conventional hierarchies between researcher and researched. While positionality has long been discussed in ethnographic literature, this study deepens that discussion by incorporating the researcher's lived experience as a CSA survivor himself into every stage of the research process – from design to fieldwork to analysis. This dual role was disclosed and negotiated with participants, shaping the ethnographic encounter as a shared and dynamic process rather than a static observation.

Rather than presenting findings, this paper foregrounds ethnography as a constitutive and adaptive research process resulting in healing effects for the participants. The ethnographic design combined traditional and emerging techniques, including in-depth, semi-structured interviews, photo-elicitation, verbal mapping, and behavioural experiments, each of which engaged different modalities of experience (verbal, visual, spatial). The integration of visual ethnography with narrative and spatial techniques allowed for a triangulation of modalities that gave depth and dimensionality to the narratives of trauma.

Additionally, Artificial Intelligence (AI) was used to support the interpretive analysis by identifying cross-cutting patterns in both verbal and visual materials (Rosato, 2025b) – a step that helped navigate the large dataset but also raised critical reflections on the role of automation in ethnographic sense-making. The use Natural Language Processing (NLP) and image-tagging tools makes this approach also mixed-method, intersecting computational techniques with multimodal ethnographic inquiry. These technologies enhanced the analytical process, allowing for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the data while also raising important ethical considerations regarding privacy and data sensitivity.

Ethnography, in this project, emerged not only as a method of inquiry but also as a site of potential healing. Many participants engaged in rituals of spatial reclamation, which ranged from symbolic acts of cleaning and rearranging furniture to creating personal altars. These personalised rituals were attempts to transform their homes from spaces of fear into environments of empowerment. These acts were therapeutic and narrative in nature, allowing survivors to reframe their relationships with their homes and pasts.

Philosophical paradigms such as Freud's *The Uncanny* (1919) and Derrida's *Hauntology* (1994) informed the analysis, guiding the exploration of how familiar spaces become unsettling and "haunted" by traumatic memories. Participants were encouraged to capture images and share videos of spaces, objects, or corners of their homes that held particular significance for their trauma and healing processes. These visual ethnographic practices uncovered how the "spectres" of past experiences linger in physical spaces, manifesting in ways that influence survivors' everyday interactions with their environments. Through this lens, the home emerged as a liminal site – both a sanctuary and a space haunted by the spectres of unresolved trauma (Rosato, Campo, 2025).

Ethnographic interviews became liminal spaces where healing could be initiated. For many participants, the act of narrating their experiences in a safe, non-judgmental environment offered significant relief. Of the 30 participants, 25 described the interviews as beneficial to their healing journey, likening the process to a form of therapy despite its non-therapeutic intent. The interviews provided opportunities for survivors to confront and articulate the spectral presence of their trauma, reshaping their narratives in ways that allowed for healing and reconfiguration. This narrative process aligns with Ricoeur's (2000) concept of narrative healing and Halbwachs' (1950) theory of collective memory, suggesting that storytelling can serve as a powerful tool for individual and communal transformation.

The visual and narrative data collected through this study revealed profound insights into the spatial dynamics of trauma (Tucker, 2010). Participants' verbal and sketch maps often depicted fragmented or compartmentalised spaces, reflecting the fractured sense of safety they experienced. Over time, these maps evolved, showing how survivors restructured their environments to foster a sense of security and agency. The methodological innovation of integrating visual ethnography, verbal mapping, and computational analysis underscores the potential of multi-method ethnography to capture layered, affective dimensions of trauma that traditional approaches may overlook.

This research contributes to the broader field of trauma studies by highlighting the intersections between spatial perception, emotional recovery, and narrative reconstruction. The findings have practical implications for trauma-informed design, particularly in architecture (Rosato, 2025a). Designers can create environments that promote healing and resilience by understanding how survivors navigate and reclaim spaces.

Ultimately, this paper positions ethnography as a dynamic, multimodal and interdisciplinary methodology capable of transcending disciplinary boundaries and engaging critically with both epistemological and ethical challenges. By integrating insights from anthropology, philosophy, architecture, and AI, the study demonstrates the transformative potential of trauma-informed ethnography in addressing complex social issues (Alessi, Kahn, 2022). The research highlights the value of interdisciplinary collaboration and methodological plurality in expanding the scope and impact of ethnographic inquiry. Through its exploration of trauma, space, and narrative, this study offers both practical tools and theoretical reflections for building safer and more inclusive ethnographies.

References

- Adams-Hutcheson, Graham
2017 «Spatialising Skin: Pushing the Boundaries of Trauma Geographies», in *Emotion, Space and Society*, 24, pp. 105-112.
- Alessi, Edward, Sarah Kahn
2022 «Toward a Trauma-Informed Qualitative Research Approach: Guidelines for Ensuring the Safety and Promoting the Resilience of Research Participants», in *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 20, 121-154.
- Derrida, Jacques
1994 *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. Routledge.
- Freud, Sigmund
1919 «The Uncanny», in James Strachey (Ed.), 1971, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XVII, London, Hogarth Press, pp. 217-256.
- Halbwachs, Maurice
1950 *Collective Memory*. New York, Harper & Row [1980 edition].
- Ricoeur, Paul
2000 *Memory, History, Forgetting*. University of Chicago Press [2004 edition].

Rosato, Gabriele C.

2025a «Empathic Architecture for Safe Spaces: An Ethnographic Approach to Trauma-Informed Design», in *Ambienti flessibili. Creatività, inclusione, ecologia, reale/virtuale. Teorie e buone pratiche per l'architettura*. Roma, Roma TrE-Press, pp. 230-243.

Rosato, Gabriele C.

2025b «Integrating AI in Anthropological Practices to Enhance Understanding of CSA Survivors' Spatiality: New Pathways for Trauma-Informed Qualitative Research», in S. Udupa, M. Baas & P. Hervik (eds.), *Handbook on Anthropology and Artificial Intelligence*. London, Edward Elgar Publishing. [In press]

Rosato, Gabriele C., Alessandra Campo

2025 «Specters of Trauma and Healing: Navigating Memories and Spaces in Childhood Abuse Survivors through Hauntology and Ethnography», in *Anthropology of Consciousness*, 36(2). [In press]

Tucker, Ian

2010 «Everyday Spaces of Mental Distress: The Spatial Habituation of Home», in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 28(3), pp. 526-538.

Willis, Anna, Susan Prior and Sarah Canavan

2016 «Spaces of Dissociation: The Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse on the Personal Geographies of Adult Survivors», in *Area*, 48, pp. 206-212.

Exploring the Intersections of Ethnography and Law. From Users of the Law to Legal Education

Luca Pes, University of Trento

luca.pes@unitn.it

Ethnography has emerged as a critical tool for understanding the complexities of legal systems, institutions, and practices. Traditionally employed by social scientists such as anthropologists and sociologists, ethnography has increasingly been adopted by lawyers seeking to engage with legal systems in new and transformative ways. This paper examines the dual trajectory of ethnographic methods in legal studies: the use of ethnography by lawyers and the application of ethnography by social scientists to the domain of legal relations.

Legal scholars have incorporated ethnographic techniques to better understand the inner workings of legal institutions, the experience of the "users" of the law and systemic injustices. These methods enabled legal scholars to gather rich qualitative data, offering insights into the lived experiences of those navigating legal systems, improving the understanding of the socio-cultural dimensions of law. Ethnography is particularly valuable in contexts such as public interest law and human rights advocacy, where understanding socio-cultural dynamics is essential; it is also crucial in legal education, fostering reflexivity about how abstract legal principles are taught, learned, and enacted by various actors in the legal process. However, these engagements raise critical questions: How do the imperatives of legal scholarship and practice align with the ethical and methodological commitments of ethnography? What challenges arise in negotiating the dual roles of lawyer and ethnographer?

Parallel to these developments, social scientists have long used ethnography to interrogate law as both a system of rules and a site of power relations. Anthropologists have investigated the plurality of legal norms across cultural contexts, while sociologists have examined law's role in reproducing social inequality. Political scientists, too, have engaged ethnographically with governance and legal regulation. This paper explores the ways in which these disciplinary perspectives illuminate the domain of legal relations, while also considering the methodological challenges of studying legal systems from an ethnographic perspective, including issues of access, authority, and representation.

By bringing these threads together, the paper highlights both the tensions and synergies between legal scholarship and practice and ethnographic inquiry. It argues that ethnography offers a critical means of bridging the gap between the abstract nature of legal principles and the lived realities they shape. Furthermore, it identifies the potential for interdisciplinary exchange, whereby lawyers and social scientists learn from each other's methodologies to produce more grounded understandings of law *in* society.

Ultimately, this paper contributes to the growing body of scholarship at the intersection of law and ethnography. It calls for a deeper engagement with qualitative methods in legal studies, while also urging greater reflexivity among social scientists working in legal contexts. In doing so, it aims to advance the dialogue between these two fields, offering new pathways for research, practice and legal education that are attentive to the complex interplay of law, culture, and power.

References

- Bourdieu, Pierre
1987 «The Force of Law: Toward a Sociology of the Juridical Field», in *Hastings Law Journal*, 38, 5, pp. 805-853.
- Comaroff, Jean, John L. Comaroff
2006 *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Dezalay, Yves, Bryant G. Garth
1996 *Dealing in Virtue: International Commercial Arbitration and the Construction of a Transnational Legal Order*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Geertz, Clifford
1983 «Local Knowledge: Fact and Law in Comparative Perspective», in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, New York, Basic Books, pp. 167-234.
- Latour, Bruno
2002 *La fabrique du droit: une ethnographie du Conseil d'État*, Paris, La Découverte.
- Merry, Sally Engle
2006 *Human Rights and Gender Violence: Translating International Law into Local Justice*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Moore, Sally Falk
2001 «Certainties Undone: Fifty Turbulent Years of Legal Anthropology, 1949-1999», in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 7, pp. 95-116.
- Mundy, Martha, Alain Pottage
2004 *Law in Society: Ethnographic Approaches*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Nader, Laura
2002 *The Life of the Law: Anthropological Projects*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- 2020 *Contrarian Anthropology: The Unwritten Rules of Academia*, New York, Berghahn Books.
- Snyder, Francis
2018 *New Directions in Legal Pluralism*, New York, Routledge.
- Twining, William
2011 *Globalisation and Legal Scholarship*, London, Cambridge University Press.

Ethnography in Legal Clinics. Bridging legal education and lived realities

Farima El Harch, University of Trento

fatimazahra.elharch@unitn.it

Luca Pes, University of Trento

luca.pes@unitn.it

The integration of ethnographic methodologies into legal education, particularly through the framework of legal clinics, represents a paradigm shift in preparing future legal practitioners. This paper examines the transformative potential of ethnographic practices within clinical legal education, emphasizing their role in addressing the limitations of traditional legal training. Drawing on examples of clinical legal activity in the field of migration and human rights law, the paper reflects on how legal clinics immerse students and practitioners in the lived realities of law, fostering a reflexive and critical understanding of legal systems.

Through immersive practices such as client interactions, legal counselling, narrative documentation and reflexive journaling, clinical programs mirror key ethnographic methodologies, enabling the study of law as a lived phenomenon. These methods not only enhance students' empirical understanding of law as deeply embedded in social and political relations, but also foster critical reflection on legal norms and their application within multifaceted legal systems. Moreover, this approach supports community engagement and the development of ethical awareness, enabling law students to navigate the complexities of justice systems with integrity and accountability.

The paper argues that the reflexivity and positionality central to ethnography align with the critical perspectives fostered in clinical settings, offering new ways to engage with law as a dynamic and contested domain. At the same time, it acknowledges tensions inherent in this approach, including the ethical challenges of balancing advocacy with scholarly inquiry and the methodological limits of ethnography within professional legal practice.

As the legal landscape evolves in response to globalization and technological advancements, the ethnographic approach equips law students to confront emerging legal challenges. From understanding the interplay of local customs with formal legal systems to navigating digital dispute resolution platforms, ethnography offers a robust framework for future-oriented legal education.

The paper then argues that by embedding ethnographic principles in legal education, legal clinics can contribute to a more inclusive, context-sensitive and socially responsive legal system. This vision is consistent with broader trends in interdisciplinary education, where the intersection of social sciences and law fosters innovation and societal impact. Finally, the paper aims to inspire the adoption of ethnographic methods as a standard in legal education, thereby enhancing the profession's ability to respond to the diverse needs of globalised societies.

References

- Acevedo, Deepa Das
2023 «What's Law Got To Do with It?: Anthropological Engagement with Legal Scholarship», in *Law & Social Inquiry* 48(1), pp. 1-13.
- Bradney, Anthony
2013 «A University is Not the World: And nor is its Law School» in Zenon Bańkowski, and Maksymilian Del Mar (eds), *The Moral Imagination and the Legal Life: Beyond Text in Legal Education*, London: Routledge, pp. 85–109.
- Darian-Smith, Eve
2016 «The crisis in legal education: embracing ethnographic approaches to law», in *Transnational Legal Theory* 7(2), pp.199-227.
- Pue, W. Wesley
2001 «Globalisation and Legal Education: Views from the Outside-In», in *International Journal of the Legal Profession*, 81(1), pp. 87-102.
- Starr, June and Goodale, Mark (Eds.)
2002 *Practicing Ethnography in Law: New Dialogues, Enduring Methods*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

The “back stage” of negotiation choices. The ethnographic method to understand the dynamics and choices of the social partners during collective bargaining

Gianluca Urbisaglia, Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia

gianluca.urbisaglia@gmail.com

The difficulty of the Labor law scholar is to understand what is hidden behind a negotiated choice thanks to which, for example, a particular discipline has been inserted into the trade union agreement: what was the motivation? What was the underlying exchange, if any? Why was this choice different from the union demands made to the employer's counterpart through the c.d. "union platform"? Why did employers' organizations accept the exchange and, if so, in return for what? What are the power relations between the negotiating parties? Does political weight influence all the collective subjects represented and all the decisions taken? Etc. The Labor law scholar can intuit, hypothesize, and always *cum grano salis*, but hardly be sure of the reasons underlying a particular negotiating choice. Ethnography is, in fact, «uniquely suited to addressing certain research questions, such as those that require an understanding of culture, social interaction, or other aspects of complex social systems that cannot be reduced to individual actions or attitudes» (Friedman, McDaniel, 1998, p. 117).

To try to answer, in part, this question – and some of the many questions connected with it, obviously also different for each collective agreement studied – as well as to provide an inspiration to the literature on Labour law in Italy, we wanted to apply the ethnographic method to the IR¹, in addition to the legal analysis of the negotiating text. In particular, the formation of a specific collective labour agreement has been studied² – the CCNL “for employees of cooperative enterprises processing agricultural products and animal husbandry and food products” – whose schedule was known to the writer. The research, therefore, focused on the four-year renewal of this national contract, which took place between February and June 2024, attending in person as “participating Observer”³ each meeting between the negotiating parties, excluding some particular meetings, called “restricted”, in which it was impossible to participate except as a senior official of the respective associations/trade union organizations. To remedy this deficiency, it was decided to plan and implement *semi-structured in-depth interviews* with the employers' and trade union leaders actively involved in the trade union negotiations after the definition of the negotiation renewal.

It was difficult to apply ethnography in such a particular context: either because of the lack of continuity of the ethnographic analysis (few encounters and rarefied, although lasting several days, and some excluded from the researcher) the narrow time limits underlying the definition of the new CCNL, in sharp contrast with the method used which, indeed, involves long survey periods (Hammersley, Atkinson, 1995). These difficulties – in addition to the usual identification of the “gatekeeper” figure – are the fundamental limits of this research that we propose to describe.

Of these results, we would like to mention a few.

In particular, the power relations existing both between the negotiating parties and between all the various subjects making up the negotiating table were clearly identified. Thanks to the leading role of substantially all the ongoing negotiations (speeches, choices, responses to the union counterparts, etc.) focused on a particular employer official – of great experience and authority – the power of the employer association she represented as well as the influence on the other parties present at the table was clearly clear to everyone. That role was also clearly visible, since the official was precisely at the center of the negotiating table.

Furthermore, the role of the “negotiating union delegation”, composed of about twenty union representatives from various Italian territories, was clarified. At the beginning, it appeared as a large group of “stone guests” at the negotiating table, but, thanks to the in-depth interviews conducted, it proved to be a non-secondary collective actor. The silent presence was, in fact, a form of control for both the unionists and the employers’ officials who were negotiating together: towards the former, because every decision taken had to be previously shared with the delegation; towards the latter, because, in the event that the employers’ parties chose to interrupt the negotiation, the union representatives of the delegation could, in the following days – but also, in some cases, immediately after the negotiation – carry out strike action, pass around union leaflets, apply pressure, etc., towards the employers represented at the table by those very employers’ officials.

Finally, it was clarified that some economic increases related to welfare were the solution to a lack of wage increases.

1. Already applied by the writer for the definition of the project “UniRE” (Union Responses to the Exploitation of migrant agricultural workers) for which the European Commission awarded its the “Seal of excellence”.
2. Chosen for some time convenience and gatekeeper ties.
3. Officially, I was part of the delegation of one of the employers’ associations to which my gatekeeper was also linked.

References

Friedman, Ray

1994 *Front Stage, Backstage: The Dramatic Structure of Labor Negotiations*, Cambridge, MIT Press.

Friedman, Raymond A., McDaniel, Darren C.

1998 «In the Eye of the Beholder: Ethnography in the Study of Work», in Whitfield Keith, Strauss George (Ed.), *Researching the World of Work. Strategies and Methods in Studying Industrial Relations*, Ithaca (Ny), ILR press e Cornell University press.

Giugni, Gino, Mancini, Federico

1954 «Per un cultura sindacale in Italia», in *il Mulino*, 1, gennaio, pp. 28-45.

Hammersley, Martyn, Atkinson, Paul

1995 *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, 2nd Ed., London, Routledge.

Ludlow, Amy

2015 «Using Ethnographic Methods to Explore Labour Law Questions», in Amy Ludlow, Alysia Blackham (Ed.) *New Frontiers in Empirical Labour Law Research*, Oxford, London, Hart Publishing, pp. 93-105.

Ludlow A., Blackham A. (Ed.)

2015 *New Frontiers in Empirical Labour Law Research*, Oxford, London, Hart Publishing.

Tiraboschi, Michele

2021 «Appunti per una ricerca sulla contrattazione collettiva in Italia: il contributo del giurista del lavoro», in *Diritto delle Relazioni Industriali*, 3, pp. 1-38.

Veneziani, Bruno,

1988 *Relazioni industriali e contrattazione collettiva in Italia (1945-1988). L'evoluzione enei settori agricolo, chimico, metalmeccanico, elettrico*, Bari, Cacucci.

How the rights of nature reshape ethnography

Anna Pedrolli, Università di Milano-Bicocca

a.pedrolli@campus.unimib.it

It is not difficult to imagine why, in various parts of the world, more and more scholars consider it important to recognise rights to nature, both to entire ecosystems and individual non-human subjects. Parallel to the development of this new legal framework, a branch of studies interested in the rights of nature is also taking shape to provide it with a scientifically solid structure. In addition to the political objectives that drive researchers from all over the world to deal with the rights of nature, the freshness of this recent legal phenomenon awakens an all-round intellectual curiosity: not only jurists question the ways to integrate this

legal institution, but also biologists find room in the debate on the rights of nature. Of course, mycologists and ecologists also contribute from their perspective to unpack the complexity of the object of study. The reasons for the involvement of natural scientists in the arena of academics debating the rights of nature are apparent – but social sciences also have something to say, even beyond the more predictable legal sphere. Indeed, the scope of rights of nature does not end with legal innovation, as its ambition is to trigger a broader cultural change involving human beings' relationship with the environment. For this reason, the rights of nature have also captured the interest of anthropologists, philosophers and artists.

The multifaceted essence of the rights of nature has led to the development of multidisciplinary research as a solution to restore the complexity of the theme under analysis through the juxtaposition of different disciplinary perspectives (Rodríguez-Gavarito, 2024). Inspired by this strategy, my doctoral research on the rights of nature in Ecuador lies in the field of anthropology and law, attempting to realise the interdisciplinary approach pursued in other works on the same theme. This perspective aims to approach law, particularly the rights of nature, not only as an object of study but also as a tool of analysis to investigate it. Such interdisciplinary collaboration, which takes anthropological theory as a starting point, not only entails the possibility of developing new understandings of the rights of nature but also leads to the inevitable redefinition of the methodology used. In particular, I had to redefine how I did ethnography to adapt the research instrument to my interdisciplinary research. The field has thus been composed of a combination of research methods, each of which has contributed to bringing together the different nuances of nature's rights. A theoretical operation necessarily accompanied this choice in order to merge the different research techniques in a homogeneous and harmonious methodology.

Aware that law is not located in any specific place but comes to life moving between the social planes where it is first thought and debated, then written down and finally applied, ethnography has had to *follow the law* both in the places it passes through and in the forms it takes as it moves from place to place. The multi-sited research (Marcus, 1995) I conducted first brought me face to face with the academic debate that engages Ecuadorian legal practitioners in the subject of the rights of nature, where I could study the institutions, themes and languages that animate the legal discipline. Here, the disciplinary peculiarities of jurisprudence allowed me to experience an inter-disciplinary ethnographic field since the movement between disciplinary perspectives and the discomfort and challenges such movement entails offer the same order of theoretical possibilities as fieldwork in distant worlds once provided (Riles, 1994). This incursion into academic reality represents the first ethnographic extension made outside the fields usually frequented by anthropology as a reaction to the invitation made by recent anthropology of law to go outside courtrooms (Márquez Porras, 2021), where research in recent years has tended to concentrate.

Embracing the theoretical advances of the School of Manchester methodological product of the extended-case method (Evens, Handelman, 2006), the research is built around a legal case concerning the recognition of the rights of nature. Besides reaching the influence social context of the Constitutional Court's ruling, where with ethnography, I could work beyond the limits of the legal enunciation in order to investigate its results and establish the actual outcomes of the recognition of the rights of nature, I also used methods of qualitative document analysis (Webley, 2010). Indeed, the connection point that links legal debates and norms with the concrete application of the law is the ruling: a written text that condenses the law's expectations and projects them onto the social context. For this reason, I have considered the constitutional ruling a fully-fledged cultural artefact that deserves anthropological attention. Its linguistic and epistemological analysis, as well as the discussion of its contents and terminology with the judges who drafted the text, further stimulated the transformation of the form of my ethnography.

In this contribution, I intend to present some methodological reflections from the 8-month field research I carried out in Ecuador between July 2023 and September 2024 as part of my doctoral research.

References

- Evens, Terry M. S., Don Handelman
2006 *The Manchester School. Practice and Ethnographic Praxis in Anthropology*, New York · Oxford, Berghahn Books.
- Marcus, George E.
1995 «Ethnography in/of the world system: the emergence of multi-sited ethnography», in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 2, pp. 95-117.
- Márquez Porras, Raúl
2021 «A call for ethnographing the judiciary (beyond the courtroom)», in *The Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, 53, 3, pp. 419-423.

Riles, Annalise

1994 «Representing in-between: law, anthropology, and the rhetoric of interdisciplinarity», in *University of Illinois Law Review*, 3, pp. 597-650.

Rodríguez-Gavarito, César (Ed.)

2024 *More than human rights. An ecology of law, thought and narrative for earthly flourishing*, New York, NYU MOTH Project.

Webley, Lisa

2010 «Qualitative Approaches to Empirical Legal Research», in Peter Cane and Herbert Kritzer (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Empirical Legal research*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 926-947.

Ethnography for Copycats. The normativity of ethnographic inquiry

Roberto Farneti, University of Bozen-Bolzano

rfarneti@unibz.it

Ethnography is in vogue in contemporary applications of design to policymaking, where the interactive, ethnographic mapping of communities is a precondition of the co-design dimension of the process. As when we engage in “cheap talking” with locals to “activate” them in a spirit of collaborative policymaking (Croso Mazzuco 2021, 141). However, inside knowledge of a social context does not *justify* the policy, it is just expedient and instrumental to setting the agenda. And if this is the case, contrary to recommendations in the literature (Longo and Zacka 2019), in no way ethnography could serve the goals of normative political theory, that looks for methods that validate, in a normative sense, policies and more generally arrangements that meet our democratic benchmarks.

There is a case though where ethnographic knowledge may assist out normative efforts, as when we dig social practices that we deem fit for normative use. And in fact, we call them *best* practices, although these practices become available with little ethnographic effort, as they are (when ready for normative use) standardized practices that tested effective in other contexts, so much so that we now want to replicate them in a context akin to the original. But I believe that there is a special set of *original* practices that we can dig via ethnographic means: these practices are not the best available (like those that promise success on the grounds of *testing* successful). These special practices are *creative* practices, that is, practices that we observe in creative milieus. Claire Bishop minimizes their normative potential when she argues “that artistic models of democracy have only a tenuous relationship to actual forms of democracy” (Bishop 2012, 6). But contrary to Bishop’s skepticism, we may test “artistic participation as a prefiguration of direct democratic participation” (McKee 2016). And use creative practices as blueprints for our prefigurative experiments in democratic design. Practices like composing an exhibition, that carries “meaning for the world we currently live in – and most importantly, for the world we want to make.” This is a statement by Koyo Kouoh, the curator of the Venice Biennale of Art of 2026, who believes that the world that “we want to make” is the effect of a co-creative endeavor; and yet she acknowledges the political nature of the stakes, and blurs the canonical distinction between the artists *and us*, for “artists are the visionaries *and social scientists* who allow us to reflect and project in ways afforded only to this line of work”. So, it is the space of the exhibition that we need to map to glean insights on, or prefigure, this world that “we want to make”: as in *Democracy in America*, the project curated by Nato Thompson (echoing Tocqueville) with its numerous satellite projects, like “town hall” meetings of artists and activists in American cities. We dig, map, and copycat the experiment to generate a prefigurative set of exemplars that will guide our normative conversations. And here we lose the distinction between the artist and the social scientist, and we see a dimension of active politics that is being reported and analyzed in texts, but that can only be fully experienced and exposed through ethnographic investigations.

Ethnographic work on spaces of creativity carry the promise of developing new methodologies and tools of investigation that have been called “live methods” (Back and Puwar 2012; Tarr, Gonzalez-Polledo, and Cornish 2018). These methods involve forms of participatory action research and engaged scholarship; they generate practices that become the applicable exemplar in a normative experiment.

Creative practices are *utopian*, and utopias are typically non-successful conceptual experiments with a long record of normative relevance (dating back to early modern utopian experiments). Ruth Levitas stressed the normative value of utopias, and this paper picks up and develops this theme in an ethnographic key, framing

creative milieus as spaces rich in utopian potential, that political theorists may want to dig, sort out, and make available to normative conversations on the future of democracy.

References

- Back, Les, and Nirmal Puwar
2012 "A Manifesto for Live Methods: Provocations and Capacities." *Sociological Review* 60 (SUPPL. 1): 6–17.
- Bishop, Claire
2012 *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso.
- Croso Mazzuco, Sofia,
2021 "Urban Commons Architecture: Collaboration Spaces Innovating Learning within Cities" pp. 138-152. In: *The Cambridge Handbook of Commons Research Innovations*. Edited by Sheila R. Foster and Chrystie F. Swiney. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Johnson, Genevieve Fuji
2022 *Grounded Normative Theory*. In: *Research Methods in Deliberative Democracy*. Edited by Selen A. Ercan, Hans Asenbaum, Nicole Curato, and Ricardo F. Mendonça. Oxford: Oxford University Press. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780192848925.003.0004
- Longo, Matthew and Bernardo Zacka
2019 "Political Theory in an Ethnographic Key." *American Political Science Review* 113 (4): 1066–70.
- McKee, Yates
2016 "Occupy and the End of Socially Engaged Art." *e-flux* #72 [www.e-flux.com/journal/72/60504/occupy-and-the-end-of-socially-engaged-art/ Accessed on January 15, 2025]
- Tarr, Jen, Elena Gonzalez-Polledo, and Flora Cornish
2018 "On Liveness: Using Arts Workshops as a Research Method." *Qualitative Research* 18 (1): 36–52.

Mixed Methods in Medicalized Spaces. Analyzing NICU Social Dynamics by Harmonizing Ethnographic and Survey Techniques

Alessandra Decataldo, Giacomo Lauritano, Brunella Fiore, Federico Paleardi, University of Milan-Bicocca

Preterm birth affects not only the clinical condition of the infant but also the well-being and functioning of families, presenting challenges during the child's stay in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and the subsequent transition home. (Ionio et al. 2016, Yari et al. 2017)

The e-ParWelB project aims to study this difficult and potentially traumatic event and its social determinants through an interdisciplinary approach that mixes Sociology of Health and Perinatal Psychology. From an operative point of view, it integrates eHealth tools, qualitative and quantitative social research, and psychological support addressed to preterm parents. Stemming from these premises, our research's main objective is to monitor parental stress and discomfort, with a plan for early intervention (acute phase) and one year-long follow-up (chronic phase) to prevent family maladjustment.

In the qualitative part of the study, we examine the complex networks of social interactions within the NICU environment and their impact on clinical practice and the well-being of preterm parents. Our research employs a combination of narrative interviews with medical staff and a multi-situated focused ethnography conducted in NICU and sub-NICU units across four Italian hospitals.

We argue that this methodological combination is particularly effective for analyzing highly medicalized environments with a clear hierarchical structure and established formal and informal practices that shape specific social interactions.

Focused ethnography is particularly suited for contexts of applied research such as this project, as it allows us to narrow the broad scope of qualitative observations, filter out "background noise," and focus on specific interactions, such as those between parents and NICU staff and skill-intensive NICU practices. This approach yields nuanced insight even after a relatively short observation period and it has already been found particularly fruitful in the exploration of medicalized spaces (Conte et al. 2015, Andreassen et al. 2020).

The short duration of focused ethnography's observation periods and the impossibility for the researcher to be a "participant" in the skill-intensive environment of the NICU may represent limitations for both the access to the field and the overall interpretation of the studied social dynamics. However, the project at least partially counterbalances these issues by combining ethnographic techniques with interviews which enables us better contextualize the researcher's observations and understand participants' experiences of being observed. In our

study, we constructed a maximum variation sample to include diverse staff profiles, striving to capture the full social network that supports preterm parents during their NICU stay.

On the other hand, the quantitative part of the study focuses directly on pre-term parents' mental health during the critical period of the transition home from NICU. Our project employs a longitudinal survey which not only aims to gather data but also to monitor and support parents' mental health. To achieve this, we provide families with digital health tools, including a dedicated web app, designed to assess their psychological well-being and foster a supportive network among parents, helping them stay connected and resilient during this challenging time. The survey includes both validated psychological scales, parental perceived social support items, and background traits of the responders.

The design of the research outlined so far aims to provide an overall view of the Neonatal Intensive Care Units social milieu combining substantive and methodological goals.

On one hand, the objective is to consider the perspective and the voice of every relevant actor that could influence family maladjustment (parents, doctors, nurses, ...) in order to have a perspective that could be as complete as possible.

From a methodological point of view, we balanced the need to reach all these populations to reach significant results, the aim to reduce the stress created by the researcher's presence in a delicate environment, and the hope of supporting preterm families during the data-gathering process. However, we believe that the resulting research effort allowed a deep and fruitful reflection regarding both the role of the researcher and, more in general, of qualitative methods (interviews and ethnographic approaches) in the difficult context of intensive therapy wards. These objectives are accompanied by several relevant challenges: the amount of work required to design the various data-gathering processes and to harmonize the different kind of information produced is huge and requires a large and well-coordinated research group (Bazeley 2017). Moreover, preterm families are a social actor which presents several important vulnerabilities and therefore should be approached with extreme care regarding research ethics.

However, we argue that this combination of different techniques could be taken as an example and replicated in the study of other medical and other similarly complex institutions as it balances the invasive role of the researcher in a closed environment and the necessity to produce significant scientific results.

References

- Andreassen P, Christensen MK, Møller JE. Focused ethnography as an approach in medical education research. *Med Educ*. 2020; 54(4):296-302, pp.297. doi: 10.1111/medu.14045. Epub 2020 Feb 16. PMID: 31850537.
- Bazeley, P. (2017). *Integrating Analyses in Mixed Methods Research*. SAGE Publications Ltd
- Conte H, Scheja M, Hjelmqvist H, Jirwe M. Exploring teams of learners becoming "WE" in the Intensive Care Unit: a focused ethnographic study. *BMC Med Educ*. 2015; 15:131
- Ionio, C., et al. (2016). Mothers and Fathers in NICU: The Impact of Preterm Birth on Parental Distress. *Eur J Psychol*; 12(4), 604-621.
- Yaari, M., et al. (2017). Maternal resolution of preterm birth from 1 to 18 months. *Am. J. Bioeth*. 19, 487-503.

Multimodal Ethnography and Team Reflexivity. A Methodological Journey into Wild Urban Nature

Enrico Mariani, University of Urbino «Carlo Bo»

enrico.mariani@uniurb.it

Francesco Sacchetti, University of Urbino «Carlo Bo»

francesco.sacchetti@uniurb.it

Ethnography can be regarded as a research system that coordinates multiple techniques. The widespread application of ethnography has sparked interdisciplinary debates on various issues (Hammersley & Atkinson 2019), including categorization processes, writing practices, the use and management of field notes, creative outputs, multimodal and sensory approaches, and more. Ethnography enables an embodied and situated understanding of experience, encouraging researchers to reflect deeply on methods of data collection and representation (Stoller 1989, Tedlock 1991, Wacquant 2000, Ingold & Vergunst 2016). The integration of diverse media and techniques – such as video, audio, photography, and digital tools – has introduced

innovative multimodal heuristic possibilities for ethnographic inquiry and interpretation (Pink 2015). This contribution aims to foster a methodological discussion centered on reflexive processes (Salzman 2002, Altheide & Johnson 1994, 2011) developed by researchers in the field. In particular, the contribution explores the relationship between adopting ethnographic multimodal techniques and producing situated context-specific knowledge. Drawing on an ongoing team ethnography focused on wild urban natures, those are areas that, after years of abandonment and urban void, undergo processes of spontaneous revegetation and become, in many cases, hubs of social and daily practices by citizens (MacNaghten and Urry, 1998; Trentanovi et al., 2021a, Gandy 2022), the contribution explores the cultural meanings and practices through which urban spaces and natures are co-produced in everyday life, as well as the agencies of human ----and non-human actors involved in this production. Ethnography can contribute to this research field by examining the meanings and values of spontaneous nature in urban coniiitexts, which are understood as inseparable from an analysis of the embodied and embedded practices through which these natures are produced. The research is a team ethnography in which, following an initial phase of go-along interviews conducted in spontaneous natural areas, participants were asked to share photos and videos to complement and enrich the narratives of their experiences. The collection of photos, audio, and video materials offers exceptional opportunities for achieving the objectives of this research, particularly with regard to the sensitive and embodied aspects of the everyday experience of spontaneous urban natures. At the same time, this multimodal team ethnography raises significant methodological and epistemological questions. In the contribution we aim to present in the panel, we propose a reflection on two key issues: the first concerns the reflexive, team-based analysis of data collected through multimodal techniques; the second addresses the search for appropriate forms of dissemination, which includes the written format of the scientific paper while also integrating other media that allow for a more multidimensional representation of the ethnographic experience.

References

- Altheide David and John Johnson
1994 «Criteria for assessing interpretive validity in qualitative research», in Norman Denzin & Yvonne Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA, SAGE, pp. 485–499.
2011 «Reflections on interpretive adequacy in qualitative research», in Norman Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA, SAGE pp. 581-594.
Gandy Matthew
2022 *Natura Urbana. Ecological Constellations in Urban Space*, Cambridge, The MIT Press.
Hammersley, Martyn and Paul Atkinson
2019 *Ethnography*, London-New York, Routledge.
Ingold Tim and Jo Lee Vergunst (Eds.)
2016 *Ways of Walking. Ethnography and Practice on Foot*, London, Routledge.
MacNaghten Phil and Jhon Urry
1998 *Contested Natures*, London, Sage.
Pink Sarah
2015 *Doing Sensory Ethnography*, London, SAGE.
Salzman Philip
2002 «On reflexivity», *American anthropologist*, 104(3), pp. 805-811. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.2002.104.3.805>
Stoller Paul
2004 *The taste of ethnographic things: the senses in Anthropology*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.
Tedlock Barbara
1991 «From Participant Observation to the Observation of Participation: The Emergence of Narrative Ethnography», *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 47(1), pp. 69-95. <https://doi.org/10.1086/jar.47.1.3630581>
Trentanovi Giovanni, Zinzani Andrea, Bartoletti Roberta and Francesco Montanari
2021 «Contested novel ecosystems: Socio-ecological processes and evidence from Italy». *Environmental Development*, 40. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.envdev.2021.100658>
Wacquant Lois
2000 *Body and Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer*, Oxford University Press, New York.

Interdisciplinary Team-Based (Linguistic) Ethnography. Operational Challenges and Critical Reflections

Ingrid de Saint-Georges, Université du Luxembourg

Ingrid.desaintgeorges@uni.lu

Patricia Lambert, ENS Lyon
patricia.lambert@ens-lyon

An attentive observer of how universities organize knowledge cannot fail to notice a changing trend over the past decades. Universities and funding agencies have increasingly shifted from a disciplinary to an interdisciplinary division of academic knowledge, viewing interdisciplinarity as a key mode to tackle large societal issues (Darbellay, 2019). To obtain funding, many investigators now must demonstrate that their projects will not only contribute knowledge to their field but will also bring together a team of academics from various disciplines to deliver research that impacts society.

In qualitative research, one approach could be viewed as a good candidate to federate researchers from different disciplines – ethnography. Historically, many disciplines have indeed claimed ethnographic methods as their own, making this research method shared across different disciplines. Ethnographers also often pay close attention to including a variety of viewpoints and local perspectives in their work. For Coupland and Creese (2015, p.4), this practice makes ethnography a promising starting point for interdisciplinary work, as such work involves looking at a problem from different vantage points. Traditionally, however, ethnography has not been much of a team activity. It has tended to be the ‘province of the lone researcher’ (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2015), solely responsible for conducting fieldwork, collecting and interpreting data.

In this presentation, we argue that transitioning from conducting ethnography independently to conducting ethnographic research as part of interdisciplinary teams raises not only pragmatic and operational questions but also new methodological and theoretical challenges. The field of linguistic ethnography, in which we locate ourselves has not yet extensively examined these challenges (Creese & Blackledge, 2012). Our goal is to unpack them. Specifically, we aim to address two of the panel’s questions in our talk (Gallo & Bassetti, 2024):

- How do (linguistic) ethnography practices change when they become part of an interdisciplinary team project?
- What happens to ethnographic praxis and theories when a team of interdisciplinary researchers begin working together, using related but different understandings of ethnography?

To answer these questions, we will divide our talk into three parts. In the first part, we will briefly discuss linguistic ethnography, highlighting what is unique to this approach and what it shares with other ethnographic traditions, particularly with anthropology (Tusting & Maybin, 2007; Duranti, 2009).

In the second part, we will introduce one interdisciplinary, team-based ethnographic project: the project Labør (Lambert *et al.*, 2024, Ghimenton *et al.* 2025). This two-year project (2022-2024) investigated learning in vocational school workshops – a site traditionally seen as a hands-on environment at the border of school and work – in the multilingual and socially diverse context of French Guiana, a French territory marked by widespread plurilingualism and unequal access to the French language (Alby & Léglise, 2018). The project brought together experts both from within (linguistic anthropology, interactional sociolinguistics, conversation analysis) and outside the language science (sociology, vocational didactics, social work, audio-visual corpus engineering) and presented a twist: in our fieldwork, we conducted observations in teams that mixed researchers from different disciplines. For example, when observing a culinary art workshop, we had three pairs of eyes: one from sociology, one from linguistics, and one from audio-visual engineering.

The literature on team ethnography does not describe this kind of interdisciplinary set up. As we discovered, team ethnographies covered in the literature are generally multisited ethnographies where either all researchers belong to the same discipline and share a common framework (Creese *et al.*, 2025), or where researchers from different disciplines each take responsibility for different fieldwork sites to address a common problem (Jarzabkowski, *et al.* 2015). Before visiting vocational schools, we expected that researchers who belonged to different discipline would need to negotiate a common understanding of what to do and how to behave together in the field. We anticipated epistemological and methodological frictions between us and that we would need to develop joint practices and tactics due to the imperative in interdisciplinary teamwork to collaborate and co-construct knowledge (Scales *et al.* 2008 ; Jarzabkowski *et al.* 2015), which does not exist when working alone (Parkin *et al.*, 2021). What surprised us, however, is that we also found ourselves having intense debates with colleagues within the same field (e.g. the language sciences). Subtle variations in our working methods were equally significant.

In the third part of our presentation, we will closely examine three key situations where we could see how our epistemological and methodological diversity impacted our ethnographic praxis and theorization:

(1) *Filming*. When research focuses on language details to understand how learners are socialized into trades, filming and recording can be crucial to the research process. In our interdisciplinary team, we discovered we had different assumptions about filming and what constituted legitimate traces for analysis. Striving for consensus, we did not reach agreement on one set of practices, but instead developed new ways of filming and new thinking about options for doing so.

(2) *Building a joint corpus*. The project's researchers needed different types of data, on various time-scales to be able to perform their analyses in ways that were sound for their discipline. This led us to build an open, multisemiotic corpus suitable for a broad theoretical and methodological spectrum, quite different from our traditional linguistic ethnographic corpora.

(3) *Writing and crafting knowledge*. During fieldwork, we often debated vigorously about our different views (Siltanen et al. 2008). However, when it came time to present and publish our results, we found that this polyvocality (Siltanen et al., 2008) often disappeared. Publications required that we stick to the conventions of one discipline, submerging some of our voices in the process. We therefore reflected also on the impact of interdisciplinary team-based research on writing, the knowledge we produced and our trajectories as researchers.

In conclusion, we synthesize the insights gained. We discuss how the switch to interdisciplinary, team-based investigation transforms ethnographic praxis and theorization, generating new analytic potential (Ghimenton, 2022). We also consider how such practice reconnects us to sometimes forgotten debates in our field. Finally, we suggest that if interdisciplinary work becomes more common in ethnographic research, more studies are needed to examine the effects and stakes of this move.

References

- Alby, S., Léglise, I.
2018 "Multilingualism and translanguaging as a resource for teaching and learning in French Guiana", in P. Van Avermaet, S. Slembrouck, K. Van Gorp, S. Sierens & K. Maryns (Ed.), *The Multilingual edge of education*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 115-137.
- Copland, F., Creese, A.
2015 *Linguistic Ethnography: Collecting, Analysing and Presenting Data*, London, SAGE.
- Creese, A., Bhatt, A., Bhojani, N., Martin, P.
2008 "Fieldnotes in team ethnography. Researching Complementary Schools", in *Qualitative Research* 8,2, pp.197-215.
- Darbellay, F.
2019 "From Interdisciplinarity to Postdisciplinarity: Extending Klein's Thinking into the Future of the University", in *Issues in interdisciplinary studies* 37, 2, pp. 90-109.
- Duranti, A.
2009 "Linguistic Anthropology: History, Ideas and Issues", in Alessandro Duranti (Ed.). *Linguistic Anthropology* (2nd edition), Wiley-Blackwell.
- Gallo, E., Bassetti, C.
2024 "Theorising ethnography across disciplines and methodological approach", Panel Description. 10th Ethnography and Qualitative Research International conference. University of Trento. <https://erq-conference.soc.unitn.it/2024/10/23/16-theorising-ethnography-across-disciplines-and-methodological-approaches/>, visited 22.01.2024.
- Ghimenton, A.
2022 *Appréhender la socialisation langagière: perspectives sociocognitives, interactionnelles et éducatives*, Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches, Toulouse, Université de Toulouse 2 Jean Jaurès.
- Ghimenton, A., de Saint-Georges, I., Corona, V., Alby, S., Ticca, A.C., Lambert P.
Forth "Learning professional taste: an ethnographic and multimodal study in a culinary arts workshop in French Guiana", in K. Riley & A. Paugh (eds.), *Food Talk: Sociocultural Entanglements of Language and Foodways (provisional title)*, London, Routledge.
- Jarzabkowski, P., Bednarek, R., Cabantous, L.
2015 "Conducting global team-based ethnography: Methodological challenges and practical methods", in *Human Relations*, 68, 1, pp. 3-33.
- Scales, K., Bailey, S., Lloyd, J.
2008 "Separately and Together: Reflections on Conducting a Collaborative Team Ethnography in Dementia Care" in *Enquire*, 4, 1, pp. 22-44.
- Siltanen, J., Willis, A., Scobie, W.
2008 "Separately together: Working reflexively as a team", in *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 11, 1, pp. 45-61.
- Tusting, K., Maybin, J.
2007 "Linguistic ethnography and interdisciplinarity: Opening the discussion", *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 11, 5, pp. 575-583

Team Patchwork Ethnography. Rethinking Ethnography in a Comparative Study on Reproductive Health in Europe

Marcin Smietana, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

marcin.smietana@unive.it

Alessandra Brigo, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

alessandra.brigo@unive.it

Giulai Zanini, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

giulia.zanini@unive.it

Falia Varelaki, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

garyfalia.varelaki@unive.it

Manon Vialle, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

manon.vialle@unive.it

This paper focuses on the experience of preparing ethnographic fieldwork in the context of a collective, transnational and comparative research project in Europe, including France, Greece, Italy, the United Kingdom and international sexual and reproductive health services. Specifically, the paper offers a reflection on the concepts of the field and ethnographic research, both individual and collective, within the domain of maternal and reproductive health.

The paper builds on the research project 'PregDaT – Pregnancy Dating Challenges: Technologies and Unequal Geographies of Abortion and Childbirth Care' (2023–2028), funded by the European Research Council (ERC) programme. The project examines the experiences of pregnant individuals and healthcare professionals in gestational age (GA) assessment, exploring how time is employed as a technology of care or as a means to deny care across different reproductive pathways (Zanini, 2023). Despite its profound implications, the process of assessing gestational age varies significantly across healthcare systems and countries, creating inequalities in access to care in terms of abortion and childbirth options. Such multiple ontologies and phenomenologies of the very concept of gestational age lead to methodological questions about where and how to grasp them ethnographically.

Fieldwork within the PregDaT project, begun in early 2025, involves sites such as abortion and obstetrics clinics in both central and peripheral locations in each country. The multi-sited and multi-nodal character of the project allows the researchers to capture the complexity of GA assessment and focus on answering the research question (Gunel, Watanabe, 2023) about how GA assessment is carried out, and with what consequences for meaning making and reproductive health purposes. However, it constitutes a discontinuity with regard to more classic understandings of ethnography, which becomes even more salient in the context of bureaucratisation of research under the ERC funding scheme as well as respective health authority and university regulations.

In this paper, we propose the ethnographic research methodology we have developed as a research team on the PregDaT project and that we call 'team patchwork ethnography'. Our approach goes beyond multi-sited ethnography, where one researcher moves between locations 'following the thing' (Marcus, 1995). In contrast, the PregDaT research team members work as active and interactive 'nodes' that function simultaneously. This approach shares some common traits with Latour's (2005) actor-network theory: as researchers, we act as a network, where each node is an actor (researcher), as well as an autonomous unit within a broader system. Whilst each one of us as a node operates in a different context, we are interconnected and independent, working collectively as a unified whole. Within this setup, each researcher's work is individual and autonomous, but it also contributes to a shared research goal. The collaboration and connection between the researchers (the nodes) is what ultimately builds a cohesive network. As researchers, we are also necessarily adapting to local bureaucratic demands, while operating under a unified institutional framework (the ERC). With regard to the panel's question about shifting understandings of research epistemologies and approaches within ethnography, the experience and theoretical proposal we offer shift ethnography's essence: from the responsibility of the individual conducting fieldwork to a more collective process, shaped by an institutional framework (the ERC).

The paper emphasises not only the need to develop diverse fieldwork strategies tailored to the ways relationships are constructed within different cultural health systems and to ongoing socio-technological transformations in reproductive biomedicine in each country (such as the introduction of telemedical abortion

in the UK). Drawing on the concepts of 'team ethnography' (Erikson, Stull, 1998), collective characteristics of ethnography (Middleton, Cons, 2014) and 'patchwork ethnography' (Günel et al., 2020; Günel, Watanabe, 2023), as well as our experience within the PregDaT project, we propose the concept of 'team patchwork ethnography'. We highlight the collective aspects of preparing individual fields and the collective comparative field, moving beyond the model of individual anthropological research. In our experience as an ethnographic team, this has involved at least three aspects: (1) preparation of each country research field, (2) construction of strategies and modes of action specific to each research field, (3) and tackling the questions at the heart of our research, such as understanding the architecture of sites where the concepts of GA assessment and pregnancy measurement are constructed.

We reflect on how collective work, both within and outside a research group, often emerges as essential transnational labour involving academic and non-academic actors to effectively prepare contemporary ethnographic research on reproduction. At the same time, we question the boundaries of the ethnographic field as thus defined and the fieldwork that arises from it.

Thus, the paper addresses the panel's question on the extent to which ethnography's application in specific disciplines/fields is enacted by individual researchers vs. research teams, and with what implications for ethnographic praxis and theorisation. The project team includes five researchers coming from anthropology, sociology and public health as well as a project manager, based in four countries, at varying career levels, with research trajectories in diverse yet mutually related fields of expertise, and with different commitments in personal lives. As we reflect on this team diversity, we refer to the panel's question on the implications of multi- and interdisciplinary research teams for ethnographic research and how this complexity affects theory-building throughout and as a consequence of ethnographic work.

References

- Erickson, Kenneth C., Donald D. Stull
1998 *Doing Team Ethnography: Warnings and Advice*. Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications.
- Günel, Gökçe, Sareeta A. Varma, Chika Watanabe
2020 «A Manifesto for Patchwork Ethnography. Fieldsights», in *Society for Cultural Anthropology*, June 9, <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/a-manifesto-for-patchwork-ethnography>
- Günel, Gökçe, Chika Watanabe
2023 «Patchwork Ethnography», in *American Ethnologist*, 51, 1, pp. 131–139, <https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.13243>
- Latour, Bruno
2005 *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford University Press.
- Marcus, George E.
1995 «Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography», in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, pp. 95–117, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.24.100195.000523>
- Timothy Middleton, Jason Cons
2014 «Coming to Terms: Reinserting Research Assistants into Ethnography's Past and Present», in *Ethnography*, 15, 3, pp. 279–290, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138114533466>
- Zanini, Giulia
2023 «PregDaT – Pregnancy Dating Challenges: Technologies and Unequal Geographies of Abortion and Childbirth Care», Starting Grant funded by the European Research Council, Grant Agreement n. 101076713 (2023-2028), <https://pric.unive.it/projects/pregdat/home>, visited 23\01\2025.

Doing ethnography between anthropology of science and STS. Genealogies, differences and gifts

Valentina Marcheselli, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

vale.marcheselli@unive.it

Roberta Raffaetà, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

roberta.raffaeta@unive.it

We are two scholars with a hybrid profile between anthropology and STS working in the empirical field of science and technology. We specifically draw on our encounters with scientists who employ different technologies and approaches – from wet lab techniques to bioinformatic tools – to study microbial communities across human and environmental ecosystems. We consider this field of study especially

generative exactly because it blurs boundaries not only between the visible and the invisible, the body and the environment, information and matter, situatedness and planetarity, the micro and the macro, but also between anthropology and STS.

In particular, we are inspired by Marilyn Strathern's (1988, 1992) examination of genealogies, considered as tools to establish social identities and hierarchy, gain access to resources, legitimacy and power and redistribute wealth. In this light, genealogies are fluid, representational and context-dependent, rather than objective sociomaterial facts, made – for example – of 'blood and soil'. Thus, we propose STS as a field that has transgressed boundaries 'by birth', descending from multiple, lateral, inventive and politically generative genealogies.

We reflect on ethnography as a research method that allows anthropology and STS to connect and coalesce, from the classic formulation of *science in action* and *laboratory ethnography* by Bruno Latour (1987), to the *situated knowledge* sprung by the encounter of STS/anthropology/feminist study (Harding 1992), to the engagement with indigenous knowledge and post/de-colonial studies (Todd, 2016; Tuck, Yang, 2012) that are articulated today at the intersection of the two disciplines. In each of these encounters, what it means to be an ethnographer among scientists changed. We discuss how these themes *are* today, for us, enmeshed with our methodology, and we reflect on what methodological interventions they call for in the study of technoscience in an increasingly computational world. In particular, we focus on the temporality of our ethnographic engagement with the scientists we work with. This is indeed an aspect that has to do with the methodology of the research and the research design, and yet this long-term engagement also allows for a certain "political" posture (the signature style of anthropological practice), one that allows a dialogue with the scientists and requires an ongoing reflection on the relationships we establish with our informants. This reflexivity, rather than falling outside the construction of ethnography, is at the heart of our ethnographic engagement.

Within our research practice, STS cannot be circumscribed as a separate field, but one that emerged and, most importantly, thrives at the intersection of different approaches. Yet, we recognize the importance to draw 'differences that make a difference' and we propose the difference between STS and anthropology in the dynamic and direction of their analytical deployment. Our take is that whereas STS's general objective is to situate scientific practice in context to better understand science, anthropology's ambition is to study science as a window into other social phenomena that are entangled but not limited to science itself. And that's why anthropology has a never fading interest in humans and not only in materiality. STS, by taking the authority of Western scientific knowledge as a reference, may lack a certain sensitivity to issues of power and capitalism. And thus – playing with Strathern again – the "gift" that STS can make to anthropology is to encourage a focus on the material aspects of the politics of relations that science enacts and reproduces; in turn, anthropology can gift STS with a renewed interest in issues of power and justice.

References

- Harding, Sandra
1992 Rethinking standpoint epistemology: What is "strong objectivity"? *The Centennial Review*, Vol.36, No.3, pp. 437-470.
- Latour, Bruno
1987 *Science in action: How to follow scientists and engineers through society*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Strathern, Marilyn
1988 *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Strathern, Marilyn
1992 *After nature: English kinship in the late twentieth century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Todd, Zoe
2016 An Indigenous Feminist's Take On The Ontological Turn: 'Ontology' Is Just Another Word For Colonialism. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol.29, pp. 4–22.
- Tuck, Eve and K. Wayne Yang
2012 Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* Vol. 1, No. 1, 2012, pp. 1-40.

Life Stories. A Transdisciplinary Genre between Anthropology and Literature

Lorena Cavuoti Cabanillas, Anthropology PhD student, UCM

lcavuoti@ucm.es

This presentation aims to transversally explore the process of constructing a life story through the lens of Anthropology and its fruitful dialogue with literary discourse. I will begin by presenting the life story of Celia, a 44-year-old Mexican woman with whom I collaborated during my fieldwork in the Bay Area, CA in the fall of 2022. By analyzing the main themes emerging from her narrative – specifically, her experience of moving from Mexico to California at the age of 19 and the challenges and joys that this entailed – I will reflect on what it means to write a life story in Anthropology (Frank, 1979; Freeman, Krantz, 1980; Watson, Watson-Franke, 1985). More specifically, given that life stories represent a distinctive approach within the anthropological endeavor and its epistemological objectives, I will examine the key challenges of working on such narratives and their intersections with the literary production, aiming to highlight how the inclusion of literary motifs, stylistic features, and analytical categories in Ethnography can significantly contribute to avoiding stereotypical interpretations when engaging with social scientific research. Although stemming from two profoundly different *poietic* processes, the interconnection between these two endeavors is productive in that it can help researchers better attune to the anthropic implications of storytelling at the core of the biographical “method”. Therefore, my analysis will engage with critical aspects such as the hyper-qualitative nature of interviews, questions of authorship and co-authorship, and the role of the listener and/or reader in crafting the narrative’s meaning (Crapanzano, 1977; Behar, 1993; Abu-Lughod, 2008; Clemente, 2013; Gay y Blasco, 2017). In conclusion, I will highlight the productive interplay between anthropological and literary discourses in shaping life stories, showcasing their inherently interdisciplinary – even transdisciplinary – nature throughout the various stages of their development (Titon, 1980; Narayan, 1995; De Angelis, 2002; Behar, 2009), as it fruitfully forgoes a dualistic conception of the boundary between these two disciplines. Accordingly, I aim to argue for life stories to be interpreted as a distinct transdisciplinary genre.

References

- Abu-Lughod, Lila
2008 Writing Women’s Worlds: Bedouin Stories. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Behar, Ruth
1993 Translated Woman. Crossing the Border with Esperanza’s Story. Boston: Beacon Press.
- 2009 “Believing in Anthropology as Literature.” In Anthropology off the Shelf, edited by Alisse Waterston and Maria D. Vesperi, 106–16. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Clemente, Pietro
2013 Le parole degli altri. Gli antropologi e le storie di vita. Pisa: Pacini Editore.
- Crapanzano, Vincent
1977 “The Life History in Anthropological Field Work.” Anthropology and Humanism Quarterly 2 (2–3): 3–7.
- De Angelis, Rose
2002 Between Anthropology and Literature. Interdisciplinary Discourse. London: Routledge.
- Frank, Gelya
1979 “Finding the Common Denominator: A Phenomenological Critique of Life History Method.” Ethos 7 (1): 68–94.
- Freeman, James M., David L. Krantz
1980 “The Unfulfilled Promise of Life Histories.” Biography 3 (1): 1–13.
- Gay y Blasco, Paloma
2017 “Doubts, Compromises, and Ideals: Attempting a Reciprocal Life Story.” Anthropology and Humanism 42 (1): 91–108.
- Narayan, Kirin
1995 “Overlapping Endeavors: Anthropology and Literature.” Anthropology and Humanism 20 (1): 76–77.
- Titon, Jeff Todd
1980 “The Life Story.” The Journal of American Folklore 93 (369): 276–92.
- Watson, Lawrence C., Maria-Barbara Watson-Franke
1985 Interpreting Life Histories. An Anthropological Inquiry. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Ethnography Between Anthropology and History: Dwelling Across the Archive and the Field

Ester Gallo, University of Trento

ester.gallo@unitn.it

The relation between history and anthropology is one of interdependence and distance: both have for long concerned with the representation – and constitution – of *other* societies. Yet, while for the former this alterity was located in the past, the latter – particularly within the functionalist and structuralist traditions – tended to temporally frame social difference around an ‘eternal present’. Indeed, postcolonial and feminist historians

have often criticised classical anthropological accounts of (traditionalising) topics such as kinship, religion or caste for reifying much longer-term processes of social transformations, included those induced by colonialism. Ethnography, as a theory and a practice, is key to reveal the logic of interdisciplinary interdependence: on the one hand, the anthropologist cannot gain full immersion into the everyday without historical imagination and, on the other, the ethnography gaze is key to the historical understanding the past. While this mutual relation is often recognised at theoretical level, relatively minor attention is paid to the question of how it plays out in ethnographic-driven research designs. Similarly, while 'the ethnography of the archive' has gained centrality in the debate, 'the archive in ethnography' deserves further attention.

This paper draws from a fifteen-year long research conducted in India and in the UK on the relation between colonial history, memory and kinship formation among contemporary Indian middle-classes. It addresses the following questions: how can we practically design and conduct ethnographic research that is attentive to the everyday and the long durée? How can ethnography be fruitfully used within a dialogue between history and anthropology? In addressing these questions, the analysis pursues two interrelated aims. On the one hand, to explore how archive research can be triangulated with other qualitative methods – specifically participant observation, diary and life history analysis, oral history and genealogical diagrams – within an ethnographic approach and design. On the other hand, to reflect on how through ethnography, as a multi-method strategy connecting history and anthropology, we can better grasp the legacy of the past into the present.

The analysis provisionally suggests how archive research offers ethnography a cultural frame inherent to the actions and registers that had framed past debates, policies and related social changes, whose understanding are key to apprehend contemporary memories. The archive does not so much offer the ethnographer with a ground of past facts where to validate present recalling. Rather, it inspires everyday fieldwork by evoking for the ethnographer the language registers, emotions and actions that marked significant past debates/events, and the terms through which forebearers imagined societal future. In a complementary logic, ethnography gives new life to archival data. It does so by tracing how subsequent destinies have aligned, deserted or provided unexpected meanings to what the 'mood of the times', and past generations, had envisaged for them. The paper concludes by highlighting the importance of further reflecting on the methodological implications of ethnographic methods for the dialogue between history and anthropology.

References

- Asad, T. 2002. 'Ethnographic Representation, Statistics, and Modern Power. In *From the Margins: Historical Anthropology and Its Futures*, edited by B.K. Axel, 66–93. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Axel, B.K. 2002. *From the Margins: Historical Anthropology and Its Futures*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Burton, A. 2003. *Dwelling in the Archive. Women Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Carminati, Lucia. 2019. "Dead Ends in and Out of the Archive: An Ethnography of Dār al Wathā'iq al Qawmiyya, the Egyptian National Archive. *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* 23 (1): 34–51.
- Comaroff J. and Comaroff, J. 1992. *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Fabian, J. 1983. *Time and the Other. How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. Columbia: Columbia University Press.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. 1963. *Structuralist Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books.
- Mathur, S. 2000. 'History and Anthropology in South Asia: Rethinking the Archive' *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 2000(29): 89-106.
- Punathil, S. 2021 'Archival ethnography and ethnography of archiving: Towards an anthropology of riot inquiry commission reports in postcolonial India', *History and Anthropology* 32(3): 312-330.
- Zeitlyn, David. 2012. 'Anthropology in and of the Archives: Possible Futures and Contingent Pasts. Archives as Anthropological Surrogates. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (1): 461–480.

17. Comparative ethnographies of borderlands: Everyday practices of bordering and resistance across securitised geographies

Convenors: Ilaria Giglioli (University of San Francisco) & Edgar Córdova Morales (UVSQ-Paris-Saclay)

Politics of (im)mobility and migrants on stand-by at the EU and US borderlands"

Chiara Maritato, University of Turin

chiara.maritato@unito.it

The article explores the complex realities faced by migrants in borderlands -regions at or near national borders where legal, political, and social boundaries intersect and often collide. Borderlands have become essential to the process of bordering and laboratories where the remote control of migration is tested (De Sarto, 2021, FitzGerald, 2020). The proliferation of a myriad of techniques by which states seek to regiment mobility is a response to "the multifarious reasons and predicaments that motivate or compel people to move across state borders, or alternately find themselves stranded en route, temporary but indefinitely stuck someplace along the way on their migration itineraries" (De Genova, 2017, p.9).

It relies on borderlands as a political and geographical space that allows for the simultaneous assessment of both the changing nature of the politics of migrants' (im)mobility and its impact on remote regions. The measures taken to ensure a "strategic engineering of mobility" (Karadağ, 2019, p.13) are daily confronted with practices of condonations, resistance and civil solidarity that can only be detected through an extensive view from within.

A focus on the borderlands can also reveal how migrants living in these liminal spaces face unique challenges in navigating a political and legal landscape characterized by uncertainty and the everyday brutality of militarized border control. The condition of being caught in transit has been at the center of several scholarly works that have critically examined the notion of "stranded" migrants, highlighting the resistance inherent in "waiting" and the potential activation of an "on stand-by" condition that can transform involuntary immobility into unauthorized attempts to cross (De Genova, 2021).

The article aims to capture migrants' unauthorized attempts as the result of a plurality of steps, which implies a complex definition of the "exit" to the "entry" points. It thus asks how three decades of bordering and ordering processes have reformulated, reallocated and re-spatialised borders that have become fragmented, diffused, dispersed, mobile and deterritorialized (Coleman, 2007; Rumford, 2006; Walters, 2016). Migrants' routes have followed this militarized de-structuring of borders: Copying visa restrictions, global routes are highly risky and costly, but also imply long trajectories in terms of "transit". While migrants from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia are currently on stand-by in Edirne, waiting before attempting to cross into Greece or Bulgaria, migrants from Turkey and China fly to Mexico City and Cancún as a first step towards entering US territory.

These transcontinental routes reinforce a comparative perspective that could capture how global migration governance keeps distant borderlands in constant dialogue. The Greek/EU Turkish and US-Mexican (hereinafter EU-TR and US-MX) borders signal the relevance of visa regimes and shifts in the EU and the US migration and asylum policies for global migration governance. Indeed, the visa-free policy allowing to travel from Turkey to Mexico brings closer two transit and emigration countries that have become essential to the EU and the US externalization of border control (Casas-Cortes, et.al., 2016). The two borderlands divide regions – Europe from Asia and the Middle East and the US from Latin America – in which unequal power relations between the so-called Global North and Global South are manifested, and both have been profoundly transformed since the 1990s by the securitisation of the migration issue (Hess, 2010).

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Turkey (Edirne province) and in the US (San Diego County) between 2021 and 2024, the article envisages a comparison resulting from a mirrored analysis between two borderlands (EU-Turkey and US-Mexico) and two respective "transit countries" at the intersection of global migration routes towards the Global North. The experiences and expectations of migrants on stand-by at the very last step before attempting to cross into the EU and immediately after crossing into the US reveal about how global migrations connect distant borderlands.

References

- Casas-Cortes Maribel, Cobarrubias, Sebastian and Pickles John
 2016 "'Good Neighbours Make Good Fences'": Seahorse Operations, Border Externalization and Extra-Territoriality" in *European Urban and Regional Studies* 23, 3, pp. 231-251.
- Coleman, Mathew
 2007 "Immigration Geopolitics Beyond the Mexico-US Border", *Antipode* 39, 1, pp. 54-76. De Genova, Nicholas
 2017 *The Borders of 'Europe': Autonomy of Migration, Tactics of Bordering*, Durham, Duke University Press.
- De Genova, Nicholas
 2021 "'On Standby...at the Borders of 'Europe'", in *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization* 21, 1, pp.283-300.
- Del Sarto, Raffaella A.
 2021 *Borderlands: Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East*, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press.
- Hess, Sabine
 2010 'The Invention of "Transit Migration" Theoretical and Methodological Considerations on Illegal Migration in Europe's Southeastern Border Region', in Klaus Roth and Jutta Lauth Bacas Migration In *From, and to Southeastern Europe: Ways and Strategies of Migrating*, Ethnologia Balkanica, Münster, LIT Verlag, pp. 129-47.
- Karadağ, Sibel
 2019 'Extraterritoriality of European Borders to Turkey: An Implementation Perspective of Counteractive Strategies', in *Comparative Migration Studies* 7, 12.
- Rumford, Chris
 2006 'Theorizing Borders', in *European Journal of Social Theory* 9, 2, pp. 155-69. Scott FitzGerald, David
 2020 "Remote Control of Migration: Theorising Territoriality, Shared Coercion, and Deterrence", in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 46, 1, pp. 4-22.
- Walters, William
 2016 'Live Governance, Borders, and the Time-Space of the Situation: EUROSUR and the Genealogy of Bordering in Europe', *Comparative European Politics*, 15, 5, pp. 794-817.

"Too busy saving lives". A comparative study of coastal fishing communities and the EU-Tunisian border regime

Luca Ramello, Politecnico di Torino

luca.ramello@polito.it

This contribution explores the entangled socio-economic, environmental, and emotional impacts of the EU-Tunisian border regime through a multi-sited ethnography conducted in 2022-2023 across coastal fishing communities in Zarzis, Kerkennah, Sfax and its northern periphery (along the Mahdia route), Teboulba, and Monastir.

By adopting a comparative approach that seeks to 'denaturalize and defamiliarize' borders (Giglioli, 2019), and building on the concept of felt externalization (Chemlali, 2023), this research explores the different ways in which regional border securitization fragment Tunisian fishermen into differentiated socio-economic and affective groups. In Monastir, fishermen with larger boats and greater capital generally align themselves with the state, supporting the militarization of ports to fight against 'illegal migration' and protect themselves from boat and engine thefts. Meanwhile, in Zarzis, where fishermen face the haunting presence of migrant bodies, a politicized community ethos has emerged, deeply intertwined with mourning and solidarity. By contrast, Sfax's northern periphery – a stigmatized and impoverished zone where departures of the so-called 'Sub-Saharan migrants' are concentrated – displays an atmosphere of disillusionment. One in which fishermen often avoid retrieving bodies for fear of bureaucratic and legal repercussions. In Kerkennah, the exclusionary mobility policies stemming from its geographic and infrastructural isolation fuel a collective resistance rooted in long-standing struggles against environmental degradation and extractivism. The comparative method reveals how border policing amplifies local socio-economic inequalities, such as the boat and engine market crisis caused by increased maritime interceptions, impacting Tunisian coastal communities unevenly.

The concept of felt externalization, as developed by Chemlali (2023), provides a crucial framework for understanding how externalized border policies generate both tangible and emotional effects on local actors. Initially formulated to capture the entanglement of environmental degradation, death, and human rights violations precisely in Zarzis, it highlights the intimate ways border violence shapes everyday life. My research comparatively builds on this framework by proposing the concept of the felt border regime, which encompasses the broader emotional and material infrastructures of bordering. Tunisian coastal fishermen

experience this regime not only through recurring encounters with migrant bodies and the stigmatization of their profession but also through their interactions with border authorities, whose shifting priorities and resource allocations reflect the asymmetries of localised practices of border policing, shedding light on internalisation logics. Crucially, the affective atmospheres of bordering vary significantly across sites, shaped by local histories, socio-economic conditions, and environmental crises. Understanding these complexities is essential for civil society organizations seeking to build alliances with Tunisian fishermen and foster solidarity practices.

By comparing these localized experiences, my research critiques the romanticization of fishermen as either 'angels of the sea' or their stigmatization as smugglers, traffickers and pirates (Ramello, 2023), a binary that obscures the nuanced and stratified realities of coastal fishing communities. As Giglioli (2019) notes, colonial histories of differentiation along the Mediterranean's northern and southern shores continue to inform contemporary bordering practices, reinforcing material and epistemic hierarchies. My ethnography shows how these hierarchies manifest within the fishing sector itself, with larger and more capitalized boats benefiting from state and trade unions policies at the expense of smaller, artisanal fishers. This stratification reflects broader patterns of uneven development, as theorized by Hart (2006), and highlights how border regimes not only externalize violence but also exacerbate internal socio-economic divisions.

The emotional geographies of fishermen provide a lens for examining the impacts of border regimes. Drawing on Anderson's (2001) concept of 'affective atmospheres,' this research explores how emotions such as fear, anger, and resignation shape resistance and adaptation among coastal fishermen and their communities. Garnaoui's (2022) observation that families who have lost loved ones in the *harga* often refuse to eat fish – fearing it may contain the remains of the drowned – reveals how externalization policies profoundly infiltrate daily life in embodied and visceral ways. Meanwhile, in Zarzis, a politicized mourning emerges as fishermen and families of the disappeared confront the recurrent recovery of bodies, the burden of rescue obligations, and the denial of protection, truth, and justice. In the Sfax region, the normalization of border violence cultivates a disenchanting pragmatism, shaped by racializing border policies that actively differentiate between Tunisians and 'Sub-Saharan' migrants. Bureaucratic and legal pressures differently force fishermen into morally fraught positions, as also illustrated by a Kerkennah fishermen representative's lament: "Why don't they stop illegal trawling? They tell us they are too busy saving lives." This response encapsulates the ethical dilemmas faced by fishermen as they navigate their dual roles as labourers and informal humanitarian actors, while grappling with a state discourse that denies its complicity in enforcing Europe's border regime.

As Brighenti and Harney (2019) argue, comparison allows us to deconstruct the processes through which places come to embody singular phenomena to the detriment of other lived realities, such as the collapse of Tunisia's coastal fishery tradition, driven by pollution, illegal fishing, and resource depletion. The EU-Tunisian border regime profoundly shapes the lives of coastal fishermen, manifesting through interlinked impacts: restrictive mobility policies, criminalization and stigmatization, shrinking fishing grounds due to militarization, the emotional and logistical toll of rescue and body recovery, disrupted access to boats and engines, and the forced diversion of resources into informal economies. These intersecting effects do not represent their first concern in everyday life, albeit their tragic nature, yet they underscore an unseen dimension of the human cost of bordering practices. Comparatively, it is possible to think how politically constructed narratives such as 'integration' and the 'fight against illegal migration' obscure the embodied and socio-economic realities felt by local communities. By employing a comparative ethnographic lens, this research critiques these disjunctions, revealing how border policies sideline lived experiences in favor of priorities imposed and construed through active efforts of social differentiation.

References

- Anderson, Ben
2001 "Affective Atmospheres," in *Emotion, Space and Society*, 2, 2, pp. 77–81.
- Brighenti, Andrea Mubi, Nicholas Harney
2019 "Comparing What? Conceptualizing Comparison in Ethnographic Research," in *Etnografia e Ricerca Qualitativa*, 12, 2, pp. 123–134.
- Chemlali, Ahlam
2023 "Rings in the Water: Felt Externalization in the Extended EU Borderlands," in *Geopolitics*, 29, 3, pp. 873–896.
- Garnaoui, Wael
2022 *Harga et désir d'Occident: Étude psychanalytique des migrants clandestins tunisiens*, Tunis, Nirvana.
- Giglioli, Ilaria
2019 "Denaturalizing Borders through Comparative Ethnography," in *Etnografia e Ricerca Qualitativa*, 12, 2, pp. 245–256.

Hart, Gillian

2006 "Denaturalizing Dispossession: Critical Ethnography in the Age of Resurgent Imperialism," in *Antipode*, 38, 5, pp. 977–1004.

Ramello, Luca

2023 "Conflit néocolonial en Méditerranée centrale: Criminalisation de l'éthique des pêcheurs tunisiens, Redéfinition de la sécurité et impunité des pratiques prédatrices," in *Revue Ibla, Frontières Mobilités Migrations*, 2, 232, pp. 201–219.

Differential inclusion across South Africa's evolving urban refugee protection regime and the urban fabric of Cape Town

Corey Johnson, University of Cape Town

jhncor003@myuct.ac.za

Scholarship within critical border studies over the past two decades has reconceptualised borders from fixed sites on the territorial edges of nation states to mobile and complex social institutions dispersed throughout state territory. An influential concept within the literature has been that of differential inclusion, a concept that seeks to account for the ways in which border regimes neither fully exclude nor include individuals into a state's political, economic and social spheres; rather, individuals are continually subjected to various degrees of subordination, rule, discrimination and segmentation (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013). In the literature, differential inclusion has largely been used as a means to analyse immigration and refugee legislation in states of the global north, assuming an even homogenous national and legal space, with some notable exceptions including Sicily/Italy (Giglioli, 2021), Turkey (Sevinin, 2024) and Malaysia (Ye and Yoh, 2022). This paper seeks to add to this literature by analysing differential inclusion through a southern urban lens to understand the forms of inclusion and exclusion that occur in and help shape the «unique, hybrid, informalised modernities of cities in the South.» (Pieterse, 2011: 13).

South Africa and its urban refugee protection regime offer a unique site to analyse differential inclusion. The country's post-apartheid transition featured the development of an urban refugee protection system based on local integration, freedom of movement, the right to conduct work and access government services in line with citizens. In 2007 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees described it as «one of the most progressive systems of protection in the world.» (Rulashe, 2007). The framework was heavily influenced by the international human rights regime and South Africa's re-entry into the global community (Klaaren et al., 2008). While strong on paper, in implementation many refugees have struggled to convert its legal entitlements into effective protection, particularly due to the lack of enabling identity documentation and inconsistent access to social services (Landau, 2006). However, despite these gaps, the system has provided a scaffolding from which refugees can gain a foothold into aspects of the formal structures of society, enabling the transformation urban spaces through a range of formal and informal practices (Brudvig, 2013). In the early 2010s, the government announced a «paradigm shift» in its management of refugee protection, largely informed by global securitisation trends seen in the global north (Department of Home Affairs, 2011), reducing access to documentation and constraining rights. This shift has seen drastic changes in legislation and in practice, where recent arrivals (referred to as «newcomers») can wait years before accessing documentation that confers legal status and formal protections.

Working through differential inclusion, and across the two temporalities of the South African urban refugee protection regime – the original system and the post-paradigm shift – the paper compares the experiences of so-called «newcomers» with more established and legally recognised refugees processed under the first iteration of the regime. The paper is based on multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork across the Cape Town metropole completed in 2022–2025, exploring how differently situated refugees in terms of legal status engage with and produce urban space across the city. This ethnographic material is supplemented with a textual analysis of migration policy and legislation, parliamentary hearings, and court papers drawn from public interest litigation.

Through using a southern urban lens to analyse differential inclusion, the paper aims to provide insights into how formal law and regulation interact with urban informality to produce intricate refugee geographies across the uneven space of the city, with newcomers drawing on an array of partial legal statuses (emails, appointment slips, court orders) to attempt to establish viable livelihoods. Critical to these geographies are the hybrid

formal/informal migrant infrastructures that connect both to formal structures of the city but also rely on informal practices, spaces and economies. The paper concludes by reflecting across the two temporalities and the notion of «the extensions» (Simone et al., 2023) to think about how the urban space of Cape Town, and the law itself, is drawn out and reoriented until form legal status becomes accessible.

References

- Brudvig, Ingrid
2014 *Conviviality in Bellville: An Ethnography of Space, Place, Mobility and Being in Urban South Africa*, Mankon, Bamenda (Cameroon).
Department of Home Affairs (Government of South Africa)
2011 «Presentation to Joint Committees on Borderline and Border Post Security», Parliament, Cape Town (11 November 2011).
Giglioli, Ilaria
2021 «On not being European enough. Migration, crisis and precarious livelihoods on the periphery of Europe.», in *Social & Cultural Geography*, 22, 5, pp. 725-744.
Klaaren, Jonathan, Jeff Handmaker, Lee Anne de La Hunt
2008 «Talking a New Talk: A Legislative History of the Refugees Act 130 of 1998», in Handmaker, Jeff, Lee Anne de La Hunt, Jonathan Klaaren (Eds.), *Advancing Refugee Protection in South Africa*, New York/Oxford, Berghahn Books, pp. 47-60.
Landau, Loren B.
2006 «Protection and dignity in Johannesburg: Shortcomings of South Africa's urban refugee policy», in *Journal of Refugee Studies* 19, 3, pp. 308-327.
Mezzadra, Sandro, Brett Neilson
2013 *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor*, Durham, Duke University Press Books.
Pieterse, Edgar
2011 «Grasping the unknowable: coming to grips with African urbanisms», in *Social Dynamics*, 37, pp. 5-23.
Pumla, Rulashe
2007 «UNHCR chief commends Pretoria's refugee policy, pledges cooperation», *UNHCR News*, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/unhcr-chief-commends-pretorias-refugeepolicy-pledges-cooperation>, visited 01/04/2025.
Sevinin, Eda
2024 «Urban Refugees and Differential Inclusion through Urban Informality in Denizli, Turkey», in Batuman, Bülent and Kıvanç Kılınç (Eds.), *The Urban Refugee: Space, Agency, and the New Urban Condition*, Intellect, pp. 27-49.
Simone, AbdouMalik, Dominique Somda, Giulia Torino, Miya Irawati, Nitin Bathla, Rodrigo Castriota, Simone Vegliò, Tanya Chandra
2023 «Inhabiting the extensions», in *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 0, 0, pp. 1-23.
Ye, Junjia, Brenda SA Yeoh
2022 «Migrant-led diversification and differential inclusion in arrival cities across Asia and the Pacific», in *Urban Studies* 59, 16, pp. 3243-3252.

Governing at the Edge. Brokers, Borders, and the Gendered Logics of Informal Power

Sara Alemir, Uppsala University

saraalemir@statsvet.uu.se

Cross-border mobility is increasingly framed as a key international security threat, driving the expansion and externalization of border control and outsourcing enforcement to countries in the Global South (Mountz, 2010; Tazzioli, 2020). While much of the literature focuses on formal institutions and bureaucratic actors, it often remains gender-neutral and state-centric, overlooking both the gendered impacts of these policies and the informal power structures shaping how borders are enforced on the ground (Ticktin, 2011; Das & Poole, 2004). My PhD research addresses this gap by exploring the gendered dimensions of externalized border control through ethnographic fieldwork in Tijuana, Mexico – a key transit hub for Central American migrants heading to the U.S. It examines how migration policies are embodied, navigated and resisted, particularly by women, and how these dynamics unfold in spaces where state authority is fragmented, complicit or absent.

For this presentation, I focus on two interconnected points. Firstly, I argue for ethnography as a critical method for studying transnational border control – particularly within IR and political sciences, where grounded, feminist methodologies remain marginal (Goldstein, 2012). And how ethnography makes visible the everyday enactments of border policy that are typically erased in top-down analyses.

Secondly, I explore the role of informal actors, such as street-level brokers and narco structures in the externalization of border control. These actors operate through networks of trust, territorial control and

gendered dependency, often stepping in where formal authority is absent. While not traditionally included in earlier research, their practices shape mobility in concrete and for women, often in invisible ways.

I use this presentation to open up questions around how such informal power structures function as mechanisms of border enforcement and how their influence intersects with gendered forms of vulnerability, coercion and control. The aim is to sketch an initial analytical entry point for thinking about informal actors as part of the broader architecture of border governance.

References

- Das, Veena, Deborah Poole (Eds.)
2004 *Anthropology in the margins of the state*, Santa Fe, School of American Research Press.
Mountz, Alison
2010 *Seeking asylum: Human smuggling and bureaucracy at the border*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
Goldstein, Daniel M.
2012 *Outlawed: Between security and rights in a Bolivian city*. Durham, Duke University Press.
Tazzioli, Martina
2020 *The making of migration: The biopolitics of mobility at Europe's borders*, London, SAGE Publications.
Tickin, M.
2011 *Casualties of care: Immigration and the politics of humanitarianism in France*, Berkeley, University of California Press.

Gender on the Move. Women and Gender Dissident Migrants at European Borders

Adele Molto, Scuola Normale Superiore

adele.molto@sns.it

Mirroring the telling but understudied invisibility of women and trans*¹ migrants at various European 'bottleneck' border areas, (critical) studies on borders, border policing, and migration strategies have mostly side-lined the experiences of these categories of people on the move. There is a rich literature on the gendered and cisheteronormative peculiarities of the (European) asylum system, as well as on the experiences of female and queer migrants in their destination countries, but research situated at the intersection of gender and border studies is, although brilliant, quite sparse (for some notable examples: Freedman, 2016 on the Balkan route; Tszlzer, 2022 on Melilla; Muhanna-Matar, 2022 on Syria-Turkey; Schmoll, 2022 on the Mediterranean crossing). In an attempt to contribute to the closing of this literature gap, I propose to analyse the mobility strategies of these migrants at internal European borders, the threats they respond to, and how they use their female and/or dissident gender identity and sexuality to their advantage in order to continue their migratory project. In line with the literature on the autonomy of migration, which emphasises migrant agency and the primacy of movement over control (Papadopoulos, Tsianos, 2013), I theorise the agential potential of female and dissident gender identities and performances as an underexplored site of mobile resistance. I argue that the observation and analysis of such grounded everyday processes of border contestation have the potential to lay bare some of the gendered and sexed characteristics of European processes of bordering.

The method of data collection is 'observing participation' (Chossière, 2021) in Trieste (Italian-Slovenian border), partly through the land ResQ project, which jointly operates a day centre in the city. I am trying to triangulate my observation of border strategies with life-story interviews with women and trans* migrants who find themselves in the city, but at the time of writing I have not yet carried out these interviews. The use of life histories as a method is to allow for an understanding of the operations of various modes of oppression at the border, by exposing power imbalances and dominant spatial orderings, taking seriously the importance of locality and context in intersectional and feminist analyses (Valentine, 2007). Importantly, life histories could allow me to uncover information about subjectivity and collective processes as well as social structures and institutions, without the pretence of uncovering some 'objective truth' regarding the nexus gender-sexuality-border (Christensen, Qvortrup Jensen, 2012). The aim of these interviews is to understand how the border experiences shape the respondent's performance of gender and vice versa, and what are their strategies for moving forward and getting through their migratory project, as well as how they themselves reflect upon them (Eastmond, 2007). Using a participatory method and employing long-form interviews is also important in order to build a relationship with the research participants and allow them to speak (or not) on their own terms

regarding their potentially traumatising experiences; to lend their voices for the constitution of an alternative body of knowledge regarding the (European) border regime (Icaza, 2017, p. 17).

Although this is a work in process, being part of my PhD research, I aim to enrich this group of interviews with observations and interviews carried out in two other border areas, namely Ventimiglia (Italian-French border) and Calais (French-British border). This multi-sitedness allows me to enlarge the scope of the analysis beyond a single border area and to encompass the larger European border regime, especially thanks to the life-story interviews, which allow me to hear stories from various border areas and not only the ones I am able to carry out participant observation at. The object of the research is thus not limited to the geographical border and its characteristics, but rather encompasses the experiences of (sexual and gender-based) violence suffered by the interviewees and their travel companions (and thus the gendered and sexed effects of border closures), their strategies to overcome heavily-policed border areas and to survive in them (their practices of resistance), in connection to the solidarity networks they have found support in, as well as to understand the reflections made by the migrants themselves regarding their experiences. The structure of the article comprises an initial theoretical investigation into the relevance of gender theory for understanding the functioning of borders, understood as spaces where a variety of tensions come together and the relationship between space and power becomes visible, in various modes (Mezzadra, Neilsen, 2013), followed by an analysis of the initial observations I have been able to conduct in Trieste. These observations have been carried out in the public spaces that are traversed by the people on the move and some of the spaces that the solidarity network in the city predisposes for them. These include an analysis of how the solidarity networks themselves require a specific gender-sex-related behaviour of the migrants, or collaborate in the shaping of specific gendered spaces. I include also a section on my experience as a first-time researcher doing ethnography alone in an unfamiliar context. I include this not to publicise my personal diary, but rather to try to make some sense of the difficulties I have had in drawing tentative conclusions from this fieldwork, which has been marked by the difficulties in access and the anxiety induced by a competitive, neoliberal academic context that pushes for “publishable results” and deliverables no matter what.

1 For the use of “trans*” as a portmanteau including a variety of gender identities that “contest the gender binary”: Tompkins, 2014, p. 1.

References

Chossière, Florent

2021 “Refugeeness, Sexuality, and Gender: Spatialized Lived Experiences of Intersectionality by Queer Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Paris”, in *Frontiers in Human Dynamics*, 3, p. 634009.

Christensen, Ann-Dorte, Sune Qvortrup Jensen

2012 “Doing Intersectional Analysis: Methodological Implications for Qualitative Research”, in *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 20, 2, pp. 109-125.

Eastmond, Marita

2007 “Stories as Lived Experience: Narratives in Forced Migration Research”, in *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20, 2, pp. 248-264.

Freedman, Jane

2016 “Sexual and gender-based violence against refugee women: a hidden aspect of the refugee ‘crisis’”, in *Reproductive Health Matters*, 24, 47, pp. 18-26.

Icaza, Rosalba

2017 “Decolonial Feminism and Global Politics: Border Thinking and Vulnerability as a Knowing Otherwise”, in Marc Woons and Sebastian Weier (Eds.), *Critical Epistemologies of Global Politics*, Bristol, E-International Relations Publishing, pp. 26-46.

Mezzadra, Sandro, Brett Neilson

2013 *Border as method, or, the multiplication of labor*, Durham, Duke University Press.

Muhanna-Matar, Altemad

2022 “The emerging intersectional performative gender of displaced Syrian women in southeast Turkey”, in *Gender, Place & Culture*, 29,6, pp. 772-792.

Papadopoulos, Dimitris, Vassilis Tsianos

2013 “After citizenship: autonomy of migration, organisational ontology and mobile commons”, *Citizenship Studies*, 17,2, pp. 178-196.

Schmoll, Camille

2022 *Le Dannate del Mare. Donne e Frontiere nel Mediterraneo*, Pisa, Astarte Edizioni.

Tompkins, Avery

2014 “Asterisk”, in *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 1,1-2, pp. 26-27.

Tyszler, Elsa

2019 “The Performative Effects of the European War on Migrants. Masculinities and Femininities at the Moroccan-Spanish Border”, in *Gender a výzkum/Gender and Research*, 20,1, pp. 40-66.

Valentine, Gill

2007 “Theorizing and Researching Intersectionality: A Challenge for Feminist Geography”, in *The Professional Geographer*, 59,1, pp. 10-21.

Nationalism, securitization and cross-border integration: evidences from three Italian borderscapes

Raffaella Coletti, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche

raffaella.coletti@cnr.it

Ingrid Kofler, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen

ingrid.kofler2@unibz.it

Alice Buoli, Politecnico di Milano

alice.buoli@polimi.it

The rise of nationalisms in the last two decades goes hand in hand with a renewed attention towards borders, as crucial places where the claim to “regain control and security” of nationalist and right-wing parties materializes (Kallis, 2018; Casaglia et al, 2020; Casaglia, Coletti, 2021; Lizotte, Kallio, 2023).

In the case of the European Union, border securitization has increasingly taken place not only at external EU borders, but also at internal ones, in response to different kind of “threats”. The dramatic increase in the unilateral suspensions of the Schengen protocol in the last fifteen years represents one clear indicator in this regard (Coletti, 2024).

The intensification of controls emphasizes the selectivity of EU internal borders, where the attempt to control undesired flows (with secondary movement of migrants as the most evident example), is paralleled by the efforts to protect the free circulation of goods, services, capitals and people across the European space. In this perspective, it is not surprising that, on the one hand, internal EU borderscapes have become increasingly patrolled while, on the other hand, they continue to be the object and subject of cross-border integration policies and practices (Medeiros, 2018).

Whereas border areas have been explored as fertile grounds in right wing populism and nationalism discourse (Lamour, 2021; 2024), the aim of this presentation is to explore the perceptions of nationalist discourse and border securitization and of their impact on border communities and cross-border cooperation at European internal borders. More specifically, the presentation will present and compare the cases of three EU territories across Italian boundaries: Italy-Austria, Italy-France and Italy-Slovenia. All of these borders have experienced forms of “securitization” in the last decade, officially aimed at preventing undesired flows such as migrants’ secondary movement or smuggling (among others, Amigoni et al., 2021; Altin, degli Uberti, 2021; degli Uberti, Altin, 2024; Kasperek, Schmidt-Semdbdner, 2019). Securitization took different forms, depending on the characteristics of each territory, on the intensity of existing flows, as well as on the different geography of migration flows: whereas in two cases most of the migrants tend to leave Italy (towards France and Austria), the opposite flow is visible at the border with Slovenia, with secondary movements originating from the Balkan Route. At the same time, the three border areas are beneficiaries of EU programmes of cross-border cooperation, that offer financial support to different initiatives to favor European integration and overcoming border obstacles.

The two topics – securitization and cross-border cooperation – are kept entirely separated in the policy discourse, and rarely intersect also in academic literature. However, these processes affect the very same territories and overlap in the everyday practices and imaginaries of border communities.

The presentation will build on 23 qualitative semi-structured interviews conducted at regional scale with institutional stakeholders and experts between March and July 2024 across the three above-mentioned national borders. Additionally, a further interview campaign has been conducted in three local case studies (Bardonecchia/Modane at the border between Italy and France; San Candido/Sillian between Italy and Austria; Gorizia/Nova Gorica between Italy and Slovenia) in June 2024 and concluding in April 2025. By employing a “polycrisis” focus (Lawrence et al, 2024) to explore the impact of overlapping crises on border areas and cross-border cooperation, the semi-structured interviews and case studies, revealed migration, nationalism, and securitization as critical issues shaping the borderscapes. The interviews highlighted the limited effectiveness, at the regional and local scale, of the invisibilization strategies on migrants and securitization more generally that often take place within policies and practices of cross-border cooperation.

The analysis also sheds lights on the different networks and alliances of activists across each border, and on the way in which they intersect with other forms of cross-border exchange and cooperation. Finally, the comparison among different border sites – but with a member state in common (Italy) – allows to identify

differences and similarities in the relation between migration, securitization, and local integration forms, highlighting at the same time the relevance of the national framework for the imaginaries and practices of border management.

The research was conducted within the the PRIN 2022 project "Italian Borderscapes After 2020: Mapping, Unfolding, and Re-Framing Border Territories in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic" (20225TN2R9), funded by the European Union – NextGenerationEU (www.italianborderscapes.polimi.it).

References

- Altin, Roberta, degli Uberti Stefano
2021 Placed in Time. Migration Policies and Temporalities of (Im)Mobility Across the Eastern European Borders. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 24, 3, pp. 439–459.
- Amigoni, Livio, Aru, Silvia, Bonnin, Ivan, Proglia, Gabriele, Vergnano, Cecilia
2021 Debordering Europe. Migration and Control Across the Ventimiglia Region. Palgrave Macmillan
- Casaglia, Anna, Coletti, Raffaella, Lizotte, Christopher, Agnew, John, Mamadouh, Virginie, Minca, Claudio
2020 Interventions on European nationalist populism and bordering in time of emergencies *Political Geography*, 82, 102238
- Casaglia, Anna, Coletti, Raffaella
2021 Territorializing threats in nationalist populist narratives: an Italian perspective on the migration and Covid-19 crises, *Space and Polity*, 27, 3, pp. 269–289
- Coletti, Raffaella
2024 Verso una nuova governance transfrontaliera nell'Unione europea? Il caso del confine Italia-Francia, *Rivista Geografica Italiana*, 1, pp. 91–111
- degli Uberti, Stefano, Altin, Roberta
2024 Historical Layers of Refugee Reception in Border Areas of Italy: Crossroads of Transit and Temporalities of (Im)mobility. *International Migration & Integration*, 25, pp. 1133–1152
- Kallis, Aristotle
2018 Populism, Sovereignism, and the Unlikely Re-Emergence of the Territorial Nation-State, *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 11, pp. 285–302
- Kasperek, Bernd, Schmidt-Semdbner
2019 Renationalization and spaces of migration: the European border regime after 2015, in Katharyne Mitchell, Reece Jones, Jennifer L. Fluri (Eds.), *Handbook on Critical Geographies of Migration*, Elgar Publishing, pp. 206–218
- Lamour, Christian
2021 A radical-right populist definition of cross-national regionalism in Europe: Shaping Power Geometries at the Regional Scale Beyond State Borders, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 46, 1, pp. 8–25
- Lamour, Christian
2024 Commemoration and radical right-wing populism in European borderlands. A power geometries approach to frontier fascism in Trieste, *Journal of Language and Politics*, 23, 3, pp. 348–368
- Lizotte, Christopher, Kallio, Pauliina
2023 Introduction to the special issue on the geographies of populism and populist geographies, *Space and Polity*, 27, 3, pp. 263–268
- Medeiros, Eduardo (ed)
2018 European Territorial Cooperation. *Theoretical and Empirical Approaches to the Process and Impacts of Cross-Border and Transnational Cooperation in Europe*, Springer Nature

The Security of Borderlander Identities. Exploring the Narratives of Young Minority Members in Border Regions: South Tyrol and Polish/Czech borderlands

Marcus Nicolson, Institute for Minority Rights, Eurac Research, Bolzano, Italy

marcus.nicolson@eurac.edu

Elzbieta Opiłowska, University of Wrocław, Poland

elzbieta.opilowska@uwr.edu.pl

In recent years the European Union has witnessed an increase of re-bordering processes, which have had a significant impact on border regions, and the national minorities that inhabit them (Opiłowska, 2021). Securitising narratives are often used to justify the need for border closures, and subsequent measures designed to protect state interests. While much of the literature in border and security studies has explored geopolitical and elite-level perspectives, less attention has been paid to the voices of individual citizens, and their (re)interpretations of macro-level political narratives. As such, this paper explores how young people in borderland regions respond to securitising border narratives.

This study draws on data gathered through interviews and creative arts research workshops conducted with young people (aged 18-30) from borderland regions in South Tyrol, Italy, and Silesia, in Poland and Czech Republic. Participants were asked to reinterpret border narratives collected from minority media and to share their experiences of borders and Europe as young members of a national minority. We therefore focus on issues of identity and belonging from the intersectional perspective of young minority representatives living in peripheral border regions.

A theoretical perspective of vernacular border security (Vaughan-Williams, 2021) is used alongside ontological security theory (Giddens 1991), to analyse how young borderlanders have experienced recent border crises, relate to securitised border narratives, and reflect on their own identities. Thus, we argue that this bottom-up perspective of the securitisation processes can help scholars better understand the complexities of life for young borderland citizens and their relationship with macro-level border narratives.

References

Giddens, Anthony

1991 *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age*. Stanford, Stanford university press.

Opiłowska, Elzbieta

2021 'The Covid-19 Crisis: The End of a Borderless Europe?', *European Societies* 23(1): pp.589-600.

Vaughan-Williams, Nick

2021 *Vernacular Border Security: Citizens' Narratives of Europe's migration Crisis*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

From homeland to the motherland. Cross-border coping strategies and the role of citizenship in the experiences of displaced Hungarian ethnic minorities

Ágnes Erőss, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano

agnes.eross@unibz.it

This paper is a first attempt to link two research projects and explore the comparability of the meaning of borders (in their material, embodied, and symbolic senses) and the strategies and narratives about (in)voluntary (im)mobility among ethnic Hungarian minorities in the context of war.

The data derive from two projects. Between 2010-2012, we interviewed ethnic minority Hungarians who left their homeland, Vojvodina, North Serbia, as an effect of the Yugoslav wars and settled in Hungary. Between 2022-2024, we conducted research with ethnic Hungarians who, due to the ongoing war, resettled from Transcarpathia, Western Ukraine to Hungary. Seeking refuge in the "motherland" seemed an obvious choice because of the spatial proximity (Hungarian ethnic minority population resides along the state border), further enhanced by Hungary's kin-state policies toward ethnic-kins (Waterbury 2011; Kántor 2014).

The semi-structured interviews, conducted more than a decade apart, reveal similarities when it comes to mourning over the loss of the lived experience of their homeland, the multicultural "brotherhood" that Yugoslavia or the Soviet Union, and later Ukraine, meant. The interlocutors put this in stark contrast with their experiences in Hungary, which many describe as xenophobic, unfriendly, and paternalizing vis-a-vis transborder Hungarians, and where they are often felt distanced (Feischmidt, 2008) and tagged as "Serbs" or "Ukrainians." From the aspect of the border, the two cases share one more common feature: both Ukraine and Serbia are EU third countries, thus the border is heavily monitored, and crossing is time-consuming and often stressful. Additionally, the border's barrier function has been amplified since 2015, when Hungary fortified its southern border, further decreasing the border's permeability (Cantat, 2016).

However, when we analyze the displacement history of these two displaced groups, we can identify distinctive narratives about (1) the permeability of the border; (2) the decision-making process about migration; and (3) the pursued (im)mobility strategies. Based on the interviews, I presume that these distinctions pertain to/conditioned by (1) their legal status upon entering Hungary; (2) the geopolitical position of Hungary; and (3) the inconsistency between migration and kin-state policy.

Those who fled Yugoslavia arrived in Hungary as refugees. Their settlement and citizenship claims were processed as any other similar claim (i.e., no ethnic preference was granted), thus it usually took almost a decade to acquire citizenship after a long and difficult bureaucratic process. In their narratives, crossing the border was a shocking experience: having lived in Yugoslavia they were used to a higher living standard, and

from one moment to another, they ended up in precarious circumstances. While waiting for the Hungarian citizenship, their cross-border commuting was limited. As a result, typically nuclear families resettled in Hungary (parents with children) whose “old-life” basically ceased to exist, while their cross-border activities mainly were reduced to family visits.

In contrast, the overwhelming majority of Transcarpathians arrived in Hungary as Hungarian citizens following the introduction of non-residential citizenship in 2010. This not only enhanced labour migration to the European Union and Hungary, but it also provided an escape route for men to avoid being drafted into the Ukrainian army. Since the eruption of the Donbas war in 2014, “as a preparation for the worse,” numerous Transcarpathian Hungarian families purchased houses on the Hungarian side of the border zone, to have a “safe place” if the situation deteriorates in Ukraine. Typically, the grandparents used the houses in Hungary, who are also entitled to receive their pension in Hungary if they move their residence to the country. After the full-scale invasion of Russia in Ukraine these second homes have turned into either primary residence for more generations or family gathering places where men working in Hungary or elsewhere in Europe can temporarily reunite with their wives and children. Consequently, the displacement of Transcarpathian ethnic Hungarians has been a gradual process that involved more generations of the family. Besides, in contrast to the case of ex-Yugoslav Hungarians, the post-2010 citizenship policies of Hungary enable the Transcarpathian Hungarians to maintain a transnational, bi-local family life: literally living on both sides of the border, roaming between two homes, and engaging in both societies. Nevertheless, the current situation puts an extra burden on women, who, besides looking after the family, the house, the garden, and running the business or the farm in Transcarpathia without the help of their husbands, engage in an exhausting “weekend migration” between their homes in Ukraine and Hungary, to keep the family together.

Some Transcarpathian families plan to return to Ukraine “when the war ends,” thus they consider their settlement in Hungary temporary. However, as the migration history of Vojvodinians shows, probably, the longer the war lasts, the less likely they return.

In sum, the paper reinforces findings about the importance of citizenship in migration both as a stabilizing factor or as a catalyst for further migration (Galeano et al 2022). Furthermore, it aims to illustrate the importance of citizenship for minorities enabling the maintenance of a bi-local and cross-border living. Importantly, neither citizenship nor ethnic kinship guarantees easy integration in the motherland: boundary-making between Hungarians from Hungary and minority Hungarians is enacted and expressed in various verbal, non-verbal, and symbolic ways.

References

Cantat, Celine

2016 «Rethinking mobilities: Solidarity and migrant struggles beyond narratives of crisis», *Intersections*, 2, 4, pp. 11–32.

Feischmidt, Margit

2008 «The Hungarian Transylvania: symbolic reconstruction of lost territories», *Hungarian Studies: A Journal Of The International Association For Hungarian Studies And Balassi Institute*, 22, 1-2, pp. 119-133.

Galeano, Juan, Pont, Aurélie, & Wanner, Philippe

2022 «A longitudinal analysis of naturalization and international migration in Switzerland, 2011–2017. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 23, 2, pp. 889-910.

Kántor, Zoltán

2014 «Hungary's Kin-State Politics, 2010-2014», *Minority Research*, 17, pp. 23-32.

Waterbury, Myra

2011 «Between State and Nation: Diaspora Politics and Kin-state Nationalism in Hungary». New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

What happens when a whole frontier governorate is “turned into a prison”? Understanding borders as elastic and interrogating their impact on the communities inhabiting, crossing or stranded at the Tunisian-Libyan border

Chiara Pagano, University of Graz

chiara.pagano@uni-graz.at

Since 2011, the Tunisian-Libyan frontier has undergone profound transformations in both border crossings and their governance. Historically, people originating from nowadays Tunisia, Libya, as well as those originating

from other parts of Africa, heading towards its northern slopes, engaged in complex regional and continental trajectories of socio-political mobilities, exchanges, and labor migration across these borderlands, encompassing both formal and informal practices (Chandoul, Boubakri, 1991; Boubakri, 2004; Mrad Dali, 2019; Doron, 2015; 2022). However, the combination of Tunisia's regime change with Libya's "February Revolution", in 2011 precipitated an unprecedented influx of displaced individuals into Tunisia as well as a surge in irregularized border crossings from both countries to Europe. Growing EU concerns over trans-Mediterranean mobilities spurred novel forms of national and international intervention (Boubakri, Potot, 2012; Boubakri, 2013; Cassarini, 2020; Garelli, Tazzioli, 2017). These interventions shifted the governance of the Tunisian frontier with Libya, from a space of intense crossings and, ultimately, a "regime of mobility" to a site for managing migration as a crisis to be contained, increasingly materializing a "regime of immobility" and containment (Schiller, Salazar, 2013; Tejel, Öztan, 2022).

This shift saw the mobilization of normative categories – such as refugees and asylum seekers versus irregular(ized) migrants – within joint humanitarian and securitarian "borderscapes" practices (Cuttitta, 2020; Dini, Giusa, 2020; Pagano, 2024). This transformation intensified after 2015, as the border became a focal point of EU externalization policies aimed at integrating its control into the broader EU (im)mobility regime in the Central Mediterranean. Consequently, border control operations expanded beyond the geographic and political demarcation of the boundary, permeating the whole frontier governorates of Tataouine and Medenine in southeastern Tunisia, thus reshaping the functioning of the Tunisian-Libyan borderzone.

Drawing on subsequent phases of ethnographic research conducted across the Medenine governorate during 2019, 2022, and 2023, this paper argues that these changes produced fields of socio-political tension across frontier communities, fundamentally altering pre-existing modes of mobility regulation while underscoring the increasing elasticity of border regimes. The challenges faced by racialized migrants in Tunisia since early 2023 – including deportations and abandonment in the desert near Libya – exemplify the severe consequences of this elastic and racially (re)produced EU-Tunisian border regime. Moreover, this paper will show the dire consequences these shifts have also had on frontier communities more broadly, and explore how they navigate, adapt to, and resist the socio-political and racialized effects of border elasticity.

References

- Boubakri, Hassen
 2004 « Échanges Transfrontaliers et Commerce Parallèle Aux Frontières Tuniso-Libyennes », in Planel, Anne-Marie (ed.), *Maghreb, Dimensions de La Complexité: Études Choieses de l'IRMC (1992-2003)*, Tunis, IRMC, pp. 241–52.
 2013 « Les migrations en Tunisie après la révolution », *Confluences Méditerranée*, 4, 87, pp. 31–46.
 Boubakri, Hassen, Swanie Potot
 2012 « De l'élan citoyen à la mise en place d'une politique migratoire en Tunisie: l'accueil des réfugiés de libye en 2011 », *Migrations Société*, 5, 143, pp.121–38.
 Cassarini, Camille,
 2020 « L'immigration Subsaharienne En Tunisie : De La Reconnaissance d'un Fait Social à La Création d'un Enjeu Gestionnaire », *Migrations Société*, 1, 179, pp. 43–57.
 Chandoul, Mustapha, Hassen Boubakri
 1991 « Migrations clandestines et contrebande à la frontière tuniso-libyenne », *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, 7, 2, pp. 155–162.
 Cuttitta, Paolo
 2020 « Non-governmental/Civil Society Organisations and the European Union-externalisation of Migration Management in Tunisia and Egypt », *Population, Space and Place*, 26, 7, pp. 1–13.
 Dini, Sabine, Caterina Giusa
 2020 *Externalising Migration Governance Through Civil Society: Tunisia as a Case Study*, Cham, Springer International Publishing.
 Doron, Adrien
 2015 « De la marge au monde : la structuration mouvementée d'une place marchande transnationale à Ben Gardane (Tunisie) », *Les Cahiers d'EMAM. Études sur le Monde Arabe et la Méditerranée*, 26.
 2022 « Ben Gardane (Tunisie): une place financière de la mondialisation des pauvres », *Afrique(s) en mouvement*, 4, 1, pp. 44–56.
 Garelli, Glenda, Martina Tazzioli
 2017 *Tunisia as a Revolutionized Space of Migration*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
 Mrad Dali, Inès
 2019 « Migrations et construction des identités minoritaires en Tunisie à partir de la fin du 19e siècle: le cas des Noirs tunisiens d'origine « tripolitaine » », *Civilisations*, 68, pp. 19–46.
 Pagano, Chiara
 2024 « Inhabiting Humanitarian Borderscapes: Claiming Rights and Organizing Dissent in Post-2011 Southeastern Tunisia », *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 18,1, pp. 36–57.
 Schiller, Nina Glick, Noel B. Salazar
 2013 "Regimes of Mobility across the Globe", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 39, pp. 1–18.

Navigating Borderlands. Ethnographic Insights into Coloniality, Mobility and Resistance along the Balkan Route

Sara Marilungo, Sapienza University of Rome

sara.marilungo@uniroma1.it

The proposed contribution examines the intersection of coloniality, mobility and resistance within the European border regime, focusing on fieldwork conducted in Bihać, Bosnia-Herzegovina, along the Balkan Route. The Balkan Route, a critical pathway to Europe, has become a site emblematic of systemic violence, racialized bordering practices, and carceral logics. Drawing on ethnographic data collected in 2021 and 2024, the contribution employs militant research methodologies (Garelli, Tazzioli, 2013) to foreground the lived experiences of people on the move navigating this hostile landscape shaped by pushbacks, displacement, and criminalization. The contribution situates mobility struggles within a framework of coloniality and racial capitalism, critiquing the European border regime as a rearticulation of colonial devices that sustain racial hierarchies and stratify mobility.

Building on the concept of border regimes as contested and negotiated spaces (Casas-Corte et al., 2015), the contribution explores how the European border regime, through its biopolitical and necropolitical dimensions, racializes mobility, rendering illegalized and racialized bodies expendable (Mbembe, 2002; Puar, 2007; Giuliani, 2020) in line with humanitarian and securitarian discourses. Ethnographic evidence from Bihać illustrates how these processes are enacted and contested on the field.

A comparative analysis of fieldworks further reveals the necessity for border regime to adapt to the diverse and dynamic mobilities of illegalized and racialized individuals crossing borders. Since the redirection of the Balkan Route to Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2018, state authorities initially left migrant needs to local and international solidarity networks. Over time, however, these efforts became entwined with racial violence and racialized categorizations and discourses (Rexhepi, 2018, 2023) with state-sponsored hostility, that discouraged grassroots solidarity and fostered a more restrictive and securitized environment (Beznec, Kurnik, 2020). The European Union's reliance on organizations like the International Organization for Migration (IOM) further entrenched Bosnia's neocolonial subordination, with resources directed through external agencies instead of BiH institutions (Ahmetašević, Mlinarević, 2019; Kurnik, Razsa, 2020). This shift led to the implementation of restrictive local measures, such as housing bans and public transportation prohibitions for migrants, which eroded grassroots support systems.

This perspective underscores the persistence of colonial power structures in migration governmentality, highlighting the emergence of "extractive humanitarianism" (Tazzioli 2023) and the commodification of migrant lives within the border-industrial complex. Bihać's urban geography, once characterized by informal settlements and community solidarity, transformed under intensified repression and criminalization. By 2024, field observations revealed significant changes: informal settlements were largely dismantled, people on the move were relocated in isolated and heavily monitored reception centers, and access to the city center was restricted, reflecting a "politics of migrant dispersal" (Tazzioli, 2020) aimed at fragmenting communities and undermining collective sociality and resistance.

The comparative analysis between the two fieldworks identifies shifts in racialized bordering mechanisms, noting an intensification of carceral practices and an evolution in the political tactics employed to resist and subvert these restrictions. Despite these changes, practices of refusal and subtraction remain critical strategies of contestation used by people on the move, resulting in the disruption of the extractive and racialized logics underpinning the European border regime.

Ethnographic research conducted in Bihać during the initial fieldwork in 2021 revealed how individuals on the move engaged in acts of refusal – such as avoiding formal reception centers – to create informal spaces of livability beyond securitized and restrictive frameworks. These actions redefined mobility and solidarity, demonstrating the capacity to reconfigure spaces of autonomy. By contrast, findings from the second fieldwork

in 2024 showed that these practices of refusal and subtraction had mostly evolved into a strategic engagement with and appropriation of state-imposed categories, such as the “refugee status”, employing counter-hegemonic practices to assert autonomy.

Finally, the tension between humanitarian and securitarian – then colonial – framings of people on the move as vulnerable or threatening subjects and their embodied enactments of autonomy and resistance underscores the limitations of dominant discourses that depoliticize and dehistoricize postcolonial mobility. These preliminary observations, while recognizing illegalized bodies as sites of political contestation rather than as passive objects of pity or securitization, reorient scholarly attention to the enduring coloniality of migration governmentality. In doing so, this ethnographic material contributes to a broader decolonial critique, challenging the way in which Western framings have politicized social conflicts, through advancing the transformative potential of a *fugitive politics* that centers the struggles of illegalized and racialized people on the move as a crucial site of political and epistemic innovation.

References

- Ahmetašević, Nidžara, Gorana Mlinarević
 2019 *People on the Move in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2018. Stuck in the corridors to the EU. Sarajevo*, Heinrich Böll Foundation.
 Barbara, Bezec, Andrej Kurnik
 2020 «Old Routes, New Perspectives. A Postcolonial Reading of the Balkan Route», in *movements. Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies*, 5, 1.
 Casas-Cortes, Maribel, Sebastian Cobarrubias, Nicholas De Genova, Glenda Garelli, Giorgio Grappi, Charles Heller, Sabine Hess, et al.
 2015 «New Keywords: Migration and Borders», in *Cultural Studies*, 29, 1, pp. 55–87.
 Garelli, Glenda, Martina Tazzioli (Eds.)
 2013 «Challenging the Discipline of Migration: Militant Research in Migration Studies», in *Postcolonial Studies*, 16, 3.
 Giuliani, Gaia
 2020 *Monsters, Catastrophes and the Anthropocene: A Postcolonial Critique*, London, Routledge.
 Kurnik, Andrej, Maple Razsa
 2020 «Reappropriating the Balkan Route: Mobility Struggles and Joint-Agency in Bosnia and Herzegovina», in *Two Homelands*, 52, pp. 7–23.
 Mbembe, Achille
 2003 «Necropolitics», in *Public Culture*, 15, 1, pp. 11–40.
 Puar, Jasbir
 2007 *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*, Durham, Duke University Press.
 Rexhepi, Piro
 2018 «Arab Others at European Borders: Racializing Religion and Refugees along the Balkan Route», in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 41, 12, pp. 2215–34.
 Rexhepi, Piro
 2023 *White Enclosures: Racial Capitalism and Coloniality along the Balkan Route*, Durham, Duke University Press.
 Tazzioli, Martina
 2020 *The Making of Migration: The Biopolitics of Mobility at Europe's Borders*, London, Sage Publications.
 Tazzioli, Martina
 2023 *Border Abolitionism. Migrants' containment and the genealogies of struggles and rescue*, Manchester University Press.

Border rituals. Interrogating the borders of Europe through performance and solidarity: A multi-sited exploration of EU borderlands in comparative perspective

Lorenzo Soprani, Università di Torino

lorenzo.soprani@edu.unito.it

In their journey towards “Europe”, irregularized migrants struggle to find their way in the labyrinth of the EU border regime, confronting with a fluid borderscape made of smuggling and solidarity infrastructures, humanitarian intervention and border policing. Notwithstanding their ongoing processes of proliferation and securitization, borders remain indeed porous (Mezzadra, Neilson, 2012). While this porosity might be explained by the role of relational networks in the material and immaterial (re)production of mobility resources (Papadopoulos, Tsianos, 2013; Vergnano, 2021), scholars remind us that the access to these resources is made possible through continuous negotiations, where individual performance is of crucial importance (Khosravi, 2008; Fabini, 2022; Cabot, 2013). Far from being an individual matter only, performance is a highly relational, cognitive and bodily experience (Turner, 1988): it requires irregularized non-citizens to gather knowledge about

the world around them, interpretate it, act it out and eventually share it with others. In the perspective of the Autonomy of Migration, performance might be seen as a tactic of *appropriation* (Scheel, 2013) of the same methods and techniques of migration control, meaning that it operates in a double sense, both enabling mobility and reproducing borders. Thus, interrogating migrant performances at borderlands as *embodied encounters* (*ibid.*) with the EU border regime may allow us to move from the mere legal or political dimension, producing significant and situated knowledge about EUrope's race, class, and gender borders, as well as on actors and methods which facilitate (or hinder) their negotiation.

In this perspective I would look at the performances adopted by irregularized migrants in two different borderlands: the frontier between Bosnia Herzegovina and Croatia, which people try to cross doing "the Game" (Minca, Collins, 2021) in order to access the EU territory; and the doorstep of an Italian Questura (police office) where people negotiate access to formalize their asylum request. I choose these two cases for several reasons. First because of their connections, as they both represent fundamental steps for several irregularized non-citizens moving towards EUrope: gaining illegally the spatial access of the EU is often required to make the law do its magic, transforming a "clandestine" in an asylum seeker. Moreover, Croatia and Italy are both perceived as being two of the external EU frontiers, making them relevant spaces where discourse and practices of the EU border regime are produced. Second, because of their differences. Not only did the two countries have, at the time the research was conducted, a significantly different status within the Union, but the two borderlands presented are qualitatively different. Comparison, in this case might challenge the different imaginaries usually associated to them: while the first case is often depicted as a highly militarized and violent border, the second one is mostly perceived as being administered through bureaucratic rationality.

I will discuss ethnographic material drawn from my experience of militant research (Garelli, Tazzioli, 2013) within a migrant-solidarity organization at the frontier between Bosnia Herzegovina and Croatia and a grassroots legal-aid collective in a city in the north of Italy. Through participant observation and in-depth interviews, I will present, either in the form of dialogues or descriptive and at time self-reflexive fieldnotes, the everyday interactions between authorities, migrants and border brokers in these two settings. Although they present different dynamics and actors, as well as different levels and types of violence, I show that even a highly bureaucratized and at times digitalized procedure such as the asylum request may force people to prolonged waiting and displacement, suggesting resemblances to the effects of border militarization in Bosnia Herzegovina. Challenging the assumption that a smooth, non-violent way of border management may exist, I argue that, instead, EU borderlands are linked by a continuum of politics of exhaustion (de Vries, Guild, 2019). In both cases, I observe how the performances adopted by migrants at these two doorsteps of EUrope aim to escape their liminal position following logics based on race and class discriminations. It is not a matter of who, by law, has the right to move, but who can convincingly pretend to have it. Although in both cases success is largely left to chance, processes of "whitening" tend to facilitate border crossing, while financial status balance racial discrimination. Who cannot hide their presence to the racializing gaze of the border regime must hire border brokers to do that: smugglers, who can effectively hide the black body from the technological gaze of Croatian border guards, or lawyers whose merely symbolic presence, far from challenging the "rules of the game" with any legal action or confrontation with police officers, may grant the access to the asylum procedure. Finally, I would interrogate my positioning as a white male activist in the said dynamics: while, in the first case, migrant-solidarity networks only offer indirect support for border crossing, in the second one they step in as effective border brokers, offering a mediated performance in the negotiations between irregularized migrants and State authorities. Caught between the struggle for mobility justice and the reproduction of inequalities, activists walk a thin line that deeply interrogates the political dimension of tactics of appropriation and migrant-solidarity action in general.

For an organic definition that accounts for the many ambivalences of these borderlands – the deeply conflictual and normative dimensions, the exclusionary and the relational aspects, as well as the bodily and highly symbolic experience unfolding there – I conclude my discussion suggesting to look at these processes as *border rituals*. Revisiting classical anthropological literature on rites of passage (Turner, 1967) and performance (Turner, 1988), I argue that borderlands become stages where a particular idea of "Europe" is summoned and lived by irregularized migrants in a liminal position. This conceptualization wants to problematize conflict as a given feature of migration inside critical migration and border studies, trying to push for more reflections upon the positioning of those who act in solidarity and calling for further research on the productivity of the embodied

encounters of migrants with border regimes that may, hopefully, offer new perspectives in the struggles for mobility justice.

References

- Cabot, Heath
2013 «The social aesthetic of eligibility: NGO aid and indeterminacy in the Greek asylum process», in *American Ethnologist*, 40 ,3, pp. 452–466.
- De Vries, Leonie Ansems, Elizabeth Guild
2019 «Seeking refuge in Europe: Spaces of transit and the violence of migration management», in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 45, 12, pp. 2156–2166.
- Fabini, Giulia
2022 *Polizia e migranti in città: Negoziare il confine nei contesti locali*, Roma, Carocci editore.
- Garelli, Glenda, Martina Tazzioli
2013 «Challenging the Discipline of Migration: Militant Research in Migration Studies, an Introduction», in *Postcolonial Studies*, 16, 3, pp. 245–249.
- Khosravi, Shahram
2008 «The 'illegal' traveller: An auto-ethnography of borders», in *Social Anthropology*, 15, 3, pp. 321–334.
- Mezzadra, Sandro, Brett Neilson
2012 «Between Inclusion and Exclusion: On the Topology of Global Space and Borders», in *Theory, Culture & Society*, 29, 4, pp. 58–75.
- Minca, Claudio, Jessica Collins
2021 «The Game: Or, 'the making of migration' along the Balkan Route», in *Political Geography*, 91, pp. 1–11.
- Papadopoulos, Dimitri, Vassillis S. Tsianos
2013 «After citizenship: Autonomy of migration, organisational ontology and mobile commons», in *Citizenship Studies*, 17, 2, pp. 178–196.
- Scheel, Stephan
2013 «Studying embodied encounters: Autonomy of migration beyond its romanticization», in *Postcolonial Studies*, 16, 3, pp. 279–288.
- Turner, Victor
1967 *The forest of symbols : aspects of Ndembu ritual*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press.
- Turner, Victor
1988 *The anthropology of performance*, New York, PAJ Publications.
- Vergnano, Cecilia
2021 «Supporting Migrants Mobility Across Securitised Borders: Between "non-Profit Migration Infrastructures" and Criminalization», in *Champ Pénal*, 23, pp. 45–62.

Multi-sited distribution. Compare everyday solidarity along the Western Balkan route

Riccardo Sacco, University of Urbino Carlo Bo

r.sacco2@campus.uniurb.it

This paper stems from a multi-sited ethnographic research in two urban areas along the Balkan route: Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Zagreb (Croatia). The researcher conducted fieldwork through a highly engaged and participatory role, volunteering in the *free shops* of two local NGOs. The term *free shop* is used by those working in these spaces to refer to a room set up like a "store", where people can freely take the non-food items they need. Based on the ethnographic material, this contribution explores how solidarity changes, along the Balkan route, in localities both inside and outside the Schengen Area.

During the 2015 'long summer of migration' (Kasperek, Speer, 2015) the Balkan route emerged from the "shadow and invisibility" (Hess, Kasperek, 2022), taking the unprecedented shape of a "formalized corridor" (Beznec et al., 2016). However, starting in early 2016, securitarian policies aimed at curbing migrant mobility were introduced along the route. These measures were driven by the willingness of core EU countries to restrict migration and control borders, and were built on mobility governance agreements that had already been established in the region as part of the EU accession process (Hameršak et al., 2020). Since 2016, the focus of unwanted mobility has shifted from local populations to third-country nationals, criminalizing migrants' journeys along the route. As a result, non-linear, circular, and fragmented mobility patterns have become the dominant forms of movement within the Balkans (Stojić Mitrović, Vilenica, 2019).

Since the opening of the formalized corridor, countries along the migratory route have seen the activation of solidarity actions and humanitarian interventions. As observed in other contexts, also in the Balkan route, solidarity takes the form of networks, which can be either endogenous when participants are local, or exogenous when initiatives are driven by people from other communities or countries (Potot, Giliberti, 2021).

On a route that traverses countries involved in the EU accession process, EU member states, and countries that are both EU members and part of the Schengen Area, different forms of support have emerged. These efforts have ranged from gap-filling initiatives to advocacy-driven support, offering both short- and long-term assistance to migrants on their journeys (Milan, 2020).

This proposal focuses on Sarajevo and Zagreb, where the researcher, through building relationships with local NGO staff, has volunteered at two *free shops* operating in these cities. Both of these solidarity spaces are open to migrants and marginalized local groups. It is important to outline that, since January 2023, Croatia is part of the Schengen Area, which makes the two NGOs operating along the same route, but within two different regions: Western Balkan and Schengen. In this context, these two cities configure as local "battlegrounds" (Dimitriadis et al., 2021) where bordering mechanisms triggered by the EU accession process, in the case of Bosnia, and, for Croatia, by its entry into the Schengen Area, clash with pro-migrant and "de-bordering solidarity" actions (Ambrosini, 2024).

To explore the differences in solidarity initiatives within and outside Schengen, this proposal compares two *free shops* established by local solidarity groups in Sarajevo and Zagreb, which serve as key nodes in the urban solidarity networks of both cities. Although they share common features in terms of design and materials, this paper argues that these spaces provide an important vantage points for comparing the different tensions between bordering and de-bordering practices unfolding in these two localities of the Balkan route. From there, it is possible to grasp the evolving geopolitics of the route, with its various branches and temporalities. They, also, offer insights into the shortcomings of both local and international institutions in the sector of migrants and asylum seekers reception, and provide an understanding of the impacts that the EU accession process has on solidarity actors and their operations. In conclusion, through the comparison of these two cases emerge how solidarity takes different shapes in different contexts (Birey et al., 2019), but also how, along the route, different forms of mobilities, struggle for rights and forms of supports coexists, making these cities more than just 'through' spaces (Collyer, De Haas, 2012).

References

- Ambrosini, Maurizio
2024 «Humanitarian Help and Refugees: De-Bordering Solidarity as a Contentious Issue», in *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 22, 3, pp. 517–530.
- Beznec, Barbara, Speer, Marc, Stojić Mitrović, Marta
2016 *Governing the Balkan Route: Macedonia, Serbia and the European Border Regime*, Beograd, Research Paper Series of Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Southeast Europe, no5.
- Birey, Tegiye, Cantat, Céline, Maczynska, Ewa, Sevinin, Eda
2019 «Introduction: Migrants' and solidarity struggles», in Tegiye, Birey, Céline, Cantat, Ewa, Maczynska, Eda, Sevinin (Eds.), *Challenging the political across borders: migrants' and solidarity struggles*, Budapest, Center for Policy Studies, Central European University, pp. 1–25.
- Collyer, Michael, De Haas, Hein
2012 «Developing dynamic categorisations of transit migration», in *Population, Space and Place*, 18, 4, pp. 468–481.
- Dimitriadis, Iraklis, Hajer, Minke H. J., Fontanari, Elena, Ambrosini, Maurizio
2021 «Local "Battlegrounds". Relocating Multi-Level and Multi-Actor Governance of Immigration», in *Revue Européenne Des Migrations Internationales*, 37, 1–2, pp. 251–275.
- Hameršak, Marijana, Hess, Sabine, Speer, Marc, Stojić Mitrović, Marta
2020 «The Forging of the Balkan Route Contextualizing the Border Regime in the EU Periphery», in *Movements, Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies*, 5, 1, pp. 9–29
- Hess, Sabine, Kasperek, Bernd
2022 «Historicizing the Balkan route: Governing Migration through Mobility», in William, Walters, Charles, Heller, Lorenzo, Pezzani (Eds.), *Viapolitics. Borders, Migration, and the Power of Locomotion*, Durham, Duke University Press, pp. 183–208.
- Kasperek, Bernd, Speer, Marc
2015 «Of Hope. Hungary and the Long Summer of Migration», in <https://bordermonitoring.eu/ungarn/2015/09/of-hope-en/>, visited 10/01/2025
- Milan, Chiara
2020 «Refugees at the Gates of the EU: Civic Initiatives and Grassroots Responses to the Refugee Crisis along the Western Balkans Route», in Russell, King, Nermin, Oruc (Eds.), *Migration in the Western Balkans. What do we know?*, London, Routledge, pp. 43–60.
- Potot, Swanie, Luca, Giliberti
2021 «Verso i solidarity studies: nuove prospettive di ricerca su migrazioni e frontiere», in *Mondi Migranti*, 3, pp. 25–41.
- Stojić Mitrović, Marta, Vilenica, Ana
2019 «Enforcing and Disrupting Circular Movement in an EU Borderscape. Housingscapes in Serbia», in *Citizenship Studies*, 23, 6, pp. 540–558.

Borders as Walls, Borders as Pathways. Ethnographic Insights from the Panama-Costa Rica and Mexico-Guatemala Borderlands

Yaatsil Guevara González, Heidelberg Center for Ibero American Studies

yaatsil.guevara@uni-heidelberg.de

This presentation draws on ethnographic visits to the Mexico-Guatemala border between 2014 and 2021, and to the Panama-Costa Rica border between 2023 and 2024. My work pursues three primary objectives: first, to depict the aesthetic landscapes of these borders; second, to analyze the anthropological insights emerging from these sites, particularly concerning the journeys of thousands of migrants striving to reach the Mexico-United States border; and third, to explore the interplay of time and space in these border regions from the perspectives of both local inhabitants and migrants transiting those borderlands.

My reflections are inspired by Veena Das's concept of "the catastrophic and everyday life" (2021), positing that the migrant experience along this corridor is deeply shaped by this duality. Consequently, anthropological practice within such contexts must engage with this tension. Building on this framework, this contribution also addresses the multifaceted challenges anthropologists face when investigating borderlands, forced migration, and the complex dynamics arising from these interactions.

References

Das, Veena. "Knowledge." In *Words and Worlds: A Lexicon for Dark Times*, edited by Veena Das and Didier Fassin, 19–38. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478021476-002>

Inside Border Solidarity. An Ethnographic Analysis of De-Bordering Practices and Networks along the Balkan Routes

Chiara Martini, Università degli Studi di Milano

chiara.martini@unimi.it

Over the past decade, the Western Balkans have become a crucial transit corridor for people seeking to reach Europe. This region has seen a proliferation of border controls and reinforcements, turning countries like Greece, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, and Bulgaria into experimental grounds for managing human mobility. However, alongside these processes, the region has also witnessed the emergence of numerous solidarity practices and acts of resistance, framing borders not only as instruments of violence and inequality but also as generative spaces for struggle and transformation (Brambilla and Jones, 2020; Agustín and Jørgensen, 2018). The dynamics of the Balkan routes, particularly in transit zones where people are trapped in forced mobility and immobility, reveal the tension between formal policies aimed at border reinforcement and exclusion, and the practical governance of mobility shaped by diverse actors. Migrants and those supporting them often blur institutional lines between authorized and unauthorized movements, legal and illegal immigration, and official reception and daily survival. Their actions include immediate and practical support in border zones, rescue operation for people in distress, sustained aid in the form of medical, legal, and educational services, the monitoring and denouncement of human rights violations, and open forms of contestation and struggle.

These "de-bordering practices" (Ambrosini, 2022) have been extensively studied, with scholars analyzing both explicit forms of resistance and more implicit, everyday actions (Della Porta, 2021). Recent research has shifted attention to less overt forms of contesting border regimes – actions that do not explicitly seek political change or make direct political claims (Fleischmann, 2020; Zamponi, 2017; Ambrosini, 2022). Examples include distributing food and non-food items, providing medical and legal support, creating informal schools, and fostering aid networks. While these practices may lack explicit political motivations, they carry significant political and transformative potential. By fostering alternative forms of recognition, inclusion, and solidarity, these actions challenge the logic of criminalization and the production of marginalized, "valueless" lives, thus building spaces of resistance and alliance.

The present contribution focuses on a comparative analysis between these specific "de-bordering practices" along the Balkan routes, where a growing and ever-changing network of individuals, collectives and organizations from below have carried out, over the years, different forms of solidarity, of more or less

contentious collective actions, of mutual aid, care and “direct social actions” (Zamponi, 2017). Despite being systematically criminalized and their actions often prevented by legal, bureaucratic, juridical and political repression (Della Porta and Steinhilper, 2021), those involved in such practices and initiatives have remained in the field, transforming their actions in the face of the challenges encountered, reacting and reorganizing solidarity against all odds. As claimed on numerous occasions, they aim at contesting the existing borders, at subverting the humanitarian logic usually present and at building alliances that challenge the hegemonic patterns of migration policies and border regimes.

Moving from these premises, this analysis is grounded in a multi-sited and relational ethnography shaped by the relations and interactions embedded in the contexts of analysis (Desmond, 2014). Such approach moves beyond simply documenting individual experiences, emphasizing instead the intricate connections between these experiences and the wider social, political, and cultural systems that shape and influence them. The study thus draws on an extensive period of fieldwork conducted in Greece, Bulgaria, and Bosnia-Herzegovina between October 2023 and November 2024, during which I was actively involved in various solidarity initiatives. Engagement with solidarity actors has been demonstrated to be an effective method of producing and disseminating analysis and reflection. This is due to the fact that such practices break down the traditional divide between participant and observer, thereby posing a significant challenge to traditional academic approaches to the circulation of knowledge. Within the evolving landscape of qualitative social research, which is increasingly marked by self-critique, self-awareness, and reflexivity (Fine, 1993), this approach has played a pivotal role in enhancing the perceived value of research. It has also contributed to reshaping the dynamics between researchers, participants, and other stakeholders in the field. This dual role as both researcher and activist thus allowed me for a nuanced perspective, combining critical reflection with direct involvement. By embedding oneself in the social dynamics of the field, in fact, a researcher can uncover how these actions – whether overtly contentious or seemingly mundane – challenge dominant paradigms of exclusion and criminalization. This standpoint helps highlighting the significance of relationships, collective agency, and the lived realities of those involved in solidarity networks. It sheds light on the often-invisible labor of mutual aid and care, demonstrating how these practices disrupt hegemonic patterns of migration governance and create alternative forms of recognition, inclusion, and alliance.

Moreover, the study also centers on relational dynamics, offering a lens to examine transnational solidarity as a fluid and adaptive process. It sheds light on how networks are formed, evolve, and endure across borders despite repression and adversity. This approach uncovers the strategies employed by actors on the ground, the solidarities built across diverse social and cultural divides, and the ways care and mutual aid function as both practical solutions and acts of resistance. These practices, though not always overtly political, hold significant transformative potential by creating spaces of possibility. Within these spaces, migrants and their allies challenge exclusionary systems and forge pathways toward justice and equity (Martini, 2024).

In conclusion, this contribution wants to underscore the importance of an ethnographic approach that is both relational and engaged (Helms, 2022), as it provides the tools necessary to critically observe, grasp, analyze and amplify the voices and actions of those at the forefront of de-bordering practices. By emphasizing the relational dynamics of solidarity work, this analysis highlights how resistance to borders and bordering processes can manifest through acts of care, mutual aid, and the creation of networks and collaborations. These practices, rooted in everyday interactions and collective efforts, carry transformative potential by fostering connections that transcend boundaries, challenging exclusionary systems, and envisioning alternative pathways of inclusion.

References

- Ambrosini, Maurizio
2022 “Humanitarian Help and Refugees: De-Bordering Solidarity as a Contentious Issue.” *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*.
Agustín, Oscar García, & Jørgensen, Martin Bak
2018 *Solidarity and the 'refugee Crisis' in Europe*, Palgrave
Brambilla Chiara & Jones Reece
2020 “Rethinking borders, violence, and conflict: From sovereign power to borderscapes as sites of struggles.” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*.
Della Porta, Donatella, & Steinhilper, Elias (Eds.).
2021 *Contentious Migrant Solidarity: Shrinking Spaces and Civil Society Contestation (1st ed.)*. Routledge.
Desmond, Matthew
2014 Relational ethnography. *Theory and Society*, 43(5), 547–579.
Fine, Gary Alan

- 1993 "Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas of Field Research." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22 (3): 267–94.
Fleischmann, Larissa
- 2020 *Contested Solidarity. Practices of Refugee Support between Humanitarian Help and Political Activism*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.
Helms, Elissa
- 2022 "Social Boundaries at the EU Border: Engaged Ethnography and Migrant Solidarity in Bihać, Bosnia–Herzegovina." *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 38 (2): 283–301
Martini, Chiara
- 2024 "Contesting Borders Through Spaces and Practices. Transformative Forms of Grassroots Solidarity Along the Balkan Routes", *DiGeSt – Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies* 11(2), 131-147.
Zamponi, Lorenzo
- 2017 "Practices of Solidarity: Direct Social Action, Politicisation and Refugee Solidarity Activism in Italy." *Mondi Migranti* 3: 97–117.

18. Aesthetics and imaginaries of eco-activist movements

Convenors: Massimiliano Guareschi & Federico Smania (University of Milano-Bicocca)

On climate activism aesthetics. The teens' view between traffic blocks and dialogue

Lorenzo Pedrini, University of Milano Bicocca

lorenzo.pedrini@unimib.it

Elisa Virgili, University of Milano Bicocca

elisa.virgili@unimib.it

Since the global rise of Fridays for Future in 2019, young generations' concern – as well as mobilizations – for the climate crisis is becoming an increasingly debated topic (Sloam et al., 2022; Tomnyuk et al., 2023). Despite there is a general agreement regarding the (contemporary) youngsters' interest in environmental issues, research shows a spectrum of «eco-social relationships» (Huddart 2022) among young generations. Among those who care about the environment, engagement represents a specific path, as Huddart (2022) argues, which partially overlaps with the so-called «Self-Effacing eco-type», that is, someone who share with the eco-activist similar (progressive) political values although they do not believe in the efficacy their actions. In her inquiry, Huddart (2022) identifies different ways of caring about the environment by connecting them to social stratification and political polarization, providing several insights to further understanding the youth's attitudes towards environmental issues and pro-environmental action.

Currently, "Extinction Rebellion" (XR) and "The Last Generation" (*Ultima Generazione*) are two of the main visible groups composing the landscape of the environmental justice movement. They are known for their contentious actions and their reference to a precise "aesthetics of conflict", which is inspired by civil disobedience political culture. Both groups adopt repertoires of contention that include roadblocking, soling cities' cultural heritage, showing nudity in public spaces, as well as other forms of direct action – e.g., on November 22, 2024, to protest against the securitization policies of the Italian government, XR emptied a truck of dung in front of the Ministry of Internal Affairs building.

These groups and their repertoires receive regular media coverage. However, how do these repertoires affect the youth imaginary? How does a certain aesthetic of conflict produce political divisiveness among the teens who, even though they are not active in these collectivities, can be considered as their constituency?

The efficacy of direct action in attracting consensus / triggering polarization represents an established question for scholars interested in "contentious politics" (Tilly, Tarrow, 2015). This paper deals with it by drawing on a series of focus groups (n=15) with young individuals (age 15-19). Over the last year, fieldwork has been carried out in several Milan's high schools and Milan's community centers. During the focus groups, in order to stimulate the debate, a series of images depicting the contentious actions of XR, *Ultima Generazione* and of a popular figure such as Greta Thunberg in a demonstration have been shown.

By analyzing the teens' point of view, we discuss a series of preliminary findings. All the teenagers included in the focus groups express deep concern about climate change. Even though only a few of them are publicly engaged – namely, participating in social movement organizations / associations / charity groups – they recognize the limits of the «ABC perspective» (Shove, 2010) – which inform the educational activities carried out in school and the institutional political debate – and call for urgent collective action. Simultaneously, they express disapproval regarding contentious direct actions. This discrepancy underscores aspects of youth perspectives that are often underexplored (Stammen, Meissner, 2024). Precisely:

The focus groups reveal that participants possess a keen awareness of the socio-political landscape of eco-activism, underscoring their will to contribute to the climate justice movement. More exactly, participants express a desire for collective action grounded in collaborative efforts rather than confrontational strategies. Many of them, including the ones who are socially and politically active, argue that the confrontational tactics employed by eco-activists may alienate potential allies, diminish support for environmental causes, and reinforce negative stereotypes of environmental activists.

Considering that the participants in focus groups are younger as compared to members of XR and *Ultima Generazione*, the debate reveals a generational *shift* in how activism is conceptualized, with teens advocating for a more inclusive and cooperative approach. It also shows a different approach towards institutions. On the

one hand, political institutions such as the municipalities, the local and national government bodies are framed as the main cause of climate change and should be the target of collective actions. On the other hand, teachers and parents – as the main socializing institutions – should play a leading role in informing them about climate change and in organizing more “conventional” demonstrations and pro-environmental campaigns. Focus group participants call for repertoires that resonate with their values: they stress the importance of building coalitions and inter-generational community by means of “petition”, “marches” and “speeches” rather than dividing it through contentious actions – in particular, roadblocks are disapproved as they can cause issues for other citizens, who are not considered responsible for climate change despite they are driving cars and contributing to pollution.

Moreover, teens seem to articulate a particular *aesthetic sensitivity*, so to say, that encompasses their view. This aesthetic reveals the working of a «civilizing» (Elias, 2012) trend. The preference for approaches that foster dialogue, community engagement, constructive-communicative rather than disruptive tactics, does not only indicate a critique of harmful actions that can undermine the efficacy of environmental movements. For example, paintings, buildings and statues are considered as symbols of civilization surrounded by sacrality. There is no such a reason that can justify “barbarian” forms of “profanation” of the “beauty” of Western civilization. In addition, according to many boys, nakedness in direct action is disgusting, particularly if it is performed collectively and by female bodies who do not appear as “well fit”. On the contrary, many female green influencers are known and followed solely for their sexual attractiveness. Different is the approach of the girls as some of them follow green influencers because of their lifestyle proposals and substantive messages, although both boys and girls do not give political credit to these figures as compared to Greta Thunberg. To conclude, we highlight the importance of the intersectionality perspective within the discussions on the *youth ecological imaginary*. We stress the need to elaborate on grounded-ethnographic inquiries in order to better examine how gender dynamics, education processes, and social media shape the beliefs about ecology and climate justice as interlaced cultural phenomena.

References

- Elias, Norbert
2012 *On the Process of Civilisation: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations: The Collected Works of Norbert Elias*, vol. 3, ed. S. Mennell, E. Dunning, J. Goudsblom, and R. Kilminster, Dublin: University College Dublin Press.
- Kennedy, Emily Huddart
2022 *Eco-Types: Five Ways of Caring about the Environment*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Shove, Elizabeth
2010 Beyond the ABC: Climate Change Policy and Theories of Social Change. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 42, 6, pp. 1273-1285.
- Sloam, James., Pickard, Sarah., Matt Henn
2022 Young People and Environmental Activism: The Transformation of Democratic Politics', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 25, 6, pp.683-691.
- Stammen, Lara, Miriam Meissner
2024 «Social Movements' Transformative Climate Change Communication: Extinction Rebellion's Activism», *Social Movement Studies*, 23, 1, pp. 19-38.
- Tilly, Charles, Sidney Tarrow
2015 *Contentious Politics. 2nd edition*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tomnyuk, Viktoriia, Varavallo, Giuseppe, Parisi, Tania, Filippo Barbera
2023 «All Shades of Green: The Anatomy of the Fridays for Future Movement in Italy», in *Sustainability*, 15, 18, p. 13917

The changing of eco-activists' representations and imaginaries overtime. The case of the criminalised NoTAP movement in southeast Italy

Anna Di Ronco, University of Bologna

anna.dironco@unibo.it

What visual and symbolic repertoires do environmental movements opposing large infrastructures construct and (re)present to contribute to shaping their external image? How do these and their underpinning imaginaries change overtime because of (among others) repression and criminalisation?

This presentation draws on the case study of the NoTAP environmental movement in southern Puglia (Italy), a movement which fought against the building of the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) – a currently completed mega-project bringing natural gas to Europe. This paper draws on the author's research on the NoTAP movement overtime and, in particular, on her studies of the movement's online representations and its representations 'on the ground' (through interviews and ethnographic fieldwork) (see e.g. Di Ronco et al., 2018; Di Ronco, Allen-Robertson, 2021) through to more recent qualitative research on the perceived effects of repression by activists (Di Ronco, 2025).

This paper critically discusses the negative impacts that repression and criminalisation accompanying the building and completion of the pipeline have had on the shaping of the movement's representations as well as on activists' underpinning imaginaries of ecological futures. Drawing on the social harm perspective (Canning and Tombs, 2021; Canning et al., 2023; Hillyard et al., 2004), it frames the weakening of the movement's efforts at external representations following its dissolution, and the emergence of negative visions of ecological futures in activists' minds and imagination, as forms of indirect harms caused by repression.

References

- Canning, Victoria, Steve Tombs
2021 *From Social Harm to Zemiology: A Critical Introduction*, London, Routledge.
- Canning, Victoria, Paddy Hillyard, Steve Tombs
2023 Social harm and zemiology, in Alison Liebling, Shadd Maruna, and Lesley McAra (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*, 7th ed., Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 501-520.
- Di Ronco, Anna, James Allen-Robertson, Nigel South
2018 Representing environmental harm and resistance on Twitter: The case of the TAP pipeline in Italy, in *Crime, Media, Culture: An International Journal*, 15(1), 143–168.
- Di Ronco, Anna, James Allen-Robertson
2021 Representations of environmental protest on the ground and in the cloud: The NOTAP protests in activist practice and social visual media, in *Crime Media & Culture: An International Journal*, 17(3), 375–399.
- Di Ronco, Anna
2025 The effects of criminalisation on activists: the case of the NoTAP environmental movement, in *Critical Criminology*. DOI: 10.1007/s10612-024-09806-z.
- Hillyard, Paddy, Christina Pantazis, Steve Tombs, Dave Gordon
2004 *Beyond Criminology: Taking Harm Seriously*, London, Pluto Press.

Inhabiting the ruins of the present. On social movements defending wastelands in Montreal

Daniela Giudici, Politecnico di Torino

daniela.giudici@polito.it

Against the backdrop of a pervasive – and often ambiguous – fascination with ruins and ruination in both scholarly and popular discourse, “vacant” spaces can offer an interesting vantage point from which to think about ruins not only as inert “remnants of modernity”, but also as vital materialities differently inhabited in the present (Stoler 2008; Downey 2020). This article suggests that an analytical and ethnographic attention to these spaces and what they mean for people can shed light on shifting forms of urban environmentalism, and their political imaginaries.

The proliferation of deindustrializing landscapes in contemporary cities has had the effect of shaping new urban ecological imaginaries, often based on a rethinking of dichotomic divisions between the “city” and “nature”, between human and non-human life (Escobar 1999; Stoetzer 2022). At the same time, “vacant” urban spaces, far from being “empty”, are invested with a multiplicity ongoing practices, attachments, projects (Fennell 2022). Drawing from one year (2023-2024) of ethnographic fieldwork in Montreal, Canada, this paper examines the development of tenacious social mobilizations to protect “re-naturalized”, “abandoned” wastelands. I draw comparison between two sites of protest with different histories and outcomes, to shed light on how “urban nature” is imagined, experienced and embodied in political activism. Although these urban spaces epitomize the aftermath of de-industrialization – with its legacy of social problems, contaminated land, and decay – they are now populated by trees, woodlands and various species of animals. Yet, these hybrid landscapes are also at the center of various urban regeneration strategies and re-industrialization projects, often justified through discourses of sustainable transition.

In this context, I trace emergent forms of urban environmentalism, largely dominated by imaginaries of ruin and survival, but also by the will to reconnect with unexpected patches of “nature” in the city. Thinking about political imaginaries and urban ruins together, I explore the increasingly disruptive and political character of weeds, which are mobilized by urban activists and dwellers to serve different ends. Activists shape and interpret novel understandings of “urban biodiversity” to counter governmental discourses of “valuable” green spaces and “legitimate” green transition (Angelo 2021). By challenging conventional notions of “worthy environments”, these practices reshape the contours and revendications of socio-environmental struggles. In this context, inhabiting the “ruins of the present” translates into cultivating attachments to a contaminated, irretrievably disturbed world, and learning to live with it.

References

- Angelo, Hilary
2021 *How green became good: Urbanized nature and the making of cities and citizens*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dawney, Leila
2020 “Decommissioned places: Ruins, endurance and care at the end of the first nuclear age”, in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 45, 1, pp. 33-49.
- Escobar, Arturo.
1999 “After nature: Steps to an antiessentialist political ecology”, in *Current anthropology* 40, 1, pp. 1-30.
- Fennell, Catherine.
2022 “Rethinking Vacancy, or Thinking with the Going Home.” *Anthropological Quarterly* 95, 2, pp. 417-436.
- Stoetzer, Bettina.
2022 *Ruderal City: Ecologies of Migration, Race, and Urban Nature in Berlin*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Stoler, Ann Laura
2008 “Imperial debris: Reflections on ruins and ruination”, in *Cultural anthropology* 23, 2, pp. 191-219.

Reclaiming Alpine Lands from Big-Money Tourism Development. Transversal Visual Narratives of Mountain Grassroots Movements in Northern Italy

Beatrice Citterio, Free University of Bozen

bcitterio@unibz.it

Between the 19th and 20th centuries, Italy's Alpine valleys underwent profound transformations driven by an interplay of economic, political, and social dynamics. These changes laid the groundwork for developing high and low-season tourism as it is conceptualised today (Leonardi, 2022). At the core of this transformation was the rise of winter tourism, with alpine skiing emerging as the dominant activity and a central economic driver for the valleys, offering a critical alternative to depopulation and socio-economic decline. Over the past fifty years, though, the ski industry has evolved into an actual monoculture – a system dominated by a single, homogeneous activity (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2024) – concentrating and stimulating the majority of tourism-related financial investments in the Alpine region and restructuring the interaction between local economies and global capital flows. Moreover, over the last three decades, the systemic challenges of global climate change and the intensification of tourism activity have necessitated widespread reliance on artificial snow production – 90-95% of slopes are artificially snowed (Legambiente, 2024) – requiring substantial national and regional public funding and broad resources usage. In the meantime, as demand and prices for skiing and holidaying in Alpine resorts continue to rise – making it a practice increasingly for the rich only – so too does the expansion of tourism infrastructure, catalysing multi-million-euros investments from public and private stakeholders, both local and external, seeking sure profit (Dematteis; Nardelli, 2022).

In light of climate projections, the large-scale displacement of public funds, the significant environmental repercussions, and, most critically, the absence of essential public and civic services – for which investment is never prioritised – both local inhabitants of various western, northern and eastern valleys and external stakeholders have begun to mobilise in resistance to large-scale investment plans. Grassroots movements, therefore, were born at different times and with various reasons in places such as Val d'Ayas (AO), Alpe Devero (VCO), Triangolo Lariano (CO), Colere (BG), Ponte di Legno (BS), Ortisei (BZ), and many more, urging local, regional and national administrations to review their development plans and claiming that such initiatives are ill-suited to contemporary challenges and fail to address the pressing needs and well-being of the local

population. The snow industry, supported by significant investments, is further bolstered by large-scale events such as the Ski World Cups and the Winter Olympic Games. These events play a crucial role in perpetuating the promotion of ski tourism as a thriving economic sector while simultaneously portraying it as a nature-oriented recreational activity (Fondazione Milano Cortina, 2019). It is hardly coincidental that the promoters of large-scale events systematically avoid addressing the negative repercussions of the snow industry on the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of the resorts involved, as well as the challenges posed by future climatic vulnerabilities. Instead, they persistently strive to represent the Alpine environment through romanticised and rhetorically evocative portrayals regarding – mostly staged – folklorism, deliberately neglecting critical engagement with the broader implications of these activities (Ferrari, 2023). A similar pattern is noticeable in the case of the 2026 Milano-Cortina Winter Olympics, where the Italian Olympic Committee and the Milano Cortina Foundation prominently emphasised sustainability while simultaneously allocating nearly 6 billion euros (De Simone, 2024) towards road infrastructure, new ski facilities and a tourism-focused marketing campaign in regions already critically impacted by demonstrated over-tourism (De Rossi, 2024). Despite the ambitious and high-profile plans announced by the central government and the MICO26 Foundation, concerns emerged regarding the extent of democratic and civic consultation during both the bidding process and the planning of large-scale, high-impact infrastructure projects. This paper examines local Alpine movements' imaginaries, demands, and participatory practices resisting Olympic and non-Olympic large-scale investments. Drawing on a qualitative research approach grounded in design and social sciences, the study combines active participation, photographic narratives, and archival and desk-based research, integrating social media and photography-based practices, to construct a visual and storytelling account of civic movements in the Italian Alps. By situating these movements within the broader context of local, regional, and national conservation and development policies, this paper critically interrogates the tourism model endorsed by these regions, with particular attention to the multifaceted social, economic, and environmental consequences of the Olympic event and other large-scale projects on the Alpine territories and their communities.

References

- Dematteis, Maurizio; Nardelli, Michele
2023 *Inverno liquido. La crisi climatica, le terre alte e la fine della stagione dello sci di massa*, Derive Approdi.
- De Rossi, Antonio
2024 *La costruzione delle Alpi. Il Novecento e il modernismo alpino (1917-2017)*, Nuova ediz, Donzelli Editore.
- De Simone, Ilenia
2024 «Milano Cortina 2026, la spesa è di circa 6 miliardi di euro. Le associazioni chiedono trasparenza», in *La Nuova Ecologia*, <https://www.lanuovaecologia.it/milano-cortina-olimpiadi-2026-campagna-open-olympics/> visited 25\01\2025.
- Ferrari, Marco Albino
2023 *Assalto alle Alpi. Vele*, Giulio Einaudi Editore.
- Jurgenson, Nathan
2019 *The Social Photo: On Photography and Social Media*. Verso, First Edition.
- Legambiente
2024 *NeveDiversa: il turismo Invernale nell'era della crisi climatica*. Report di Legambiente.
- Leonardi Andrea
2024 «Come il turismo ha modificato l'economia della montagna alpina. Le trasformazioni intervenute tra XIX e XX secolo» in *Studi Trentini. Storia*, n.2, pp. 323-344.
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary
2024 "Monoculture" <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/monoculture#:~:text=%3A%20the%20cultivation%20or%20growth%20of,single%20crop%2C%20plant%2C%20or%20organism> visited 25\01\2025.

Feeding Nationalism. Building Anti-Ecological Imaginaries through Culinary Traditionalism

Ghita Bordieri, University of Milano-Bicocca

ghita.bordieri@unimib.it

This article examines the radical right's construction of anti-ecological imaginaries through discourses rooted in culinary traditionalism, focusing on the case of Salvini's League in Italy. By framing ecological and climate policies as threats to Italian cultural and economic traditions, the League crafts counter-narratives that oppose

environmental activism while consolidating its links with food producers' consortiums, and creating a joint line against what they see as extreme ecologic policies. The party combines anti-ecologism, anti-Europeism, and gastronationalism (Demuru 2021; DeSoucey 2010; Edwards 2019; Ichijo 2020; Parasecoli 2022) to position itself as the defender of traditions, condensing distinct food-related instances in a coherent narrative of persecution of Italianness.

The authorization of cricket flour as "novel food" and *contested food* (DeSoucey 2016), negative scores of Parmigiano Reggiano in the Nutriscore, regulations of intensive livestock related to the ecological transition, and bland rules against the imitation of Italian products are all framed as part of a "war on the Mediterranean Diet". European institutions and ecologists threaten Italian culinary products, which become material representations of Italians and the nation as a whole.

This article examines three main arguments by analyzing ethnographic data, videos of public events, and the party's online content. First, it looks at how "tradition" and gastronationalism are used to defend mass production against more sustainable production methods. Second, it discusses the ambivalence surrounding the concepts of territories and local economies. Finally, it addresses the construction of the stereotype of the "extremist ecologist". We will see that these images help shape an interpretive framework around ecologism and serve as concrete ways to engage with different audiences and advocate for specific industrial policies.

These discursive strategies enable the League to articulate a culturally resonant form of anti-ecologism. The party's narrative not only appeals to nostalgic imaginaries of national authenticity but also operates as a pragmatic tool to mobilize support across diverse constituencies, from small producers to large-scale food industry actors. Ultimately, this article sheds light on how the radical right integrates environmental backlash into a broader nationalist rhetoric, and how the politics of food becomes a key battleground for struggles over identity, sovereignty, and industrial policy in contemporary Italy.

References

- Demuru, Paolo.
2021 « Gastropopulism: A Sociosemiotic Analysis of Politicians Posing as 'the Everyday Man' via Food Posts on Social Media» in *Social Semiotics* 31,3, pp. 507–27.
- DeSoucey, Michaela.
2010 « Gastronationalism: Food Traditions and Authenticity Politics in the European Union» in *American Sociological Review* 75, 3, pp 432–55.
- 2016 *Contested Tastes: Foie Gras and the Politics of Food*, Princeton University Press.
- Edwards, Jason.
2019 « O, The Roast Beef of Old England! Brexit and Gastronationalism» in *Political Quarterly*, 90, 4, pp. 629–36
- Ichijo, Atsuko.
2020 « Food and Nationalism: Gastronationalism Revisited» in *Nationalities Papers* 48, 2, pp. 215–23.
- Parasecoli, Fabio.
2022 *Gastronativism*. Columbia University Press.

"This Zapatista Coffee Tastes Even Better if You Drink it in the Struggle". Imaginaries and Aesthetics of Rebel Coffee Distribution

Miria Gambardella, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

miria.gambardella@uab.cat

This paper explores the imaginaries and aesthetics surrounding the distribution of Zapatista "rebel" coffee produced within autonomous communities to economically and politically support their struggle. Drawing from 10 years of ethnographic research on transnational solidarity networks between European radical left collectives and the indigenous organization from Chiapas, the analysis focuses on the ethics and politics embedded in coffee narratives and aesthetics. Through an anthropological lens, I examine how Zapatista coffee labels constitute a political space of defiance against neoliberal capitalist exploitation and a source of collective subjectivation, conveying the movements' commitment to autonomy, dignity, and social justice.

The political ecology of Zapatista territories and land relations is a mix of both indigenous ontologies and anti-capitalist ideologies, strategically mobilized as a tool for resistance. This research investigates how their fight for autonomy is reappropriated by European radical left activists, often idealizing Zapatista practices while

participating in transnational networks of solidarity, particularly through Zapatista coffee distribution. The tensions between these different interpretations of indigenous autonomy and land use are at the center of this inquiry on the mobilization of insurgent imaginaries and aesthetics, contributing to current debates on social and eco-activist movements.

The Zapatistas' radical stance on land ownership – what they have recently defined “the common and the non-property” – goes beyond traditional notions of communal landholding. They envision a system where land is not owned in the legal or capitalist sense, where it's not granted to indigenous peoples by “a law whose existence and fairness we ignore” (EZLN, 1994), but treated as a shared resource for the collective good. This redefinition of land relations is deeply embedded in indigenous worldviews, where the earth is infused with agency, and human beings are seen as stewards rather than owners of nature. In this sense, the Zapatista territories can be seen as an experiment in post-capitalist social relations, where land is not a commodity but a basis for collective autonomy. Escobar (2015) highlights how indigenous movements in Latin America often frame their struggles in terms of defense of the territory and fight for life, where land is seen as integral to identity, culture, and survival. He argues that these movements challenge not only the neoliberal state but also Western ontologies that separate humans from nature and commodify natural resources. The Zapatistas, in their defense of *lo común*, are promoters of this broader wave of indigenous and peasant movements that resist capitalist extractivism and advocate for alternative, more equitable forms of relations with the environment.

In ecological and anti-capitalist struggles, the notion of territory extends beyond its geographical boundaries to encompass a relational space where human and non-human actors coexist in reciprocal relationships. Svampa (2019) highlights how indigenous movements frame their struggles against mega-projects not just as environmental resistance but as broader confrontations with global capitalism's destruction of communal life. As such, the territory becomes a site of political action, reimagination, and subjectivation, where alternative forms of existence and resistance can flourish, deeply questioning the roots of capitalist modernity. This approach resonates with broader global movements for autonomy and resistance to extractive economies, especially in Latin America, where struggles against megaprojects, resource extraction, and land dispossession are intensifying. From an anthropological and political ecology perspective, the Zapatista experience embodies a transformative rethinking of human-environment relations, one that promotes not only environmental sustainability but also social justice and indigenous sovereignty.

The Zapatista coffee is framed not as a mere commodity but as a symbol of resistance, reinforcing the ethics of solidarity and collective organization that define the movement and its European allies. It embodies a rejection of traditional, exploitative trade relations, offering an alternative vision for economic practices based on mutual aid and direct solidarity. The coffee's distribution network, which stretches from the autonomous territories in Chiapas to international consumers, is steeped in the aesthetics of political resistance. The design and marketing of the coffee labels reflect a clear political message, invoking imagery of the Zapatista struggle for autonomy, land, and dignity. This aesthetic representation not only communicates the political messages of the Zapatista communities but also serves as an educational tool for consumers, urging them to reflect on their role within the broader system of global capitalist exploitation.

The study explores how, for transnational activists, engaging in Zapatista coffee distribution becomes a participatory act in a larger political struggle against neoliberalism, highlighting the role of economic activism within eco-political movements. The aesthetic and symbolic dimensions of Zapatista coffee challenge conventional understandings of consumer goods, inviting solidarity and ideological commitment rather than mere consumption. By aligning with anti-capitalist and anti-colonial politics of Zapatista communities, rebel coffee distribution serves as a tool to raise consciousness and for the construction of a collective imaginary that transcends national borders. The paper also situates Zapatista coffee within broader debates on the ethics and aesthetics of resistance, economic solidarity, and the role of transnational activist networks in global environmental and social justice movements. Ultimately, this paper aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion on how aesthetic and symbolic representations in eco-activist movements serve as powerful tools for mobilizing collective action and challenging the dominant neoliberal order in the era of predatory capitalism.

References

Escobar, Arturo.

- 2015 *Sentipensar con la tierra. Nuevas lecturas sobre desarrollo, territorio y diferencia*, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Junetik Conatus: Ediciones Cideci-Unitierra Chiapas.
- EZLN (Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos).
- 1994 *¿De qué nos van a perdonar?*, <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/1994/01/18/de-que-nos-van-a-perdonar>, visited 05/04/2025.
- EZLN (Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés and Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos).
- 2017 *La primera de varias [The First of Several]*, <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2017/03/16/la-primera-de-varias>, visited 05/04/2025.
- Svampa, Maristella.
- 2019 *Neo-extractivism in Latin America: Socio-environmental Conflicts, the Territorial Turn, and New Political Narratives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

19. Rethinking the role of ethnography in more-than-human participatory research and design

Convenors: Liesbeth Huybrechts (University of Hasselt) & Cristiano Storni (University of Limerick)

Multispecies speculative ethnography in the ruins/ruinings of the Anthropocene

Antje Jacobs, KU Leuven & University of Melbourne

antje.jacobs@kuleuven.be

This presentation explores *multispecies speculative ethnography* as a methodological approach to critically engage with the capitalist and colonial ruins/ruinings of the Anthropocene. Multispecies speculative ethnography presents a form of speculative thinking to imagine possible worlds from a multispecies perspective. The approach draws on emerging fields such as multispecies studies and multispecies ethnography, which increasingly highlight the complex entanglements of other-than-humans and human societies (Van Dooren et al., 2016; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2016; Kirksey, 2014). Here, the term 'other-than-human' aligns with Marisol de la Cadena's concept of "earth-beings," encompassing not only organisms such as plants, fungi, micro bacteria, human and other-than-human animals, but also extending to biophysical entities such as mountains, rivers, the sky, a lagoon, the soil, and so on (de la Cadena, 2015). Thinking-with and speculating-with earth-beings in multispecies speculative ethnography involves acknowledging and imagining lively relationality between humans and other-than-humans amidst the climate crisis (Watts, 2013).

In exploring multispecies relationality, multispecies studies and relating fields have been criticized for "flattening of ontologies" where all entities are perceived as equally agentic or similar. Such perspectives risk neglecting power inequities or prioritizing other-than-human lives over those of marginalized human populations who are disproportionately affected by climate change (Heise, 2016). Similar critiques are directed at the concept of the Anthropocene. As many have pointed out, the common understanding of the Anthropocene as a geological epoch characterized by the destructive impact of humankind on the Earth – such as relating to resource extraction, energy productions, industrialized agricultures, petrochemicals, and so on – fails to differentiate and acknowledge its racial and colonial origins (Yusoff, 2018; Gómez-Barris, 2017). As discussed by Gómez-Barris (2017), colonial capitalism first rendered territories and peoples as extractible commodities, "discursively constructing radicalized bodies within geographies of difference, systematically destroying through dispossession, enslavement, and then producing the planet a corporate bio-territory" (p. 4). This legacy of colonial exploitation and destruction continues to be neglected in contemporary narratives of the Anthropocene and the climate emergency. We need to recognize the interlinked capitalist and colonial practices of the Anthropocene, and the ruins it is leaving behind (Watts, 2013; Yusoff, 2018).

Although ruins might imply a remnant of the past, it is crucial to recognize their material presence in contemporary society. In this context, the term 'ruinings' emphasizes the continuous impacts and afterlives of coloniality. I build on Stoler's work on 'ruins of empire,' where she describes ruins not as "memorialized and large-scale 'leftovers' or relics, but [as] to what people are 'left with:' to what remains, to the aftershocks of empire, to the material and social afterlives of structures, sensibilities, and things" (Stoler, 2008, p. XX). These remnants matter in contemporary societies and their afterlives shape the present and future (Stoler, 2008; Yusoff, 2018).

In acknowledging these capitalist and colonial ruins/ruinings of the Anthropocene, the question arises of how the method multispecies speculative ethnography can transcend such a flattening of ontologies, which reduces humanity into a universal "us" or oversimplifies the complex and dynamic multispecies assemblages. In challenging this flattening, I explore how multispecies speculative ethnography as a methodological approach can address power structures and injustices in times of climate change, while at the same time reconceptualizing more-than-human relationality. It is this question that I have been grappling with in a participatory project I conducted in Australia in 2024, titled the 'Multispecies City Lab.' The project involved a series of workshops or 'Labs' where participants were invited to re-imagine urban spaces in Australia. In these Labs, multispecies speculative ethnography served as a methodological approach for collaborative speculative

thinking about multispecies climate futures in urban settings. At the start of the workshop, participants took part in a city walk during which they selected specific urban sites to reimagine. They explored how humans and more-than-human actors could collaborate in those locations to address particular climate challenges. These new imaginaries were visualized by the creation of visual artworks (i.e. collages, drawings, installations, etc.) and by writing fictional stories about a multispecies city. The Labs were held in three Australian cities: Megandjin/Brisbane with a group of artists, Narm/Melbourne with a group of people living in Melbourne, and Boorloo/Perth with a group of scholars.

Imagining Australian urban spaces as dynamic sites for human and other-than-human relationality necessitates engaging with Australia's specific colonial history and settler-colonial present. The question of how multispecies speculative ethnography can address power injustices – rather than flattening ontologies – found particular grounding when speculating with/about/on stolen lands. In this context, we must reflect on the "imaginative limits of modernity," where capitalist and colonial ruins/ruinings continue to shape and restrict imaginaries of possible futures (Kerr & Andreotti, 2018, p. 55). Truman (2023) argues that "a crisis of (human) imagination over time has configured, represented, and re-affirmed the world into this humanist image so convincingly that it may appear to many of us to be the 'natural' or 'universal' order of things. But we have never been universal" (Truman, 2023). This "colonial crisis of imagination" reinforces dominant societal narratives and structures that might (re)produce inequality. As such, speculative thinking practices – and multispecies speculative ethnography in particular – carry a responsibility to move beyond imagining a world "where only one world fits" (de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018) and instead, should allow multiple perspectives to inhabit speculation (Rifkin, 2019).

In this presentation, I will provide a detailed exploration of the Multispecies City Lab project, focusing on the method of multispecies speculative ethnography and its potential to address the colonial ruins/ruinings of the Anthropocene. Furthermore, I will discuss the multispecies speculations created by participants during the various Labs held in Australian cities. My analysis of these co-created speculations begins by *tracing* the ruins/ruinings addressed within these speculations. Following on this tracing, I will explore the counter cities imagined by participants, where multispecies relationality and justice were prioritized. The presentation will conclude with a reflection on the potential and challenges of using multispecies speculative ethnography to re-imagining settler-colonial geographies into multispecies relational environments.

References

- Blaser, Mario & de la Cadena, Marisol
2018 Pluriverse: Proposals for a world of many worlds. In: de la Cadena, M. & Blaser, M. (eds.). *A world of many worlds*. Duke University Press, pp. 1-22.
- Gómez-Barris, Macarena
2017 *The extractive zone: Social ecologies and decolonial perspectives*. Duke University Press.
- Heise, Ursula
2016 Multispecies fictions for the Anthropocene. In Heise, U. (ed): *Imagining extinction: The cultural meanings of endangered species*. The University of Chicago Press, pp. 202-237.
- Kerr, Jeannie & Andreotti, Vanessa
2018 Recognizing more-than-human relations in social justice research: Gesturing towards decolonial possibilities. *Teacher Education*, 27(2), pp. 53-67.
- Kirksey, Eben
2014 *The multispecies salon*. Duke University Press.
- Pacini-Ketchabaw, Veronica, Taylor, Affrica & Blaise, Mindy
2016 Decentring the human in multispecies ethnographies. In: Taylor, C. & Hughes, C. (eds.). *Posthuman research practices in education*, pp. 149-167.
- Rifkin, Mark
2019 *Fictions of land and flesh: Blackness, indigeneity, speculation*. Duke University Press.
- Stoler, Ann Laura
2008 Imperial debris: Reflections on ruins and ruination. *Cultural Anthropology*, 23(2), pp. 191-219.
- Truman, Sarah
2023 Colonial crises of imagination, climate fictions, and English literary education. *Research in Education*, 117(2), pp. 1-16.
- Van Dooren, Thom, Kirksey, Eben & Munster, Ursula
2016 Multispecies studies: Cultivating arts of attentiveness. *Environmental Humanities*, 8(1), pp. 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3527695>
- Watts, Vanessa
2013 Indigenous place-thought & agency amongst humans and non-humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European world tour!). *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 2(1), pp. 20-34.
- Yusoff, Kathryn

Antispeciesist Perspectives in Rural Development: A Critical Approach in More-Than-Human Participatory Research. Rethinking Rurality through Relational Ethics and Interspecies Collaboration

Luca Di Clemente, University of Milan
luca.diclemente@unimi.it

Introduction. The intricate interplay between rural development and anthropocentric paradigms remains central to contemporary sustainability, governance, and ecological justice debates. Traditional frameworks often prioritise human interests, marginalising the complex interdependencies defining ecosystems and rural contexts' cultural specificities. This research introduces anti-speciesism as a transformative framework, challenging these paradigms through relational ethics and interspecies justice. It calls for reimagining rural development as an inclusive and dynamic process transcending extractivist, productivist, and urban-centric paradigms.

Antispeciesism interrogates entrenched hierarchies in industrial agriculture, extractivist practices, and top-down governance. It advocates for recognising human and non-human actors as agential participants in shaping shared futures. Marco Reggio's assertion that "Antispeciesism is thus embarrassment, wonder, and disturbance" encapsulates this framework's exploratory ethos, inviting a critical examination of how social and institutional infrastructures can be reimagined. This study posits rurality as a site of negotiation and resilience, where coexistence integrates ecological, social, and cultural dimensions, amplifying the often-muted human and non – human voices. By addressing these relational dynamics, the research positions anti-speciesism as a lens that questions not only sustainability but the broader ethical foundations of development.

Rethinking Ethnography for More-Than-Human Contexts. Ethnography, historically centred on human societies, requires methodological transformation to account for the agency and relational dynamics of non-human actors. In rural contexts, where ecosystems, animals, and plants are integral, an expanded ethnographic scope becomes essential. This shift challenges anthropocentric methodologies, advocating for a more inclusive epistemology that values interspecies entanglements as core to understanding rurality.

Anti-speciesist perspectives push ethnographic practice beyond passive observation, urging researchers to adopt participatory approaches that reflect non-human agencies. This involves creating methodologies capable of capturing the lived experiences and relational intricacies of rural ecosystems. Visual ethnography and performative practices offer tools for documenting and analysing human– and non-human-animal relationships, fostering governance approaches that reflect the realities of interspecies coexistence. Ethnography thus becomes not only a method of inquiry but a means to engage ethically with the contested terrains of rural governance and sustainability.

Practical Sites of Interspecies Collaboration. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) initiatives and animal sanctuaries exemplify participatory governance models rooted in care, reciprocity, and ecological balance. CSAs function as relational spaces fostering shared decision-making between producers and consumers. They emphasise sustainability and mutual care, challenging the commodification of rurality. These initiatives highlight the potential for alternative models that integrate ethical principles with practical solutions, creating ecosystems where ecological and social well-being are intertwined.

Similarly, sanctuaries reject the commodification of non-human lives, providing refuge while reconfiguring interspecies relationships as ethical and participatory. Sanctuaries are not merely shelters but dynamic spaces of relational experimentation, where human and non-human actors negotiate new forms of coexistence. These sites demonstrate how participatory methodologies can integrate non-human agencies into rural governance, offering practical insights into the transformative potential of anti-speciesist principles.

Relational Ethics and Degrowth. This study interweaves relational ethics and the socio-economic principles of Degrowth as critical frameworks for reimagining rural development. Relational ethics foregrounds mutual care and interconnectedness, advocating governance models that prioritise inclusivity and the agency of non-human participants. It critiques exclusionary practices that marginalise certain actors, offering pathways for creating systems that honour the intrinsic value of all life.

Degrowth, as a counterpoint to paradigms of endless growth and efficiency, promotes redistributive, localised, and care-centred practices. In rural contexts, Degrowth complements anti-speciesist critiques by rejecting extractivism and prioritising ecological balance. By aligning these frameworks, the research offers a multidimensional lens for analysing rural governance, presenting pathways for sustainability that integrate socio-economic critique and ecological integrity. This synthesis addresses the urgent need for transformative frameworks that integrate ethical and ecological dimensions into development practices.

Aesthetics and Imaginaries in Participatory Research. The aesthetic dimensions of eco-activist movements significantly shape participatory research, providing tools to reimagine justice and sustainability. Through narratives, imagery, and performative practices, these movements challenge exploitative systems while articulating alternative visions. Sanctuaries and CSAs emerge as sites of aesthetic and ethical experimentation. Sanctuaries use storytelling and visual narratives to depict non-human animals as sentient agents, fostering empathy and disrupting normative assumptions. CSAs, through participatory governance, create spaces where human and non-human interactions redefine traditional power dynamics.

These aesthetic practices contribute to reconfiguring imaginaries of rurality and sustainability, offering avenues for addressing ecological and social challenges. They demonstrate how cultural narratives and visual strategies can amplify marginalised voices, fostering a deeper engagement with more-than-human relationships.

Research Questions and Hypotheses. This study addresses two core questions:

1. How can anti-speciesist principles reshape rural development frameworks?
2. What role can non-human actors play in fostering sustainable practices?

The research hypothesises that anti-speciesism challenges anthropocentric assumptions, fostering inclusive and relational models of sustainability. Recognising the agency of non-human actors enhances resilience, strengthens communal bonds, and informs equitable governance.

Methodological Approach. The study employs a mixed-methods approach to capture rural-anti-speciesist dynamics. Qualitative methods include literature review, semi-structured interviews, community mapping, and participant observation in CSAs and sanctuaries. These methods aim to capture the nuanced relational dynamics and lived practices that define rural contexts. Quantitatively, Social Network Analysis (SNA) will be utilised to map and quantify interactions, offering structured insights into human and non-human relationships.

This methodological synthesis bridges theoretical critique with empirical exploration, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of governance and interspecies relationships. By integrating participatory methodologies and anti-speciesist principles, the research seeks to illuminate the ethical and ecological dimensions of rural development.

Conclusion. Anti-speciesism challenges dominant rural development paradigms, advocating for relational ethics, participatory governance, and interspecies justice. By exploring the dynamics of sanctuaries, CSAs, and governance frameworks, this research redefines sustainability as an inclusive and interconnected process. It contributes to the evolving discourse on rural development, offering alternative pathways to address ecological, social, and ethical challenges. Through its focus on interspecies collaboration, aesthetic innovation, and transformative governance models, the study fosters spaces where coexistence and care replace commodification and exploitation.

References

- Asara, Viviana; Otero, Iago; Demaria, Federico; Corbera, Esteve
2020 "Socially Sustainable Degrowth as a Social-Ecological Transformation: Repoliticizing Sustainability", in *Sustainability*, 12, 1, pp. 1-16, available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279806237_Socially_sustainable_degrowth_as_a_social-ecological_transformation_repoliticizing_sustainability.
- Bindi, L.; Conti, M.; Belligiano, A.
2022 "Sense of Place, Biocultural Heritage, and Sustainable Knowledge and Practices in Three Italian Rural Regeneration Processes", in *Sustainability*, 14, 4858, available at <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14084858>.
- Bookchin, Murray
1982 *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy*, Palo Alto, Cheshire Books, available at <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/murray-bookchin-the-ecology-of-freedom>.
- Braidotti, Rosi
2013 *Materialismo Radicale*, Rome, Meltemi Editore, available at <https://www.meltemieditore.it/catalogo/materialismo-radicale/>.
- Caffo, Leonardo
2012 *Vegan. Un manifesto filosofico*, Milan, Cortina Editore, available at <https://www.luccasapiens.it/scheda-libro/leonardo-caffo/vegan-un-manifesto-filosofico-9788806235628-926442.html>.

- Davico, Luca
2012 "Etica e sostenibilità", in *Lo Sguardo – Rivista di Filosofia*, 8, pp. 12-25, available at https://www.academia.edu/9331882/Etica_e_sostenibilit%C3%A0.
- De-Shalit, Avner
1996 "Ruralism or Environmentalism?", in *Environmental Values*, 5, 1, pp. 47-58, available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30301504>.
- Escobar, Arturo
2015 Degrowth, Postdevelopment, and Transitions: A Preliminary Conversation, available at https://degrowth.viper.ecobytes.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ESCOBARDegrowth-postdevelopment-and-transitions_Escobar-2015.pdf.
- Florit, Luciano Félix; Da Silva Grava, Diego
2020 "Environmental Ethics and Sustainable Territorial Development. An Analysis from the Speciesism Category", in *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, 63, 1, pp. 1-22, available at <https://www.scielo.br/j/asoc/a/GwW9VnxDpCP8Jg4y7yQmqkg/?lang=en&format=pdf>.
- Grasseni, Cristina
2022 "Re-territorialising skills? Insights from ethnography on solidarity-economy food activism", available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/382214926_Re-territorialising_skills_Insights_from_ethnography_on_solidarity-economy_food_activism.
- Haraway, Donna
2016 *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Durham, Duke University Press, available at <https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/27/Staying-with-the-TroubleMaking-Kin-in-the>.
- Reggio, Marco
2020 *Cospirazione Animale*, Rome, Meltemi Editore, available at <https://www.meltemieditore.it/catalogo/cospirazione-animale/>.

Collaborative and Sensory Ethnographic Film to explore the Pluriverse. Human and More-than-Human Encounters in the Chacahua Lagoon, Mexico

Clara Kleininger-Wanik, University of Exeter

ck523@exeter.ac.uk

In this paper I want to discuss how a (visual) multispecies ethnography, which I have conducted in the Chacahua-Pastoria lagoons, on the Pacific coast of Mexico, can contribute to re-tracing multispecies entanglements by employing collaborative filmmaking and an attention to sensoriality. Chacahua is one of Mexico's oldest national parks, declared in 1937. It is home to an Afro-Mexican and Indigenous Chatino and Mixtec community increasingly confronted with ecological threats to its rich ecosystem. Currently, problems with water quality and species loss, caused by climate change, pollution, and human intervention in the lagoon's connection with the ocean, are compounded by a boom in international tourism in the area. Over the past eight months, I have employed collaborative filmmaking and multispecies ethnography – a methodological framework that considers the interests, pathways, and life-worlds of both humans and other species (Kirksey, Helmreich, 2010, Ogden et al., 2013) – to represent the complex relationships between human and more-than-human inhabitants of the lagoon. As part of a national park, humans frequently interact with other living beings. These encounters are informed by different types of knowledge which determine conservation practices, subsistence and commercial fishing and the ontological dimension of being *tonal* – a human whose fate is tied to that of a particular animal out in the forest. In re-tracing these complex relationships, and as a way of rethinking what ethnographic knowledge promises to be, I draw on the concept of the *pluriverse*, a world of many worlds (Marisol de la Cadena, Mario Blaser 2018). Thinking within the pluriverse allows for many heterogeneous worlds instead of a one-world world which tries to make its logic ubiquitous. I join the argument that imagining nature and culture as separate domains carries some of the responsibility for the climate crises we are in as well as has been conceptually used to dominate others – both human and non-human. To counteract a dominance of the one-world world, knowledge that contributes to the pluriverse, with Afro-descendant and Indigenous perspective as a basis (TallBear, 2011, Escobar, 2018) can offer alternative ways of behaving in relation to the environment and more-than-human companions. Thinking about human and more-than-human encounters in Chacahua as part of the pluriverse is significant for understanding how different ontologies shape the multispecies movements of the lagoon. Biological knowledge encounters the ontology of being tonal, sharing life with a more-than-human animal – a particular individual out in the lagoon – where fate, abilities, and death are experienced across species. In this context, the collaborative filmmaking I have practiced has allowed my co-creators to direct me in the field, during the long hours of monitoring and conservation activities. These participatory moments have brought my attention to the senses engaged in encounters and communication with more-than-human others. The ample

opportunity to recognise my limitation and learn from my collaborators leads me to propose sensoriality as a valuable tool for “re-tracing” the entanglement of multispecies beings in Chacahua. Filmmaking that foregrounds sensoriality can facilitate a decentring of the human perspective, better representing multispecies entanglements. The lagoon, as a place imbued with animacy, is best represented through a sensory audio-visual approach. In the spirit of the pluriverse and its incommensurabilities, I also propose a permission for gaps-of-knowledge, a place for contradictions and obscurity, in both the film and writing about Chacahua. I will discuss the methodological implications of this approach, and to illustrate, I will showcase an excerpt from the work-in-progress collaborative film that accompanies the ethnography.

References

- De la Cadena, Marisol, Mario Blaser
2018 A World of Many Worlds, Duke University Press.
Escobar, Arturo
2018 Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds, Duke University Press.
Kirksey, S. Eben, Stefan Helmreich
2010 The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography, *Cultural Anthropology*, 25(4), 545-576.
Ogden, Laura, Hall, Billy, and Tanita, Kimiko
2013 Animals, Plants, People, and Things: A Review of Multispecies Ethnography, *Environment and Society*, 4(1), 5-24.
TallBear, Kim
2011 Why interspecies thinking needs Indigenous standpoints. *Cultural Anthropology*, 24(1), 1-8.

OWLing as an ethnographic practice

Ana Carvalho, University of Limerick

carolinacarvalho.goncalvesde@ul.ie

Cristiano Storni, University of Limerick

cristiano.storni@ul.ie

With increasing socio-environmental challenges, divisions between actors, human or otherwise, may generate a difficulty in developing empathy for different lived experiences and worlds. This distance may also embolden the “othering” of marginalized actors, when voices of an attributed “normality” overstep the under-represented (Braidotti, 2013).

Participatory Action Research (PAR) has been introduced to promote stronger inclusion and community-based practices (den Houting *et al.*, 2021). Methodologies which aim to engage researchers and community members, by bridging the expertise of both groups, allow for the previously mentioned under-represented communities to have their interests taken into account, in a more meaningful manner (den Houting *et al.*, 2021; Pellicano *et al.*, 2022). At the same time, through these efforts, researchers get to learn from communities’ lived experiences and develop more democratized design and technology (Börjesson *et al.*, 2015; Lazar *et al.*, 2018; Wilson *et al.*, 2019). However, there are occasions where current ethnographic methodologies used in PAR may perpetuate notions of “othering”. If, for example, there is a lack of consideration for different communication preferences, these methodologies may not be inclusive enough and struggle to trace current socio-environmental challenges. The complexity of this task increases when we acknowledge communities or individuals that interact or express themselves in ways researchers are not accustomed to interpreting. For this, new practices of *tracing* and *retracing* are required.

Verbal communication is an example of a capability with much relevance in ethnographic practices of PAR (Lazar *et al.*, 2018). Many workshops and activities are based on the participants’ ability to verbally express themselves and be proactive. However, less focus has been given to individuals who either require or prefer different ways of communicating (Börjesson *et al.*, 2015; Lazar *et al.*, 2018; Wilson *et al.*, 2019). A direct example of this is the design and research process of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices, used by autistic people (Wilson *et al.*, 2019). Considering that 30% of autistic children are minimally-verbal, communicating through non-speech sounds, echolalic language, among other ways of interaction, there is a need for devices that can support their abilities (Wilson *et al.*, 2019). However, what is often seen is a lack of understanding (or *retracing*) of these same abilities, with the development of technologies that do not always

take autistic peoples' strengths and communication needs, such as gestalt language development, into account (Blanc *et al.*, 2023; Lazar *et al.*, 2018; Nicolaidis, 2011; Wilson *et al.*, 2019).

Propelled by neurodivergent self-advocates, the neurodiversity paradigm supports the notion that all individuals, with varying needs, should be included (Pellicano *et al.*, 2022; Pellicano, Houting, 2022). Rather than understanding autism as a disorder, it is looked at as a part of a person's identity (Pellicano *et al.*, 2022; Pellicano, Houting, 2022). Therefore, it is important that ethnographic practices learn from this paradigm to avoid furthering the "othering" of neurodivergent groups, as well as the perpetuation of stereotypes (Nicolaidis, 2011). OWL (which stands for Observe, Wait, Listen) is a relevant practice to avoid this "othering" of autistic individuals. As a practice, it encourages neurotypical people to give space for autistic people to take the lead in interactions in their preferred way (Pepper, Weitzman, 2004). It is heavily based on caring for the timing of the other person. In my presentation, I will approach OWL (Pepper, Weitzman, 2004) as a practice which ethnographic researchers may learn from and adopt.

The three stages of OWL, observing, waiting and listening, allow for autistic people to choose topics and ways of expressing themselves (Girolametto *et al.*, 1986; Pepper, Weitzman, 2004; Wilson *et al.*, 2019). Girolametto *et al.* (1986) explains how the practice encourages parents "to take the first step toward developing dialogue by being at the child's physical level, waiting, observing, and listening, and thereby giving their child a chance to initiate a topic. (...) By following the child's lead in these ways, joint attention is established, shared activity develops, thus providing a necessary framework for the 'give and take' of dialogue". Nevertheless, this practice can be extended beyond parent-child interactions. In a broader sense, it highlights the importance of taking time before acting, by placing observation as a way to avoid immediate assumptions of an imposed "normality" and to open space for inclusivity. Equally, it focuses on real-life settings, encouraging more meaningful and purposeful interactions (Girolametto *et al.*, 1986).

Within an ethnographic context, observing, waiting, and listening are all skills researchers may develop, so as to better understand the abilities and needs of participants, granting them the space to express themselves and communicate according to their own specificities/interests. Researchers may learn to take a step back and acknowledge different lived experiences. To add to this, as a practice, OWL is closely related to Bellacasa (2017)'s concept of care work, which emphasizes attentiveness and observation, for both human and non-human actors, as well as their interdependencies. Bellacasa (2017) argues that productionist agricultural practices, for example, which have allowed for an increase in growth and availability of crops, can also be seen as "oriented by a one-way anthropocentric temporality". This imposed temporality has affected the soil, which renews slower than these practices tend to demand, but also the workers, with the pressures of speeded-up processes, showcasing the need for a better understanding of these actors beyond timeframes of production (Bellacasa, 2017).

All in all, *retracing* practices such as OWL allow researchers to learn from the experiences of autistic people and, consequently, link them to more inclusive ethnographic practices. This connection underlines how specificities of one community may inform and improve upon another, through their inherent entanglements. The same can be said for non-human actors, which may equally benefit from practices of care and attentive observation, even if adapted to their own requirements. Therefore, taking all this into account, an improved focus on inclusion and the avoidance of "otherness" may be achieved in the favoring of careful observation over immediate action.

This research is supported by the European Union's Horizon 2022 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Doctoral Network (MSCA-DN-01) REWORLDING under grant agreement number 101119451.

References

- Bellacasa, Maria
2017 *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More-than-Human Worlds*, University of Minnesota Press.
- Blanc, Marge *et al.*
2023 Using the Natural Language Acquisition Protocol to Support Gestalt Language Development, in *Perspectives of the ASHA Special Interest Groups*, 8, 6, pp. 1279–1286. https://doi.org/10.1044/2023_persp-23-00098.
- Börjesson, Peter *et al.*
2015 Designing technology for and with developmentally diverse children – A systematic literature review, in *Proceedings of IDC 2015: The 14th International Conference on Interaction Design and Children*. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2771839.2771848>.
- Braidotti, Rosi
2013 *The Posthuman*, Polity Press.
- den Houting, Jacqueline *et al.*

- 2021 'I'm not just a guinea pig': Academic and community perceptions of participatory autism research, in *Autism*, 25, 1, pp. 148–163. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361320951696>.
Girolametto, Luigi *et al.*
- 1986 Developing dialogue skills: The Hanen early language parent program, in *Seminars in speech and language*, 7, 4, pp. 367–382. Thieme Medical Publishers, Inc.
- Lazar, Amanda *et al.*
- 2018 Making as expression: Informing design with people with complex communication needs through art therapy, in *Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems – Proceedings, 2018–April*. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3173574.3173925>.
Nicolaidis, Christina *et al.*
- 2011 Collaboration strategies in nontraditional community-based participatory research partnerships: lessons from an academic–community partnership with autistic self-advocates, in *Prog Community Health Partnersh*, 5, 2, pp. 143–150. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cpr.2011.0022>.
Pellicano, Elizabeth, den Houting, Jacqueline
- 2022 Annual Research Review: Shifting from 'normal science' to neurodiversity in autism science, in *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines*, 63, 4, pp. 381–396. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.13534>.
Pellicano, Elizabeth *et al.*
- 2022 A capabilities approach to understanding and supporting autistic adulthood, in *Nature Reviews Psychology*, 1, 11, pp. 624–639. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44159-022-00099-z>.
Pepper, Jan, Weitzman, Elaine
- 2004 *It takes two to talk: A practical guide for parents of children with language delays*, Hanen Centre.
- Wilson, Cara *et al.*
- 2019 Co-design beyond words: 'Moments of interaction' with minimally-verbal children on the autism spectrum, in *Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems – Proceedings*. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3290605.3300251>.

Tracking large carnivores in the Anthropocene. An ethnographic proposal for exploring more-than-human worlds

Roberto D'Alba, University of Padua and Ca' Foscari Venice

roberto.dalba.1@phd.unipd.it

In recent decades, a series of socio-economic and ecological transformations have facilitated the return of large carnivores to areas where they had been previously extirpated. These rewilding processes, whether autonomous or human-driven, are often accompanied by increasingly conflictual relationships that undermine long-term coexistence and pose new challenges related to how to live with a presence that may be as uncomfortable as it is spectacular.

This presentation draws on ethnographic research in Trentino, Italy, to explore tracking as both a methodological tool and object of inquiry. In particular, it explores tracking as a multifaceted set of practices that underscores important aspects of the contemporary spatial and affective dimensions of human, bear and wolf cohabitation. Indeed, tracking is a privileged activity for investigating the interplay between space, power, technology, knowledge systems and more-than-human agencies in the context of conservation. As a scientific activity, tracking involves wildlife monitoring, data collection and mapping, with significant implications for biosecurity and conservation policies (O'Mahony, Corradini & Gazzola, 2018). Simultaneously is an affective embodied experience that engages the tracker with the multisensory and multispecies fabric of the landscapes (Morizot, 2021, Gandy, 2024). 'To trace' is above all to follow paths that connect visibility and invisibility, presence and absence. Traces and paths are the interweaving of multi-temporal lines of movements inscribed in the landscape that, once retraced, allow us to explore how landscapes are formed, transformed and inhabited by human and non-human beings (Ingold, 2010, Du Plessis, 2022).

The ethnographic involvement in tracking activities conducted both by field-scientists, citizen-scientists and unprofessional naturalists, unfolded the potential of tracking as a methodology for multispecies ethnography. In particular, three aspects of tracking practices are discussed: knowledge-making, landscaping, and metamorphosis. These dimensions highlight how tracking unsettle traditional binarism such as nature/artificial, human/nonhuman and science/local knowledge and opens up a space of possibility for rethinking coexistence as a multispecies relational achievement.

References

Du Plessis, Pierre

2022 Tracking meat of the sand: Noticing multispecies landscapes in the Kalahari. *Environmental Humanities*, 14(1), 49–70.

Gandy, Matthew
 2024 Attentive Observation: Walking, Listening, Staying Put. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 1-19.
 Ingold, Tim
 2000 *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. London and New York: routledge.
 Ingold, Tim
 2010 Footprints through the weather-world: walking, breathing, knowing. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16: S121–S139.
 Morizot, Baptiste
 2020 *Sulla pista animale*. Nottetempo.
 O'Mahony, Kieran, Corradini, Andrea, & Gazzola, Andrea
 2018 Lupine becomings – tracking and assembling Romanian wolves through multi-sensory fieldwork. *society & animals*, 26(2), 107-129.

Exploring socio-material undercurrents. Post-human performativity in situated participatory design work

Andy Peruccon, Malmö University

andy.peruccon@mau.se

Xinquan Wen, Malmö University

xinquan.wen@mau.se

Rethinking the way of being “After Progress” as Savransky (2021b) brilliantly put it, invites us to imagine human and more-than-human forms of life as part of a broader paradigm shift, that challenges practices like design to move beyond functionalist and rationalist perspectives—embracing instead—the idea that we inhabit a world of many worlds (Escobar, 2018) – each filled with countless stories and lives that deserve our attention and attunement. Design deals and has always dealt with problematisation (Schön, 1983; Simon, 1996), as in naming things, framing them and ultimately attending to them. If, as Savransky (2021a) suggests, problematising is a generative process intrinsic to life itself, then in a world of many worlds, problematising becomes an act of ‘becoming-with’ multiple perspectives. Here, the focus shifts from solving a singular, compelling problem to recognising that multiple problems coexist within diverse, contingent situations. These problems are not isolated but are shaped and aggregated by the interplay of socio-material elements and their respective historical undercurrents, each carrying its own historicity and complexity (from people, rocks, plants, animals and even clouds, bodies of water). The issue for design all of a sudden is not anymore about how to include more participants in a design process, but understanding how we shape the world and the world shapes us back; how the more we acknowledge the undercurrents weaving together in highly situated contexts, the more we open up to possibilities for creation.

While scholars have been shedding light on the issue of subjectivity in ethnography, the discussions often lead to the emphasis on the value of appropriate analysis, interpretation, and presentation (Forsythe, 1999; Silverman, 2014) instead of questioning the subject-object divisions in the first place. Furthermore, while participatory design has gained a lot of interest in feminist and post-humanist studies, bridging this gap by acknowledging more-than-human subjectivities, its traditions are still anchored in axioms related to democracy, inclusion, and problem-solving. In this view, we praise many other insights into design and participatory design research that aim at challenging its traditions through the integration of caring, reflexive and relational practices—see the work of Light, Akama (2018), Stengers et al. (2023), and Svanæs (2013). With this contribution, we do not seek to reject traditional tenets, but we rather wish to reflect—and perhaps, expand—the activity of design when design enters a realm of a world emerging through its socio-material interactions. Rather than focusing on relata as scientific objects of study, this shift highlights their relations and prompts questions about how those relations might be accessed in the first place. This approach considers threading carefully between what one considers real (ontology) and how one conceives of accessing the real (epistemology). The heated debate on the issues of representation is still very much present in design work, and we ask ourselves in what other ways we can access and work with knowledge if we consider that it does not only come through human understanding but also through the agency of matter (and the non-human). To make this further step, we draw from the notion of Performativity, which has influenced the arts since the end of the 20th century. Building on the work of Karen Barad (2003; 2007), we explore post-human performativity, and its potential to provide a framework for conducting design research at the intersection of artistic practice. This framework offers a diffractive perspective on how, as humans, we engage with the world

and how realities (including our own) emerge through these interactions. This way of thinking aligns with the concept of “Re-tracing,” a process that emphasises the need to uncover the intricate interdependencies between human and more-than-human relations. Through this lens, we seek to re-examine the entangled realities that shape our world – not merely by acknowledging the co-constituted interconnections of all beings, but by embracing the understanding that phenomena are constantly evolving. This continual unfolding not only gives rise to new worlds but also brings forth new problems and possibilities for ways of being, inviting us to rethink and reimagine our place within these interdependencies.

By looking at two distinct cases emerging from our own individual practices, we discuss the opportunity to link a post-humanist notion of performativity with the overarching ontological turn in design. We bring forward the possibility of queering methods for participatory design by rethinking what it means to engage in design within ever-changing, dynamic contexts – contexts that resist replication, embrace the somatic over the rational, and celebrate multiplicity over singularity. In this approach, the sensuous becomes a guiding compass for understanding, challenging the dominance of language as a tool for schematically defining the world. By inviting these shifts, we aim to open up new possibilities for design that resonate deeply with the complexities and nuances of lived experiences.

References

- Barad, Karen.
2003. ‘Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter’. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28(3): 801–31. doi:10.1086/345321.
- Barad, Karen.
2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Escobar, Arturo.
2018. *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds*. Durham: Duke University press.
- Forsythe, Diana E.
1999. “‘It’s Just a Matter of Common Sense’: Ethnography as Invisible Work”. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW)* 8(1–2): 127–45. doi:10.1023/A:1008692231284.
- Light, Ann, and Yoko Akama.
2014. ‘Structuring Future Social Relations’. In *Proceedings of the 13th Participatory Design Conference on Research Papers – PDC ’14*, PDC ’14, New York, NY, USA: Association for Computing Machinery, 151–60. doi:10.1145/2661435.2661438.
- Savransky, Martin.
2021a. ‘After Progress: Notes for an Ecology of Perhaps’. *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization* 21(1): 267–81.
- Savransky, Martin.
2021b. ‘Problems All the Way Down’. *Theory, Culture & Society* 38(2): 3–23. doi:10.1177/0263276420966389.
- Schön, Donald A.
1983. *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. New York: Basic Books.
<http://archive.org/details/reflectivepracti0000scho> (January 24, 2025).
- Silverman, David.
2014. *Interpreting Qualitative Data*. 5E ed. Los Angeles London New Delhi Singapore Washington DC: SAGE.
- Simon, Herbert A.
1996. *The Sciences of the Artificial*. 3rd ed. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Stengers, Isabelle, Marc Higgins, and Maria Wallace.
2024. ‘In Conversation with Isabelle Stengers: Ontological Politics in Catastrophic Times’. In *Reimagining Science Education in the Anthropocene, Volume 2*, eds. Sara Tolbert, Maria F.G. Wallace, Marc Higgins, and Jesse Bazzul. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 363–87. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-35430-4_20 (January 24, 2025).
- Svanæs, Dag.
2013. ‘Interaction Design for and with the Lived Body’. *ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction* 20(1): 1–30. doi:10.1145/2442106.2442114.

Re-tracing Milanese air pollutants’ data journey

Rita Duina, University of Milano Bicocca

r.duina@campus.unimib.it

Between 18 and 20 February 2024, IQAir, a Swiss-US company, published worrying data on particulate matter (PM2.5) levels in the air breathed in Milan (Italy), second only to Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Chengdu, China. The information, bounced around on various social media platforms, infuriated Milan Mayor Giuseppe Sala, who

declared that IQAir's data were unreliable and that, on the contrary, Milan's air quality according to ARPA, the public company that produces air quality data in Lombardy Region, was improving. Politicians, experts, data journalists, data activists and environmentalist social groups such as Cittadini per l'aria [eng. Citizens for the air] moved in the wake of the news to join the debate on the veracity and reliability of the data and the claim for a healthier city. The milanese anecdote shows how, while the institutional public actors keep invoking more accurate and precise air pollutants data to engage in any material action towards air quality improvements, communities' members seem to consider IQAir's data 'good enough' to engage in political claims and to perform a specific kind of citizenship, namely 'data citizenship'. This methodological paper proposes to expand the literature around data political ecology discussing how the Data Journey as a multi-sited ethnographic methodology could be effective in investigating the complex entanglements of milanese citizens, air pollutants and the data devoted to their representation, without techno-oppressive or techno-enthusiast prejudices. The relatively recent scholarships in the field of political ecology of data (Goldstein and Nost, 2022) have pointed out the risks of an uncritical adoption of an agnostic, datafied idea of nature. Indeed, in the era of the anthropocene and global climate emergency data are growingly considered the one and only way to achieve mitigation and adaptation to climate change (Espinoza et al., 2021; Isenhour et al., 2016), up to the point that 'the problem of environmental change then often becomes a problem of gathering data and acting on that data within the terms set by these modes of calculation' (Gabrys, 2016b, p. 2), re-defining political agendas around climate change management. However, many data activism scholars have underlined how data are not just political from a top-down perspective but they can become tools and objects of 'on the ground' practices: the the processes for validating, distributing and acting on environmental data are key sites of materialization and contestation, where new engagements with environmental politics and citizenship are worked through and realized.' (ibid.) In this respect, environmental data has particular political a/effects by informing relations and ways of life, which environmental data potentially solidify or unsettle.' (Gabrys, 2016b, p. 3)' and therefore, it becomes particularly important to investigate their onto-ethic-epistemology through appropriate methodologies.

The multi-sited, ethnographic methodology of the Data Journey – introduced by Bates and colleagues in 2016 to study the journey of UK meteorological data from their sites of production in local meteorological stations to financial markets –, allows to follow IQAir milanese air pollutants data through their crafting, interpretation, dissemination and manipulation by different human and non human actors. Data Journey is structured precisely around the observation of the socio-material constitution of data as they move between heterogeneous and interconnected sites of activation and application. This methodology captures data lifecycle from their initial generation to their reuse in different albeit interconnected contexts (Bates et. al., 2016; Edwards et. al., 2013); it pays attention to potential movement, stopping points, speed and timing, forking, replication and re-use of data in different ways in different places and eventual 'frictions' (Edwards, 2010). That said, Data Journey appears particularly suitable to address the following research questions: a) how air pollution data are crafted and distributed? b) What does air pollutants data do when they are assembled with different societal actors, namely active civil society members, experts (such as data scientists and data journalists), businesses and politicians? c) do these assemblages enable any kind of discursive and/or material practices towards climate change adaptation and sustainable transition? If yes, which ones? Which are the other non-human actors that assembled with air pollutants data enable or disable any form of political change towards sustainable transition? This methodological paper intends to demonstrate the applicability of the Data Journey to the study of data political ecology most pressing concerns through its adoption and operationalization within the Milanese urban context to address the just mentioned research questions.

References

- Bates Jo., Lin Yuwei, Goodale, Paula
2016 «Data journeys: Capturing the socio-material constitution of data objects and flows», in *Big Data & Society*, July–December 2016, pp. 1–12.
- Bennett, Jane
2020 «The Agency of Assemblages and the North American Blackout in Public Culture» in 17(3) *Duke University Press*, pp. 445–65,
- Edwards, Paul, Jackson, Steven, Chalmers, Melissa, Borgman, Christine, Ribes, David
2013 Knowledge Infrastructures: Intellectual Frameworks and Research Challenges.
http://pne.people.si.umich.edu/PDF/Edwards_etal_2013_Knowledge_Infrastructures.pdf, visited 10/02/22
- Fortun, Kim

2012 «Biopolitics and the informing of environmentalism» In Sunder Rajan K. (editor) *Lively Capital: Biotechnologies, Ethics, and Governance in Global Markets*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, pp. 306–326.

Gabrys, Jennifer
 2016, b. «Practicing, materialising and contesting environmental data» in *Big Data & Society*, July–December 2016, pp. 1–7.

Gabrys, Jennifer., Pritchard, Helen, & Barratt, Benjamin.
 2016 «Just good enough data: Figuring data citizenships through air pollution sensing and data stories» in *Big Data & Society*, 3(2)

Ghelfi, Andrea
 2023 «Political ecology in more than human worlds» in Pellizzoni L. (editor), *Introduzione all'ecologia politica*, Milano, Il Mulino

Goldstain, Jenny and Nost, Eric.
 2022 *Introduction: The Nature of Data Infrastructures, Environments, Politics*. University of Nebraska Press

Kennedy, Helen
 2018 «Living with Data: Aligning Data Studies and Data Activism Through a Focus on Everyday Experiences of Datafication.» in *Krisis : Journal for Contemporary Philosophy*, 2018 (1). pp. 18-30.

Machen Ruth, Nost, Eric
 2021 Thinking algorithmically: The making of hegemonic knowledge in climate governance.» in *Trans Inst Br Geogr*. 2021, 46 pp. 555–569.

Marcus, George. E.
 1995 «Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography.» in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24(1), pp. 95–117.

Pritchard, Helen and Gabrys, Jennifer
 2016, a «From Citizen Sensing to Collective Monitoring: Working through the Perceptive and Affective Problematics of Environmental Pollution» in *GeoHumanities*, 2:2, pp. 354-371,

Farm to fork entanglements. Using arts-based methods to “retrace” the socialities of the asparagus plant

Anna Tudos, Free University of Bolzano-Bozen

panka@tudos.hu

How can arts-based methods used in ethnographic research contribute to our understanding of interspecies co-existence? From a human perspective, one of the main points of interaction with plants is consuming them as food. However, in our contemporary commercial food systems, plants are often regarded as unconditionally available for use and exploitation by humans (Fowkes, Fowkes, 2022). With agribusiness models' growing prevalence and the use of technology in food farming, the interaction between humans and edible plants is mostly restricted to the supermarket (Marder, 2013).

The cultivation of asparagus, however, requires specialist care. It needs to be hand-picked carefully and at the right time – by humans. Asparagus bunches contain only the shoots of the plant, while after harvest, plants are grown to up to 2-meter height to ensure a better crop next year. White asparagus is even deprived of sunlight for photosynthesis, which is done by covering the fields with black-and-white tarps and controlling the temperatures underneath. As in South Tyrol, asparagus is a subsidiary crop for farmers mainly growing apple and/or grapes in the other seasons, it presents itself as a unique case study, entangled in other growing systems, but requiring special care and the unlearning of certain practices. Following a place-based logic, the PhD research is situated in Northern Italian medium-scale farms, which are famous for their asparagus.

The proposed presentation uses deep mapping methodology through arts-based methods, which is proposed as an effective approach for multispecies ethnographic research. Deep mapping is a multidisciplinary method drawing from the arts, alongside spatial anthropology, urban cultural studies, cultural memory and spatial humanities. Arts-based research for deep mapping can generate interdisciplinary expertise, provide new orientations to issues and produce practical abilities, for example, to engage with the asparagus plant (Bodenhamer et al., 2021; Modeen, Biggs, 2020). Field note sketches are expanded into dialectograms to reflect environmental, social and personal constellations. The visualisation of the aerial (satellite) view of the Adige valley, “the field”, is used to elaborate on nature-culture contact zones, the layers of time, and the researcher's place in this environment (Brown, 2022). I also present my case study in the context of «retracing», moving beyond established ways of describing and revealing difficult-to-see interdependencies.

A theoretical perspective of posthumanism is used to analyse the asparagus's role in the vision of planetary coexistence. Critical plant studies have been exploring the avenues of human-plant interconnectedness and plant intelligence in an interdisciplinary manner (Gibson, Brits, 2018; Ryan et al., 2021) and the study makes use

of the field's scientific advances. Overall, the study allows for the definition of 'asparagus socialities', based on human and non-human agents' needs, experiences, and communicative acts around the asparagus plant.

References

- Bodenhamer, David, John Corrigan, & Trevor, M., Harris (Eds.).
2021 *Making Deep Maps: Foundations, Approaches, and Methods* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Brown, Imani Jaqueline
2022 «Ecological Witnessing», in Bridget Crone, Sam Nightingale, and Polly Stanton (Ed.), *Fieldwork for Future Ecologies*, Eindhoven, Onomatopée, pp. 21-48.
- Fowkes, Maja, Reuben Fowkes
2022 *Art and Climate Change (World of Art)*. Thames & Hudson
- Gibson, Prudence, Brits Baylee
2018 *Covert plants: vegetal consciousness and agency in an anthropocentric world*. punctum books
- Modeen, Mary, Biggs, Iain
2020 *Creative engagements with ecologies of place: Geopoetics, Deep mapping and slow residencies*. Routledge
- Marder, Michael
2013 *Plant-thinking: A philosophy of vegetal life*. Columbia University Press
- Ryan, John C., Patrícia I. Vieira, Gagliano, Monica
2021 *The mind of plants: Narratives of vegetal intelligence*. Synergetic Press.

20. Collectivities rule their own lands: Ethnography and interdisciplinary approaches for territories of life

Convenors: Marta Villa & Mauro Iob (University of Trento)

Discussants: Matteo Cosulich (University of Trento), Marco Bassi (University of Palermo) & Alessandro Mancuso (University of Palermo)

Against the tyranny of the minority in representative democracy. Collective Domains and conflict with public institutions

Mauro Iob, University of Trento

mauroiob@mauroiob.it

Marta Villa, University of Trento

marta.villa@unitn.it

Collective Domains, present in numerous places in Italy, are made up of land and people: they are part of the Territories of Life, spaces that communities possess and defend to safeguard their socio-cultural and economic survival (Iob, Villa 2025). Each culture has its own way of conceiving its own Territory of Life, however, some characteristics of collective Domains are present globally (Ostrom 1990). Collective property rights have a very ancient history, formally dating back to medieval forms of land tenure, but were present as customary even earlier (Fraas 1847). These collegial and autonomous forms of property governance have managed to overcome the vicissitudes of history and are still alive and vital today, have adapted to the present time and show a clear vision of the future, which emerges above all from the actions that the participants of the collective Domains, the subjects of ownership, collectively plan and implement with the help of all. These collectivities, in fact, appear to be guided by conscious solidarity (Honneth 2001): they display capacities for good governance. They have drawn from the past forms of social cohesion and of reading the phenomena they introduce to take care of their territories using ecosystemic visions (Guattari 1989). They are guided by the categorical imperative (rights of man as an individual and in the social formations where his personality takes place Art. 2 Const.) to hand over improved collective Domains to future generations (Grossi 2019). Collective Domains propose forms of governance that are not aligned with the liberal representative conception of democracy: the collective assembly that provides itself with its own statute (Rules) has a very high level of decision-making autonomy. The members of the collective Domain represent themselves and are not represented by anyone but themselves: this way of conceiving decision-making power positions them as 'foreign' entities in Western democracies (Balibar 2022). The various case studies analyzed and presented are intended to document: the misunderstandings with public administrations that hinder them, attempt to suppress them, plunder them of their assets (Villa 2023). At the same time, the constant comparison between the ways of governing the agro-sylvo-pastoral patrimony of public administrations and collective domains shows the almost unbridgeable gap between those who are capable, the latter, of maintaining healthy environments without dissipating their resources and those who, instead, are enticed by speculations that irreparably compromise the patrimony in collective private property. The Italian case sets the standard: the Republic recognizes Collective Domains as primary legal orders, the Law 168/2017 that protects them is a 'constitutionally necessary' law because it implements the Italian Constitution (Fioravanti 2014; Zagrebelsky 2023). They are in fact defined as subjects owning private property, and the limits to the same, i.e. the constraints of inalienability, inusucapability, indivisibility and perpetual use have not been forcibly imposed by State Law but have only been incorporated in the same because they were already present ab origine in these institutions.

References

Balibar, Étienne

2022 *Oltre i confini. Per una rifondazione dell'Europa*, Roma, Castellecchi.

Fioravanti, Maurizio

2014 *Pubblico e privato. I principi fondamentali della Costituzione*, Napoli, Editoriale Scientifica.

Fraas, Karl

1847 *Klima und Pflanzenwelt in der Zeit: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte beider*. Landshut, J.G. Wölfl.

Grossi, Paolo

- 2019 *Il mondo delle terre collettive. Itinerari giuridici tra ieri e domani*, Macerata, Quodlibet
- Guattari, Félix
- 1989 *Les trois écologies*, Paris, Edition Galilée.
- Honneth, Axel
- 2001 «Recognition or redistribution? Changing perspectives on the moral order of society», in *Theory, Culture and Society*, 18, 2-3, pp. 43-55.
- Iob, Mauro, Marta Villa
- 2025 *La sfida di quell'altro modo di possedere. Come attraverso la ragione si conserva senza dissipare*, Roma, Aracne.
- Ostrom, Elinor
- 1990 *Governing the Commons: the evolution of institutions for collective action*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Villa, Marta
- 2023 «Agroecologia e antropologia pubblica nelle Terre Alte: comunità, margini, saperi trasversali», in *Antropologia Pubblica*, 1, pp. 25-42.
- Zagrebel'sky, Gustavo
- 2023 *Tempi difficili per la Costituzione. Gli smarrimenti dei costituzionalisti*, Roma-Bari, Laterza.

The occupation of public space as a way of engaging in the world. Ethnographic study of a peri-urban neighborhood

Samiha Hamdi, University of Sfax, Tunisia

samiha.hamdi@flshs.usf.tn

After the 2011 revolution, illegal practices have turned common and democratized. The occupation of public spaces in the city has ever since become one of their most widespread forms. Our survey involves an ethnographic study of a working-class neighborhood located on the outskirts of the city of Sfax in Tunisia. This study focuses on the occupation of public spaces (like sidewalks, public gardens, and fields) as a form of resistance to territorial inequalities and social exclusion. It also seems important to jointly analyze the modes of governance of these spaces that escape state control and to question how the state manages these transgressive practices of the urban order.

Based on ethnographic research, this study will try to demonstrate that illegalisms present themselves as a mode of governance or a form of "silent arrangement" that settles between public actors and the local population to have social peace. For their part, the inhabitants of the said neighborhood develop methods of action to manage their territory. We, therefore, speculate they "dwell" it in its pragmatic dimension; that is to say as a way of engaging in the world. It is in this sense that we analyze the occupation of public spaces within the framework of pragmatic regimes of engagement in the human and non-human environment. It is a form of "dwelling" reflecting how people identify and recognize themselves in these spaces.

References

- Abel Olivier « Habiter la cité », *Autres Temps*, Cahiers d'éthique sociale et politique. N°46, 1995. pp. 31-42.
- Aguilera Thomas, « Gouverner les illégalismes. Les politiques urbaines face aux squats à Paris », *Gouvernement et action publique*, vol.1, 2012, pp.101-124
- Aguilera Thomas, *Gouverner les illégalismes urbains : les politiques publiques face aux squats et aux bidonvilles dans les régions de Paris et de Madrid*, Paris, 2017.
- Amicelle Anthony, « (Il)légitimité du renseignement financier : usages transnationaux de la traçabilité des flux de capitaux », *Criminologie* 47, no. 2, 2014, pp. 77-104.
- Breviglieri Marc, Pattaroni Luca, « A l'air libre. Notes sur l'expérience vive et commune du dehors. Dehors ! Cultiver l'espace public », Éditions la Baconnière, pp.18-24, 2016.
- Breviglieri Marc « Les habitations d'un genre nouveau. Le squat urbain et la possibilité du " conflit négocié " sur la qualité de vie », in Pattaroni Luca, Rabinovich Adriana, et Kaufman Vincent. (S.dir.), *Habitat en devenir. Enjeux territoriaux, politiques et sociaux du logement en Suisse*, Lausanne, Presses Polytechniques et Universitaires Romandes, 2009.
- Bennafla Karine, « État et Illégalisme: Quelle Géographie ? Une Approche Par Les Flux Marchands Depuis l'Afrique et Le Moyen-Orient », *Annales de Géographie*, vol. 123, no. 700, 2014, pp. 1338-58.
- Chelkoff Grégoire, Thibaud Jean-Paul, « L'espace public, modes sensibles : Le regard sur la ville », *Les Annales de la recherche urbaine*, N°57-58, *Espaces publics en villes*, 1992, pp. 7-16.
- Damon Julien, Marchal Hervé, Stébé Jean-Marc, « Les sociologues et le périurbain : découverte tardive, caractérisations mouvantes, controverses nourries », *Revue française de sociologie*, (Vol. 57), 2016, pp. 619-639.
- Ferron Madeleine et Cliche Robert, « Quand le peuple fait la loi: la loi populaire à Saint-Joseph de Beauce », Montréal, Hurtubise HMH, 1972, pp. 15-16.
- Scott C. James, *La domination et les arts de la résistance. Fragments du discours subalterne*, Paris, Éditions Amsterdam, 2009.

Intertwining Territories of Life and Intentional Communities. Life-affirming systems for more-than-human well-being

Stefan Lazic, University of Trento

stefan.lazic@unitn.it

Maria Della Lucia, University of Trento

maria.dellalucia@unitn.it

Life-affirming heterodoxy seeks to shift the prevailing economic paradigm away from the extractive tendencies of neoliberal capitalism (Waddock, 2022). Human systems based on this heterodoxy, including organizations, value all forms of life, emphasizing human-nature mutuality and reciprocity through life-affirming principles – stewardship of the whole, interconnectedness, collective value co-creation, local governance forms, and regenerativity, among other things. Human systems grounded in these principles enhance the potential of human-nature co-existence, aligning human activities with natural boundaries and fostering mutually beneficial relationships. These systems develop in different contexts and across various scales.

Territories of Life (ToL) (ICCA, 2021) and Intentional communities (ICs) (Lopez & Weaver, 2019) exhibit synergies with life-affirming principles, as their well-being and prosperity are intrinsically tied to the places and lands they inhabit. ToL are areas managed and protected by Indigenous or rural communities whose identity, governance, and cultural heritage are shaped by the relationship with the land and non-human living beings. They govern conserved areas privately and leverage place-based knowledge to improve the management and monitoring of local ecosystems. On the other hand, ICs are intentionally created by groups of people who choose to live cooperatively sharing a communal vision and purpose – e.g. ecological, communal, religious, practical, and co-living motivations (Lopez & Weaver, 2019). Typically located in rural or peripheral areas, ICs establish livelihoods for families and individuals, emphasizing both ideological and geographical separation from mainstream society (Meijering et al., 2007).

ToL and ICs share an ecological consciousness, that is deeply embedded in their cultural identity, linking heritage, landscape, and foundational principles to nature's nurturing. Both emphasize co-evolution and co-existence, fostering collaborative actions, land preservation, and alternative forms of governance that support a collective future. Additionally, both face external pressures threatening their survival. For ToL, this pressure often stems from the extractive tendencies of the mainstream economy, seeking growth on 'unconquered' Indigenous lands. For ICs, challenges arise from the shortcomings of modern society, prompting their intentional separation, even if they maintain an open connection with the external world. ToL and ICs differ primarily in their approach to communal existence within a specific place. ToL embody an outside-in approach; the inhabited place shapes community formation, bonding, and practices, often rooted in ancestral ties to the land. In contrast, ICs reflect an inside-out approach; driven by communal motivations, they deliberately select locations to distance themselves from mainstream systems. Accordingly, due to pre-existing cultural connections to the place, ToL typically receive formal legal recognition at national or international levels. Conversely, as ICs are founded on voluntary agreements among individuals, they frequently lack formal legislative recognition. Finally, ToL tend to maintain closed systems to safeguard ancestral traditions, while ICs are more inclined to engage with external markets to sustain their community models.

This study examines Amalurra, a rural community located in the Basque Country in northern Spain, as a ToL and IC aligned to the principles of life-affirming systems. Initially operating as an ecovillage, Amalurra was established in the mid-1990s to support the flourishing of all life existing on the territory they purchased. In 2020, the community adopted a more open approach, welcoming a broader range of visitors. Central to the community's ethos and activities are the integration of personal well-being with environmental regeneration and the awakening of "the profound feminine" – described as "the genuine female force and value inherent in every woman" (personal communication, 2024).

This study takes a constructivist perspective in examining Amalurra, acknowledging the active role of both participants and researchers. The methodology is based on embedded and embodied ethnography (Wacquant,

2015), encompassing four months of fieldwork alongside in-person and online semi-structured interviews and focus groups conducted over a 10-month period in 2024. The collected data underwent multi-level thematic analysis (Abbott & Monsen, 1979), guided by the principles of life-affirming systems (Waddock, 2022) and the concept of entangled reflexivity in tourism studies (Ateljevic et al., 2005). By intertwining researchers' knowledge, experiences, and positionality with the findings, we facilitated a dynamic interplay between ourselves and the phenomenon under investigation.

Findings show that Amallura is an IC located within a ToL. By deliberately settling in rural areas outside major Basque cities the community has pursued collective co-existence while adapting internal processes to the environment which they inhabited. This integration of inside-out and outside-in approaches fosters holistic co-evolution and co-existence between the community and nature. Their focus on the intertwined health of humans and nature reflects an intrinsic link to the land, shaping a place for more-than-human well-being. This bond with the territory is further strengthened by a profound connection to local cultural heritage and ancestral traditions, which are embedded into all communal activities. The community has embraced the Basque identity in fostering ecological consciousness among members and collective efforts ensuring participatory governance and a long-term commitment to thriving livelihoods. Amalurra's leading principles extend to their economic activities, focused on hosting tourism activity within human-nature harmony. Their approach demonstrates the potential of life-affirming heterodoxy to shape human systems and integrate IC and ToL concepts for the flourishing of all life.

References

- Abbott, Walter F., Monsen, Joseph
 1979 On the Measurement of Corporate Social Responsibility: Self-Reported Disclosures as a Method of Measuring Corporate Social Involvement. *Academy of Management Journal*, 22(3), 501–515.
 Ateljevic, Irena, Harris, Candice, Wilson, Erica, Collins, Francis Leo
 2005 Getting 'Entangled': Reflexivity and the 'Critical Turn' in Tourism Studies. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 30(2), 9–21.
 ICCA Consortium
 2021 Territories of Life: 2021 Report. ICCA Consortium: worldwide.
 Lopez, Christina, & Weaver, Russell
 2019 Placing Intentional Communities in Geography. *Journal of Geography*, 118(5), 197–209.
 Meijering, Louise, Huigen, Paulus, Van Hoven, Bettina
 2007 Intentional communities in rural spaces. *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie*, 98(1), 42–52.
 Wacquant, Loic
 2015 For a Sociology of Flesh and Blood. *Qualitative Sociology*, 38(1), 1–11.
 Waddock, Sandra
 2022 Transforming economics values toward life: From heterodoxy to orthodoxy. *Business Ethics, the Environment & Responsibility*, 31(1), 274–280

Heritage, Indigenous governance and (post)human rights. The craft of multi-sited archaeological ethnography

Francesco Orlandi, University of Macerata

francesco.orlandi@unimc.it

Heritage research has broadened its scope in the last few decades, shifting attention from conservationist concerns to a more socially engaged field of interdisciplinary inquiry. The paper argues that this change is evidence of the growing importance of Indigenous peoples' claims to heritage and territorial governance in academia and the public at large. While community-based approaches have been integrated into legislative frameworks and disciplinary practices of 'public engagement' to support the democratisation of heritage imaginaries, ethically oriented methodologies can become trapped in bureaucratic forms and cultural ceremonialism that reinforce the separation between expert and local knowledge. Critical scholarship in anthropology, archaeology and heritage studies has pointed out the reshaping of epistemic inequities and social injustices in cultural and natural resource management due to the silencing of conflicts for the sake of consensus (Appadurai 2001; Coombe, Baird 2015; Lazzari et al. 2024; Meskell and Pels 2005; Waterton 2015). Addressing this question during my fieldwork in the south-central Andes (Orlandi 2022) has led to an innovative

focus on historicising and mapping pathways to Indigenous sovereignty through the collective memory and materiality of frictional encounters with state and international regimes of heritage conservation.

The research is based on oral history interviews with community members and Indigenous authorities, archival work and multi-period surface surveys around two iconic archaeological sites in their respective countries, i.e. Tiwanaku (Bolivia) and Quilmes (Argentina). These two sites were chosen because they were crucial in shaping an “authorised heritage discourse” (Smith 2006) as nation-states consolidated in the 19th century. In addition, unpacking socio-territorial relations and place-based histories that are alternative and complementary to dominant conservation regimes exposes another layer of commonality between the two sites, despite the distinctly different proportions in terms of visibility and weight of Indigenous social movements in Bolivian and Argentine political arenas, which materialised in the “space of equivocation” (Viveiros de Castro 2004) characterising multicultural recognition policies in both countries.

The paper will illustrate the critical potential of archaeological ethnography to unravel the political ontology of heritage (Harrison 2015) through discursive and material connections that strengthen Indigenous governance in the selected case studies. Archaeological ethnography is an interdisciplinary field of inquiry that looks at how long-standing living entanglements between people, places, and things can help to identify and challenge the structural violence against Indigenous territories and lifeworlds. Combining multi-modal ethnography of heritage sites with a renewed archaeological sensibility toward the recent past (Castañeda 2009; Hamilakis 2011; Meskell 2012) can inform an ethical-methodological strategy that draws attention to the gaps in scientific knowledge and legal frameworks in order to multiply the political possibilities of Indigenous heritage rights within, and outside of, modern politics and regulations.

The interdisciplinary and comparative approach aims to identify and disrupt extractive modes of knowledge production by enhancing co-creation processes and demonstrating the intertwining of place-based heritage narratives and socionatural conflicts. The comparison between the case studies will shed light on the routed emergence of indigeneity as assemblages of cosmopolitical subjectivation, i.e. how and why seemingly disparate processes trigger unique yet comparable community actions that unsettle normative understandings of heritage and give rise to ecologically constituted collective subjects that confront the suffering inflicted upon them.

References

- Appadurai, Arjun
2001 «The globalization of archaeology and heritage», in *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 1, 1, pp. 35-49
- Castañeda, Quetzil
2009 «The ‘ethnographic turn’ in archaeology: Research positioning and reflexivity in ethnographic archaeologies», in Quetzil E. Castañeda, Christopher N. Matthews (Eds.), *Ethnographic Archaeologies: Reflection on stakeholders and archaeological practice*, Lanham, AltaMira Press, pp. 25–62.
- Coombe, Rosemary J, Melissa Baird
2016 «The limits of heritage: Corporate interests and cultural rights on resource frontiers», in William Logan, Máiréad Nic Craith, Ullrich Kockel (Eds.), *A Companion to Heritage Studies*, Chichester, John Wiley & Sons, pp. 338-354
- Hamilakis, Yannis
2011 «Archaeological Ethnography: A Multitemporal Meeting Ground for Archaeology and Anthropology», in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 40, 399–414.
- Lazzari, Marisa, Peter B. Larsen, Francesco Orlandi
2024 «Introduction-The heritage and decoloniality nexus: Global exchanges and unresolved questions in sedimented landscapes of injustice», in *American Anthropologist*, 126, 2, pp. 311-316.
- Meskell, Lynn
2012 «Archaeological Ethnography: Materiality, Heritage, and Hybrid Methodologies», in Davis Shankland (Ed.), *Archaeology and Anthropology: Past, Present and Future*, London, Routledge, pp. 133–144.
- Meskell, Lynn, Peter Pels
2005 «Introduction: Embedding Ethics», in Lynn Meskell, Peter Pels (Eds.), *Embedding Ethics*. London, Routledge, pp. 1–26.
- Orlandi, Francesco
2022 «Indigenous Heritage and Ontological Conflicts in the Southcentral Andes», in *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation History, Theory, and Criticism*, 19, 2, pp. 17-30.
- Smith, Laurajane
2006 *Uses of Heritage*. London, Routledge.
- Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo
2004 «Perspectival Anthropology and the Method of Controlled Equivocation», in *Tipiti: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 2, 3–22.
- Waterton, Emma

Italian Federation of Collective Domains: recognition, protection and active self-government

Ragazzi Carlo, Centro Studi sui Demani Civici e le Proprietà Collettive, University of Trento

fed-dominicollettivi@libero.it

Collective Domains have been present in Italy since the Middle Ages, today they are alive and vital and do not represent a nostalgic remnant of a lost past: they are dynamic realities that continue in their work of guardianship, care and protection of the environment and landscape (Grossi 2008). Collective Domains are made up of people and land in their ownership, they have precise constraints: these assets are inalienable, inusucapible, indivisible and with perpetual use. Resources are still needed for communities to live in dignity on their lands by implementing actions of solidarity and self-government (Nervi 2017). Until now, they have not had an autonomous and adequate national representation that could help them in the protection of their rights, which are often put at risk due to external actions aimed at taking away their autonomy and property (de Nitto 2018). In 2024, the Italian Federation of Collective Domains came into being, which began a series of activities of self-education of the proprietary collectivities themselves, information towards the generality of the inhabitants, accreditation at the highest institutions of the republic, and dissemination of the extraordinary and innovative scope of Law 168/2017, which filled a legislative vacuum that had persisted since 1927 when the then Government of the Kingdom of Italy had passed a law liquidating the lands of civic use (Public Property and Individual Property). The Federation, whose purpose is also the union representation of collective Domini, gathers within itself the voices of different collectivities from almost all Italian regions and autonomous provinces. The paper aims to document the history of this birth, the causes of its origin and the cultural objectives and maturity of the times to move from passive to pro-active representation.

References

Grossi Paolo

2008, «Usi civici: una storia vivente», in *Archivio Scialoja-Bolla*, 1: 19-27.

Nervi Pietro

2017, «Assetti fondiari collettivi. Tutela ambientale e valorizzazione», in *Archivio Scialoja-Bolla*, 1: 129-144.

de Nitto Achille

2018, «Qualche nota sulle formazioni sociali nella Repubblica», in *Archivio Scialoja-Bolla*, 2, 121-138.

Rules and practices in rice production in Piedmont. Legal and anthropological aspects

Roberta Lombardi, University of Eastern Piedmont

roberta.lombardi@uniupo.it

Rossana Pennazio, University of Eastern Piedmont

rossana.pennazio@uniupo.it

Davide Porporato, University of Eastern Piedmont

davide.porporato@uniupo.it

Northern Italy produces more than 90% of Italian rice. Rice cultivation is an extremely relevant trait that characterizes not only the economy of the territory, but also the identity of the places and defines their landscape. This agricultural system is the outcome of a complex historical process in which water is the central resource. In the management of water resources is included the epic of canalization which, especially during the nineteenth century, endowed the Piedmont irrigated plain with an articulated infrastructure built through the combination of ingenious insights and traditional popular knowledge. It is a ramified system of interconnected canals, developed since the late Middle Ages, the backbone of which is the Cavour Canal. Associated with this enormous hydraulic infrastructure serving agriculture there is the elaboration, by a plurality of social actors, of a complex framework of laws and regulations, but also of customary, unwritten rules that

are fundamental for managing water, a source of life for rice-growing but also a health risk factor. Water, a common good par excellence, not freely and haphazardly available to all, therefore requires to be administered as well as rice lands. The contribution intends to give an account of the regulatory choices historically produced, the “good practices” that can be inferred from both legal regulations and the recovery of oral memories, and how they have been transposed into practice. A regulatory heritage, written and oral, that in the present can once again become a source of inspiration for legislators.

References

- Andrews G., 2008 *The Slow Food Story. Politics and Pleasure*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal; trad. it. 2010 *Slow food. Una storia tra politica e piacere*, Il Mulino, Bologna.
DOI : 10.3898/136266206820466200
- Bagnaresi P. et al., 2012 «Comparative transcriptome profiling of the early response to *Magnaporthe oryzae* in durable resistant vs susceptible rice (*Oryza sativa* L.) genotypes», in *PLoS One*, 7(12): e51609, doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0051609.
DOI : 10.1371/journal.pone.0051609
- Barberis C., a cura di, 2009 *Ruritalia. La rivincita delle campagne*, Donzelli, Roma.
- Bérard L., Marchenay P., 2004 *Les produits de terroir. Entre cultures et règlements*, Cnrs, Paris.
DOI : 10.4000/books.editions-cnrs.9368
- Berengo Gardin G., 2013 *Il racconto del riso*, Contrasto, Roma.
- Braudel F., 1977 *Capitalismo e civiltà materiale (secoli XV-XVIII)*, Einaudi, Torino.
- Cabiati I., 2014 *Il canale Cavour*, Museo Regionale di Scienze Naturali-Centro Stampa della Regione Piemonte, Torino.
- Faccini L., 1976 *Uomini e lavoro in risaia. Il dibattito sulla risicoltura nel '700 e nell'800*, Franco Angeli, Milano.
- Fassino G., 2015 «Presidi Slow Food e buone pratiche di comunità. Il caso della Piattella canavesana di Cortereggio», in P. Corvo, G. Fassino (a cura di), *Quando il cibo è benessere. Alimentazione e qualità della vita*, Franco Angeli, Milano: 191-205.
- Fassino G., Porporato D., 2018 *Le ragioni della terra. Parole, gesti e storie dell'agricoltura piemontese*, Università di Scienze Gastronomiche – Laboratorio “Granai della memoria”, Pollenzo-Bra, video digitale, durata 13'56". Direzione scientifica P. Grimaldi; ricerca antropologica di G. Fassino, D. Porporato; regia di L. Ghiardo. Il video è disponibile in rete: www.ricerchedea.it/le-ragioni-della-terra.
- Graziosi D., 2012 *Le storie della risaia*, a cura di R. Cicala, Interlinea, Novara.
- Grimaldi P., Saiu B., 2007 «Tradizioni popolari nelle terre coltivate a riso», in P. Faggi (a cura di), *Sviluppo locale: territorio, attori, progetti. Confronti internazionali*, [in *Memorie geografiche*, n.s., n. 7, supplemento alla *Rivista geografica italiana*]: 238-245.
- Invernizzi A.C., 2017 *La filiera agroalimentare del riso. Aspetti strategici e profili economico-finanziari delle aziende di trasformazione*, Franco Angeli, Milano.
- Maffi L., Woodley E., 2010 *Biocultural diversity conservation. A Global Sourcebook*, Earthscan, London-New York.
DOI : 10.4324/9781849774697
- Peano C., Sottile F., a cura di, 2012 *I Presidi Slow Food in Europa, un modello di sostenibilità. Valutazione dei risultati socioculturali, agroambientali ed economici*, Slow Food-Fondazione Slow Food per la Biodiversità Onlus, Bra.
- Petrini C., 2005a *Slow food revolution. Da Arcigola a Terra Madre: una nuova cultura del cibo e della vita*, conversazione con Gigi Padovani, Rizzoli, Milano.
- Porporato D., «Morte e rinascita di una risorsa sostenibile: le terre d'acqua e il riso Gigante Vercelli», *Archivio antropologico mediterraneo* [Online], Anno XXIV, n. 23 (2) | 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/aam/4764>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/aam.4764>
- Porporato D., 2013 «Narrare la città: alla ricerca dell'identità novarese», in G. Ferrari, M. Leigheb (a cura di), *Narrare la città. Trattati identitari, linguistici e memoria della tradizione a Novara*, Interlinea, Novara: 19-32.
- Porporato D., 2018 «Si comincia dal cappone: vent'anni di Presidi Slow Food», in *Archivio antropologico mediterraneo*, a XXI, n. 20 (1), <http://journals.openedition.org/aam/309>.
DOI : 10.4000/aam.309
- Vassalli S., 1990 *La chimera*, Einaudi, Torino.
- Vassalli S., 2011 *Terra d'acque. Novara, la pianura, il riso*, seconda edizione accresciuta, Interlinea, Novara.

«La robe dal comùn 'a jè di duc' e di nissùn». Collective Domains in Friuli-V. G. (Italy)

Luca Nazzi, Centro Studi sui Demani Civici e sulle Proprietà Collettive, University of Trento

vicinia.friuli@gmail.com

'La robe dal comùn 'a jè di duc' e di nissùn' is an old Friulian proverb in the “Nuovo Pirona” dictionary and its translation and interpretation can be: the goods in common belong to everyone, therefore they are not individual private property. In Friuli, numerous communities, owners of collective ownership – in Friulian 'Bens' / Beni –, which have survived the privatising greed of the 'landowners' and latifundists of yesteryear and the frenzied liquidating or centralising ideology of the public administrations of yesterday and today (Barbacetto, 2000), they became aware that they were the custodians of 'another way of possessing' (Grossi, 1977) and of a model of 'patrimonial management' of natural resources of the highest ecological value (lagoons, countryside, woods, pastures, in 148 municipalities out of 215 in the Friuli-V. G.), fundamental, today more than

ever, to trigger processes towards food and energy self-sufficiency, where the 'patrimonial values of the territory' are the propelling elements of a self-sustainable economy and the material bases for a production aimed at the 'wellbeing' of local society and the consolidation of its capacity for self-government, whose pivot is the Community Assembly (Nervi, 2012).

This different way of owning and administering – fully recognized, at the state level, with Law 168/2017, but not at all at the regional level – has as its fundamental values the unmarketability of natural capital, the usufructuary and participatory patrimonial management of collective resources, the reversibility of management choices the respect of customary norms, the transmission to future generations of what was inherited from the village communities of the ancestors (as specified in the 1997 'Document-Proposal' on 'Civic Lands in the Friuli Mountains' and in the 2006 'Declaration of Collective Ownership') (Lottieri, 2010). The presentation aims to recount these alternative ways of self-government of the territory that have always been devoted to environmental protection (Nazzi, 2011) and implement an active participatory democracy, which continually revitalizes communities through an exercise of citizenship that in other contexts seems to have been gradually lost (Carestiatto 2008).

References

Barbacetto, Stefano

2000 «*Tanto del ricco quanto del povero*» *Proprietà collettive e usi civici in Carnia tra Antico Regime ed età contemporanea*, Pasian di Prato, Lithostampa

Carestiatto, Nadia

2008, *Beni comuni e proprietà collettiva come attori territoriali per lo sviluppo locale*, Tesi di Laurea, University of Padua

https://www.research.unipd.it/handle/11577/3425952?1/Tesi_Carestiatto.pdf

Lottieri, Carlo (ed)

2010 *Dalle Vicinie al Federalismo Autogoverno e responsabilità*, Pordenone, Associazione Culturale Carlo Cattaneo

Nazzi Luca

2011, «Comunisti da sempre. Il Popolo delle Terre collettive in Friuli e sul Carso», in *Tiere furlane Terra friulana*, Rivista di cultura del territorio, 3, 4

Nervi Pietro

2012, «Assesti fondiari collettivi e strategie di governo del territorio», in Aa. Vv., *La città sussidiaria Vivere oltre lo stato*, Associazione culturale Carlo Cattaneo, Pordenone

The collective Domains of Monte Bondone. The self-management of a Territory of Life

Ivan Broll, Centro Studi sui Demani Civici e la Proprietà Collettiva, University of Trento

geombroll@gmail.com

Silvano Baldessari, Centro Studi sui Demani Civici e la Proprietà Collettiva, University of Trento

silvano.baldessari@libero.it

Flavio Franceschini, Centro Studi sui Demani Civici e la Proprietà Collettiva, University of Trento

flavioigolo@yahoo.it

On Monte Bondone there are three collective domains that have provided themselves with their own administration, i.e. an ASUC (Amministrazione Separata dei beni di Uso Civico): these administrations are the expression of the communities owning the heritage in collective ownership, which for the most part consists of agro-sylvo-pastoral assets, but not only (Grossi 2019). The form of self-government exercised allows communities to take care of their living space: once it was decisive for the subsistence of the whole community, today it is decisive for other reasons (Bassi, 2022). The care of forests and pastures makes Monte Bondone a scientifically recognized treasure chest of biodiversity (biosphere): care becomes defense. The three ASUCs were established at different times in history: the one in Sopramonte in the early 1950s, the one in Baselga del Bondone and the one in Vigolo Baselga in more recent times (early 2000s) in relation to inappropriate uses that the Trento municipality and private individuals were making of the community's collective ownership assets. Even today they still exercise this custody, but they are hindered and not recognized: they must defend, even through the courts, their actions, which are never aimed at squandering resources but are aimed at the improved conservation of the environmental heritage (Nervi, 2014). The property-owning communities carried out concrete actions to protect Bondone's landscape heritage against speculations that followed extractive logics: without their clear opposition, guaranteed by Law 168/2017 (Iob, 2023), Monte Bondone would have

seen an important part of its high value nature reserve, the Viote plain, eroded (Villa, 2023). The paper aims to briefly illustrate the history of safeguarding put in place by the communities owning Monte Bondone, which have been acting in synergy for two decades, the attempts to take away their heritage by other forces, and the important function of self-government of the Territory of Life from which the entire general community benefits (Bassi, 2016).

References

Bassi Marco

2016, «Nuove frontiere nella conservazione della biodiversità: Patrimoni di comunità e assetti fondiari collettivi», in *Archivio Scialoja-Bolla. Annali di Studio sulla proprietà collettiva*, 1, 111-136.

2022, «Territories of Life in Europe. Towards a Classification of the Rural Commons for Biodiversity Conservation», in *Antropologia Pubblica*, 8 (2), 101-122.

Grossi Paolo

2019, *Il mondo delle terre collettive. Itinerari giuridici tra ieri e domani*, Macerata, Quodlibet

Iob Mauro

2023, «Se non ci fosse un futuro da rispettare, non ci sarebbe nulla da conservare: la Legge 168/2017 per i territori di vita», in *Slowzine*, 15, 5-6.

Nervi Pietro

2014, «La nuova stagione degli assetti fondiari collettivi in un sistema evolutivo economia/ambiente», in *Archivio Scialoja-Bolla. Annali di Studio sulla proprietà collettiva*, 1, 2014, 87-104

Villa Marta

2023, «Agroecologia e antropologia pubblica nelle Terre Alte: comunità, margini, saperi trasversali», in *Antropologia Pubblica*, 1, 25-42.

Inhabiting Collective Domains. Community and sustainability through the case of the Caseificio Turnario di Pejo

Marta Nadalin, Università di Trento

marta.nadalin@studenti.unitn.it

In Italy some communities manage their land through collective systems, outside traditional private and public ownership structures. These arrangements are rooted in agrosilvopastoral use rights, which are upheld by a community's shared governance (Bigaran, Villa, 2019). The persistence of these systems challenges historical trends, beginning with the enclosures, which sought to eliminate communal thirdness and collective property (Olori, Oliverio 2022). Studying the commons is crucial as they represent examples of self-determination of systems of governance, culture, and land rights (ICCA Consortium, 2022). While precise data on collective properties in Italy are scarce, estimates suggest they account for about 10% of the national agricultural land (Bassi, 2012).

Collective Domains were recognized as a primary legal order of the original communities by Law 168 of 2017. This legislation acknowledges their role in preserving environmental, social, and cultural heritage for the benefit of local communities, as stipulated in Article 1 of the law, which aligns with Articles 2, 9, 42 (second paragraph), and 43 of the Italian Constitution. Article 2 of the law emphasizes the Republic's duty to safeguard these domains.

The relevance for environmental and biodiversity conservation is also suggested by the fact that many collectively owned lands overlap with protected areas (some directly managed by them) and many are part of the Natura 2000 network (Bassi, 2012). The enduring practices of these communities have fostered a close relationship between humans and the land. The non-commercialization of the land subject to civic uses and the use of resources aimed at their perpetual reproducibility (Olori and Oliviero, 2022) allow the transmission of natural heritage from one generation to the next, as indicated in the statutes of the communities. (Bigaran, Villa 2019)

Numerous ASUCs (Separate Administrative Bodies for Fractional Civic-Use Properties) are members of the ICCA-Territories of Life consortium. This consortium amplifies the voices of local and indigenous communities self-managing their territories. Territories of Life emerge when a profound connection exists between a community and its land. This relationship is deeply rooted in the community's history, culture, and identity, which depend on the land for material and immaterial well-being. Case studies analyzed within the ICCA

framework reveal that self-governance of resources generates positive outcomes for both the territory and the community (Saveja, Borrini- Feyerabend, Niederberger, 2019).

Among the most significant Territories of Life in Italy are the highlands Collective Domains, both in terms of their size and political importance. In Trentino, region in which my case study is set, forests cover 63% of the provincial territory, with 14.78% of them managed by ASUCs (Data source: Forest and Wildlife Service-Autonomous Province of Trento). These communities face numerous challenges, including climate change's disproportionate effects on mountain ecosystems, village depopulation, and "legislative contradictions undermining the principles of inalienability, indivisibility, and protection of agroforestry use enshrined in laws governing collective properties" (Bassi, 2012, p. 29). Other challenges arise from weak or absent community management structures.

Nonetheless, Collective Domains continue to exemplify respectful land stewardship. Their practices highlight the importance of land use and the relationships between humans and non-humans, especially in the face of deterritorialization caused by global organizational systems and extractivist logics. These systems often reduce inhabitants to mere consumers, while reterritorialization efforts aim to address areas marginalized by globalization itself (Magnaghi, 2023). Urban-centric development further exacerbates these issues. By extending economic and organizational models typical of cities into surrounding areas, the boundaries between urban and non-urban spaces get eroded, transforming the territories (Carrosio, 2023). The marginalization of Inner Areas, often associated with degradation and depopulation, stems in part from the imposition of metropolitan functions and logic onto these regions (Magnaghi, 2018).

In this context, Collective Domains present an alternative model of land organization and management. These communities embody a way of inhabiting the land that resonates with bioregionalist principles, which seek to regenerate ecological and hydrogeomorphological balances through solidarity-based, non-hierarchical living and self-government focused on territorial care (Magnaghi, Marzocca, 2023). Bioregionalist thought emphasizes care for the relationships – both material and immaterial – that connect a community to its land. It promotes place consciousness, a cultural transformation that fosters awareness of the heritage value of territorial commons as essential for sustaining both individual and collective life (Magnaghi, 2018). By recovering this place consciousness, communities can enhance social life and ensure the sustainable use of land resources. My hypothesis is that the communities of Collective Domains may already demonstrate place consciousness, cultivated through their management practices and deep historical connections to their territories.

My research aims to uncover the foundational aspects of Collective Domains' management system by exploring the interpretations, meanings, and motivations that guide these communities' land-use practices. Specifically, I seek to understand:

- Does place consciousness, as defined by Magnaghi, exist within these communities? What role does it play within the management model?
- What is the nature of human-nature and human-community relationships, both productive and non-productive?
- How do the values underpinning these relationships align with or challenge the current mainstream economical and political system?
- What are the defining characteristics of the collective management model derived from these relationships?

To address these questions, I conducted participant observations and interviews. My analysis focuses on how individuals interpret and assign meaning to their actions, drawing on theories such as those of Schutz, who highlights the significance of subjective meaning in everyday situations.

My case study is the Caseificio Turnario di Pejo, the last dairy in Italy collectively managed by an ASUC. In this system, dairy owners bring milk daily, and the entire day's cheese production is allocated to one of the owners in proportion to their milk contribution. This collective organization emerged from subsistence needs, as producing cheese with small milk quantities was costly or infeasible. Collectively owned dairies were once common but began declining in the 1950s, replaced by large producers' cooperatives. Despite the challenges of collective management, the Caseificio Turnario di Pejo remains a vital part of the community, requiring active participation from its members and managers. These efforts exemplify the dedication needed to sustain this unique form of land stewardship in the modern world (Villa, 2025).

References

Bassi, Marco

2012 Recognition and support of ICCAs in Italy. In Kothari, Ashish, Corrigan, Colleen, Jonas, Harry, Neumann, Aurelie, & Shrumm, Holly (Eds.), *Recognising and supporting territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities: Global overview and national case studies* (Technical Series No. 64). Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, ICCA Consortium, Kalpavriksh, and Natural Justice.

Bigaran, Federico, Marta Villa

2019 Gestione delle aree di uso civico, protezione della biodiversità e salvaguardia del paesaggio: Il caso di studio dell'allevamento e monticazione della Vacca di razza Rendena nei territori a proprietà collettiva in Provincia di Trento. Un approccio ecologico ed antropologico. *Archivio Scialoja-Bolla*, 1, pp. 365–390.

Carrosio, Giovanni Landi Alessandra

2023 Spazio, ambiente, territorio. Teorie, metodi e prospettive di ricerca in sociologia, Roma, Carocci Editore.

ICCA Consortium

2021 Territories of life: 2021 Report. ICCA Consortium: Worldwide, www.report.territoriesoflife.org, visited 02/01/2025.

Magnaghi, Alberto

2019 La bioregione urbana nell'approccio territorialista. In *Contesti. Città, Territori, Progetti*, 1, pp. 26–51, <https://doi.org/10.13128/contesti-10629>.

Magnaghi, Alberto, Ottavio Marzocca

2023 Ecoterritorialismo.

Sajeva, Giulia, Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend, Thomas Niederberger

2019 Meanings and more... Policy brief of the ICCA Consortium (No. 7). ICCA Consortium in collaboration with Cenesta.

Villa, Marta

2025 Le latterie turnarie di Pejo e Campolessi. In F. Fimiani (Conduttore), *Il Verziere di Leonardo* [Episodio podcast audio]. Radio Popolare.

Disponibile su: https://www.radiopopolare.it/puntata/?ep=popolare-ilverzieredileonardo/ilverzieredileonardo_11_01_2025_12_30 Italia.

Legge n. 168/2017 Norme in materia di domini collettivi.

The Italian network of Territories of Life and global challenges of Rural Commons

Federico Bigaran, ICCA Consortium

federico.bigaran@gmail.com

Despite a long historical period in which Italian legislation was for the liquidation of civic uses abolishing the community's ancient land rights, in Italy, as in other European territories, different forms of Rural Commons have survived. They are re-emerging as a relevant factor in biodiversity conservation and local community support overlapping to some extent with officially protected areas (Bassi 2022). The extension of collectively managed lands is relevant. According ISTAT in 2010 610.000 ha of Utilised Agricultural Area, forestry is excluded, are under Rural Commons management. An estimation of the total area collectively managed is 1,5 million hectares, consistently reduced from the year 1947 when the extension was 3 million hectares (INEA 1947). The managing authorities of common lands have the responsibility, and therefore they should have the abilities and the instruments, to manage their agro-forestry-pastoral assets in a sustainable way to maintain the resources for future generations preventing their over-utilization. The core principles of inalienability, indivisibility, and non-applicability of adverse possession norms, the perpetual destination of common lands for agricultural, forestry, and pastoral activities (L. 168/2017), and their inclusion in the areas of landscape conservation by law (art. 142 DL 42/2004) even in the event of liquidation, transfer of rights, and exchange make Rural Commons strategic for biodiversity conservation.

At international level (UNEP - United Nation Environment Programme, CBD- Convention on Biological Diversity, IUCN - International Union for the Conservation of Nature, ILC - International Land Coalition) there is an increasing recognition of the important role of indigenous people and local communities (ICCAs – territories of life) in nature conservation and the sustainable management of resources at global level recognizing the links between community-based governance, environmental conservation and bio-cultural diversity (Borrini-Feyerabend et al., 2010). According to the UNEP-WCMC and ICCA Consortium analysis the Territories of Life (Territories and areas that Indigenous peoples and local communities govern, manage and conserve) could cover at least 28 million km² (most of Europe is not included), which is over one-fifth (21%) of the world's land surface. On the CBD agenda there is the creation of a third environmental protection system formed by Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs). This could be a third pathway for the recognition and support of the collective rights, roles, and responsibilities of Rural Commons as custodians of

rural territories to continue to cultivate their relationships with their territories, self-organize, and strengthen their governance systems and collective rights.

In 2022 an Italian network of Territories of Life was informally established linking members and honorary members of ICCA consortium with Universities, research centers, associations and institution that deals from different perspectives with Rural Commons. The network aims to share information and knowledge, organize meetings and workshops, and support Rural Commons along the way of their recognition and inclusion in the European legal framework as important actors of sustainable development, boosting policy and legislation progress in favor of the common management of agro-forestry-pastoral resources. Several initiatives are on course, mainly at the national and regional level across EU, for defining boundaries, spatial data, and assets of these different forms of self-management of agro-forestry-pastoral resources.

References

- INEA (1947) La distribuzione della proprietà fondiaria in Italia, relazione generale a cura di Giuseppe Medici
- Borrini-Feyerabend, G. (2010). Bio-cultural diversity conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities – examples and analysis. ICCA Consortium and CEnesta for GEF SGP, GTZ, IIED and IUCN/CEESP.
- M.Bassi (2022) Territories of Life in Europe. Towards a Classification of the Rural Commons for Biodiversity Conservation. *Antropologia Pubblica*, 8 (2) 2022, ISSN: 2531-8799
- UNEP-WCMC and ICCA Consortium (2021). A global spatial analysis of the estimated extent of territories and areas conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities, Territories of Life: 2021 Report. UNEP-WCMC (Cambridge, UK) and ICCA Consortium .

Governance partecipativa e gestione sostenibile dei Territori di Vita. Un'indagine etnografica sugli usi civici nelle Madonie

Giorgio Scalici, University of Palermo

scalicigiorgio@gmail.com

La ricerca etnografica che propongo mira a esplorare il complesso mondo degli usi civici in Sicilia, con attenzione all'area delle Madonie. I comuni di Geraci e Petralia Sottana costituiscono i due casi studio principali. Il progetto si colloca all'interno di un campo di studi più ampio che mette in evidenza il ruolo cruciale dei "Territori di Vita" e dei "Rural Commons" (RCs) come forme di gestione collettiva delle risorse naturali e culturali. La ricerca vuole contribuire al dibattito sui modelli alternativi di democrazia e governance presenti in queste aree, evidenziando le modalità attraverso cui le comunità locali proteggono e gestiscono i loro territori, preservando la biodiversità e resistendo alla crescente pressione del capitalismo estrattivo.

Sebbene i *commons* rurali siano una realtà riconosciuta in alcune regioni europee e italiane, in Sicilia rappresentano una questione spesso trascurata, sia dal punto di vista delle politiche pubbliche che della ricerca accademica. La Sicilia, infatti, mostra un grande potenziale in termini di governance partecipativa delle risorse comuni, ma è soggetta a un livello di consapevolezza e gestione inferiore rispetto al Nord Italia. La ricerca fa parte del progetto PRIN 2022 "Valorising rural commons for a greener and fairer society. Insights from Southern and Northern Italy (RuComItaly) – Valorizzare i domini per una società più verde e più equa. Una visione comparativa tra sud e nord Italia (RuComItaly)". Oltre all'Università di Palermo, coinvolge l'Università di Trento e l'Università di Padova. Attraverso un approccio interdisciplinare e l'analisi comparativa mira per comprendere le cause storiche, giuridiche e sociologiche delle differenze tra le diverse regioni italiane

Per la componente siciliana viene adottato un approccio etnografico che coinvolge non solo l'osservazione partecipante, ma anche un'interazione diretta con le comunità locali e i vari stakeholder. L'obiettivo è comprendere come i membri delle collettività locali si auto-organizzano per proteggere i loro Territori di Vita e trasmetterli alle generazioni future anche secondo modelli di partecipazione diretta che possono discostarsi dalle modalità riconosciute per le democrazie rappresentative.

Il contesto contemporaneo, in particolare con l'implementazione del NextGenerationEU Recovery Plan e le nuove politiche europee come il Green Deal e la Strategia per la Biodiversità 2030, offre nuove opportunità per valorizzare i commons rurali. Tuttavia la gestione comune delle risorse naturali da parte delle comunità locali è spesso trascurata nelle politiche settoriali europee, nonostante il loro potenziale nel contribuire agli obiettivi di sviluppo sostenibile e conservazione ambientale. Attraverso questa ricerca, intendo dimostrare che i commons rurali, specialmente nelle aree marginali come le Madonie in Sicilia, potrebbero svolgere un ruolo decisivo nel raggiungimento di questi obiettivi.

Una parte centrale del progetto è costituita dall'analisi del ruolo delle politiche pubbliche e degli strumenti legislativi, come la legge 168/2017 in Italia, che riconosce i diritti delle comunità sui beni di dominio collettivo. Sebbene in alcune regioni italiane tali strumenti siano utilizzati in modo efficace per promuovere la governance partecipativa e sostenibile delle risorse, in Sicilia la loro applicazione risulta limitata. Attraverso lo studio di casi concreti, intendo esplorare le barriere istituzionali e culturali che impediscono una piena realizzazione di questi modelli di governance nel Sud Italia, proponendo eventuali soluzioni per un maggiore coinvolgimento delle comunità locali nella gestione dei loro beni comuni. Il progetto, dunque, non solo vuole contribuire alla ricerca accademica sulla gestione dei commons, ma si propone anche di avere un impatto pratico, offrendo raccomandazioni politiche per migliorare la capacità delle comunità rurali di contribuire alla governance ambientale. In questo senso, l'approccio etnografico si dimostra particolarmente efficace, poiché permette di cogliere le dinamiche quotidiane della vita comunitaria e di evidenziare le modalità con cui queste comunità affrontano le sfide contemporanee, come il cambiamento climatico e lo sfruttamento capitalistico delle risorse naturali.

Self-ruling, governing and managing the lands. A reflection on Rural Commons, sovereignty and hybrid political orders for enhancing forms of direct and collective political governance

Michele Ravaoli, University of Bologna

michele.ravaoli98@gmail.com

Collective property systems and institutions, also known as Rural Commons, constitute the result of processes of political, social and legal self-organisation of local communities that throughout the centuries have produced their own legal order, coexisting with that of the State and composed by socio-anthropological foundations, ancient practices and customs inspired by a communitarian and reicentral model of society. This highlights the legal-pluralist character of the sociopolitical Italian space (Ravaoli, 2024). Such coexistence of diverse legal orders, referring to diverse sociopolitical structures, show that State rule is only one possible solution in terms of political governance. In fact, RCs represent viable alternative experiences proposing a different paradigmatic model of governance which is based on direct, participative, collective ways for taking decisions, dealing with issues and (self)managing the community's lands. So, if the State entity frames governance predominantly in a liberal and representative conception, RCs indicate *another* possible model emerging from and legitimised by customary practices and values. The latter is based on radically different assumptions from those of liberal representative democracy, namely direct participation of people, self-representativity of the members, self-government and self-management. Therefore, it may open to new possibilities for building a more viable and functional form of community-based political governance by returning to community networks the capacity of producing law and of being sovereign on their own lands. This would contrast the contemporary processes of people's alienation from political and legal participation (Mattei, Capra, 2017).

Recognising the originality of such communitarian legal orders, as Italian Law 168/2017 does, represent a clear constataion of their ontological dimension as autonomous pre-State entities (Giulietti, 2018), from which attributing them a series of autonomies and capacities that had been exercised *de facto* since before this recognition. In this sense, it may be interesting to widen the debate by introducing the concept of "hybrid political order" (Boege *et al.*, 2008) to better understand the alternativity and otherness of RCs institutions to more recent forms of political organisations like the State. It refers to situations in which State sovereignty is not absolute due to the disconnection existing between individuals and institutions of the State, between the legitimacy of the State entity and the relevance of other traditional institutions and other social orders, but it is rather mediated and/or contested through these *other* institutions (Boege *et al.*, 2008). The modern State emerged during the 17th century in response to political, economic and military needs, consolidating over the centuries as a socio-political formation supported by the Western bourgeoisies and naturalised as the ultimate model for the achievement of human progress (Minca, Bialasiewicz, 2004). According to Hobbesian theories, the State sovereign power is regarded as a superordinate force supporting internal security and opposing external barbarism through the legitimate use of violence. Yet, in recent times, it has been shown that

sovereignty, understood in a much broader sense, is not an attribute belonging only to the State, but it is exercised by different forms of socio-political organisation (Latham, 2000). This shows that the State does not always have a privileged role, but it must share authority, sovereignty and legitimacy with other actors. If political ruling classes impose their sociopolitical order through the production of legislative acts, intended as norms emerging from the governmental legal power that can make them enforceable and legitimised by the sovereign power that the State assumes (Mattei, Capra, 2017), the normative autonomy characterising RCs relocates the power to define their own social, legal and ultimately political order back into the hands of the community. This has extremely relevant implications regarding sovereignty. Law theory defines sovereignty as an original power independent of any other power, and it is considered as a legal quality pertaining exclusively to the State since the validity of its legal system does not derive from any other superior system (Treccani, n.d.). The RCs legal orders' originality and primacy in relation to the community that produced them, even if dependent upon State recognition, means that they do not derive from any other superior system, as the fact that those orders predate the State itself and have been operative since before the State existed suggests. As territorial sovereignty (considered as the State exclusive competence over its own territory and the resources located therein) turn out to be, rather than something absolute, a relative condition exercised on multiple overlapping levels, questions regarding the absoluteness of State sovereignty in Italy may be raised. Moreover, RCs' original sovereignty, referred to their own territories, is not configured as for the State, i.e. centralised in the hands of a ruling political class holding political and legal power while presenting centralisation as mitigated by the concept of representation, but rather it is placed within the community to which it belongs in a diffused manner among the members of the collective institutions. Such institutions express community's wills through assembly procedures, mainly regarding territorial interventions proposed by the board of directors (which is an organ elected by the community members so that it constitutes an integral part of the community), thus being able to autonomously implement its own methods and criteria of self-government. The community's "*potere di autonormazione civica*" (Crea, 2020, p. 461) constitutes, therefore, a form of direct political participation that represents a potential alternative to the current instruments of political representation, through which returning to communities their original sovereignty over the territory they belong to (De Bonis, Ottaviano, 2022).

Finally, the observation of different empirical case studies regarding various Comunanze Agrarie located across Umbria and Marche has not only grounded the aforementioned reflection, but also allows to attempt at answering to some of the open questions proposed in the session.

References

- Boege, Volker, Brown, Anne, Clements, Kevin, Nolan, Anna
2008 *On Hybrid Political Orders and Emerging States. State Formation in the Context of 'Fragility'*, Berlin, Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management
- Crea, Camilla
2020 «"Spigolando" tra biens communaux, usi civici e beni comuni urbani» in *Politica del Diritto*, 3, pp. 449-464, DOI: 10.1437/98040
- De Bonis, Luigi, Ottaviano, Giovanni
2022 «Assetti fondiari collettivi tra conflittualità e potenzialità territorializzanti», in *Scienze del Territorio*, 10, 1, pp. 44-51, <https://dx.doi.org/10.13128/sdt-13156>
- Giulietti, Walter
2018 «Norme in materia di domini collettivi ed assetti organizzativi», in *Il diritto dell'Economia*, 64, 97, pp. 1041-1057
- Latham, Robert
2000 «Social Sovereignty», in *Theory, Culture & Society*, 17, 4, pp. 1- 18, DOI: 10.1177/02632760022051284
- Mattei, Ugo, Capra, Fritjof
2017 *Ecologia del diritto. Scienza, politica, beni comuni*, Arezzo, Aboca Edizioni
- Minca, Claudio, Bialasiewicz, Luiza
2014 *Spazio e politica. Riflessioni di geografia critica*, Padova, Cedam Edizioni
- Ravaioli, Michele
2024 «Assetti fondiari e domini collettivi: il pluralismo giuridico in Italia», in *Rivista Geografica Italiana – Open Access*, 4, pp. 22-43, <https://doi.org/10.3280/rgioa4-2024oa18971>

Reclaiming Collective Property. Co-Research as a Tool for Strengthening Communities and Resisting Extractivism in the Apuan Alps

Samuele Andreoni, Wrench Project, Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona

samuele.andreoni@uab.cat

Chiara Braucher, Università degli Studi di Trento

chiara.braucher@unitn.it

This intervention explores how collective property, understood as a socio-ecological tool, can be reclaimed and strengthened through qualitative research methodologies that empower communities to resist extractivism and envision transformative futures.

The study of collective property and its socio-ecological implications has become increasingly relevant in the context of global crises. While Italian legislation recognizes collective property with Law 168/2017, its true implementation still occupies a gray juridical area. Article 42 of the Constitution, dedicated to property, omits collective property, declaring that "property is public or private." This absence reflects capitalism's "world-historical patterns" of dominance, as highlighted by Moore (2015), which led, during the last century, to the progressive disruption of socio-ecological systems where collective property flourished. In the Italian case, Di Genio (2012) observes that the "general direction" after World War II steered the world toward the assumption of private property as the predominant form, perspective that was also adopted by the Italian Constituents.

Although laws to recognize collective property do exist in Italy, this constitutional omission remains a significant obstacle to its development. While authors like Di Genio and Fulciniti argue that this absence is not critical due to existing legislation, comparative analyses of Latin American constitutions assess that the constitutional presence or absence of a concept such as collective property is relevant for its promotion and recognition by States (Andreoni, 2024). Drawing on examples from Latin America, political and constitutional recognition is achieved through political struggle (Almaraz in Bazoberry et al., 2023, p.173) In Italy, especially in the Apuan Alps, the social and political recognition of collective property remains ineffective due to the lack of awareness regarding the necessity of these rights and the struggles associated with them.

In the Apuan Alps (Tuscany, Italy), the lack of a legal recognition of collective rights is evident and undermined by persistent antagonism. A notable example is the ongoing trial concerning the Usi Civici of Monte Altissimo, claimed by the community of "Montagna Seravezzina." Despite multiple judicial rulings affirming the community's ownership, the last one in 2020 (n. 39/2020), the trial has dragged on since 1989 (n. 27/1989) due to appeals by a marble extraction enterprise. This company's claim to ownership (Braucher, Armiero, 2023), based on doubtful emphyteusis contracts dating back to 1885, exemplifies how economic disparities enable corporations to delay justice while continuing environmental and social exploitation. Such cases highlight the inadequacies of existing laws in protecting collective property.

This intervention wants to explore the potentiality of co-research in participating and collaborating with those struggles, in order to address public institutions in recognising and promoting "territories of life" (ICCA Consortium 2021; Bassi 2022) as instruments to address contemporary crises – climatic, economic, and social. This work relies on years of co-research based on qualitative methodology, integrating critical ethnography, sociological methods, oral history, cartography, and participant observation conducted over five years by a plurality of researchers. Semi-structured interviews with workers, activists, and residents further enriched the findings. Immersive participant observation provided insights into the lived experiences of communities resisting extractivism. Collaborative mapping initiatives documented toxic biographies and territorial imaginaries, creating tools to visualize and challenge extractive narratives. Additionally, researchers, activists, and community members co-produced knowledge through walking tours, workshops, and creative methodologies. This participatory approach bridged research and action, supporting socio-ecological transformation.

This study discusses the potentiality of co-research to strengthen and enhance the perception of collective rights and explores the erosion of knowledge surrounding collective property. The loss of understanding about collective property's socio-ecological significance has hindered the reimagining of governance tools, particularly in regions like the Apuan Alps, where extractivism is entrenched in the socio-economic model. By living, participating, and observing the evolution of these spaces, the study demonstrates how research can align with activism to foster paradigmatic shifts. By bridging research and activism, this methodological

perspective contributes to the broader project of reimagining governance tools and socio-ecological futures. Recognizing and revitalizing the commons as political and economic instruments is crucial for addressing the intersecting crises of our time and reclaiming the territories of life as more just ecological public policies.

References

Andreoni, Samuele,

2022 *Mitologie del marmo. Estrattivismo, cultura e lavoro nelle Alpi Apuane dell'alta Garfagnana*, Tesi di Laurea Magistrale, Università degli studi di Torino.

2024 "Gobernanza colectiva. Una comparación entre la propiedad colectiva de la tierra en Europa y Sudamérica", in *Exploraciones*, 68, Instituto para el Desarrollo Rural de Sudamérica (IPDRS), La Paz, Bolivia.

Bassi, Marco,

2022 "Territori di vita in Europa. Verso una classificazione dei comuni rurali per la conservazione della biodiversità", in *Antropologia Pubblica*, 8, 2, pp.101-122

Bazoberry Chali, Oscar et Al.,

2023 *Acceso a la tierra y territorio: una oportunidad para reducir desigualdades en Bolivia*, Instituto para el Desarrollo Rural de Sudamérica. (IPDRS), La Paz, Bolivia.

Braucher, Chiara, Marco Armiero,

2023 "The Dark Side of the White Alps: Guerrilla Narratives in the Marble Landscape of Tuscany", in *Resistance: A Journal of Radical Environmental Humanities*, 11(1), 105-123. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/res.2023.a931668>.

Di Genio, Giuseppe,

2012 "Tutela e rilevanza costituzionale dei diritti di uso civico", Giappichelli, Torino.

Fulciniti, Luciana,

2018 «I domini collettivi tra archetipi e nuovi paradigmi», in *Diritto agroalimentare*, 3.

ICCA Consortium

2021 «Territories of Life», ICCA Consortium.

Moore, Jason W.,

2015 *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital.*, Verso, London.

21. Examining the controversial social space of female genitals

Convenors: Federica Manfredi & Raffaella Ferrero Camoletto (University of Torino)

Bodies and Words on Fire. Pelvic and Vulvar Pain on TikTok and Instagram Between Invisibilization and Voices that Fight

Chiara Perin, University of Parma

chiaraperin96@gmail.com

Alice Buonaguidi, University of Milano-Bicocca

a.buonaguidi@campus.unimib.it

Over the last years, in Italy, digital platforms and social media have taken on a central role in raising public awareness and in prompting processes of destigmatization of conditions characterized by chronic pelvic and vulvar pain, such as vulvodynia, endometriosis, painful bladder syndrome, and other “neglected” diseases and conditions. Although they affect at least one-tenth of all bodies assigned female at birth (Harlow *et al.*, 2014; Buck Louis *et al.*, 2011), obtaining a diagnosis for these diseases and conditions is consistently made complicated, frustrating and time-consuming (Seear, 2009; Shallcross *et al.*, 2019) by the lack of scientific knowledge rooted in a cultural approach that taboos and stigmatizes people with vulvas’ and women’s sexuality (Bertone *et al.*, 2011) and that normalizes what is medically rubricated as “female genital” and menstrual pain (Manfredi, 2024) and irregularities (Seear, 2009).

People with vulva’s health has historically been confined to their potential roles as wives and mothers, and their needs have been assumed to be met through maternal care, regardless of how they identify. For these reasons, the non-reproductive health of people with vulvas has long been disregarded by the medical community (Bueter, 2015). As a consequence, patients are commonly misdiagnosed and/or referred to inappropriate secondary care (Ballard *et al.*, 2006; Denny and Mann, 2008; Jones *et al.*, 2004). Within this context, digital platforms and social media have been used by many as spaces for information, influence, mutual support, advocacy, struggle and resistance, both individual and collective, against experiences characterized by pain and medical, institutional, and social delegitimization of women, trans*, gender-fluid and non-binary people, and, more generally, people with vulvas (Holowka, 2022; Buonaguidi and Perin, 2023).

This research therefore aims to analyze and make visible the main discourses and narratives about bodies and health, and needs, created and shared by the users of these platforms, and to highlight their transformative (or not) potential in relation to issues intersecting pelvic and/or vulvar pain, specifically thematizing the invisibilization and normalization of pain as a result of the reproduction of an androcentric and heteropatriarchal medical-social knowledge. To this end, a collaborative feminist ethnography was conducted on Instagram and TikTok, adopting a critical approach to their affordances and the algorithmic structuring of platform-generated content. The study underscores the need for a situated, transfeminist methodological and theoretical approach to knowledge production as a political commitment to recognizing the epistemic value of embodied experiences of power and oppression.

References

Ballard, Karen, Karen Lowton, and Jeremy Wright

2006 «What’s the Delay? A Qualitative Study of Women’s Experiences of Reaching a Diagnosis of Endometriosis», in *Fertility and Sterility*, 86, 5, pp. 1296–1301.

Bertone, Chiara, Raffaella Ferrero Camoletto, and Paola Maria Torrioni

2011 «Sessualità Femminile, Tra Nuovi Desideri E Nuovi Confini», in *Polis*, 25, 3, pp. 363–392.

Buck Louis, Germaine M., Mary L. Hediger, C. Matthew Peterson, Mary Croughan, Rajeshwari Sundaram, Joseph Stanford, Zhen Chen

2011 «Incidence of Endometriosis by Study Population and Diagnostic Method: The ENDO Study», in *Fertility and Sterility*, 96, 2), pp. 360–365.

Bueter, Anke

2015 «Androcentrism, Feminism, and Pluralism in Medicine», in *Topoi*, 36, 3, pp. 521–530.

Buonaguidi, Alice, and Chiara Perin

2023 «Resisting but Embracing Fragility: Exploring Prominent Themes Emerging from Online Feminist Activists and Advocates’ Posts Addressing Conditions Characterized by Chronic Pelvic Pain on Instagram», in *AG about Gender*, 12, 23, pp. 140–180.

Denny, Elaine, and Christopher H. Mann

- 2008 «Endometriosis and the Primary Care Consultation», in *European Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology and Reproductive Biology*, 139, 1, pp. 111–115.
- Harlow, Bernard L., Christine G. Kunitz, Ruby H.N. Nguyen, Sarah A. Ryell, Rachel M. Turner, and Richard F. MacLehose
2014 «Prevalence of Symptoms Consistent with a Diagnosis of Vulvodynia: Population-Based Estimates from Two Geographical Regions», in *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 210, 1, pp. 40.e1–40.e8.
- Holowka, Eileen Mary
2022 «Mediating Pain: Navigating Endometriosis on Social Media», in *Frontiers in Pain Research*, 3, pp. 1–12.
- Jones, Georgina, Crispin Jenkinson, and Stephen Kennedy
2004 «The Impact of Endometriosis upon Quality of Life: A Qualitative Analysis», in *Journal of Psychosomatic Obstetrics & Gynecology*, 25, 2, pp. 123–133.
- Manfredi, Federica
2024 «The Neglected Reflections of Vulvar Pain. An Anthropological Research-Action through Art and Science», in *Visual Ethnography*, 13, 1, pp. 101–125.
- Seear, Kate
2009 «The Etiquette of Endometriosis: Stigmatisation, Menstrual Concealment and the Diagnostic Delay», in *Social Science & Medicine*, 69, 8, pp. 1220–1227.
- Shallcross, Rebekah, Joanne M. Dickson, David Nunns, Kate Taylor, and Gundi Kiemle
2019 «Women's Experiences of Vulvodynia: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the Journey toward Diagnosis», in *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 48, 3, pp. 961–974.

Is the Vagina 'Good To Think With?'. A qualitative analysis of the meanings of the vagina among people with variations of sex characteristics (VSC) and their medical teams

Dr. Daniela Crocetti, Bar Ilan University

d.crocetti.ac@gmail.com

Dr. Limor Meoded Danon, Bar Ilan University

limormdanon@gmail.com

Dr. Marcy Brink-Danan, Bar Ilan University

reproductionjourneys@gmail.com

Based on ethnographically-informed, in-depth narrative interviews with people living with variations of sex characteristics (VSC), this international research study addresses essential questions in the cultural study of genitalia: At what age – and by what means – do people become aware of the functions of their genitalia? How do humans come to understand the function and value of their bodies (as parts and whole)? What myths – universal and culturally specific – about genitalia continue to play a role in the way people understand their place in society? By analyzing the life narratives of people with variations of sex characteristics, namely Mayer-Rokitansky-Küster-Hauser (MRKH) patients, we delve deeper into the role myths about genitalia play in broader social organization. After diagnosis, usually when menstruation does not begin, MRKH patients confront questions about how to understand and “manage” their non-normative bodies, vis a vis normative gender standards and their inability to conform to them. In most cases, genital variations are met with a socio-medically perceived need to “fix” their bodies in order to conform to social expectations (Crocetti et al. 2022). In addition to raising questions of fertility at an early age, the issue of “genital identity” (Waltner 1986) enters their consciousness. These patients may be offered medical interventions, such as vaginal dilation or surgery, to lengthen their vaginal canals (Jensen 2024). As our research reveals, these medical interventions – like other “vaginal practices” (Hilber et al. 2012) – raise the question of the meaning and purpose of the vagina itself. This paper thus explores central themes that arise in interview narratives about genitalia: heteronormative views about vaginas being “for penetration,” communication challenges in disclosing variations in sex characteristics (Guntram and Zeiler 2016), medical interventions across the lifespan and bodily autonomy (Meoded Danon 2022), the impact of clitoral, vulvar and vaginal variations on life choices (dating, marriage and family planning), genitals as markers and pathways for fertility and the medicalization of the vagina in patient-doctor interactions (Karkazis 2008). By qualitatively examining the meanings given to the vagina by people with variations of sex characteristics (VSC or intersex) and their medical teams, we are able to understand more broadly the taken-for-granted symbolic roles genitalia plays in broader cultural discussions. Further, medical technological practices offered to MRKH patients, such as vaginal dilation, vaginoplasty and uterine transplants (UTx), are

symbolically complex sites for the 'management' of bodily diversity and variation that, when analyzed, can offer understanding of the social dynamics at stake in biopolitical dynamics of gender, parenthood and sexuality.

References

- Crocetti, Daniela, et al.
2020 «Towards an agency-based model of intersex, variations of sex characteristics (VSC) and DSD/dsd health», in *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 23, 4, pp. 500-515.
- Guntram, Lisa, Kristen Zeiler
2016 «'You have all those emotions inside that you cannot show because of what they will cause': Disclosing the absence of one's uterus and vagina», in *Social Science & Medicine*, 167, pp. 63-70.
- Hilber, Adriane, et al.
2020 «A cross cultural study of vaginal practices and sexuality: implications for sexual health» in *Social Science & Medicine*, 70, 3, pp. 392-400.
- Jensen, Amalie, et al.
2024 «Experiences of vaginal lengthening treatment and sexual well-being in women with Mayer-Rokitansky-Küster-Hauser (MRKH) syndrome: An interview study», in *BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology*, 131, 13, pp. 1841-50.
- Karkazis Katrina
2008 *Fixing sex: Intersex, medical authority, and lived experience*, Durham, Duke University Press.
- Meoded Danon, Limor
2022 «Temporal sociomedical approaches to intersex* bodies», in *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences*, 44, 2, pp. 1-28.
- Waltner Richard
1986 «Genital identity: A core component of sexual-and self-identity», in *The Journal of Sex Research*, 22, 3, pp. 399-402.

Like a Seeker. A Story of a Body Struggling for its Existence

Rachele Dutto, Independent researcher

rachele.dutto@edu.unito.it

Vulvodynia is defined by the *International Society for the Study of Vulvovaginal Disease* as chronic pain that persists beyond three months from its onset (Groysman, 2010) and who suffer from it describe it as itching, burning, stinging and needle-like sensations (Barnabei, 2020). According to *Comitato Vulvodinia e Neuropatia del Pudendo* (2023), 16% of individuals assigned female at birth are affected by vulvodynia, although this percentage could vary due to the diagnostic delay inherent to the condition, which averages five years and occurs after consulting multiple specialists (Ibidem). What distinguishes vulvodynia from other vulvovaginal disorders is its multifactorial nature. In order to fully understand it, it is necessary to consider a combination of psychosocial, cultural, sexual, physiological, gastroenterological, postural, and neurological factors (Groysman, 2010). The diagnostic delay complicates the pain: vulvodynia is a chronic pain characterized by the absence of clear evidence of tissue damage. Diagnosis occurs through exclusion (Barnabei, 2020), thus becoming a *diagnostic enigma* (Good, 2006) to disentangle in its individual, cultural, social, and historical complexities. In this linguistic translation *struggle*, from experience to verbalization, individuals attempt to give substance to their pain: shaping it into a defined and tangible form, placing it in a specific time and space, and striving to make *visible* something that inherently seems untranslatable and belonging to its own world (Ibidem). Vulvodynia must be analyzed beyond the organic matter, *bios*, seeking further elements of personal experience in order to create a personalized therapy based on the multiple factors that contribute to the persistence of the pain.

This debate will focus on the results of my ethnographic research conducted between 2021 and 2023 using participatory, qualitative, and artistic methodologies. The research began with an analysis of academic literature on vulvodynia and the formation of a medical-scientific vocabulary. The acquisition of a *new* language introduced me to the intricate world of the pelvic floor and vulvar pain. The perspective through which *suffering* is observed is the voice of those who are directly affected by it, in order to highlight their multiple experiences. The body was the perspective through which I aimed to understand how it is meaningfully interpreted by those who suffer, transforming this into an ethnography that narrates the stories of six people discovering their bodies. Since the body is a prismatic perspective, not only I was able to observe its carnal elements, but all the symbolic factors running through it: the reformulation of the self, sexuality, the experience of seeking a diagnosis, reconfiguration of the concept of femininity, relationships with the *Others*, and economic factors. All

of these aspects were analyzed through a narrative language within six subparagraphs: each story was assigned the task of addressing a different aspect of vulvodynia.

My *participatory* and *critical* positioning led to the development of a project that facilitated dialogue and enabled individuals to be agents in their own interpretation of vulvodynia (Giorgi et al., 2021). The research unfolded through two main *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) methodologies: the creation of an artifact (collage or drawing) representing a body part significant in the experience of the illness, and the *Identity Box* (Brown, 2019), which aimed to creating a symbolic path composed by objects that narrated the bodily perception from the onset of pain. My discussion will focus on one of the multiple aspects of vulvodynia: the search for a name and a diagnosis.

Elisa's story illustrates the key moments of the search for an answer to the pain experienced, an experience I have defined as a *diagnostic displacement*. Elisa moves through Italy and other countries, where she searches for someone who can translate her words into a diagnostic framing, but first and foremost alleviating the pain she experiences. This process involves self-formation of a *medical social capital* (Ferritti, 2023) – that is, the acquisition of medical language through which translating one's personal experience – the activation of support networks, and the transmission and search for tangible proof. Becoming *Medici di se stessi* (Guerzoni, 2020), one's own doctor, becomes necessary, considering that the majority of European medical personnel are not trained to diagnose vulvodynia, around 45-65% (Bautrant et al., 2021), and it is vital for closing the gap between unrecognized pain and something tangible and nameable (Vescio, 2023). Elisa's experience overlaps with what is defined as the *gender pain gap*: her suffering is dismissed as irrational by medical personnel, as a pain that is either non-existent or *not significant enough* to be incorporated into a nosological category (Ibidem). The body is emptied of the concept of *truth*, forced to train for the performance of the gynecological visit in order to create a credible story that satisfies medical expectations, leading to a crisis of the self, compelled to reformulate itself (Moretti, 2019). As I observed in my research, this translates into resistance practices against the *invisibilization* to which people suffering from vulvodynia are subjected. The diagnostic moment becomes a starting point for rebuilding *trust* in one's own experience and body.

Opening a new space for discussion on the *invisibilized* vulvovaginal conditions is crucial for understanding how pain and the body undergo a process of re-signification. The concept of *disease*, by definition, requires both an internal, private, and intimate recognition (*illness*) as well as a public one, where rights and existence are recognized (*sickness*) (Kleinman, 1985). In the absence of this recognition, individuals reshape their bodies starting from the awareness of their pain and everything that constitutes the intricate world of having an *ill body*. It is therefore necessary for social sciences to understand the networks, lived spaces, and the meanings they convey, to reveal their complexities, and to identify factors that either hinder or support the search for a diagnosis, through a synergic work of multiple disciplines to design interventions aimed at optimizing care and diagnostic spaces, with a positive impact on patients' quality of life.

References

- Barnabei, Vanessa M,
2020 «Vulvodinia», in *Clinical obstetrics and gynecology*, 63, 4, pp. 752-769.
- Bautrant, Eric, Porta, Oriol, Murina Filippo, Mühlard, Hanna, Levêque, Christine, Rian, Thibaut, Ploteau, Stephane, Valancogne, Guy e Levesque, Amélie
2021 «Provoked Vulvar Vestibulodynia: Epidemiology in Europe, Physio-Pathology, Consensus First-Line Treatment and Evaluation of Second-Line Treatments», in *Journal of Gynecology Obstetrics and Human Reproduction*, 48, 8, pp. 685-688.
- Brown, Nicole
2019 «Identity boxes: using materials and metaphors to elicit experiences», in *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 22, 5, pp. 487-501.
- Comitato Vulvodinia e Neuropatia del Pudendo,
2023 a cura di, *Vulvodinia e Neuropatia del Pudendo: un dolore senza voce*, pp. 20-65.
- Ferritti, Valentina
2023 «Vulvodinia tra invisibilità e invisibilizzazione. La tortuosa strada per il riconoscimento», in *About Gender*, 12, 23, pp. 397-418.
- Giorgi, Alberta, Pizzolati, Micol, Vacchelli, Elena
2021 *Metodi creativi per la ricerca sociale. Contesto, pratiche, strumenti*, Bologna, Il Mulino.
- Good, Byron Josef
2006 *Narrare la malattia. Lo sguardo antropologico sul rapporto medico-paziente*, Torino, Einaudi.
- Groysman, Vlada,
2010 «Vulvodynia: New concepts and Review of Literature», in *Dermatol Clinic*, 28, pp. 681-696.
- Guerzoni, Corinna Sabrina,
2020 *Sistemi procreativi. Etnografia dell'omogenitorialità in Italia*, Milano, Franco Angelini.
- Kleinman, Arthur,

1985 «Interpreting Illness Experience and Clinical Meanings: How I See Clinical Applied Anthropology» in *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 16,3, pp. 69-71.

Moretti, Chiara,

2019 *Il dolore illegittimo: Un'etnografia della sindrome fibromialgica*, Pisa, Edizioni ETS.

Vescio, Alessandra,

2023 *La salute è un diritto di genere*, Busto Arsizio, People.

Embodied, fluid and clandestine: notes on the space of queer womxn and their affects in Accra, Ghana

Ylenia Baldanza, Università di Torino

ylenia.baldanza@unito.it

On October 27th, I attended an event about protest culture in Ghana. I entered a building inside a private compound owned by an african women development NGO, and found myself sitting on a colorful mat with another dozen of womxn¹, all of them self-defined intersectional feminists and activists aged 20-35. The conversation we had spanned from the recent Galamsey² protests held in Accra to class and gender struggle in today's Ghana. At the end of this awareness circle, one of the participants, Millie³, thanked the others for the moment we shared, claiming that she came in feeling exhausted. Money struggle, a constant feeling of restlessness, impotence and the secrecy of being a queer woman in Ghana all contributed to her feeling of weariness. She stated that this occasion felt regenerative for her: it was a moment to verbalize her feelings and being heard, to unwind and rest with friends, but also to become aware of the social and political roots of her affective state (Fieldwork notes, 27/10/2024).

Millie's words are representative of an emotional state many womxn in today's Ghana have expressed to me. During my fieldwork among people of non-conforming gender and desire in Accra, this feeling of exhaustion and impotence appeared to be the *leitmotif* that characterizes the daily lives of queer womxn.

It must be addressed that in recent years, Ghana started the legislative process to pass a law criminalizing LGBTQIA+ identities and advocacy. The "Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Act" contributes to build a political and social environment hostile to people of non conforming gender and desire, which reinforces hegemonic and heteronormative views about intimacy and sexuality. Hegemonic heteronormativity here refers to a mixture of biopolitics of the body, politicized homophobia (Currier 2018; Adomako 2022; Gore 2024), pathologization linked to the spread of HIV/AIDS, and the influence of Pentecostal views of reproduction (Meyer 1998; Gusman, Viola 2014) that, all together, contribute to the othering of queerness.

This macro scenario enters inside the lives of my interlocutors, shaping their emotions and affective states (Malatino 2022). In many instances queerness becomes one of the sources of this peculiar state specifically because of this heteronormative, hegemonic context. The secrecy, fatigue, fear and loneliness that being queer implies often intersect with class struggle and contribute to the exclusion of these subjectivities from citizenship. This exclusion appears to be somehow dual: if on one side it can force people in the intimate, private space of their homes, on the other side it harvests a peculiar type of rage and agency. This anger is generative and takes place inside – inside the home and the body – but also outside, *on* the body, in the streets, in bars, in art and it is fostered in the intersubjective encounter with other queer womxn. Moreover this rage is fostered by care and community, as Millie's experience shows, and it can build a fluid, political space.

With this contribution I intend to address the topic of spacialization of Ghanaian queer womxn's affects (Malatino 2022), through a materialist lens. The choice of focusing on such a framework is inspired by the works of Hil Malatino (2022), Eric Stanley (2018) and Lauren Berland (2011; 2015), who consider affects as common. Drawing from my ethnographic research, I mean to investigate how anger and exhaustion but also care and pleasure are physically, affectively and discursively located in space (Cvetkovich 2007). I argue that all of the affective states previously described both shape and are shaped by the space in which they can emerge.

I will present a few examples of these places of affection: firstly, I'll present the Voyage, a bar in Accra that is often the site of womxn only parties and, occasionally queer art exhibitions. Then I'll consider the home of two of my interlocutors, a woman who self-defines as *supi* and a trans* man. I argue that these examples can help sketching an image of a space that is embodied, fluid and clandestine.

It is embodied in the sense that it lies in a continuum with the queer body, a body that draws attention and that is or is imagined to be watched, sexualized or harassed, but also a body that is enraged and talks back or that fears for its safety. It is a body morphed by the spaces it inhabits, but also a body that creates a space for itself and its non-conformity.

Moreover this space is fluid, in the sense that the physical spaces of these affects often shift: for instance, the home, where many womxn can find a sense of security, rest and pleasure is also an enclosed space where occurrences of violence can take place. Another example is the case of a few selected bars where the community can safely gather; these spaces are places of fun, friendships and sex but they can also foster insubordination and create political, social cohesion. Finally this space is also fluid in the sense that, when it cannot have a physical manifestation, it becomes symbolic, social and political through art, poetry, film and discourse (Halbestram 1993).

Finally, I use the term “clandestine” to express that the secrecy these womxn find themselves in, although forced by a heteronormative climate, has a generative political capacity. It is illicit, unwanted, exiled to the margins and yet it is there and it claims more and more of itself (Lefebvre 2014 [1968]).

1 Among the activist’s communities I collaborated and worked with, the term “womxn” refers to people who self-describe themselves as lesbians, sapphic or *supi*, a Twi word that indicates an intimate and often – but not always – sexual relationship between two women or people socialized as such (Dankwa 2022). Following Sylvia Tamale’s approach (2011), I consider gender and sexuality in a unified perspective, therefore including in the term “womxn” also those who self-identify as trans men, trans women and non-binary people. Moreover In this paper I will not shy away from using the term “queer” to describe the people of non conforming gender and desire that constitute my interlocutors on the field. This is due to the fact that, first and foremost, “queer” is an emic term, used, in other words, by my informants to describe themselves, often alongside other words in local languages, specifically Twi and Ga. However it must be addressed that “queer” as a self-descriptor is predominantly employed by young middle and lower class activists (aged 18-35) who are familiar with Western queer theory either through internet and media, because of their diasporic background or transnational mobility. This being said, I must address that “queer” is a term rooted in Western history, the hegemony of which has to be addressed in its postcolonial applications. At the same time, however, my interlocutors creatively use queerness, informing this Western concept and enlarging it to include Ghanaian understandings of not only sex and gender, but also kinship, body, care and political positions like panaficanism, black feminism and decoloniality.

2 Galamsey refers to illegal small-scale gold mining. The term derives from the English phrase “gather them and sell”. On October 11th the streets of Accra were flooded by people calling for the ban of Galamsey, addressing the great impact of this practice on the environment and agriculture.

3 Names of people, places and personal information are anonymized.

References

Adomako, Kwame

2022 «An Overwhelming Consensus? How Moral Panics about Sexual and Gender Diversity Help Reshape Local Traditions in Ghana», in *Politique africaine*, 168(4), pp. 75-94.

Berlant, Lauren

2011 *Cruel Optimism*, Durham, N.C., Duke University Press.

2015 «Structures of Unfeeling: Mysterious Skin», in *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 28(3), pp. 191–213.

Cvetkovich, Ann

2007 «Public Feelings», in *South Atlantic Quarterly* 106(3), pp. 464-503.

Currier, Ashley

2018 *Politicizing Sex in Contemporary Africa: Homophobia in Malawi*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Dankwa, Serena Owusua

2021 *Knowing women. Same-Sex Intimacy, Gender, and Identity in Postcolonial Ghana*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Gore, Ellie

2024 *Between HIV Prevention and LGBTI Rights: The Political Economy of Queer Activism in Ghana*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press.

Gusman, Alessandro & Viola, Lia

2014 «Quando un fatto sociale diventa “problema sociale. Un’analisi dell’Anti-Homosexuality Act ugandese tra religioni e gender studies», in *Dada. Rivista di Antropologia post-globale*, 4(2), pp. 7-29.

Halberstam, Judith & Halberstam, Jack

1993 «Imagined Violence/Queer Violence: Representation, Rage, and Resistance», in *Social Text*, 37, pp. 187–201.

Lefebvre, Henri

2014 [1968] *Il diritto alla città*, OmbreCorte, Verona.

Meyer, Brigit

1998 «Make a complete break with the past. Memory and Post-colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist Discourse», in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 28(3), pp. 316-349.

Stanley, Eric

2018 «The Affective Commons: Gay Shame, Queer Hate, and Other Collective Feelings», in *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 24(4), pp. 489-508.

Tamale, Sylvia (Ed.)

2011 African sexualities: A reader, Cape Town-Dakar-Nairobi-Oxford, Pambazuka Press.

22. Observing digital practices: The role of artificial intelligence in cultural processes

Convenor: Alessandra Micalizzi (Università Telematica Pegaso)

Artificial Intelligence as an Epistemological Problem

Primož Krašovec, University of Ljubljana

primoz.krasovec@ff.uni-lj.si

In 1966, Foucault ended his *The Order of Things* with a premonition about the fate of the fundamental arrangements of knowledge: "If those arrangements were to disappear as they appeared, if some event of which we can at the moment do no more than sense the possibility – without knowing either what its form will be or what it promises – were to cause them to crumble [...] then one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea."

Although Foucault wasn't writing about epistemic effects of the development of artificial intelligence (AI), the event in question might still be today's rise of deep learning (DL). Standard epistemology is mostly concerned with human intelligence and human thinking, both of which are equated with intelligence and thinking in general and the adjective human is so self-evident that it is usually not even written down. Current development of DL AI not only shatters this entrenched notion of human intelligence as the only possible intelligence, but also shows that human intelligence is not what we usually imagine it to be and that we do not think as we think we think.

My conception of AI as an epistemological problem will capture precisely these two basic problems that (deep) learning machines pose for epistemology as they show that non-human intelligence is possible and – at the same time – destabilise the (self-)understanding of human intelligence. In my presentation, I will address the twin questions of how can we understand DL AI as 'other' intelligence; and what we can learn about human intelligence from it – as well as what does all this mean for the current 'figure of the human', how it erases (or, more accurately, demystifies) it and what kind of resistance(s) it encounters in the process.

Artificial intelligence and ethnographic methods. Analysing User Creativity in Prompting Practices

Gabriella Taddeo, University of Turin

gabriella.taddeo@unito.it

There is a growing debate on how text-to-image AI systems interact with creative processes and cultural production (Mazzone et al., 2018; Arielli & Manovich, 2022). This debate includes reflections on the evolving concept of authorship, the more or less original nature of AI-generated works, the role of interfaces and training datasets in shaping the process, and the ethical and legal implications of these transformations within the creative industry (Wingström et al., 2022; Oppenlaender, 2022; Koivisto & Grassini, 2023; Morley et al. 2023; Haase & Hanel, 2023).

This paper proposes an innovative AI ethnography analysis method designed to observe creativity from a process-oriented perspective (Rhodes 1961) and to assess people's perceptions of quality and satisfaction during creative interaction. Through such method, the paper seeks to address the following questions: How is the creative process influenced by the prompting flow in image generation tools? How do individuals interpret the results obtained during the process, and what is their perceived level of agency within it?

The study investigates AI-human creative processes with 52 participants (aged 11–60) across 12 workshops held in Turin, Italy. These workshops fostered iterative creativity, encouraging participants to use text to image AI tools, moving between prompts and images to reflect on individual visions, stereotypes, and the dynamics of algorithm-influenced cultural production.

In the contribute, AI is presented as both a creative tool and a form of short ethnographic method (Pink & Morgan, 2013). A participatory research protocol was employed to allow participants to use prompts and images as forms of elicited thought. A cross-modal qualitative analysis is proposed as a novel observation and

analysis protocol that incorporates three components: textual prompts, visual outputs, and follow-up interviews.

The creative trajectories produced during each participant's prompting process were analyzed through semantic analysis. Each session was examined using cosine variation to determine whether users remained faithful to their initial idea, significantly altered it, or negotiated their idea through co-creative interaction with the AI system and its outputs.

The interpretive framework used in this study is the encoding/decoding model originally developed by Stuart Hall (1973), which has been adapted to the interactive, iterative dynamics of the user-AI relationship. Within this framework, users respond to AI-generated outputs in three possible ways. A hegemonic "encoding/decoding" occurs when the user does not substantially change the prompt, delegating most creative elaboration to the algorithmic system. A "negotiated" reading takes place when the user gradually modifies the prompt to alter the semantic or stylistic characteristics of the image. An "oppositional" reading is identified when the user radically shifts the semantic direction between prompts, signaling a rejection of the prior result and the pursuit of alternative paths.

Alongside this semantic analysis, participants' follow-up reflections were recorded to provide contextual and interpretive insights that enriched the semantic findings. A visual analysis was also conducted, producing a visual timeline of each prompting process. These timelines serve to interpret connections between user intention, textual formulation, and AI-driven visual output (Manovich 2011).

This method allows the author to examine the dynamics of creativity within text-to-image AI environments across several dimensions: pleasure versus frustration, focus versus distraction, and openness versus closure.

The findings indicate that negotiated readings were slightly more frequent than oppositional and hegemonic readings. This suggests that generative AI use may foster co-creative practices between users and machines: prompting emerges as a layered semiotic practice in which users alternate between reception and production, acceptance and reformulation.

The co-creation process can thus be described as an iterative encoding-decoding pathway in which users and AI systems engage in mutual negotiation of meaning-bridging individual sensibilities and collective audiovisual imaginaries embedded within datasets and algorithmic structures.

References

- Arielli, Emanuele, Manovich, Lev
2022 AI-aesthetics and the Anthropocentric Myth of Creativity. *NODES* 1 (19-20)
- Haase, J., & Hanel, P. H.
2023 Artificial muses: Generative artificial intelligence chatbots have risen to human-level creativity. *Journal of Creativity*, 33(3), 100066.
- Hall, S.
1991 -(1973) Encoding, decoding. In: During S (ed.) *The Cultural Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, pp. 90-103
- Koivisto, M., & Grassini, S.
2023 Best humans still outperform artificial intelligence in a creative divergent thinking task. *Scientific reports*, 13(1), 13601.
- Manovich, L.
2011 What is visualisation?. *Visual Studies*, 26(1), 36-49.
- Mazzone, M., Elgammal, A.
2019 Art, Creativity, and the Potential of Artificial Intelligence. *Arts*, 8(1), 26. <https://doi.org/10.3390/arts8010026>
- Morley, J., Kinsey, L., Elhalal, A., Garcia, F., Ziosi, M., & Floridi, L.
2023 Operationalising AI ethics: barriers, enablers and next steps. *AI & SOCIETY*, 1-13.
- Oppenlaender, J.
2022, November. The creativity of text-to-image generation. In *Proceedings of the 25th international academic mindtrek conference* (pp. 192-202).
- Pink, S., Morgan, J.
2013 Short-Term Ethnography: Intense Routes to Knowing. *Symbolic Interaction*, 36(3), 351-361. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/symbinte.36.3.351>
- Rhodes, M.
1961 An analysis of creativity. *The Phi delta kappan*, 42(7), 305-310.
- Wingström, R., Hautala, J., & Lundman, R.
2022 Redefining Creativity in the Era of AI. *Creativity Research Journal*.

Human-Machine Feedback Loops in Research. Leveraging Generative AI for Semi-Structured Interview Development

Giulia Coppo, University of Padua

giulia.coppo@phd.unipd.it

Theoretical accounts increasingly frame algorithms as social agents that actively participate in social life and influence the dynamics of human interaction (Beer, 2017; Airoidi, 2022). At the same time, social actors play a critical role in shaping the development and functioning of algorithmic codes. The relationship between humans and machines can be seen as a recursive feedback loop (Airoidi, 2022), in which the social shaping of technology and the technological shaping of society unfold simultaneously. Consequently, humans and artificial social agents are already linked in a multitude of feedback loops and interactional practices that occur in their everyday personal and professional lives. Researchers are no exception, as interactions between scholars and AI-powered machines are increasingly finding a wide range of applications in the research process (Beer, 2019; Christou, 2023) both individually and collectively (Chubb et al., 2022).

The growing accessibility of generative AI models presents novel opportunities to understand how social practices influence the development of large language model infrastructures, while also being shaped by their outputs. Generative AI implies the active production of textual inputs (i.e. prompts) for the definition of the desired output, and is currently finding a wide range of applications in diverse professional contexts. Notably, there is a renewed interest into the application of generative AI in research as an enabler of new methods, processes, management practices, pedagogical approaches, and evaluation strategies that remains relatively under-explored (Chubb et al., 2022).

This contribution aims at fostering meta-research into the ways generative AI can be employed in qualitative research and argues that overlooking the potential of these new forms of human-machine interaction risks ignoring the transformative impact algorithms and generative AI are having on academia. In particular, it asks: *Can generative AI aid social research in the process of constructing qualitative research tools such as interview guides? And what are the methodological and ethical implications that this process engenders?*

To address this gap, this work explores the integration of generative AI into the construction of semi-structured interview guide, addressing the expanding role of AI in research while critically evaluating – from a sociological standpoint – the outcomes and implications that such a process entails. In doing so, it aims to investigate the potential of prompt engineering – a cornerstone of generative AI – to design tailored interview questions and identify thematic areas.

A central focus of this analysis relates to the methodological challenges posed by employing prompt engineering for semi-structured interviews. These include the need to align prompts to specific research contexts and goals, the process of “training” the algorithm while scrutinising input and output data, and strategies for mitigating cultural biases inherent in generative AI outputs (Leavy et al., 2020). Poorly designed prompts, like poorly crafted interview questions, can unintentionally reinforce stereotypes or lead to ambiguous answers. This study, therefore, proposes strategies to foster a more “dialogic” interaction (La Mendola, 2009) with the algorithm.

Ethical considerations also form a key pillar of this analysis (Jobin et al., 2019; Hangendorff, 2020) as it is crucial for qualitative researchers to reflect on the outcomes and implications of producing and divulging knowledge with the mediation of machines.

The discussion will be grounded in an empirical example drawn from the authors’ preliminary-phase research on AI-assisted professional practices in political marketing. This specific case study encouraged an exploration of human-machine interaction in the construction of interview guides, given the complexity and multi-faceted composition of the professional field under investigation. Special emphasis is given to stakeholders’ collaboration in prompt and question development. This involvement plays a valuable role not only in identifying and addressing researchers’ implicit assumptions, but also in incorporating expert “human” knowledge into the construction of AI-mediated interview guides. Stakeholders’ contribution can not only ensure more context-specific, accurate and diverse outputs but also strengthen the ethical integrity of AI-assisted research.

The methodological steps will be detailed, offering a replicable – yet questionable – methodological framework for other researchers interested in adopting similar approaches. These include but are not limited to: (i)

integrating stakeholders' knowledge in prompt engineering, (ii) critically interrogating generative AI, (iii) analysing and evaluating AI-generated responses, (iv) refining outputs through iterative processes, (v) the AI-assisted individualisation of patterns and thematic areas, (vi) addressing issues related to cultural biases or hallucinations.

This discussion emphasises the importance of critically evaluating AI as a methodological tool in qualitative research and reflects on the researcher's positionality in interacting with such technologies. Engaging with the potential of AI technologies is essential for ensuring the needed transparency, accountability, and ethical compliance within the research process (Sartori and Theodorou, 2022).

Ultimately, the broader ambition of this work is to stimulate dialogue on the dynamics of human-machine interaction (Hoc, 2010; Tsvetkova et al, 2024) and its significance – for the social sciences – in the process of sense-making of social phenomena.

References

- Airoidi, Massimo
2022, *Machine Habitus. Toward a Sociology of Algorithms*, John Wiley and Sons Ltd.
- Beer, David
2017, "The Social Power of Algorithms", in *Information, Communication & Society*, 20,1, pp. 1-13.
- Beer, David
2019, "Should we use AI to make us quicker and more efficient researchers",
<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2019/10/30/should-we-use-ai-to-make-us-quicker-and-more-efficient-researchers/>.
Accessed 23rd Jan 2025.
- Brinkmann, Svend
2020, "Unstructured and semi-structured interviewing", in Patricia Leavy (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*, pp. 424-456.
- Christou, Prokopis A.
2023, "How to Use Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a Resource, Methodological and Analysis Tool in Qualitative Research?", in *The Qualitative Report*, 28, 7, pp. 1968-1980.
<https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2023.6406>
- Chubb, Jennifer, et al.
2021, "Speeding up to keep up: exploring the use of AI in the research process", in *AI & Society*, 37, pp. 1439-1457.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-021-01259-0>
- Hagendorff, Thilo
2020, "The Ethics of AI Ethics: An Evaluation of Guidelines", in *Minds and Machines*, 30, 1, pp. 99-120.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11023-020-09517-8>
- Hoc, Jean-Michel
2010, "From human-machine interaction to human-machine cooperation" in *Ergonomics*, 43, 7, pp. 833-843.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/001401300409044>
- Jobin, Anna, et al.
2019, "Artificial Intelligence: the global landscape of ethics guidelines" in *nature machine intelligence*, 1, 389-399.
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s42256-019-0088-2>
- Leavy, Susan, et al.
2020, "Data, power and bias in artificial intelligence", Retrieved from: <https://arxiv.org/abs/2008.07341>
- Sartori, Laura, Theodorou, Andreas
2022, "A sociotechnical perspective for the future of AI: narratives, inequalities, and human control", in *Ethics and Information Technology*, 24, 4.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10676-022-09624-3>
- Tsvetkova, Milena et al.,
2024, "A new sociology of humans and machines", in *nature human behaviour*, 8, pp. 1864-1876.
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-024-02001-8>

Analyzing the outputs of generative AI platforms to uncover gender and social biases

Elisabetta Risi, IULM Univerisity

elisabetta.risi@iulm.it

Over the past two decades, scholars have increasingly examined the Internet – and later social media, streaming services, and other algorithmic media or digital platforms – as a subject of research. These investigations have explored how such platforms are developed within corporate environments (Seaver, 2022), how individuals interact with them (Lomborg and Kapsch, 2020), and the social narratives or imaginaries surrounding their implementation and functionality (Beer, 2018; Natale, 2021). Simultaneously, methodologies "embedded"

within online devices have been repurposed to analyze social and cultural changes (Gandini and Caliandro, 2016; Venturini et al., 2018).

The emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI) models has introduced new questions regarding the investigation of human-machine communication (Esposito, 2022) and how these technologies' features and affordances might be repurposed within sociological methodologies. Generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, MidJourney, and DALL-E, present significant opportunities and challenges for research (Salah et al., 2023). For instance, their advanced capabilities for efficiently and rapidly analyzing or summarizing data from social media platforms offer the potential to deepen our understanding of social phenomena (Elmas & Gül, 2023; Haluza & Jungwirth, 2023).

Generative AI platforms can be conceptualized as "epistemological machines" (Rogers, 2013) that reproduce societal characteristics, including deeply ingrained social biases. This paper seeks to: (1) analyze how generative AI reproduces societal characteristics, specifically biases related to categories such as gender; (2) explore the role of affordances in prompting and the emergence of what Ian Bogost (2007) has termed the "procedural rhetoric" of platforms; and (3) challenge the widespread attribution of certain generative AI outputs to the concept of "bias" which tends to obscure the responsibility of technology companies (regarding the collection and management of large datasets, the exploitation of natural and human resources, and culturally embedded developer frameworks).

By generating and analyzing empirical examples, we argue that any research effort involving generative AI becomes intrinsically an investigation of the platform itself, autoethnographically (Markham, 2024). Indeed, the socio-technical and discursive-material characteristics of generative AI systems render their outputs inseparable from the medium that produces them. Our study has identified how social representations embedded within AI-generated content can perpetuate implicit biases and potentially play a role in reinforcing them. A particularly pertinent area of inquiry is the relationship between occupational roles and gender roles. This relationship underscores how societal norms shape career choices and workplace dynamics, often reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes (Smith, 2019).

Empirically, our study employed a set of prompts to generate images using several T2I platforms (MidJourney, Bing Image Creator, and so on): these prompts were designed to depict specific social categories (e.g., the Italian grandmother, a couple of lovers, the engineering student) and professions (e.g., nurse, delivery rider, caregiver, taxi driver). We iteratively refined the prompts to create representations of different (gender) identities within these roles. This process allowed us to investigate how generative AI platforms reflect and reproduce societal norms and biases in visual form.

The results of this study indicate that artificial intelligence's capacity to generate visual content informed by social norms offers a valuable framework for researchers to investigate deeply rooted social stereotypes and biases.

Furthermore, the research highlights the connections between users' agency (in the act of prompting) and platform capitalism, emphasizing how the affordances of generative AI systems enable and constrain certain types of interactions.

Although our findings constitute an initial step towards developing qualitative methodologies for studying generative AI as socio-technical systems, we observed that it offers opportunities to explore the strong intersections of technology, society, and culture.

References

- Beer, D. (2018). Envisioning the power of data analytics. *Information, Communication & Society*, 21(3), 465-479.
- Caliandro, A., & Gandini, A. (2016). *Qualitative research in digital environments: A research toolkit*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Elmas T., Gül İ. (2023). Opinion mining from YouTube captions using ChatGPT: A case study of street interviews polling the 2023 Turkish elections (arXiv:2304.03434). <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2304.03434>
- Esposito, E. (2022). *Artificial Communication: How Algorithms Produce Social Intelligence*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Friedrich, F., Schramowski, P., Brack, M., Struppek, L., Hintersdorf, D., Luccioni, S., & Kersting, K. (2023). Fair Diffusion: Instructing Text-to-Image Generation Models on Fairness. *ArXiv*, abs/2302.10893.
- Haluza, D., & Jungwirth, D. (2023). Artificial Intelligence and Ten Societal Megatrends: An Exploratory Study Using GPT-3. *Systems*, 11(3), 120.
- Lomborg, S., & Kapsch, P. H. (2020). Decoding algorithms. *Media, Culture & Society*, 42(5), 745-761.
- Markham, A. (2024). Algorithms as conversational partners: Looking at Google auto-predict through the lens of symbolic interaction. *New Media & Society*, 26(9), 5059-5080. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448241251800>
- Natale, S. (2021). *Deceitful media: Artificial intelligence and social life after the Turing test*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Rogers, R. (2013). *Digital methods*. Cambridge, MA: MIT press.

Salah M., Al Halbusi H., Abdelfattah F. (2023). May the force of text data analysis be with you: Unleashing the power of generative AI for social psychology research. *Computers in Human Behavior: Artificial Humans*, 1(2), 100006. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbah.2023.100006>

Seaver, N. (2022). *Computing taste: algorithms and the makers of music recommendation*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Smith, J. (2019). Gender disparities in STEM: A comprehensive review. *Journal of Educational Research*, 112(5), 615-629.

Venturini, T., Bounegru, L., Gray, J., & Rogers, R. (2018). A reality check (list) for digital methods. *New media & society*, 20(11), 4195-4217.

Moving beyond text. A comparative case study of ai-assisted audio interviews in relation to textual data from mobile diaries in Singapore

Nadia Olisa, RySense Ltd

nadia.olisa@rysense.sg

Azaleah Mohd Anis, RySense Ltd

azaleah.anis@rysense.sg

As technology evolves, researchers have increasing opportunities to innovate data collection methodologies, for greater efficiency and depth. This seems especially relevant for asynchronous qualitative studies, which increasingly use online text-based data collection methods. As with other methods, it comes with its own challenges – a lack of richness and depth of responses through the loss of non-verbal cues like tone and volume, and respondents' ability to edit their responses.

Collecting responses through voice recordings, rather than text, may help to overcome these limitations. It would now also be more easily accessible to respondents as usage of smartphones, enabled with microphones and internet access, becomes ubiquitous. It allows for responses with some non-verbal cues, and potentially more spontaneous and elaborate responses. A major challenge with asynchronous data collection remains – the researchers' reduced capacity to immediately probe on respondents' answers. Text-based data collection tends to be mono-directional, or have limited capability for two-way communication (emails, online diary platforms, etc.). Both researchers and respondents are likely responding at their own convenience, hence potentially diluting or losing out on some data points surfaced in the initial response as both may be unable to immediately follow up and elaborate. Simply replacing text-based data collection with audio recordings may have this same issue of mono-directionality.

With the advent of artificial intelligence (AI) tools, this challenge may be closer to resolution. In particular, with the rapid development of large language models (LLM), natural language processing (NLP) models and machine learning (ML), conversational AI chatbots, which have rapidly grown in usage and capability, may unlock bi-directional interaction. These bots can engage in dynamic conversations with users, adapting to their responses and providing more personalised interactions, and are generally more versatile than traditional rule-based chatbots. This would allow for probing respondents' initial responses, to achieve greater depth. Coupled with audio recordings that capture non-verbal cues, this would ultimately allow for more nuanced insights, almost akin to the level of depth achievable with an in-person interview.

While comparing text-based and audio methods of data collection is not a new area of inquiry, introducing AI as a probing tool is a new angle to be explored. This may enhance the quality of data and insights, adding to the nascent body of literature on this subject.

This comparison looked at two studies of online diaries, one where respondents were only able to type in responses to the platform, and another where respondents could record their responses into an AI-enabled platform.

The first study was conducted with 49 respondents over a period of 2 weeks. Respondents would be posed questions every alternate day and asked to type in their responses. If responses were vague or mentioned interesting data points, researchers could then reply to the responses and follow-up with the respondents, typically within 24 hours of the initial responses, and may be followed by a second round of probing, time permitting.

The second study was conducted with 39 respondents over a period of 2 weeks. Respondents would be sent a web link via email/ SMS to the question of the day, and given the option to type or record their answers. After the initial response, the AI chatbot would ingest the response and ask a follow-up probe in-the-moment. Prior

to fieldwork, the researcher would have programmed the chatbot with the parameters for probing, including topics that require further follow-up. This probing would continue for up to 5 rounds if needed.

The data from both studies were then analysed for length and quality of responses. The latter was assessed by breadth (number of details provided), depth (way of describing events, emotions, and feelings about mentioned experiences or examples) and coherence (relevance of response to the posed question, clarity of response).

The results showed that data collection through audio recording resulted in comparatively richer data, particularly from older respondents. From an operational standpoint, the addition of AI probing reduced manhours while still achieving depth in responses. Limitations which surfaced with this method was the limitations of the AI chatbot's probing of unexpected responses which had not been accounted for by the researchers, as well as individual respondents' willingness to share, both in terms of preference for text over audio, and in response length regardless of modality.

In conclusion, there appears to be great value in collecting responses through auditory means, which would be difficult to achieve through text-based responses alone. Including an AI chatbot also proved to further nuance data collection, and thereby enhance insights. Further areas of study include: understanding the suitability of this data collection method for certain segments, such as older respondents, or for researching particular topics, such as more sensitive topics or unique experiences; exploring the potential for scalability of collecting audio responses with the objective of improving efficiency of manpower.

References

- Karem Höhne, Jan, Konstantin Gavras, Joshua Classen
2024 «Typing or Speaking? Comparing Text and Voice Answers to Open Questions on Sensitive Topics in Smartphone Surveys», in *Social Science Computer Review*, 42, 4, pp. 1066-1085.
- Hershberger, Patricia E., Karen Kavanaugh
2017 «Comparing Appropriateness and Equivalence of Email Interviews to Phone Interviews in Qualitative Research on Reproductive Decisions», in *Applied Nursing Research*, 37, pp. 50-54.
- Ratislavová, Kateřina, Jakub Ratislav
2014 «Asynchronous Email Interview As a Qualitative Research Method in the Humanities», in *Human Affairs*, 24, pp. 452-460.
- Chien-Chang, Lin, Anna Y. Q. Huang, Stephen J. H. Yang
2023 «A Review of AI-Driven Conversational Chatbots Implementation Methodologies and Challenges (1999–2022)», in *Sustainability*, 15, 4012.
- Surendran, Aiswarya, Reena Murali, R., Babu
2020 Conversational AI – A Retrieval Based Chatbot.

23. The everyday lives of platform workers: Migration, precarity and resistance

Convenors: Giorgio Pirina & Francesco Pontarelli (University Ca' Foscari Venezia)

Claiming mediation: Moroccan workers navigating agriculture and digital platforms in inland Sicily

Eugenio Giorgianni, University of Messina

eugenio.giorgianni@unime.it

My presentation focuses on the research I am conducting under the supervision of Giuliana Sanò on the digitalization of agricultural labor in Sicily, particularly as it concerns foreign workers. This is an exploratory study, as the digitalization process in Italy's agricultural sector is still in its early stages – a hesitant and fragmented beginning, hindered by structural issues that I will outline shortly.

I will start by briefly sketching the landscape of foreign labor in Sicilian agriculture. Then, I will explore the new dynamics introduced by digital mediation – its innovations, its continuities, the spaces of agency it opens or forecloses, and how it contributes to the reproduction of neoliberal market mechanisms. To ground this analysis, I will refer to a specific case study: an attempt to establish a labor corridor between Sicily and Morocco. The employment of foreign labor in agriculture – along with informal work, brokerage systems, and power relations – is an extremely complex matter, too dense to fully unpack in just a few minutes. Here, I will share an anecdote collected during the research, that illustrates the context.

During my fieldwork, I interviewed a representative from CGIL, the main Italian trade union. In order to show me how deeply entrenched labor exploitation is in Sicilian agriculture, he played me a recording of a conversation between two farm owners from the Adrano area, near Catania.

The case of the Work Corridor between Sicily and Morocco invites to reflect on a broader paradox: while digital platforms, structured mobility, and transnational cooperation may offer concrete tools for improving working conditions and countering exploitation, their success is still constrained by the very dynamics they aim to challenge – economic precarity, market volatility, and institutional fragility.

At the same time, what we observe in the everyday practices of migrant workers – between hustling and digital self-mediation, between informal networks and formal experiments like Migrants.Work – is the emergence of hybrid forms of agency. These do not necessarily overturn existing hierarchies, but they do complicate the narrative of passive victimhood that too often frames migrant labor in the agricultural sector.

Navigating Invisible Labors. Unpaid Work, Housing Struggles, and Resilience Among Migrant Women in Italy

Arslan Asghar, University of Salerno

aasghar@unisa.it

Gennaro Avallone, University of Salerno

gavallone@unisa.it

As a guide for this research, Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) and Feminist Political Ecology (FPE) are employed to understand the intersection of migration, unpaid labor and socio-economic precarity in the lives of migrant women in Italy. The study employs ethnographic fieldwork including in depth interviews and participant observations in Campania region of Italy, to examine the intertwined interactions of unpaid reproductive labor, housing struggles and precarious employment within exploitative and unequal systems.

Scholars of Social Reproduction Theory, especially Silvia Federici (2004), and Lise Vogel (2016), put the spotlight on the indispensable but marginalized role of unpaid reproductive labour to maintain both families and capitalist economies. Racialized and feminized, global structures of inequality inform this labor, disproportionately women, especially migrant women. Given the context of a legal immigration status in Italy, migrant women are simultaneously burdened by structural inequalities (e.g. discriminatory labor markets,

housing instability, exclusion from migration benefits) as well as by the combined roles of caregiver and economic contributor. Yet their struggles are situated in these broader conditions of neoliberal capitalism that works by the invisibility and undervaluation of reproductive labour.

This analysis is extended by FPE to link socio-economic precarity to environmental and ecological factors. Gendered labor and environmental degradation are deeply interconnected as Karen Bakker (2007) and Joan Martinez Alier (2002) rightfully argue that how environmental and economic exploitations combine to create migrant women's precarious living conditions of inadequate housing and limited access to resources is highlighted. The ecological aspects of their struggles underscore the ways in which socio ecological systems potentially heighten the preexisting vulnerabilities of racialized and gendered people.

However, the study highlights the active ways in which migrant women resist and survive through their own systemic challenges. Using the concept of Social Networks which negotiate the structural constraints, the research shows how migrant women act out defiance and collective care. These practices not only resist exploitation but also undermine traditional gender roles and systemic inequities through the formation of mutual support networks and asserting claims for recognition of reproductive labor. By adding comment, Ananya Roy (2010) also brings out more how these women create spaces of solidarity and localized resistance to trigger transformative potentials in constrained socio political context.

This research brings together the theoretical discussion of Social Reproduction Theory and Feminist Political Ecology to provide a holistic accounting of precarity as both a condition of vulnerability and as a dynamic field of negotiation. Unpaid labour and socio-economic struggles are set within a global political economy, while their local ecological impacts are looked at. But they point to a need to reconsider policy and advocacy strategies to address structural inequality. This work recognizes the agency of migrant women and begins to address the socio-ecological dimensions of their resistance to bring about more equitable change.

References

- Ba', S. (2024). 'Precarious parents' in Italy: A study on gendered and racialised labour-power. *Capital & Class*, 48(4), 501-517. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309816822113927>
- Barca, S. (2020). *Forces of Reproduction: Notes for a Counter-Hegemonic Anthropocene*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Benstead, L. J. (2020). Conceptualizing and measuring patriarchy: The importance of feminist theory. *Mediterranean Politics*.
- Gabrielli, M. (2024). 'Wages for Housework': the evolution of the debate in the 1970s Italian women's movement. *Modern Italy*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1017/mit.2024.49>
- Himmelweit, S. (1995). The Discovery of 'Unpaid Work': The social consequences of the expansion of 'work'. *Open Discussion Papers in Economics*, 6. Economics Department, The Open University. <https://oro.open.ac.uk/89788>
- Hoskyns, C., & Rai, S. M. (2007). Recasting the Global Political Economy: Counting Women's Unpaid Work. *New Political Economy*, 12(3), 297-317.
- Laudini, A. (2024). Punjabi "housewives" in central Italy: navigating patriarchy, labor exploitation, and welfare exclusion. *Dialect Anthropol*, 48, 345–365. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10624-024-09735-x>

Between Formalization and Precarity. Migration, Legal Status and Everyday Work in the Platform-Mediated Cleaning Sector in Switzerland

Widmann Hélène, University of Lausanne (UNIL)

helene.widmann@unil.ch

Platform-mediated gig work has become a significant form of employment for migrants, often marked by precarious conditions. Research highlights how platforms exacerbate precarity through algorithmic control, task fragmentation, and worker misclassification, depriving workers of social security (Rosenblat, 2019; van Doorn, 2017). Some platforms also perpetuate informal or illegal labor practices, employing individuals without legal status and exploiting their vulnerability to impose poor working conditions while limiting their capacity to resist. Migrants-especially those without legal residency-are disproportionately affected, reinforcing inequalities in the labor market along racial and class lines (Andersen et al., 2024). In this context, platforms are often seen as vectors of precarization, employing the most vulnerable workers, particularly undocumented migrants.

However, the Swiss cleaning services sector presents a notable deviation from this pattern. Leading platforms in this sector claim to formalize employment relationships by directly employing workers and offering salaries

inclusive of social security contributions. Regulatory scrutiny and public criticism since 2021 compelled platforms to adopt formal employment models. Some platforms have adopted what Farris (2017) describes as "rescue narratives", portraying themselves as saviors of migrant women by granting them access to legal employment while framing their operations as a fight against undeclared labor (e.g., #FightBlackMarket) and a commitment to fair working conditions.

This shift has reshaped working conditions and stratified the cleaning services sector, raising critical questions. How do platforms shape work and employment conditions in the cleaning services sector? What role do they play in influencing working conditions, the everyday lives of migrant workers, and the broader division of labor, particularly concerning migration and legal status?

Are some migrant platform workers better off than others? To what extent do factors such as legal status, employment conditions, or platform models impact their experiences?

Addressing these questions requires examining the working conditions and everyday lives of platform workers in relation to their migration backgrounds and legal statuses. A comparative analysis of platform workers versus those in the traditional cleaning sector is also essential. Moreover, the diversity of platform business models must be accounted for, as their objectives, strategies, and target clientele significantly influence workers' experiences, their vulnerabilities and strategies for navigating precarity.

This research employs a multi-sited ethnographic approach (Meyer et al., 2017), combining interviews and ethnographic observations-both digital and in-person:

- Life-course interviews with platform workers engaged with various types of platforms-often simultaneously and under different employment arrangements. These interviews trace individual trajectories and explore everyday working experiences. Additional interviews with workers from the conventional cleaning sector serve as a comparative reference, helping to assess the broader impact of platforms on working conditions.
- Interviews with platform managers investigate how labor is organized and regulated, with particular attention to issues of employment. Interviews with clients focus on the nature of interactions and employment relationships within these mediated arrangements.
- Ethnographic fieldwork, including digital ethnography of marketplace platforms and participant observation through direct work as a cleaner for both an on-demand and a marketplace platform. This immersive approach offers firsthand insights into job-seeking strategies, working and employment conditions, and managerial practices.

Initial findings reveal a highly stratified labor market, where access to platform work is heavily influenced by legal residency status. Key distinctions emerge between platform types:

On-Demand Platforms (Claiming to Regularize and Formalize Work): These platforms directly employ workers, using regulation and simplified employment processes to attract clients. While offering formal contracts, they fail to address deep-seated precarity. Workers often struggle to secure full-time hours or adequate income, forcing them to juggle multiple jobs.

Marketplace Platforms: Migrants without legal status often turn to these platforms, which function similarly to digital ads. Undeclared work is pervasive, and wages are very low. Clients and workers negotiate prices directly, with no platform-mandated minimum, leading to intense competition and a race to the bottom. This system relegates workers to the informal economy, where exploitation and limited bargaining power prevail.

Across both models, time capture and unpaid labor remain key issues-such as commuting, task preparation, job searching, and maintaining an online profile-though these issues manifest differently and with varying intensity depending on the platform type. While this mirrors challenges in the traditional sector, the dynamics are modified by platform structures.

Engaging in declared work via platforms does not necessarily improve economic stability or working conditions. Some workers report higher earnings in undeclared work arrangements despite lacking access to social security benefits. Traditional cleaning sector jobs, especially those involving direct relationships with regular clients, can offer a stronger sense of recognition and humanity, with workers sometimes feeling less exploited. In such arrangements, workers say being "almost part of the family", and wages can be higher, potentially leading to significant monthly incomes-even when a substantial portion of the work remains undeclared, creating challenges in terms of social security and retirement rights.

The Swiss case illustrates how platforms simultaneously formalize and fragment employment in the cleaning sector. By excluding undocumented migrants, leading platforms reinforce labor market stratification, creating

distinct tiers of access and opportunity. Yet, formalization does not resolve structural precarity for those employed. Workers often adopt multi-activity employment strategies, alternating between declared and undeclared work.

This research contributes to understanding the interplay between migration, legal status, and platform-mediated work. It challenges narratives homogenizing platform work, revealing nuanced dynamics of inclusion and exclusion shaped by legal status and platform business models. The heterogeneity of platform models emerges as a critical determinant of workers' access to jobs, their working conditions, and employment experiences. This underscores the necessity of moving beyond an "Uber-centric" view of platform work to capture the diverse ways platforms operate and impact workers across sectors.

Ethnographic methodologies offer a fine-grained understanding of platform workers' everyday realities, particularly at the intersection of migration and precarity. By focusing on their lived experiences, I will highlight systemic inequalities perpetuated by digital platforms and explore workers' agency within and beyond formal employment structures. These insights emphasize the need for contextualized analyses to address the complexities of migration, precarity, and platform-mediated work.

References

- Andersen, Magnus, Zampoukos, Kristina, Spanger, Marlene, Mitchell, Don
2024 "At your service: The mobilities, rhythms and everyday lives of migrant labour in the gig economy", in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 50, 15, pp.3733-3750.
- Farris, Sara R.
2017 *In the Name of Women's Rights. The Rise of Femonationalism*, Durham, Duke University Press.
- Meyer, Michaël, Perrot, Adeline, Zinn, Isabelle
2017 "Entre ambition «tout-terrain» et impossible ubiquité: Les ethnographes en mouvement", in *SociologieS*, pp.1-7, <http://journals.openedition.org/sociologies/6521>, visited 16\01\2025.
- Rosenblat, Alex
2019 *Uberland: How Algorithms Are Rewriting the Rules of Work*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Schor, Juliet B., Attwood-Charles, William, Cansoy, Mehmet, Ladegaard, Isaac, Wengronowitz, Robert
2020 "Dependence and Precarity in the Platform Economy", in *Theory and Society*, 49, 5, pp. 833-861.
- van Doorn, Niels
2017 "Platform labor: On the Gendered and Racialized Exploitation of Low-Income Service Work in the 'On-Demand' Economy", in *Information, Communication & Society*, 20, 6, pp. 898-914.

Reconfiguring Digital Work. An Ethnographic Study of Migrant Workers at TaskRabbit in Milan, Italy

Silvia Pitzalis, Università degli studi Link

s.pitzalis@unilink.it

Luca Rimoldi, Università degli studi Milano-Bicocca

luca.rimoldi@unimib.it

This presentation examines the preliminary findings of an ongoing ethnographic study, launched in March 2024, as part of the PRIN 2022 project Migrant Digital Work (MiDi Work). The research examines migrant workers' engagement with the digital platform TaskRabbit in the urban context of Milan, focusing on how the platform reconfigures work practices and everyday life. It explores the role of the platform in the construction of material, symbolic, and social relations that cross professional and private spheres.

The study employs a multimodal methodological framework that integrates traditional qualitative ethnography with digital ethnography to analyze the algorithmic processes that mediate taskers' experiences. Specifically, it asks how TaskRabbit's algorithm, rhetoric of self-management, and economic model shape workers' autonomy – often oscillating between its perceived and actual dimensions. Central to this investigation are the tensions between labor flexibility and precarity, the emergence of new forms of dependency, and the hierarchies of visibility and recognition exemplified by the status of the "tasker elite. These dynamics are critically examined as mechanisms of algorithmic control and classification within the platform's digital ecosystem.

The acquisition of TaskRabbit by the Ingka Group (IKEA Retail) is analyzed as a paradigmatic case of convergence between the Gig Economy and global consumer capitalism. This integration redefines the boundaries between manual labor, symbolic production, and consumption, transforming labor into an on-

demand service and reshaping the nexus between work and consumption. In addition, the research critically engages with the disjuncture between TaskRabbit's corporate narratives and the lived experiences of migrant workers, highlighting how digital platforms produce, obscure, and exacerbate inequalities, exclusions, and displacements.

Despite these structural inequalities, the ethnographic analysis highlights the emergent forms of agency among workers within these "digital workspaces". Migrant workers navigate the algorithmic and relational complexities of the platform by employing strategies of self-organization, negotiation, and resistance. By focusing on the case of TaskRabbit, the presentation offers a critical reflection on the role of digital platforms in constructing new material and symbolic boundaries and highlights the importance of anthropology in interrogating the ambivalences of micro-entrepreneurship and adaptive practices within the broader context of global economic and social crises.

References

- Brynjolfsson Erik, Andrew McAfee
2015 *La nuova rivoluzione delle macchine. Lavoro e prosperità nell'era della tecnologia trionfante*, Feltrinelli, Milano.
- Gökçe Günel, Chika Watanabe
2024 «Patchwork ethnography», in *American Ethnologist*, 51: pp. 131–139.
- Rogaly, Ben
2009 «Spaces of Work and Everyday Life: Labour Geographies and the Agency of Unorganised Temporary Migrant Workers», in *Geography Compass*, 3 (6), pp. 1975–1987.
- Wood Alex J., Vili Lehdonvirta
2021 «Antagonism beyond employment: how the 'subordinated agency' of labour platforms generates conflict in the remote gig economy», in *Socio-Economic Review*, 19 (4), pp. 1369–1396.
- van Doorn Niels, Darsana Vijay
2021 «Gig work as migrant work: The platformization of migration infrastructure», in *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X211065049>.
- van Doorn Niels, Fabian Ferrari, Mark Graham
2023 «Migration and Migrant Labour in the Gig Economy», in *Work, Employment and Society*, 37 (4), pp. 1099–1111.

24. Institutional ethnography: Researching for social change

Convenor: Morena Tartari & Órla Murray (Northumbria University)

Mapping the workplace support for working family carers: A work in progress

Daniela Perucca Gallegos, University of Edinburgh

d.perucca@sms.ed.ac.uk

Background. Dependency is one of the main challenges of ageing, as it profoundly impacts the caregiving dyad (Ministerio de Salud Chile, 2013; Herrera *et al.*, 2014; Jofré, Mendoza, 2005), intensifying long-term care (LTC) and informal caregivers' needs (Villalobos, 2019). Since 2015, the World Health Organization (WHO) has highlighted the relevance of two principles: care as a right and universality (World Health Organization, 2017). Considering care as a right implies policies guaranteeing the right to provide care in quality and equal conditions (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2021). Globally, caregiving tends to be left to the family unit, which challenges the family due to myriad reasons, including elderly dependency, the caregiver's characteristics, and the socio-cultural context. For example, caregivers are often women who participate in the workforce and may face overlapping responsibilities, personal goals, and the challenges of ageing themselves. These factors make informal caregiving an urgent work-life conciliation issue (Saraceno, 2010).

In Chile, evidence suggests lack of awareness of eldercare as a shared social role and an unequal structural distribution of government resources. These factors have impacted the involvement of central and local governments in providing support for eldercare, replicating gender and social inequities (Palacios, 2017; Villalobos, 2019). Thus, developing welfare state policies for LTC for the elderly is an emergency in Chile.

Aim. This research examines how workplace support for working family caregivers (WfC- working family carers) of older adults with dependency is organised in the Chilean workplace. These new insights could potentially enhance awareness and understanding of workplace support for WfC, thus supporting Chilean society's transformation into a society of care.

Methodological approach. Institutional Ethnography (IE- institutional ethnography) is the method of inquiry for this research. Applying IE involves investigating how things happen as they do (Campbell, Gregor, 2002), beginning and remaining focused on what people do in their everyday lives, and uncovering the relations of power that coordinate and organise people's lives (Smith, 2006). This study is for WfC of older adults with dependency. Thus, it adopts their standpoint, meaning it was conceptually designed to explore their experiences in accessing support at their workplace. Consequently, the interviews focused on things the researcher needed to learn about their work.

Fieldwork. The first stage of data collection was conducted in the Metropolitan Region of Chile between September and November 2024. To date, twenty-three one-to-one, face-to-face interviews have been completed. Four of these interviews involved extra-local informants or managers (WfCM - working family carers managers), three of whom are also WfC. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim, facilitating an initial analysis. This process helped identify key areas for further exploration in subsequent interviews, particularly focusing on work processes and their gaps.

Initial findings. Through interviewing local informants, I focused on identifying the relevant practices or what WfC do to request or access support in their workplace. This initial analysis included mapping the ruling relations of workplace support for working family caregivers. To this end, I followed the reference guide from Turner (2008).

Changes in the health status of older adult family members of the WfC, such as chronic non-communicable disease-related conditions or abrupt changes such as stroke, heart attack, and psychotic breaks, activate these work processes. One of the first processes I have identified is when the WfC informs her new life situation to the WfCM. Generally, this is verbal communication in the manager's office or by WhatsApp through the workplace mobile phone.

Contribution. This research has the potential to uncover the textually mediated ruling relations that shape WfC's everyday work. By shedding light on these dynamics, it could contribute to social change in Chile, ultimately improving the well-being of caregivers and their families. To the best of my knowledge, this will be the first institutional ethnographic study focusing on unpaid caregivers in Chile.

References

- Campbell, Marie, Gregor, Frances
2002 *Mapping Social Relations: Primer in Doing Institutional Ethnography*, Aurora, Ontario Garamond Press.
- Herrera, Luz-María, et al.
2014 *Programa de apoyo al trabajador cuidador familiar: fenómeno social emergente*. Aquichan, 14, 430-439. Available from: http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1657-59972014000300012&lng=en, visited 10\01\2025.
- Jofré, Viviane, Mendoza, Sara
2005 *Toma de decisiones en salud en mujeres cuidadoras informales*. Ciencia & Enfermería, 11, 37-49. Available from: http://www.scielo.cl/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0717-95532005000100005&lng=es, visited 27\12\2024.
- Ministerio de Salud Chile
2013 *Orientación técnica para la atención de salud de las personas adultas mayores en atención primaria*. Available from: <http://www.repositoriodigital.minsal.cl/handle/2015>, visited 14\01\2025.
- Palacios, Josefa
2017 *Elderly care in Chile: policies for and experiences of family caregivers*. Political science. Université de Rennes. Available from: https://theses.hal.science/tel-01679883v1/file/PALACIOS_Josefa.pdf, visited 15\01\2025.
- Saraceno, Chiara
2010 *Social inequalities in facing old-age dependency: a bi-generational perspective*. Journal of European Social Policy, 20, 32-44. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928709352540>, visited 12\01\2025.
- Smith, Dorothy E
2006 *Institutional Ethnography as practice*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Turner, Susan Marie
2008 *Mapping institutional work/decision processes. A reference guide for tracking and diagramming organizational work and identifying sites for change*. Available from: <https://www.mappingforchange.ca/about-institutional-ethnography/>, visited 18\11\2025.
- United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
2021 *Towards the construction of Comprehensive Care Systems in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Available from: https://oig.cepal.org/sites/default/files/s2200186_en.pdf, visited 07\01\2025.
- Villalobos, Pablo
2019 *Informal caregivers in Chile: the equity dimension of an invisible burden*. Health Policy and Planning, 34, 792-799. Available from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31603492/>, visited 08\01\2025.
- World Health Organization
2017 *Towards long-term care systems in sub-Saharan Africa: WHO series on long-term care*. WHO series on long-term care. Geneva. Available from: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241513388>, visited 04\01\2025.

Unsustainable lives in sustainable cities. Hegemonic struggle on socio-ecological relations in post-political cities

Senzio Sergio D'Agata, University of Milano-Bicocca

s.dagata2@campus.unimib.it

I hope to contribute to this session sharing my first attempt in engaging with Institutional Ethnography during my research activity. Indeed, recently I concluded my PhD course with a thesis firmly based on Smith's ontological stances, trying on one hand to explore IE's Marxist tradition, on the other to connect IE with spatial theory and the concept of hegemony. Of course, in doing so I encountered many opportunities and challenges which I would like to discuss during my presentation.

The thesis explores the relationship between sustainability and hegemony in the context of socio-ecological transformations within urban settings. Through a Marxist-inspired analysis, it examines how capitalist accumulation shapes contemporary urban environments and the interactions between society and nature. The study employs David Harvey's concept of "spatial fix," revealing how capitalism resolves its cyclical crises of overaccumulation through spatial restructuring, generating lasting impacts on local environments and socio-political landscapes. Additionally, using the Strategic Relational Approach (SRA), the thesis addresses the role of sustainability in the struggle for hegemony, highlighting the complex dynamics between the capitalist imperative for growth and the needs of urban populations. Drawing on the ontological framework of Institutional Ethnography (IE), this work examines the structures of institutional power that govern urban spaces, emphasizing the role of extra-local ruling relations in maintaining the capitalist model of production. By tracing the ideological foundations embedded in urban governance practices, the research shows how institutional texts and discourses reproduce socio-ecological inequalities under the guise of sustainability. The IE approach anchors the research in specific case studies, revealing how regulatory regimes, political paradigms, and institutional ideologies are implemented across diverse local contexts. In its empirical analysis, the study

focuses on two cases: urban development strategies and urban political movements in Milan and Seville. These cases illustrate the broader struggle for socio-ecological justice, as local actors challenge hegemonic projects that prioritize capitalist interests over community well-being. The thesis argues that these urban movements embody counter-hegemonic narratives, contesting the dominant discourse of “sustainable development” as a tool for capitalist accumulation and social control. This research contributes to critical urban studies by reframing sustainability as a site of political contestation, where hegemonic projects confront popular mobilizations seeking to redefine the terms of urban life. Furthermore, it underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of sustainability that considers both the material and ideological dimensions of urban governance practices related to it.

References

Jessop, Bob

1997 *A neo-Gramscian approach to the regulation of urban regimes: accumulation strategies, hegemonic projects, and governance*. In *Reconstructing urban regime theory: regulating urban politics in a global economy*, 5, 1-74.

2006 *Spatial fixes, temporal fixes and spatio-temporal fixes*. In David Harvey: *A critical reader* (pp. 142-166).

2016 *The State: Past, Present, Future*. Polity Press.

Lefebvre, Henri

(2003 [1970]) *The urban revolution*. Translated by R. Bononno, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN and London.

Loftus, Alex

2012 *Everyday Environmentalism: Creating an Urban Political Ecology*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Smith, E. Dorothy

1977 *Feminism and Marxism – A Place to Begin, A Way to Go*. *Contemporary Sociological Thought*, 225.

1987 *The Everyday World As Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*. Northeastern University Press, Boston.

Institutional intimacies. Generating social change through day-to-day collaborations with wildlife conservation authorities

Gabriele Orlandi, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

gabriele.orlandi@unive.it

Nicola Martellozzo, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

nicola.martellozzo@unive.it

Roberta Raffaetà, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

roberta.raffaeta@unive.it

This paper explores the intersection of discourses on human-wildlife coexistence and institutional dynamics within the Adamello Brenta Nature Park, where in the last decade several conflicts have arisen following the reintroduction (1999) of brown bear (PNAB, 2010). As anthropologists engaged in documenting discourses and practices related to human-wildlife coexistence, we approach the Nature Park both as an object of study as well as a collaborative research partner. Specifically, we explore the role of nature conservation as both a scientific discipline and a form of governance within a layered network of power, looking at how institutional mechanisms shape human-wildlife relations in rural, sparsely populated mountain areas.

Our method draws on anthropological invitations to study “elites” (Marcus, 1983) or “studying up” (Nader 1972; Gusterson, 2021) considering social situations as multi-actors formations (para-sites) through which to co-develop (para-ethnography) (Marcus, 1995, 2000). In ethnographically understanding conservation practices, we consider that informal, everyday practices are a crucial part of institutional dynamics, making them capable of absorbing or fostering (?) disruptive and unforeseen events. Although they sometimes challenge institutional governance, these undocumented forms of know-how also prove to be a vital part of the day-to-day functioning of a conservation institution, such as a Nature Park. As we are engaged in “para-ethnographic” research (Holmes, Marcus, 2005) with conservation experts, regular meetings, informal interactions, shared spaces, and collaborative work with the Park’s staff represent a significant part of our time in the field. Thanks to this collaborative and extensive research methodology, we have been able to grasp in depth the “inner” operational mechanisms of environmental conservation institutions to ethnographically engage with bureaucratic rationalities (Bernstein, Mertz, 2011; Bierschenk, Olivier de Sardan, 2019) underpinning them.

Until now, our ethnographic practice has contributed to reshape the institutional gaze on local communities. By participating in the production, reading, and amendment of institutional texts, we act as intermediaries between local communities and conservation institutions; in particular, we provide conservation authorities with a more nuanced understanding of the real-world social dynamics that shape the implementation of wildlife conservation policies. Moreover, by mapping and making visible the legal-bureaucratic processes involved in wildlife conservation, we aim to demystify the complex governance structures that impact local lives. This process involves making the “hidden” bureaucratic processes more accessible and transparent to local communities, thus enabling them to better understand the ways in which their lives and actions intersect with larger governing structures. As Smith and Griffith argue, this visibility is essential for helping people see where and how “*their own lives and doings [are] caught up in ruling relations extending beyond their own experience and understanding*” (2022, p. 4). This issue is particularly relevant in the daily life of these mountain communities due to the presence of bears, which requires a widespread governance enacted by wildlife conservation authorities.

More broadly speaking, this paper contributes to renewing the understanding of the epistemic and political value of intimacy, a concept that has been extensively explored in anthropology and sister disciplines (e.g. Herzfeld, 1997; Wilson, 2012). By mobilizing ethnographic knowledge within institutional settings, we aim to demonstrate how ethnography-based interventions can influence institutional documents and policies, leading to more inclusive and fair forms of nature management within communities. In the end, our work aims to highlight the potential for anthropological research to bridge the gap between local communities and conservation authorities, fostering a more participatory and informed approach to wildlife conservation and coexistence. This approach not only challenges traditional top-down governance models but also emphasizes the importance of intersecting these with local knowledge and practices into conservation strategies, making them more adaptable, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of both humans and wildlife within these mountain territories.

References

- Bernstein, Anya, Mertz, Elizabeth
2011 «Bureaucracy Ethnography of the State in Everyday Life», in *PoLAR*, 34, 1, pp. 6-10
- Bierschenk, Thomas, Olivier de Sardan, Jean-Pierre
2019 «How to Study Bureaucracies Ethnographically?», in *Critique of Anthropology*, 39, 2, pp. 243- 257.
- Herzfeld, Michael
1997 *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State*, London, Routledge.
- Holmes, Douglas, Marcus, George E.
2005 «Cultures of Expertise and the Management of Globalization: Toward the Re-Functioning of Ethnography», in Aihwa Ong and Stephen J. Collier (Eds.), *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*, Malden, MA, Blackwell Publishing, pp. 235-252.
- Gusterson, Hugh
2021. «Studying Up: Four Modalities, Two Challenges», in *Public Anthropologist*, 3, 2, pp. 232–252.
- Marcus, George E.
1983. *Elites, Ethnographic Issues*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
1995 « Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography » in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, pp. 95–117.
- 2000 (ed.). *Para-Sites: A Casebook against Cynical Reason*. Chicago, Chicago University Press.
- Nader, Laura
1972 *Up the Anthropologist: Perspectives Gained From Studying Up* Working paper of the Department of Anthropology. University of Berkeley, California.
- Parco Naturale Adamello Brenta [PNAB]
2010 *L'impegno del Parco per l'orso: il Progetto Life Ursus*, Trento, Manfrini.
- Smith, Dorothy E., Griffith, Alison I.
2022 *Simply Institutional Ethnography : Creating a Sociology for People*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.
- Wilson, Ara
«Intimacy: A Useful Category of Transnational Analysis», in Geraldine Pratt and Victoria Rosner (Eds.), *The Global and the Intimate: Feminism in Our Time*, New York, Columbia University Press, pp. 31-56.

L'Etnografia Istituzionale come strumento di monitoraggio e trasformazione sociale. Il caso del progetto Afghanistan 2030 – Next Leaders

Rebecca Agnoletti, CREA, Centro Ricerche EtnoAntropologiche

rebecca.agnoletti@gmail.com

Il presente contributo propone una riflessione sull'applicazione dell'Etnografia Istituzionale come metodologia di monitoraggio e valutazione all'interno del progetto *Afghanistan 2030-Next Leaders*. Il progetto, ideato da A2030 OdV Social Innovation Designers, è basato su un approccio partecipativo e di innovazione sociale e mira a promuovere l'inclusione socio-economica dei migranti altamente qualificati in Italia. Ideato da scienziati sociali *Afghanistan 2030-Next Leaders* è frutto dell'implementazione di buone pratiche emerse da precedenti esperienze di EI in cui sono state prese in esame criticamente le interazioni tra i migranti e le strutture istituzionali, evidenziando dinamiche di potere, pratiche di resistenza e strategie di adattamento.

Il presente lavoro approfondisce come l'integrazione tra dati qualitativi ed elementi quantitativi consenta un monitoraggio approfondito dei dispositivi progettuali e supporti i processi di ripensamento delle politiche di inclusione.

Il dibattito sulle politiche di accoglienza e integrazione in Italia ha evidenziato la necessità di superare approcci emergenziali a favore di strategie orientate alla coesione. Tale transizione è discontinua a livello nazionale, lasciando spazio a iniziative locali e private. In questo contesto, l'adozione di metodologie etnografiche e partecipative ha permesso di valorizzare le soggettività migranti come attori in grado di influire sulle trasformazioni istituzionali. Il progetto *Afghanistan 2030-Next Leaders* si inserisce in questo ambito, puntando a favorire l'inclusione attiva di giovani migranti in Italia attraverso percorsi formativi, lavorativi e di cittadinanza, con un focus sull'esperienza migratoria come risorsa e sull'EI come strumento di cambiamento.

L'approccio dell'EI ha costituito infatti fin dall'inizio un riferimento teorico e metodologico centrale nella definizione del progetto, orientandosi verso l'osservazione critica delle pratiche istituzionali e la valorizzazione di bisogni e soluzioni proposte dai beneficiari stessi. L'adozione dell'EI ha consentito di progettare dispositivi flessibili, in grado di riconoscere le soggettività migranti come agenti attivi nei processi di inclusione e nella rinegoziazione dei contesti normativi e organizzativi. In questa prospettiva, il progetto si configura non solo come intervento sociale, ma come esercizio riflessivo capace di interrogare e trasformare le relazioni istituzionali.

L'EI parte dall'esperienza vissuta dei soggetti per risalire ai meccanismi istituzionali che strutturano tali vissuti, mettendo in luce come il potere si eserciti in forma indiretta ma pervasiva attraverso la standardizzazione delle pratiche. Al centro di questa metodologia vi è l'attenzione alle "relazioni sociali mediate testualmente": quei processi organizzativi e burocratici che si attivano attraverso documenti, regolamenti, moduli e procedure.

Nell'ambito del progetto *Afghanistan 2030 -Next Leaders*, l'EI è stata utilizzata per osservare e decifrare come i giovani migranti interagiscono con i dispositivi istituzionali che ne condizionano i percorsi formativi, di accoglienza e di inserimento lavorativo. Interviste, osservazioni partecipanti e analisi di testi amministrativi hanno consentito di "mappare" le forme in cui i documenti – domande di permesso, contratti di tirocinio, regolamenti – influenzano le scelte, le opportunità e le difficoltà quotidiane dei partecipanti. L'obiettivo non è stato solo descrittivo, ma anche trasformativo: comprendere come tali relazioni si configurano ha permesso di costruire interventi più accessibili, comprensibili e coerenti con i bisogni dei beneficiari, favorendo l'emersione di forme di *agency* e di partecipazione attiva.

Il progetto *Afghanistan 2030-Next Leaders* si articola lungo quattro direttrici principali, pensate per sostenere i giovani migranti afgani in un percorso di inclusione attiva e consapevole. Il primo asse riguarda l'orientamento personalizzato e l'accompagnamento individuale, volto a sostenere ciascun partecipante nella definizione di un proprio progetto di vita e autonomia. Il secondo promuove l'accesso all'istruzione superiore e alla formazione linguistica, con l'obiettivo di rafforzare le competenze comunicative e professionali, considerate chiave per l'accesso al lavoro e alla cittadinanza.

Un terzo elemento centrale del progetto è stato la creazione, su richiesta dei beneficiari stessi, di spazi di espressione e confronto interculturale che rispondano all'esigenza di essere artefici del proprio percorso, come l'*Inner Place Chat Café*, spazio informale ma significativo, progettato dai partecipanti stessi, per condividere esperienze, riflessioni e criticità legate al proprio percorso migratorio. Infine, poiché l'accesso al lavoro è un punto critico, il quarto asse prevede la costruzione di un database digitale per la mappatura delle competenze,

pensato come strumento di autovalutazione e visibilità delle competenze acquisite. Questo strumento vuole fungere anche da collegamento tra domanda e offerta formativa e lavorativa per migranti e aziende. In tutto il percorso, l'esperienza migratoria è stata considerata un elemento generativo e non un limite da colmare, valorizzando il ruolo attivo dei beneficiari come co-autori dei percorsi intrapresi e delle soluzioni proposte.

In qualità di osservatrice esterna, ho implementato un sistema di monitoraggio che combina strumenti quantitativi con un'indagine etnografica basata su osservazione partecipante e colloqui.

L'EI ha evidenziato come i partecipanti abbiano sviluppato strategie di navigazione istituzionale e pratiche quotidiane di resistenza, le quali sono emerse grazie alle etnografie. Questi momenti di dialogo diretto hanno fornito una finestra importante sulle modalità con cui i migranti interagiscono con le strutture istituzionali e le sfide che affrontano nel cercare di accedere a diritti e servizi. Questo ha fornito inoltre un elemento fondamentale per l'interpretazione delle esigenze principali, in particolare riguardo all'acquisizione di un vocabolario adatto e competenze specifiche per migliorare l'accesso alla burocrazia.

Inner Place Chat Café ha contribuito a rendere tangibili queste esperienze, fungendo da laboratorio sociale in cui le esperienze personali sono state condivise ed elaborate collettivamente.

Un elemento rilevante è stato il coinvolgimento diretto dei migranti nella progettazione di strumenti digitali, come la piattaforma per la mappatura delle competenze. Questo processo ha rappresentato un momento di empowerment significativo, in cui l'utilizzo dell'EI ha avuto una funzione trasformativa, stimolando una maggiore consapevolezza delle dinamiche di potere e favorendo la rinegoziazione delle relazioni tra migranti e istituzioni.

Il monitoraggio etnografico del progetto *Next Leaders* ha confermato il potenziale trasformativo dell'EI, non solo come metodologia di ricerca, ma come pratica riflessiva, partecipativa e generativa, permettendo di aprire uno spazio di indagine critica sulle strutture che regolano la vita dei migranti e favorendo una loro riformulazione a partire dai vissuti. In questo senso, l'esperienza di A2030 rappresenta un esempio replicabile di come la ricerca debba integrarsi nei progetti sociali, contribuendo a rendere le politiche pubbliche più inclusive e sostenibili.

References

Campbell, M., & Gregor, F.

2004 *Mapping Social Relations: A Primer in Doing Institutional Ethnography*, University of Toronto Press.

Dal Zotto, E., & Fusari, V.

2022 *Diamo rifugio ai talenti: L'inclusione attiva dei rifugiati*, in *Antropologia Pubblica*, 8(1).

DeVault, M. L., & McCoy, L.

2006 *Institutional Ethnography: Using Interviews to Investigate Ruling Relations*, in Silverman, D. (Ed.), *Qualitative Research*.

Grisot, F.

2022 *L'importanza della voce. La migrazione afghana del 2021 e il progetto Afghanistan 2030*, in *Antropologia Pubblica*, 8(1).

Malfatti, F.

2012. *Effetti «collaterali» del Monitoraggio: Il ricercatore come comunicatore*. In F. Bracci (A c. Di), *Emergenza Nord Africa: I percorsi di accoglienza diffusa – Analisi e monitoraggio del sistema*. (p. 249). Pisa University Press. <http://servizi.regione.toscana.it/osservatoriosociale/>

Pinelli, B.

2020 *Migranti e rifugiate*, Milano: Raffaello Cortina.

Smith, D. E.

2005 *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People*, Rowman & Littlefield.

Between the opportunities of academic mobility and the struggles of doing family across borders. An ethnographic case study

Morena Tartari, Northumbria University

morena.tartari@northumbria.ac.uk

Alessandro Tartari Marini, Excelsior Academy

alessandro.tartarimarini@gmail.com

While funding institutions emphasise the positive impact that academic mobility has on the trajectories of academic careers (e.g., Momeni *et al.*, 2022; Gopaul, Pifer, 2016), the impact on the lives and families of those same academics involved in academic mobility and the problems that they meet are often under-researched and not properly taken into consideration (e.g., Nikunen, Lempäinen 2020; Hao, Leung 2023). Particularly

under-scrutinized is how the relational, social, and economic precariousness due to academic international relocations shapes the ways in which family can be “done” and is done (e.g., Minello et al., 2021; Tartari, 2022). Moreover, the perspectives of children and young people (Islam, 2024) are never included in those data. Inspired by the approach of Institutional Ethnography (IE), an alternative sociological approach created by the Canadian scholar Dorothy Smith (2005) and then developed by a network of scholars in North America and Nordic countries (e.g., Luken, Vaughan, 2021), this paper explores these issues through a case study and discusses how the emphasis on the value of mobility in higher education careers sometimes neglects the hidden costs and struggles of transnational families.

This study combines IE, auto-ethnography (e.g., Ellis, 2007), and collaborative and visual research with children (Thomson, 2008). It analyses the gaps between family and children’s needs and institutions’ ruling relations in different countries, the reorganization of family everyday life, the transformation of family practices, the struggles to reach social inclusion after one and multiple international relocations. In particular, the presentation will analyse the challenges posed by the immigration and education systems.

The results allow for a discussion of the tensions between the contemporary representations of academic careers and precariousness, institutional expectations, and the reality of doing family across borders (e.g., Koh, Sin, 2023).

By pointing out the opportunities and challenges that adults and children who are members of academic transnational families face, this presentation aims to stress the importance of doing research on this specific category of transnational families, including children as co-researchers, and promoting IE as a tool for reflection on social problems among young people and children.

References

- Ellis Carolyn
2007 «Telling secrets, revealing lives», in *Qualitative Inquiry* 13(1): pp. 3–29.
Gopaul, Bryan, Pifer Meghan J.
2016 «The conditions of movement: A discussion of academic mobility between two early career scholars», in *Higher Education Quarterly*, 70(3), pp. 225–245.
Hao, Yanbo, Leung Maggi W.H.
2023 «Academic mobility and the family», in Johanna L. Waters, and Brenda S.A. Yeoh (Eds.) *Handbook on Migration and the Family*, Cheltenham, Elgar, pp. 249–264.
Islam, Rezaul M.
2024 *Understanding Children's Perspectives in Social Research*, Hoboken, John Wiley & Sons.
Koh, Sin Yee, Sin Lin
2023 «Mobility and intergenerational transfers of capital: narrating expatriate and globally mobile children's perspectives», in Johanna L. Waters, and Brenda S.A. Yeoh (Eds.) *Handbook on Migration and the Family*, Cheltenham, Elgar, pp., 102–117.
Luken, Paul. C., Vaughan Suzanne (Eds.).
2021 *The Palgrave handbook of institutional ethnography*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan.
Minello, Alessandra, Martucci Sara, Manzo Lidia K.
2021 «The pandemic and the academic mothers: present hardships and future perspectives», in *European societies*, 23(1), pp. S82–S94.
Momeni, Fakhri., Karimi Fariba, Mayr Philipp, Peters Isabella, Dietze Stefan
2022 «The many facets of academic mobility and its impact on scholars' career», in *Journal of Informetrics*, 16(2), 101280.
Nikunen, Minna, Lempiäinen Kirsti
2020 «Gendered strategies of mobility and academic career», in *Gender and Education*, 32(4), pp. 554–571.
Smith, Dorothy E.
2005 *Institutional ethnography: A sociology for people*, Altamira, Rowman.
Tartari, Morena
2022 «Being a transnational researcher and a mother amid the COVID-19 crisis», in *Families, Relationships and Societies*, 11(1), pp. 45–49.
Thomson, Pat (Ed.)
2008 *Doing Visual Research with Children and Young People* (1st ed.), London, Routledge.

25. Surveillance imaginaries and practices

Convenor: Fabio Quassoli (University of Milano-Bicocca)

Identifying Hidden Mechanisms of Social Control. Designing Qualitative Research on Digital Twin Cities

Gabriele Suffia, University of Milan

gabriele.suffia@unimi.it

The rapid deployment of digital twin technologies in urban governance has amplified the risk of surveillance (Bauman and Lyon, 2014; Zuboff, 2019; Perri, 2020). Particularly, the dual nature of surveillance mechanisms: the overt control reminiscent of Orwellian paradigms and the entrapment in opaque bureaucratic processes evoking Kafkian/Kafkaesque systems (Ziccardi, 2017).

This research proposes initial steps for a conceptual and methodological framework for examining how surveillance operates within a Digital Twin City (DTC, also known as Urban Digital Twin or Local Digital Twin) and its implications for urban governance and citizens' rights. Specifically, it aims to allow ethnographic and qualitative researchers to leverage insights on the topic from legal informatics and socio-technical studies.

A Digital Twin City refers to a virtual representation of physical urban spaces created using real-time data streams from sensors, CCTV cameras, IoT devices, and other technologies (Deng et al., 2021). While designed to enhance urban planning, resource management, and citizen services, DTCs also risk institutionalising pervasive surveillance. By integrating concepts from Giovanni Ziccardi's theoretical distinction between Orwellian and Kafkaesque surveillance, this study seeks to map the specific surveillance mechanisms embedded within DTCs, differentiating between overt monitoring tools and algorithmic governance systems that entrap citizens in invisible processes of control.

The study builds on Ziccardi's dichotomy of surveillance modalities:

- Orwellian Surveillance: Visible mechanisms of control, including monitoring by cameras and sensors, fostering self-regulation among citizens based on the awareness of being watched. This framework aligns with Bentham's panopticon and has implications for the dynamics of power and visibility in urban spaces.
- Kafkaesque Surveillance: Subtle and procedural forms of control, wherein citizens are subjected to endless bureaucratic processes mediated by algorithmic systems. Here, the surveillance is characterised by a lack of transparency, inaccessibility, and systemic inaccuracy, which often lead to arbitrary and discriminatory outcomes.

This framework will be applied to urban digital twins to analyse surveillance as a socio-technical phenomenon (Eubanks, 2018) with cultural, ethical, and political dimensions.

This research must benefit from adopting a qualitative and ethnographic approach, emphasizing fieldwork, participatory observation, and citizen narratives to uncover hidden dynamics of surveillance in DTCs. The methodology is likely to include:

- Digital Ethnography: Studying digital infrastructure, algorithms, and data governance systems that underpin DTCs to map the sources and flows of surveillance data.
- Interviews and Focus Groups: Engaging with diverse stakeholders, including policymakers, urban planners, technologists, and citizens, to understand their perceptions of surveillance in DTCs.
- Case Studies: Examining specific DTC implementations in global urban centres to compare surveillance practices and governance frameworks.
- Document Analysis: Reviewing urban planning policies, legal frameworks, and technical reports to contextualize findings within broader socio-political and legal structures.

The methodological path can start from the following research steps:

1. Defining and Describing the Digital Twin City: At the outset, it is critical to map the specific scenario and context of the Digital Twin City under study. Given that DTCs differ in their technological infrastructures, governance models, and cultural environments, a detailed understanding of the chosen case is essential (the preference will be destined to a city, or cities, with a high maturity level of integration (Weß, 2023; Haraguchi et al., 2024)). This step involves identifying the unique characteristics of the DTC, such as its key stakeholders, urban planning priorities, and specific surveillance technologies deployed.

2. Mapping Surveillance Mechanisms in the DTC: Exploring how citizens experience the city "augmented with the DTC", it is possible to map the surveillance tools and processes within the DTC, including their functions and governance structures. This will include studying perceptions of control, fairness, and accountability.

3. The Proposed Framework: Orwellian surveillance will be examined through components such as CCTV cameras, facial recognition systems, and predictive policing tools. More interestingly, it could become possible through this research to highlight also the Kafkaesque surveillance, that is expected to emerge in terms of algorithmic decision-making, data proxies, inaccuracy, and discriminatory impacts.

4. Assessing Ethical and Legal Implications: Evaluating the risks posed by these surveillance dynamics to fundamental rights, including privacy, autonomy, and non-discrimination. Legal informatics perspectives will be integrated to examine how existing frameworks address or fail to address these challenges.

5. Informing Ethical Design: Developing recommendations for designing ethically robust DTCs that mitigate the risks of both forms of surveillance while ensuring citizen participation and agency

Initial investigations suggest that DTCs simultaneously amplify both Orwellian and Kafkaesque surveillance mechanisms:

Orwellian Elements: CCTV cameras and sensors linked to real-time analytics platforms exemplify visible surveillance. While these tools ostensibly enhance public safety and efficiency, they foster a culture of compliance rooted in the awareness of being observed.

Kafkaesque Elements: Algorithmic systems managing urban services often rely on proxies and metrics that obscure accountability. Citizens report frustration with inaccessible appeals processes, inaccurate data, and discriminatory impacts of algorithmic decisions, particularly in areas such as resource allocation and law enforcement.

Interplay Between Modalities: These surveillance forms are not isolated but interdependent. For example, facial recognition systems (Orwellian) often feed into predictive analytics platforms (Kafkaesque), creating feedback loops that exacerbate systemic biases and perpetuate inequalities.

This research contributes to the emerging discourse on surveillance in digital urban governance by bridging legal informatics with ethnographic methodologies. It underscores the importance of understanding surveillance not merely as a technological phenomenon but as a lived experience shaped by socio-technical systems. The findings aim to inform the design of ethical DTCs in Europe, that balance innovation with the protection of citizens' rights.

By advancing a critical and interdisciplinary perspective, this study seeks to provide actionable insights for policymakers, urban planners, and technologists to mitigate the risks of surveillance and enhance the democratic accountability of DTCs.

The proposed contribution builds on the Author's ongoing doctoral research (LAST-jd programme University of Bologna, University of Luxembourg) on Digital Twin Cities in Europe and inequalities (expected conclusion April 2025).

References

Bauman, Zygmunt, David Lyon

2014 *Sesto potere*, Laterza.

Deng, Tianhu, Keren Zhang, and Zuo-Jun (Max) Shen

2021 *A Systematic Review of a Digital Twin City: A New Pattern of Urban Governance toward Smart Cities*, Journal of Management Science and Engineering 6, no. 2 (June 2021): 125–34.

Eubanks, Virginia,

2018 *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police and Punish the Poor*, New York: St Martin's Press.

Haraguchi, Masahiko, Tomomi Funahashi, Filip Biljecki,

2024 *Assessing governance implications of city digital twin technology: A maturity model approach*, Technological Forecasting and Social Change, Volume 204.

Perri, Pierluigi,

2020 *Sorveglianza elettronica, diritti fondamentali ed evoluzione tecnologica*, Giuffrè Francis Lefebvre.

Weß, Sophia,

2023 *Wie können digitale Zwillinge die Aufgabenerledigung deutscher Kommunen verändern? eine Analyse von Einsatzbereichen, Veränderungspotenzialen und Rahmenbedingungen*, TOGI Schriftenreihe, Band 24. Berlin: epubli.

Ziccardi, Giovanni,

2017 *"Da Orwell a Kafka": l'evoluzione della sorveglianza elettronica e del controllo nella società dei sensori*, Notizie di Politeia, N. 128.

Zuboff, Shoshana,

2019 *Il capitalismo della sorveglianza*, LUISS University Press.

Amphibious Detention. New Bordering Ethnography of Safe Countries of Origin and the Use of Digital Data and Devices in the Governance of Migration in Europe

Matteo Buffa, Università degli Studi di Milano

matteo.buffa@unimi.it

As is well known, ten years have passed after the first major European migration crisis in 2015 when more than a million migrants arrived in Europe, and many asked for asylum in the European Union. These were difficult years, also due to the geopolitical events that had passed in the years immediately preceding Arab Springs and new "autumns" in the Middle East. At that time, the EU adopted a strategy aimed, on the one hand, at increasing security for EU citizens, by strengthening the application of the provisions of the Dublin Regulation on the identification of third-country nationals with the Juncker Commission's hub/hotspot approach, defining new detention facilities for migrants, arising new external borders with a dedicated agency, solidarity mechanisms between SSMMs (destined to fail in applying relocation). On the other hand, agreements with third countries, first attempts to externalize the deprivation of freedom by administrative means. In 2024, we recorded 199,200 arrivals in the EU compared to 270,000 the previous year. In Italy we had 66,475 arrivals, less than half of the previous year, 2023, with 157,000 migrants. In the first month of 2025, in January, according to UNHCR 11,223 people arrived in Europe; of these only about 2891 would have arrived in Italy and have been identified here. Yet, a new crisis is announced in 2024, quantitatively different, but not qualitatively, because in a dynamic of the emergency that is certainly not new, even in the face of the progressive increase in applications for PI, the adoption of the new EU migration and asylum pact in Europe is reached. More than a pact, it is a set of sources of EU law, including many regulations that, as such, will be directly applicable and with direct effect on EU countries in 2026.

In several aspects, the new rules of this pact seem to go beyond the concept of "safe third country of origin" and (its ethnographies and) issues related to territorial exceptions or certain categories of persons with the percentages of recognition of some form of protection by the Member States of the EU.

The grammar of non-exceptional exceptions, as I have defined it elsewhere, returns, with our government's request for the activation of new HUBs (from computer science, literally, "concentrators" of data) for repatriations to third countries on 18th December 2024, a few days after the decision of the Court of Cassation on the matter of SCO and still awaiting the outcome of the interpretative requests of many Italian Judges to the Court of Justice.

It will be necessary to focus on some provisions of Law 187/2024, the procedural ones had entered in force from January 2025. Some reforms still seem to be moving in the sign of a certain suspicion for SAR operations by non-sovereign entities, including those conducted by air, adding to previous restrictions on the possibility of submitting subsequent applications and other special/exceptional provisions, which relate to data processing. The subject we are dealing with (RSDP) is perhaps one of the most inhabited by sensitive data, an issue with which I now also measure myself in teaching, that is, in the encounter between the limits of consensus, the obligations that derive from the pursuit of a public interest in the operations of social control in GDPR. Data, at times, insensitive.

Article 10-ter of the TUI (D.lvo 286/1998) has been amended by providing, for the foreigner tracked down on the occasion of an irregular crossing of the internal or external border or who has arrived in the national territory following rescue operations and taken for SAR and first aid needs to special crisis points, the obligation to cooperate in ascertaining his/her identity and to exhibit or produce the elements in his/her hands relating to age, identity and citizenship, as well as the countries in which he/she has stayed or transited, allowing, as necessary to acquire the aforementioned elements, access to the electronic or digital devices or supports in his possession. In the absence of cooperation, the Police Commissioner may order that the officers or agents of public security proceed with immediate access to the identification data of the electronic devices and any electronic (S.I.M.) or digital (e.S.I.M.) cards in the possession of the foreigner, as well as to the documents, including video or photographs, contained in the same devices or electronic or Digital. Access to correspondence and any other form of communication by the data subject is prohibited, but it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between data and metadata in this sense.

This provision, of course, also applies to foreign nationals detained in CPRs (detention center for repatriation) for the purpose of repatriation (Article 14, paragraph 1.2 of the TUI). If a perquisition order is applied, it must

be communicated to the Giudice di Pace within 48 hours and validated by the same Judge within a further 48 hours. If such a searching activity is ordered against a minor, the Juvenile Court (and its rubble, after recent reforms) will have jurisdiction. In northern Europe, in particular, in Germany, several cases have already highlighted, in the literature and in jurisprudence, showing how controversial these tools are in evidence and credibility assessments procedures. Such controversial nature is confirmed even when these assessments have been limited on the nationality, considering that, the definition of the (safety of the) country of origin is a crucial point for understanding how procedures must be hinged and their terms, the possibilities of externalized detention in Albania and in other hubs in third countries as well as, at the same time, for the purposes of the refugee status determination process.

ACK. This work was supported in part by project SERICS (PE00000014) under the NRRP MUR program funded by the EU – NGEU. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Italian MUR. Neither the European Union nor the Italian MUR can be held responsible for them.

References

- Buffa, M.,
2023 *Trattenuti e trattamenti. Esistenze e spazi nella nemesi del diritto*, Ombre corte, Verona.
- 2024a *Digitalization of proceedings in Italy: the strange case of international protection*, IFKAD, International Forum on Knowledge Asset Dynamics, Proceedings IFKAD 2024, Madrid, Spain 12-14 June 2024 Translating Knowledge into Innovation Dynamics ISBN: 978-88-96687-17-8.
- 2024b *Resignifying Compliance between Ontologies and Epistemologies of Law*, in L. Wong, M. Saeki, J. Araujo, C. Ayora, A. Bernasconi, M. Buffa, S. Castano, P. Fettke, H. G. Fill et al., a cura di, *Advances in Conceptual Modeling – ER 2024 Workshops*, Springer Nature Switzerland AG, LNCS, Cham, 2024. ISBN 978-3-031-75598-9.
- 2025 *The "Biometric on": on the (Dual) Use of Biometric Data in Migration and International protection in Europe*, in *"Product Liability: Platforms, Internet of Things and Artificial Intelligence"*, Routledge, (to be published in 2025).
- Figoni, L., Rondi L.,
2024 *Gorgo CPR. Tra vite perdute, psicofarmaci e appalti milionari*. Altreconomia, Milano.
- Halberstam, J.,
2023 *Creature selvagge. Il disordine del desiderio*, Minimum Fax, Roma.
- Lindhal, H.,
2017 *Linee di frattura della globalizzazione, Ordinamento giuridico e politica dell'a-legalità*, Mimesis edizioni.
- Mezzadra, S., Neilson B.,
2013 *Border as method, or the multiplication of labour*. Durham, Duke University Press.
- Scheel, S.,
2024 *Epistemic domination by data extraction: questioning the use of biometrics and mobile phone data analysis in asylum procedures*, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 50:9, 2289-2308.
- Scheel, S., Ruppert, E., Ustek-Spilda, F.,
2019 *Enacting Migration through Data Practices*, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 37/4.

The Plural Police Dream. Reproduction of Social Order by Non-State Actors in the Nordic states

Björn Karlsson, IT University of Copenhagen

bjrk@itu.dk

Vasilis Galis, IT University of Copenhagen

vgal@itu.dk

Katarina Winter, Stockholm University

katarina.winter@criminology.su.se

"Now the police dreams that one look at the gigantic map on the office wall should suffice at any given moment to establish who is related to whom and in what degree of intimacy; and, theoretically, this dream is not unrealizable although its technical execution is bound to be somewhat difficult" Arendt (1968, p. 146)

Arendt's description of the police imaginary of total surveillance and control is in the modern era not hampered by the technical issues of her time. Instead, this dream of social order is reverberated, materialized and reproduced in and through a diversity of new state and non-state actors and a plethora of new technologies, such as data driven or predictive policing (c.f. Sadowski & Pasquale, 2015; Sanders & Sheptycki, 2017; Brayne, 2021; Karlsson & Galis, 2025), alongside mundane and municipal security technologies (apps, sensors, systems) (Winter 2025; Winter & Hermansson 2025). In that sense, policing has expanded to include new forms of

organization and practices, becoming increasingly plural (Bayley & Shearing 1996; Crawford 1999; Loader 2000; Boels & Verhage 2016; Hansen Löfstrand 2019; Ellefsen 2021). Plural policing relates to how policing has been distributed in a wider set of practices that do not necessarily correspond to traditional imaginaries of law enforcement, involving not solely state-centered but also local, private and civil actors (Volquartsen, 2020; Holmberg, 2005; Kammersgaard et al., 2023; Eneman & Ljungberg 2025a; Winter 2025; Hansen Löfstrand 2021; Uhnöo & Hansen Löfstrand 2018). This decentralization of policing potentially increases responsabilization and roles for private actors (e.g., security guards, housing companies, insurance companies), civil society organizations (NGO's such as volunteer night and security patrols), and local authorities (e.g., municipal and regional bodies).

Running parallel to the pluralization of policing motivated by an increasingly security-focused society (Hermansson 2019; Brandén 2022; Ahmed 2004; Lee 2007; Boutellier 2004; Lee 2007; Stanko, 2000) is a shift from a post-crime to a proactive pre-crime society. This preventive paradigm prioritizes pre-emptive measures and security logics (Zedner 2007; Lomell 2017) and is accompanied by the increasing digitalization of crime policy arenas. The digitalization of policing has been particularly associated with the expansion of policing into private actors, even in the Nordic countries (Flyghed 2017), enabling the immersion of a variety of non-state actors, such as the American tech giant Palantir Technologies, in policing practices. It also includes local municipalities that are assigned with state law enforcement functions, and which in turn are interlaced with a variety of private businesses. In that sense, the pluralization of policing marketizes security, inserting new actors and blurring the division between private and public. By investigating two Nordic states – Denmark and Sweden – we attend to the interplay between how non-state actors reverberate, materialize, and reproduce imaginaries of social order and police organization through the pluralization of policing.

In the case of Denmark, Palantir Technologies has supplied the Danish police with a data-driven policing platform (POL-INTEL). The platform functions by connecting disparate state and non-state databases into one interface for fast cross-cutting searches, analyses and visualizations. Originally, POL-INTEL was dubbed by the police as a “super weapon” in the fight against crime that would constitute a “quantum leap” into modern, digital crime fighting. Critics of POL-INTEL argued that the platform would produce mass surveillance and pointed at Palantir's reputation as a shadowy, authoritarian company, to strengthen their case. In contrast to assigning POL-INTEL immense power, whether for good or for bad, we show how Palantir deploys and reproduces the imaginary of this own power as part of its marketing strategy. Thereby, we specify how imaginaries of social order in and through policing technologies are reproduced by what Taylor (2021) refers to as private actors without public values.

By analyzing the code of POL-INTEL as a materialization of ideology (c.f. Chun, 2011), we move from theory to practice, clarifying the new contradictions, issues and problems for the police themselves as POL-INTEL was deployed. This relates to problems of black boxing, where Palantir's private ownership of the means of data production means that the inner workings of its platform are obscured to police, and to the wider criminal justice system.

The Swedish case stands out with recent legislation (SFS 2023: 196) mandating municipalities to implement systematic local crime prevention efforts nationwide (Skr. 2023/24:68). This has sparked a competitive market for security technologies, with private firms adapting their products to align with these new municipal responsibilities. These companies are striving to become the primary procurement choices for municipalities, regions, and housing companies. The companies are ornamenting their often visually complex products with key concepts drawn from the legislation and national guidelines. For instance, Embrace, the largest system in this market, claims to deliver “evidence-based”, “systematic” reporting and mapping of insecurity activities, “advanced analysis” on demographics and police statistics, and “collaboration” for directing interventions.

This emerging security market is explored through combining articulation work (Star 1991; Strauss 1985) and sociotechnical imaginaries (Jasanoff 2015). Applying a sensitivity for the mundanity of technology and society, we can explore how everyday work becomes locked to certain futures and worldviews. Paying attention to the visible and invisible work, actors, and discourses in implementation processes reveals how imaginaries perform action. Consequently, daily mundane practices not only create criminal futures (Leese 2023), but also generate techno-optimistic imaginaries on evidence. These imaginaries, in turn, legitimize the often time consuming and challenging everyday implementation work, and sanitize or blackbox the political and constructed nature of these policing practices (Chan, Sanders, Bennet Moses, and Blackmore 2022).

Paraphrasing the Invisible Committee (2017), since the time when law enforcement started to be pluralized to a techno-legal operation conducted day after day, it was inevitable that policing would become a political question. This paper delves deeper into the techno-politics of plural policing in the Nordics.

Digital Surveillance and Big Data Policing. Local Security Governance in the Global Digital Age

Eleonora Di Molfetta, University of Milano-Bicocca
eleonora.dimolfetta@unimib.it

The increasing adoption of digital technologies, big data and AI is transforming security practices and urban governance, raising pressing legal, ethical and social dilemmas. Research has shown how law enforcement agencies worldwide are leveraging these tools, reshaping policing practices and cultures, organizational structures, priorities and power dynamics (Galis, Karlsson, 2024; Gundhus *et al.*, 2023; Schuilenburg, Soudijn, 2023; Lally, 2022). A key insight from studies on policing and technology is that big data and technological tools are deeply embedded in the social context where they are developed and implemented, and their significance is best understood at the intersection of complex social interactions, political agendas, cultural and legal norms, work practices and existing objectives (Brayne, 2021; Egbert, Leese, 2021; Edler Duarte, 2021; Jefferson, 2020). This perspective underscores the need to contextualise policing innovations within broader frameworks, accounting for how established practices, traditions and priorities influence the adoption of technology – and how technology, in turn, reshapes these practices. Against this backdrop, the Digital Surveillance and Big Data Policing project, a research area of the Open Government Data (OGD) project, investigates the impact of big data and technologies on police forces in the city of Milan. The project explores operational changes, organizational restructuring, inter-agency collaborations, and recruitment strategies, shedding light on the (local) governance of security in the (global) digital age. Following an overview of the main features and evolution of security policies in Italy, this presentation will share the preliminary findings of the project, examining the opportunities and challenges of integrating big data and digital tools into policing and their broader implications for governance and social equity.

References

- Brayne, Sarah
2021 *Predict and Surveil. Data, discretion and the future of policing*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Edler Duarte, Daniel
2021 «The Making of Crime Predictions: Sociotechnical Assemblages and the Controversies of Governing Future Crime», in *Surveillance & Society*, 19, 2, pp. 199-215.
- Egbert, Simon, Leese Matthias
2021 *Criminal Futures. Predictive Policing and Everyday Police Work*, Abingdon, Routledge.
- Galis, Vasilis, Karlsson Björn
2024 «A world of Palantir – ontological politics in the Danish police's POL-INTEL», in *Information, Communication & Society*, 27, 13, pp. 2438-2456.
- Gundhus, Helene, Skjevraak Pernille, Wathne Christin
2023 «We Will Always Be Better than a Spreadsheet. Intelligence Logic and Crime Prevention in Practice», in *European Journal of Policing Studies*, 6, 1, pp. 27-49.
- Jefferson, Brian
2020 *Digitize and Punish. Racial Criminalization in the Digital Age*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Lally, Nick
2022 «"It makes almost no difference which algorithm you use": on the modularity of predictive policing», in *Urban Geography*, 43, 9, pp. 1437-1455.
- Schuilenburg, Marc, Soudijn Melvin
2023 «Big data policing: The use of big data and algorithms by the Netherlands Police», in *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, 17, pp. 1-7.

AI-Powered Security and the Normalization of Algorithmic Surveillance during the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris

Giacomo Campini, Università di Milano-Bicocca

The Paris 2024 Olympic Games represent a critical turning point in the use of AI-powered video surveillance as a security tool in public spaces. France has become one of the first European countries to deploy pervasive algorithmic surveillance, raising fundamental questions about the future of urban security governance.

Despite privacy concerns and legal controversies, the LOI JO has legitimized AI-enhanced video surveillance (VSA) for large-scale security operations, reinforcing the integration of predictive policing models into everyday law enforcement. The debate surrounding these measures has been largely overshadowed by narratives of security necessity, even as Parisian authorities express interest in maintaining these technologies beyond the Olympic period.

This research critically examines how AI-powered cameras are implemented, justified, and contested, drawing on semi-structured interviews, ethnographic observations, and document analysis. It explores the political imaginaries and operational practices shaping the deployment of AI surveillance and its interactions with traditional security forces. By focusing on the intersection between algorithmic governance, social control, and urban policing, this study questions whether the Olympics serve as a laboratory for the normalization of AI-driven security in European cities.

Engaging with critical surveillance studies and criminology, this work contributes to ongoing debates on predictive policing, algorithmic discrimination, and the privatization of public security, offering insights into the power dynamics embedded in emerging AI surveillance infrastructures

26. Labour exploitation: Beyond existing development paradigms

Convenors: Timothy Raeymaekers (University of Bologna) & Giuseppe Grimaldi (University of Trieste)

The criminalization of labor intermediation in the context of Italian agriculture. An analysis of the evolution of rural informal settlements and caporalato in the Foggia province*

Camilla Macciani, Università di Bergamo

camilla.macciani@unibg.it

The present paper intends contributing to the growing debate regarding the relationship between migrant labor exploitation and industrial agriculture, by investigating the criminalization of labor intermediation in the context of Italian agriculture. Literature on the topic has often stressed the continuity between contemporary exploitation of migrant labor and slavery (Cristaldi 2015; Omizzolo 2016). The dichotomy between modern slavery paradigms-which tend to blame traffickers and intermediaries as the responsible of exploitation conceiving them as the slave traders of 21st century (Bales 2004; Byrne, Smith 2016)- and critical unfree labor studies scholars – who focus on the oppressive structures allowing for the exploitation of migrant workers to take place (O’Connell Davidson 2010; Sharma 2017)- existing in the international literature also appears to reproduce with regard to the Italian context and its peculiar form of labor intermediation, so-called *caporalato*. An analysis of the criminalization of *caporalato* within Italian regulation suggests that, from an institutional point of view, the modern slavery approach has prevailed. The criminalizing approach characterizing the fight against *caporalato* has further been affected by a stereotyped and static representation of *caporalato* present in the public discourse and a part of scientific literature, whereby *caporali* have been portrayed as modern-day slavers and the main responsible of migrant labor exploitation. Various scholarly contributions have already challenged these representations, calling for a more nuanced understanding of the role of *caporali* in the context of Italian agriculture (Perrotta 2014). While fundamental to deepen our understanding of the issues at stake, these accounts, apart from few exceptions (Perrotta, Raeymaekers 2023), have been written with reference to a different historical context that had not yet been affected by the anti-*caporalato* legislation approved in 2016 and enforced in the following years.

The present work, building on five years of fieldwork in the province of Foggia carried out through the adoption of an activist research methodology, aims to account for the evolution of labor intermediation in the context of Foggia province. This area, for long time considered as the emblem of *caporalato* and migrant labor exploitation, has nevertheless experienced dramatic changes in the past years. On the one hand, rural informal settlements have transformed, from being temporary shelters aimed at satisfying the need of seasonal production to become permanent rural settlements inhabited all year round by mostly West African migrant workers. On the other hand, the implementation of anti-*caporalato* legislation (l.199/2016), taken together with labor shortages that have affected the province following Covid-19 pandemic, have consistently transformed the role and nature of both labor intermediation and labor exploitation in the area.

Through an in-depth ethnographic account of the evolution of rural informal settlements and labor organization, it is possible to suggest that while the criminalization of labor exploitation and *caporalato* has allowed for some improvements on the side of salaries and labor rights for documented workers, at the same time it represented a factor of further marginalization for undocumented workers. Thus, the implementation of anti-*caporalato* measures through a criminalizing approach made clear the contradiction between labor and citizenship rights, inherent to modern slavery paradigms.

A previous version of this work, written with Francesco Saverio Caruso (Università della Calabria), with the title “The criminalization of labor intermediation in Southern Italian countryside: an ethnographic account of the evolution of rural informal settlements and *caporalato* in Foggia agricultural district” has been published on issue 3/2023 of the journal *Studi Sulla Questione Criminale*.

References

Bales, Kevin

2004 *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*, 3rd edition, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, University of California Press.

Byrne, Richard, Kreseda Smith

- 2016 *Modern slavery and agriculture*, in Joseph F. Donnermeyer (Ed.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Rural Criminology*, London and New York, Routledge, pp. 157-166.
- Cristaldi, Flavia
- 2015 "I nuovi schiavi: gli immigrati del Gran Ghetto di San Severo", in *Rivista di Geografia Italiana*, 122, pp. 119-142.
- Fanizza Fiammetta, Marco Omizzolo
- 2018 *Caporalato: an authentic agromafia*, Mimesis International, Sociology n.7.
- O'Connell Davidson, Julia
- 2010 "New slavery, old binaries: human trafficking and the borders of 'freedom'", in *Global Networks*, 10, 2, pp. 244-261.
- Omizzolo, Marco
- 2016 "Tratta internazionale e sfruttamento della comunità punjabi in provincia di Latina", in *Romanische Studien*, 3.
- Perrotta, Domenico
- 2014 "Vecchi e nuovi mediatori. Storia, geografia ed etnografia del caporalato in agricoltura", in *Meridiana*, 79, pp. 193-220.
- Perrotta, Domenico, Timothy Raeymaekers
- 2023 "Caporalato capitalism. Labour brokerage and agrarian change in a Mediterranean society", in *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 50, 5, pp. 2002-2023.
- Sharma, Nandita
- 2017 "The New Order of Things: Immobility as protection in the regime of immigration controls", *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 9, pp. 31-47.

"Beyond the ghetto" as territorial logic. Migrant labour in the Foggia area and institutionalised field-forms between imaginaries and policies

Edoardo Ciuffreda, Università di Torino

edoardociuffreda@gmail.com

Manuel Grimaldi, Università di Torino

manuel.grimaldi@edu.unito.it

Stefano Mastromarino, The Bartlett's Development Planning Unit, UCL

stefano.mastromarino.23@ucl.ac.uk

Antonio Stopani, Università di Torino

antonio.stopani@unito.it

Camillo Boano, DIST, Politecnico di Torino

camillo.boano@polito.it

Our contribution aims to analyse certain institutional practices partaking in the intricate and multi-layered set of devices that in the control/abandonment pair (Pinelli 2017) seek to govern the spatialities and temporalities of migrant subjectivities.

For several decades, in the Capitanata, institutionally-hegemonic imaginaries have planned an economic-productive fabric around blurring the distinction between the urban and the rural and centred on 'agro towns'. The latter were mostly a result of individuals migrating in response to the demand for labour in the region's intense and often-monocultural agriculture, according to the prevailing economic-political paradigm.

Due to such movements of people – neither fully sedentary, nor totally nomadic – settlements have formed which fulfil housing, job, and transportation demands; places that offer services, hideouts, relationships – in short, so-called "margins", that is, "place of resistance" (hooks 1989) that are actually central for people who inhabit them as temporary places of dwelling.

The present contribution endeavours to examine the analytical approaches and design imaginaries that have been stimulated by the 'National Recovery and Resilience Plan' (105 million euros for the province of Foggia) within the policy framework of 'overcoming informal settlements'. Specifically, the 'Ghetto Out' project appears to have provided a model, while resembling a local translation of processes that has been described through the concept of encampment (Verdirame, Harrell-Bond 2005). The paradigm of 'overcoming' essentially replicates the dynamics related with the 'camp-form', understood as an institutionally-imposed standards of housing which produce patterns of polarisation and segregation.

The ghetto of black labour, the migrant ghetto, is overcome by its erasure. The process of overcoming takes the shape of a demolition or removal. Yet what about the 'beyond' that it envisions? What tensions and variations does a project of overcoming involve? And what shape does it take? Which values and aspects does

this 'going beyond' a phenomenon that is claimed in need of improvement, correction, abandonment, or eradication contemplate? In short, do the projects of overcoming merely replace what they aim to improve by framing it as outdated and useless, perpetuating harm through erasure, rather than engaging with its complexity? Do they all embody a contemporary and progressive intentionality?

The paper will attempt to untangle the notion of overcoming by highlighting how it pivots on pre-existing institutional imaginaries and simultaneously replicates them without questioning them, merely changing their descriptive formulations. With the help of a partial genealogy of previous projects of overcoming, the ethnographic focus on the 'Ghetto Out' project, and our first-hand experience in the 'Pista' in Borgo Mezzanone – which has taken place through methodologies that are based on frequenting and constantly listening to the places and subjects of the research (people living in the 'informal' settlements, activists, collectives, associations and NGOs working in the area, local institutional representatives and other researchers) –, we aim to unpack how space is constructed through 'overcoming' as a tool of subtraction: governing infrastructure, dividing territory into manageable and fragmented grids of functional elements, making use of bodies, and agglomerations, but also functioning as a means to dismantle, close and dissolve forms of collective self-organisation.

In this contribution, 'overcoming' is understood as project failure, comparable to reformism rather than abolition, but nevertheless an action in space that makes, produces and reproduces territory itself.

References

hooks, bell

1989 «Choosing the margin as a space of radical openness» in *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, 36, pp. 15-23.

Pinelli, Barbara

2017 «Politiche, persone, immagini», in Pinelli Barbara, Ciabbari Luca (Eds.), *Dopo l'approdo. Un racconto per immagini e parole sui richiedenti asilo in Italia*, Firenze, editpress, pp. 25-91.

Verdirame, Guglielmo, Harrell-Bond, Barbara

2005 *Rights in Exile: Janus-Faced Humanitarianism*, New York, Berghahn Books.

More Than the Sum of Its 'Wholes'. Interrogating the Universal Categories of Ethics and Producer in Fair Trade

Giorgia Dal Fabbro, University of Oxford

giorgia.dalfabbro@qeh.ox.ac.uk

Global trade, often presented as a catalyst for prosperous societies while simultaneously reproducing colonial patterns of labour and environmental exploitation (Oxfam International, 2022), has long been entangled with questions of ethics. Amid growing international concern about the social and environmental failures of conventional trade, Fair Trade has thus positioned itself as an ethical alternative to neoliberal globalisation, trying to embed fairness in global trade relationships by improving market access for marginalised producers in the Global South through connections with ethically minded consumers in the North (Fridell, 2007).

Yet, anthropological scholarship has pointed out how Fair Trade, despite its commitments to fair wages, workers' rights, and environmental sustainability, tends to centralise ethical authority in the hands of Northern stakeholders. These organisations, reflecting a variety of roles and interests within the Fair Trade space, have often assumed the role to define both the need for, and content of, the ethical values underpinning Fair Trade relationships (Dolan, 2008). Much like other efforts to "ethicise" economic life – such as Corporate Social Responsibility – Fair Trade tends to frame these values as forming part of a universal and unfragmented ideal of fairness, defined in terms of a set of standards to be implemented and neglecting instead the embedded and negotiated nature of everyday ethics (Gallenga, 2016; Mauksch, 2022).

Scholars have thus sought to unpack the political nature of Fair Trade relationships by drawing attention on, for example, how marketing narratives depict producers as passive and dependent, thereby misrepresenting their agency within global value chains (Berlan, 2008). Others have highlighted enduring power asymmetries between producers and both buyers and certification bodies, showing how conventional hierarchies persist within ethical trade (Herman, 2019). Some have also challenged the cultural assumptions underpinning Fair

Trade, where producers are often expected to perform forms of indigeneity that align with Northern imaginaries in order to gain access to Fair Trade networks (Wilson, 2010).

These critiques reveal how Fair Trade risks becoming a depoliticised project (Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1994) in which a singular notion of fairness is channelled through institutional frameworks that foreclose ethical and cultural plurality. Crucially, just as Fair Trade articulates a universalised notion of ethics through the authority of Northern organisations, it also tends to invoke a monolithic and unproblematised category of the 'producer' to which this ethical framework is applied. This framing of producers as a singular, monolithic category implicitly establishes a restrictive definition of who counts as 'producer,' neglecting the diverse cultural, geographic, and economic realities that exist within the category (Naylor, 2014). By doing so, it overlooks the agency and complexity of producers as social actors and reinforces a narrow, one-size-fits-all approach to Fair Trade.

In my doctoral project, I interrogate two forms of universalisation at the heart of Fair Trade: first, the construction of a singular, uncontested ethical framework – typically articulated and enforced by Northern organisations – and, second, the construction of the producer as a homogenous, passive recipient of these externally defined norms. While not identical, both function as essentialising categories through which Fair Trade relationships are imagined, organised, and practiced. Rather than contrasting them, I thus focus on how both categories are constructed as monolithic and unchallenged within Fair Trade, overlooking the complexity and plurality of ethical frameworks in the North and the diversity of producer experiences in the South.

This contribution focuses on the first of two – the assumed moral unity of Fair Trade – and explores the plurality of ethical imaginaries within Northern Fair Trade actors. By comparing the narratives and strategies of two key Northern organisations, Fairtrade International (FI) and the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO), I show that, rather than articulating a shared vision, they promote divergent understandings of what fairness entails, how it should be pursued, and whom it should serve. This lens reveals that ethical framings within Fair Trade are not neutral or unified, but reflect distinct organisational logics, priorities, and moral projects.

Crucially, these divergent moral projects hinge on different conceptualisations of who qualifies as a producer – some narrowly centred on marginalised farmers in the Global South, others embracing a broader spectrum that includes artisans and producers from the Global North. This observation lays the groundwork for the next phase of my research, which interrogates how the category of the producer is likewise universalised and essentialised. My aim is thus to explore how producers themselves experience, engage with, and at times resist the ethical frameworks imposed upon them – thus shifting the lens from discourse to lived realities.

Overall, the preliminary reflections presented in this contribution help move beyond the binary framing of the Global North as the sole locus of ethical governance and the Global South as a space of passive compliance, and instead foreground the multiplicity of positions, perspectives, and practices that shape Fair Trade on the ground. In doing so, they contribute critical insights on current efforts to embed fairness in global trade, highlighting the need to move beyond universalised moral frameworks and towards more plural and context-sensitive approaches to ethical trade relationships more broadly.

References

- Berlan, Amanda,
2008 «Making or marketing a difference? An anthropological examination of the marketing of fair trade cocoa from Ghana», In *Hidden Hands in the Market: Ethnographies of Fair Trade*, pp. 171–194.
- Dolan, Catherine,
2008 «Arbitrating risk through moral values: The case of Kenyan fairtrade», In Geeve, Nert de (Ed.), *Hidden Hands in the Market: Ethnographies of Fair Trade, Ethical Consumption, and Corporate Social Responsibility*, pp. 271–296.
- Escobar, Arturo,
1995 *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the Third World*, Princeton University Press.
- Ferguson, James
1994 *Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*, University of Minnesota Press.
- Fridell, Gavin,
2007 *Fair Trade Coffee*, University of Toronto Press.
- Gallenga, Ghislaine,
2016 «The Anthropology of Business Ethics: Worth Thinking about!», In *Journal of Business Anthropology*, 7, 19.
- Herman, Agatha,
2019 «Asymmetries and opportunities: Power and inequality in Fairtrade wine global production networks», In *Area*, 51, 2, pp. 332–339.
- Mauksch, Stefanie,
2022 «Economic Ethicising», In Carrier, James (Ed.), *A Handbook of Economic Anthropology*, pp. 266–276, Edward Elgar Publishing.

Naylor, Lindsay

2014 «“Some are more fair than others”: Fair trade certification, development, and North–South subjects», In *Agriculture and Human Values*, 31, 2, pp. 273–284.

Oxfam International,

2022 «Fair Trade: Justice and sustainability for people and the planet», In *Policy Papers*, www.oxfam.org, visited 8/12/2023.

Wilson, Patrick,

2010 «Fair Trade Craft Production and Indigenous Economies: Reflections on “Acceptable” Indigeneities». In Lyon, Sarah (Ed.), *Fair Trade and Social Justice*, pp. 176–198, New York University Press.

Weathering Exploitation. Making The Ties Between Climate Change, Migration and Severe Exploitation Visible

Giulia Repetti, Leverhulme Centre for Water Cultures

g.repetti-2022@hull.ac.uk

The 2024 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons identified the impacts of climate change on economic vulnerability and displacement as factors that increase the risk of trafficking along migratory routes (UNODC, 2025). Prolonged or sudden events such as droughts, floods, and intense storms can destabilise socio-environmental systems, compounding preexisting social, economic, political and personal vulnerabilities (Palumbo, 2024). The impacts of accelerating environmental changes are disproportionately affecting people already living in crisis, corroding livelihoods, political stability, and in some cases contributing to the decision to migrate (McLeman, 2019). Once left their homes behind, people on the move are exposed to greater risk of experiencing exploitation. This risk is exacerbated by situational factors such as economic loss, isolation and lack of social networks, as well as structural influences – i.e., rampant institutional hostility and systematic production of precarious living and labour conditions along migratory routes (Bates-Eamer, 2019; Bettini & Casaglia, 2024).

Over the last four decades, significant academic attention has been given to the role of these phenomena in (im)mobility decisions and outcomes, with studies collecting quantitative and qualitative evidence from all around the world (Khavarian-Garmsir et al., 2023). However, migration is not a singular, linear phenomenon. It takes place over time and in a multidimensional space where the access to resources (including information), reliability of social networks, and the rights of people are more easily contested and redefined, eroded and constricted, at times suspended. Experiences of migration are a space in which the exposure and the undertaking of exploitative practices can tremendously increase (David et al., 2019; Lewis & Waite, 2019). By contrast, considerably less attention has been given to the study of how climate change is linked to severe forms of exploitation, including human trafficking, especially in the migratory context (Hoogesteyn et al., 2024). Although an emerging branch of research has begun to conceptualise the interconnections between these factors, the gap in understanding what contributes to the relationship between the global challenges of climate change and labour exploitation is still open and contested (Brown et al., 2021).

This paper explores the methodological challenges and opportunities of researching the intersection of climate stress, migration, and severe exploitation along the routes towards and within Europe. To address the gap in understanding how climate-induced stressors exacerbate vulnerabilities to exploitation, I will collect narratives from individuals with lived experience of severe environmental events, migration, and exploitative practices, as well as insights from practitioners working specifically in anti-trafficking and migrant support networks. These stories will provide critical insights into how structural, personal, and situational factors shape experiences of vulnerability and resilience. A key focus of this paper is the practicalities involved in conducting qualitative research around sensitive topics. This includes ensuring informed consent, minimising harm, and navigating the power dynamics inherent in researcher-participant relationships. I will discuss strategies for creating a participatory research framework that centres the voices of affected individuals while safeguarding their dignity and agency. Furthermore, the paper will reflect on the challenges of engaging with practitioners and institutions, balancing the need for actionable findings with the complexities of institutional frameworks and confidentiality. By addressing these methodological concerns, this paper aims to contribute to a more nuanced and ethical approach to researching the nexus of climate stress, migration, and trafficking, while highlighting the importance of lived experience in shaping future research and policy.

References

Bates-Eamer, Nicole

2019 Border and Migration Controls and Migrant Precarity in the Context of Climate Change. *Social Sciences*, 8(7), 198. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci8070198>.

Bettini, Giovanni, Casaglia, Anna

2024 From denial to domestication: Unpacking Italy's right-wing approach to climate migration and security. *Geoforum*, 155, 104079. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2024.104079>.

Brown, David, Boyd, Doreen S., Brickell, Katherine, Ives, Christopher D., Natarajan, Nithya, Parsons, Laurie

2021 Modern slavery, environmental degradation and climate change: Fisheries, field, forests and factories. *ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING E-NATURE AND SPACE*, 4(2), 191–207. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2514848619887156>.

David, Fiona, Bryant, Katherine, Joudo Larsen, Jacqueline

2019 *Migrants and Their Vulnerability to Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Forced Labour*. International Organization for Migration (IOM). Available online: https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migrants_and_their_vulnerability.pdf [Accessed 22/04/2024].

Hoogesteyn, Katherine, McCallum Desselle, Leanne, Barrick, Kelle, Pfeffer, Rebecca, Vollinger, Lauren

2024 The Intersection of Human Trafficking and Natural Disasters: A Scoping Review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 25(4), 2877–2890. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380241227985>.

Khavarian-Garmsir, Amir Reza, Hajian Hossein Abadi, Mohammad, Sadeghi, Ali, Rahimi, Dariush, Asadzadeh, Asad

2023 Trends and future research in climate migration: a bibliometric analysis of forty years. *Environmental Hazards*, 0(0), 1–24. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17477891.2023.2265928>.

Lewis, Hannah & Waite, Louise

2019 Migrant illegality, slavery and exploitative work. In Lewis, H., Waite, L., Craig, G., & Balch, A. (eds) *The Modern Slavery Agenda*. 1st edition. Bristol University Press (Policy, politics and practice), 219–242. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvb1hsm8.14>.

McLeman, Robert

2019 International migration and climate adaptation in an era of hardening borders. *Nature Climate Change*, 9(12), 911–918. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-019-0634-2>.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

2025 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024, (United Nations publication, Sales no.: E.24.XI.11).

27. New ethnographic perspectives on racialization processes

Convenors: Ivana Rapoš Božič & Bernadette Nadya Jaworsky (Masaryk University)

When the postcolonial gaze is not enough. The new popular schools between neoliberal welfare support and counter-hegemonic resistance to racialized dominant culture

Fiorenzo Parziale, Sapienza Università di Roma

fiorenzo.parziale@uniroma1.it

Luca Alteri, Sapienza Università di Roma

luca.alteri@uniroma1.it

The aim of this paper is to analyze the new era of popular schools in Italy, which have succeeded in establishing a national network that contributes to enhancing the cultural capital of vulnerable groups (immigrants, second-generation individuals, students from low-income families, or those experiencing social hardship). The new popular schools promote forms of "cultural resistance" that challenge linguistic codes designed to perpetuate social inequalities, thereby hindering the full enjoyment of citizenship rights (Willis, 1977; Parziale, 2016). Our research spans four years and is based on participant observation of the internal dynamics of the «Verbanò» popular school and the Network of Popular Schools in Rome, supplemented by 28 in-depth interviews with educators involved in the project. We chose to investigate the context of Rome because extensive literature (Alteri, 2014) highlights the significant number of grassroots initiatives promoted by social movements active in the city, many of which align with the principles of critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2018). From a theoretical perspective, the authors adopt the framework proposed by British Cultural Studies and Public Sociology, which redefines, from an epistemological standpoint, the relationship between the subject and the «object» of research, challenging the distinction between elite culture and popular culture. The authors propose the category of «demanducation» to describe how popular schools combine social mutualism with counter-hegemonic resistance (Gramsci, 1975), directing their efforts toward a group of individuals to whom the «official» school system and racialized dominant culture ascribe a clear social stigma (Reay, 2018). Today, being children of migrants and of working-class extraction often means becoming «diasporic» students (Appadurai, 1996), for whom the school fails to fulfill its universalist function. With regard to these students, victims of racialization, popular educators adopt a «postcolonial» approach that valorizes the practices of resistance enacted by their students, seeking to modify their subaltern identity (Freire, 1968, Parziale, 2023). On the other hand, there is no lack of a critical look at the practices of popular education, at a time when it performs a refunctionalisation of neoliberal welfare, trying to repair the damage inflicted on the national school system.

References

Alteri, Luca

2014 «Il cerchio attraversato dalla saetta. Le esperienze dei Centri Sociali Occupati Autogestiti», in Luca Alteri, Luca Raffini (Eds.), *La nuova politica. Mobilitazioni, movimenti e conflitti in Italia*, Napoli, Edises, pp. 141-168.

Appadurai, Arjun

1996 *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

Freire, Paulo

1968 *Pedagogia do oprimido*, São Paulo, Paz e Terra.

Giroux, Henry A.

2018 «Teachers as transformative intellectuals», in Eleanor Blair Hilty (Ed.), *Thinking about Schools. A Foundation of Education Reader*, New York, Routledge, pp. 183-189.

Gramsci, Antonio

1975 *Quaderni dal carcere (1948-1951)*, Torino, Einaudi.

Parziale, Fiorenzo

2016 *Eretici e respinti. Classi sociali e istruzione superiore in Italia*, Milano, Franco Angeli.

2023 «Il senso della scuola per gli studenti nell'epoca della "learnification"», in Fiorenzo Parziale (Ed.), *La mediazione digitale a scuola. Studenti e insegnanti nelle scuole superiori a Roma*, Campospinoso (PV), Edizioni Altravista, pp. 169-204.

Reay, Diane

1998 «Miseducation: inequality, education and the working class», in *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 27(4), pp. 453-456.

Willis, Paul

1977 *Learning to labour*, New York, Columbia University Press.

Roma women serving community sentences in Italy. An analysis through the lens of critical Romani studies and critical criminology

Claudia Mantovan, Università di Padova

claudia.mantovan@unipd.it

Building on some results of the research project *"Punished Mothers. Women with children serving sentences"*, this paper will analyze the topic of community sentences served by Roma women.

In particular, the paper asserts that it can be analytically expedient to employ and combine aspects of Critical Criminology (Hogg and Carrington, 2002) and Critical Romani Studies (Bogdan et al., 2018) in research that analyses the relationship between Roma and the criminal justice system (Mantovan, 2024).

The former emerged in the 1970s in the United Kingdom after two outlooks were brought together: a Marxian take on the organization of control and repression mechanisms stemming from the structure of relations of production in capitalist societies, and the constructionist interpretative methods devised by symbolic interactionism to analyse forms of deviance from a relationship point of view. The meeting point between the two perspectives lies in the central role in analysis of selective control and repression mechanisms, and therefore in consideration of how structural selectivity fits together with that typically associated with microsocial interactions and with individuals who are represented as dangerous (Sbraccia, 2021).

Critical approaches first emerged in Romani Studies much more recently: it could be said that they "officially" came into being when the "Critical Romani Studies" journal was founded in 2018. Scholars that take this approach aim to bring Romani Studies out of the "ghetto" where they have been confined to date, and to "cross-fertilize" them with critical social theories like Critical Race Theory, feminist and intersectional theories, and postcolonial theories. A new generation of Romani feminists (Brooks, 2012) proposes to replace the concept of "ethnicity" (prevalent among scholars of Roma to date) with the concept of "race" or "racialized minority". This will shift the analytical focus from the "cultural" characteristics attributed to Roma people to structural racism and, more specifically, the processes by which the dominant society racializes Roma, depicting them as "others". The Roma are indeed constructed and reconstructed as "other" by continuous processes of everyday bordering (Yuval-Davis et al., 2017).

There are some interesting similarities between the two approaches, making connections between them mutually fruitful. Their very nature as "critical" approaches means that they both take into consideration the power structures in society and challenge mainstream approaches in their respective fields, which have very often analysed subjects connected with criminality and the condition of Roma in a way that focuses on the supposed intrinsic characteristics of the people being studied, not infrequently echoing predominant discriminatory representations. In contrast with these approaches, Critical Criminology and Critical Romani Studies both focus on *processes*: *criminalization* processes in the case of critical criminology and *racialization* processes in the case of Critical Romani Studies. When it comes to Roma, these two processes have historically gone hand in hand and reinforced each other, so in order to analyse them it is also useful to bring together the critical approaches that examine them. In addition, when studying the relationship between the criminal justice system and Roma, focusing on the racialization and criminalization processes inflicted on Roma by the dominant society rather than on their supposed "cultural" characteristics makes it possible to highlight the frequently insidious and indirect institutional discrimination that has yet to be studied on a significant scale in social research.

Furthermore, bringing together critical criminology with Critical Romani Studies provides an opportunity to enrich the former with the intersectional approach (Crenshaw, 1989) that is so powerfully advocated by the latter. The term "intersectionality" was coined by Crenshaw, who has described it as a *heuristic device*, a *provisional concept* (Crenshaw, 1991) and a *work in progress* (Carbado et al., 2013) with the potential to be enhanced by input from different approaches and contexts from those within which it was developed. It has actually been espoused by Central European Roma feminists recently. Among all the takes on intersectionality, it is no coincidence that the latter draw above all on that presented by Crenshaw, as well as those of other black feminists such as Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, and Angela Y. Davis, declaring that they have "provided inspiration and intellectual guidelines for Romani women scholars to think about gender, race, class, sexual identity, and other forms of oppressions as intersecting categories" (Kóczé, 2018, p. 114).

When applied to research into mothers serving community sentences in Italy, this analytical framework enabled us to highlight forms of discrimination that affect Roma women given non-custodial sentences and show how their relationship with the criminal justice system is influenced by the prevailing cultural constructs regarding gender and motherhood, as well as by racialization processes and class backgrounds.

References

- Brooks, Ethel
2012 «The Possibilities of Romani Feminism» in *Signs. Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 38, 1, pp 1-11.
Bogdan, Maria, Jekatyerina Dunajeva, Timea Junghaus, Angéla Kóczé, Iulius Rostas, Márton Rövid, Marek Szilvasi
2018 «Introducing the New Journal of Critical Romani Studies», in *Critical Romani Studies*, 1, 1, pp. 2-7.
Carbado, Devon, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Vickie Mays, Barbara Tomlinson
2013 «Intersectionality: Mapping the Movements of a Theory», in *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*, 10, 2, pp. 303-312.
Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams
1989 «Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics», in *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1, pp. 139-167.
Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams
1991 «Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color », in *Stanford Law Review*, 43, 6, pp. 1241-1299.
Hogg, Russel, Kerry Carrington
2002 *Critical Criminology*. Oregon, Willan.
Kóczé, Angéla
2018 *Transgressing Borders: Challenging Racist and Sexist Epistemology*, in Sam Beck, Ana Ivasiuc (eds), *Roma Activism. Reimagining Power and Knowledge*, New York, Berghahn, pp. 111-128.
Mantovan, Claudia
2024 «Roma women serving community sentences in Italy: an analysis through the lens of Critical Criminology and Critical Romani Studies», in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2024.2372037>
Sbraccia, Alvise
2021 *Criminologie critiche*, in Alessandra Dino, Cirus Rinaldi (eds), *Sociologia della devianza e del crimine*, Milano, Mondadori, pp. 321-350
Yuval-Davis, Nira, Georgie Wemyss, Kathryn Cassidy
2017 «Introduction to the special issue: racialized bordering discourses on European Roma», in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 40, 7, pp. 1047-1057.

Understanding Jewish racialization. Musing from the field

Valentina Gaddi, Université de Montréal

valentina.gaddi@umontreal.ca

Can Jewish people be racialized? The question goes back to debates spurred during the 19th century about the “semitization” of the Jews as the embodiment of the Oriental in Europe. Nowadays, it has become more difficult to include Jews in the conversation regarding race and racialization, as Jews are well integrated in Western societies and deemed White since at least the turn of the 1960s.

This presentation aims to explore the process of racialization undergone by Hasidic Jews who, despite their apparent whiteness remain physically visible and distinct from the rest of society because of their attire. This racialization process is very specific to Jewishness (as a way to set Jews physically apart regardless of their skin color). It highlights how, when it comes to Jewish ethno-racialization, racial and religious belonging are often congruent.

Based on my decade-long fieldwork research among Hasidic Jews in Montreal (combining ethnographic interviews with ethnographic observations), this intervention seeks to present how this racialization process unfolds in day-to-day interactions between Hasidic Jews and their neighbors.

In addition, I would like to explore how gender taints this process in those daily interactions.

An analytical framework for the study of essentialized notions of descent-based groups

Marcello Maneri, Università di Milano-Bicocca

marcello.maneri@unimib.it

The concepts of race and ethnicity are often conflated and inconsistently applied in both colloquial and academic contexts. Identical terminology may refer to divergent ideas, while disparate terms can express overlapping notions. This ambiguity arises from the inherently ill-defined and untenable nature of these concepts. Moreover, the taboo surrounding the term "race" – even when acknowledged as a social construct – has compounded the issue. In European academic and public discourse, the preference for terms such as "ethnicity," "culture," and "difference" has inadvertently masked racism directed at historically racialized groups.

While the politicization of race has heightened awareness of racialization processes and their consequences, an uncritical revival of century-old concepts of race and ethnicity as analytical categories is problematic. Their ambiguous boundaries and historical entanglement with orientalist and oppressive frameworks render them unsuitable for critical inquiry.

This paper proposes an alternative approach: an analytical framework that deconstructs ideas of essentialized, naturalized difference attributed to descent-based groups into their fundamental components. Such a framework enables a deeper understanding of the colloquial meanings and everyday applications of these notions while revealing how different conceptions of essentialized difference serve specific ideological and discriminatory purposes.

Our comparative, interview-based study of university students in Italy and the United States explores rhetorical strategies and underlying ideas about descent-based difference in two contexts with distinct histories of racialization and linguistic norms. Despite their differences, both countries exhibit surprisingly similar conceptualizations of race. By employing a comparative-friendly analytical framework, we identify variations in the configurations of essentialized difference across these contexts. The findings suggest that to advance sociological inquiry, the categories of practice "race" and "ethnicity" should paradoxically be set aside as analytical tools.

Navigating tensions between ethnoracial Othering and belonging in the urban space of Brno

Ivana Rapoš Božič, Masaryk University

ivana.rapos.bozic@fss.muni.cz

Alica Synek Rétiová, Masaryk University

retiova@mail.muni.cz

Karel Němeček, Masaryk University

karelnemecek@mail.muni.cz

In this study, we respond to the recent call for using place as an entry point for the study of migration (SLAPE et al., 2023). We aim to provide a nuanced, place-specific perspective on how immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Sub-Saharan Africa who currently reside in Czechia navigate the tensions between experiences of ethnoracial Othering and an emergent sense of belonging to the city and Czech society at large. We propose that these tensions can be productively explored through the concept of place attachment, which has the potential to capture the different and sometimes contradictory meanings people attach to the places they encounter in their everyday lives. We situate the study in the city of Brno, a secondary city in Czechia that has been recently experiencing a surge in its population of foreign-born residents. Although people with origins in the MENA and Sub-Saharan African regions represent an important part of the city's growing ethnoracial diversity, as a population they remain comparatively small, highly visible, and exposed to different forms of ethnoracial Othering. Combining the methods of comprehensive interviews (Ferreira, 2014) with go-along interviews (Kusenbach, 2003) conducted in the public space of Brno, we focus on identifying distinct forms of place attachments that variously enable or impede an emergent sense of belonging. More specifically, we explore how research participants establish familiarity, avoid exclusion and danger, and navigate between convenient anonymity and a sense of sticking-out in public. We also discuss how a specific place attachment is formed not only through direct experience with urban spaces but also through intersubjectively shared meanings and narratives about them. In this regard, we shed light on the formation of relationships

with place, which can consequently strengthen or undermine a broader sense of belonging to the city and Czech society at large.

References

Ferreira, Vitor Sérgio

2014 Arts and tricks of comprehensive interview. *Saúde e Sociedade*, 23(3), 979–992.

Kusenbach, Margarethe

2003 Street Phenomenology: The Go-Along as Ethnographic Research Tool. *Ethnography*, 4(3), 455–485.

SLAPE, Anna Wyss, Tania Zittoun, Oliver Clifford Pedersen, Janine Dahinden, Emmanuel Charmillot

2023 Places and mobilities: studying human movements using place as an entry point, *Mobilities*, 18(4), 567–581.

28. Transnational religious education in Europe: Between integration and differentiation

Convenors: Roberta Ricucci (University of Turin) & Minoo Mirshahvalad (University of Copenhagen)

Religious Education among Albanian Muslims in Italy

Chiara Anna Cascino, University of Verona, Italy – Lincean Academy

chiaracascino@gmail.com

The analysis of Albanian Muslims in Italy offers a compelling case study for examining communities perceived as *marginal*. The extant scholarly literature on Muslims in Italy has seldom encompassed the study of this religious community (Molteni, Dimitriadis, 2021; Romania, 2004; Capo 1998), preferring to focus on majority and chronologically older groups within the Islamic landscape of the country, particularly those from Asia and Africa. However, an investigation into the identity issues (Clayer 2010) and the construction of the religious community of Albanian origin not only provides a more complete picture of Islam in Italy but also offers numerous insights into the intricacies of the subject.

One of the most effective ways to understand this complexity is to examine the religious education system they adopt. The Union of Albanian Muslims in Italy (UAMI) is an association that is involved in gathering and supporting the Islamic practice of people from this community. The organisation was founded in 2009 in the north of Italy and since then it has been responsible for providing religious education to children of Albanian origin (Cascino 2025). Initially, religious education was imparted in Albanian; however, today this is taught in Italian, both in person and online, depending on the availability of local centres. The system adopted is modelled on the British experience and the Maliki school of jurisprudence, despite the fact that, prior to the Communist regime, the Hanafi school was predominant in Albania. The paper draws on ethnographic fieldwork within the association to discuss the path of educators in dealing with traditional teachings and the challenges of European and Italian societies. In addition to the transnationalism of the Albanian community, it is also crucial to recognise the national context within which the association operates, given the ongoing discourse surrounding Islamic education in Italy at various levels.

References

Capo, Angiolanna

1998 "Identità religiosa e immigrazione. Un'indagine tra gli immigrati albanesi e tunisini di Tor Lupara", in *La Critica Sociologica*, 124, pp. 87-101.

Cascino, Chiara Anna

2025 "De-centering the gaze on peripheral Islams. New forms of rooting and community building among Albanian Muslims in Italy", in *Religions*, 16 (forthcoming).

Clayer, Nathalie

2001 "Islam et identité nationale dans l'espace albanais (Albanie, Macédoine, Kosovo) 1989-1998", in *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, [En ligne], 115 | juillet-septembre 2001. DOI : 10.4000/assr.18443.

Molteni, F., Dimitriadis, I.

2021 "Immigrants' Religious Transmission in Southern Europe: Reaction or Assimilation? Evidence from Italy", in *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 22, pp. 1485-1504.

Romania, Vincenzo

2004 *Farsi passare per italiani. Strategie di mimetismo sociale*, Roma, Carocci.

Muslim women in religious public spheres in Europe. Non-Violence education through intra cultural dialogue and Islamic centres/mosques as a model for gender empowerment

Tehseen Nisar, Independent Research

nisar.tehseen@gmail.com

Education through the religious public spaces like mosques, centres of Islamic learning (cultural centres, madrasa or religious schools) has shaped and is still shaping Muslim culture, politics and identities in many

forms and facets and in many socio-cultural contexts in Europe. In fact, the role of religion in influencing Muslim communities in Europe like elsewhere in the world has been phenomenal.

Religion and religious spaces remain an important arbiter in private and public spheres in the European context and have a strong effect on shaping Muslim cultural identity/ies. Since religious spaces act as hubs of religious knowledge sharing and centres for social interaction; dialogue and knowledge creation remain a paramount function of such institutions. In fact, religious spaces are also capable to generate new narratives on peace and non-violence that can simultaneously influence opinions, thoughts, and perspectives; making them harbingers of hope in public spheres of Europe.

How can communities of young Muslim women in European religious spheres (Islamic mosques, Islamic cultural centres, madrasah) organize themselves to generate and identify themselves within the diverse group of trans-Islamic communities living in Europe that interact in myriad ways for dialogue among a cross-sectional and inter-sectional variety of platforms? And what implication could that dialogue have for the inter and intra cultural and religious inter-communication among young Muslim women in European social and cultural spheres?

Muslim women are continuously shaping socio-cultural/ religious and economic identities in Europe, be it a debate on niqab, hijab, burqa, burkini in France, or for that matter on being equally represented in the European works force, the question of forced marriages, as in case of Italy, or third generation Muslim diasporic women becoming a target of attention for the radicalization under ISIS from Britain, Sweden, Norway and Germany. The case of Muslim women minority communities, therefore, remains an area of an extremely important and that of their dialogue in the religious spaces is an important one.

Retrospectively, with violence and instances of terror attacks on religious spaces in Europe, complex amalgamation of radicalization with militant radical Islam was seen to generate a psychosis of hate and liberation from the vestiges of the liberal order. The precedent years saw the extreme forms of sexual, psychological and ideological manipulation and religious radicalization in public spheres of Europe, including brainwashing of the European Muslim women. The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), led a media campaign manipulating and recruiting hundreds of men and women from European Muslim origin.

Many young Muslim women from third generation Muslim immigrant families in Western Europe, became viral ISIS recruits. Manipulation of Muslim women as jihad brigades for activities of violence (as jihad brides) serving the male jihadists of the ISIS was one of the worst examples of gender-based violence (including sex slavery, sexual mating/marriages for liberation of Islam from infidels).

Such patterns of indoctrination of radicalization remain alarming and are continually influenced by waves of global terrorism. In the middle of this phenomenon, one very noticeable point to observe is the use of mosques/ other Muslim religious spaces in Europe as targets of terrorism (making them unsafe places for dialogue, where violence and terror reigned supreme).

Thus, mainstreaming Muslim women voices in such spaces to address multi encompassing challenges across cultural, social and religious platforms in European public spheres can also address islamophobia, radicalization and make Muslim women protagonists of peace. Such a stream can also guarantee that Islamic centres/mosques serve as a model for gender empowerment and dialogue.

Such a focus can address the lack of communication, interaction, and can create networks, in myriad dialogical ways; as much in social spheres but also within the European religious spheres like (Mosques, Islamic centres and religious cultural spaces); In effect it can lead to identify threatening calls for violence, creating awareness of the issues and avoiding perpetual situations (which can account to violence) by sharing, communicating and generating strategies and new narratives on gender empowerment through avoiding violence and being victims of it.

Till date, there is little research that has addressed this issue. Muslim women empowerment through voices from these spheres and platforms can facilitate non-violence education; such spaces for religious encounters among varied sections of Muslim women; from third generation young women from migrant backgrounds, diasporic origins, students, activists, educational professionals; living, studying and working in Europe, can go a long way greater goal of Muslim women empowerment as well as their rights and freedom. Such an impact needs to be addressed urgently, to assess and analyse policies and strategies towards the greater challenges of violence and its ramifications on Muslim minorities in Europe

Such an initiative can also help identify the problems to rights to citizenship, belonging, identity; corresponding to the women voices and struggles; their representation in mass-based movements, identifying in its wake the non- elite based reflection of the global/ European social spheres.

Furthermore, approaching mosques and Islamic cultural centres as not only places of worship but also of dialogue and networking: where socialization can generate peace and non-violence through a dialogical way can guarantee a renewed emphasis on the debate on religious pluralism in Europe and the many ways of non-violent education.

References

- Alan Gamlan, Giulia Liberatore and Helene Neveu Kringelbach, eds.
2015 *Diasporas Reimagined: Spaces, Practices and Belonging* Oxford: International Migration Institute.
De Vido, Sara & Frulli, Micaela (eds),
2023 *Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. A Commentary on the Istanbul Convention*, Elgar Commentaries in Human Rights, Edward Elgar Publications
De Vido, S & Sosa, L
2021 *Criminalisation of gender-based violence against women in European States*, including ICT-facilitated violence, report for the European Commission EELN
Europe's Muslim women: potential, aspirations and challenges, European Website on Integration https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/europes-muslim-women-potential-aspirations-and-challenges-0_en.
Habermas, Jürgen
1991 *The Structural Transformation of the Public sphere: An inquiry into the category of bourgeoisie society*, Massachusetts: MIT.
Kooman, William, Van Joop Pligt
2016 *The Psychology of Radicalization and Terrorism*. Routledge, New York.

Transnational education and Global Islam. The Arabic schools in the province of Salerno

Salvatore Senatore, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, University of Naples "L'Orientale"

salvatore.senatore@unimore.it

Salerno is a city located in the Campania Region, Southern Italy. In this area a large part of the Moroccan community is involved in a system of exploitation called *caporalato* (Avallone, 2017). Despite ethno-national homogeneity, the harsh living conditions do not allow this community to express stable religious leadership. The Islamic organizations that operate in this area, experience numerous difficulties in conveying their "vision" because they find themselves dealing with a fragmented and isolated community, whose members often do not even have a regular residency permit. Here the *muṣallayāt* (prayer rooms) are not only places of worship but are also welcoming centres offering a kind of social support system both for new arrivals and the irregular immigrants (Portes & Hao, 2002, 889–912.). In this context, the leadership of the local *muṣallayāt* appears distant from the secretariats of the national Muslim organizations. We can speak of "street level authority" (Sunier, 2023, pp.156-167) i.e. religious personalities who produce locality (Appadurai, 1996, pp. 178-199) through the consolidation of social networks that influence and regulate relationships between members of the community. However, locality is a fragile social condition that must be constantly reproduced and re-established (Sunier, 2023, pp.146). For this reason, where possible, the imams of Salerno organize extra-canonical activities such as Arabic schools in the spaces available to them. It is a way to constantly reproduce specific religious knowledge to train the Muslims of the future. This knowledge derives from a circulation of plural ideas and visions involving local realities and broader transnational Muslim organizations such as associations, *ṭuruq* (religious order of Sufism) and movements (Green, 2020). In Italy this plurality of opinions can be found in the negotiations between Muslim organizations and the Ministry of the Interior which led to the creation of a consultative agency which in 2017 ratified a "Pact" in which they tried to establish an effective connection between state legal norms and the law of the Muslim communities (Alicino, 2018, pp. 359-373). In October 2023, some members of this agency resigned, denouncing the government's inactivity. Although negotiations are at a standstill today, Italian governments, like other European governments, have the "domestication" of Islam on their agenda (Bowen, 2004, pp. 43-55). These policies aim to "bureaucratize" the Muslim communities present on Italian territory by trying to "assimilate" them as much as possible to the national culture. This attempt occurs on multiple fronts. First, there is attention to a hermeneutic proposal that marginalizes the fundamentalist elements. The other interest is to bring young Italian Muslims closer to

"European citizenship" starting from school education and specific pedagogical courses. In fact, between the 1980s and 90s, the "intercultural approach" that emerged in Italy provides that the children of foreigners can practice traditions as long as these are not seen to undermine characteristics of the Italian school or impact its organization in terms of arrangement of time or space. However, Intercultural education has been applied autonomously by schools in their self-organization, and it has been realized mainly through language learning support for immigrant pupils (Ambrosini & Caneva, 2011, pp. 40-41) Such national policies no longer played an important role in intervening on the integration paths of non-autochthonous citizens, especially in contexts such as the province of Salerno, where pedagogical policies are entrusted to the personal initiative of educators who try to establish a problematic mediation with the parents of the learners. Systematic processes of exploitation and social mobility involve families to the point that children's education takes second place. Although these difficulties exist, the local religious authorities have committed to opening afternoon schools in the same places where the *ṣalāt* (the pray) occurs. This is a parallel activity to the institutional one and does not replace its programs. Through the teaching of Arabic, the imams and religious personnel, aim to provide second generation Muslims with the linguistic tools to read the Quran and the Sunnah. Encouraging the presence of young Muslims in religious spaces is also a way for religious personnel to identify the future leadership of the religious community whose knowledge of Arabic is a fundamental requirement to fulfill his duties as a spiritual guide. However, the transmission of religious theological knowledge takes place within the home. Parents impart the religious knowledge learned in the place of birth to their children. Local authorities, who often have references and relationships with religious leaders of transnational organizations, participate in the construction of this knowledge which takes the form of a complex circulation system of different opinions (Green, 2020). In other words, the first generation hopes that the second one will preserve and reproduce the religiosity that was shared with them, also because the successful integration of the children can result in a progressive departure from the sharing of rites, traditions, customs, marriage choices and religion (Ricucci, 2021, p.22) This research aims to present the characteristics and reasons that led the religious personnel of the *muṣallayāt* of the province of Salerno to promote the teaching of the Arabic language. We will try to answer these questions: Who teaches these courses, and what training do they have? Does the teaching of Arabic "convey" the transmission of other knowledge? Who attends these courses? What importance does the religious element have among second generations? Do the living conditions of the Muslim communities living in the province of Salerno determine a specific religiously oriented tendency? Will young learners be the agents who favor the "assimilation" of these communities, or will the religious element progressively disappear from their interests?

References

- Alicino, Francesco
 2018 «The Italian legal system and imams. A difficult relationship», in Hashas Mohammed et al. (Ed.), *Imams in Western Europe Developments, Transformations, and Institutional Challenges*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press. pp. 359-373.
- Ambrosini, Maurizio & Caneva, Elena
 2011 «Italy: Intercultural education» in *Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Schools: Comparative Report, Accept Pluralism, Working Paper*, pp. 40-41.
- Appadurai, Arjun
 2005 *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (1996), New York, Routledge, pp. 178-199.
- Avallone, Gennaro
 2017 *Sfruttamento e resistenze. Migrazioni e agricoltura in Europa, Italia, Piana del Sele*, Verona, Ombre Corte.
- Bowen, John
 2004 «Does French Islam Have Borders? Dilemmas of Domestication in a Global Religious Field», in *American Anthropologist, New Series*, 106, 1, pp. 43-55
- Green, Nile
 2020 *Global Islam. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Portes, Alejandro & Hao, Lingxin
 2002 «The price of uniformity: Language, family and personality adjustment in the immigrant second generation», in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 25(6), pp. 889-912.
- Ricucci, Roberta
 2021 *Ethnicity, Identity and Faith in the Current Migratory Crisis Continuity and Change in Migrants' Religiousness in Southern Europe*, Springer, Cham, p. 22
- Sunier, Thijl
 2023 *Making Islam Work Islamic Authority among Muslims in Western Europe*, Springer, Brill, Leiden, pp. 156-167

Religious Firms in Motion. Al Mustafa University's European Branches

Minoo Mirshahvalad, University of Copenhagen

mmi@hum.ku.dk

This paper explores an understudied phenomenon: the role and performance of the Iranian Al-Mustafa University (AMU) in Western Europe. It examines two interrelated issues: first, the university's positionality within the complex nexus of Shia education in Europe, and second, the key variables influencing its functionality, including the size and age of local Shia communities, the host country's language, Iran's diplomatic relations with the host state, and European policies toward Islamic minorities.

The empirical data for this study focuses on cities in Germany, Britain, and Italy, with additional references to an institutional offshoot of AMU in Copenhagen. The research is based on 27 semi-structured interviews conducted between 2018 and 2025 with teachers, administrators, and students affiliated with the university. This study aligns with the rational choice theory of religion, as articulated by Stark and Finke (2000), and demonstrates how AMU's case further advances this analytical framework.

The findings suggest that Al-Mustafa operates most successfully in locations with a well-established Shia community, where English is the primary local language, Iran maintains stable relations with the host country, and European policymakers adopt more inclusive approaches toward Muslim minorities.

References

Stark Rodney and Finke Roger, 2000, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*, University of California Press.

29. Ethnographies of expert capitalism

Convenor: Daromir Rudnyckyj (University of Victoria) & Coco Kanters (Utrecht University)

Critique in purgatory. Or, how to study 'Capitalism' in econographic detail

James Christopher Mizes, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

chris.mizes@univ-paris1.fr

Purgatory is a Christian word that first appeared, likely in the twelfth century, to describe 'a place between heaven and hell' (Keck, 2014, p. 49). The idea was that, even after death, souls might still be forgiven for their lesser sins, ascend into heaven, and find salvation. Purgatory was a place of suspended judgment. For centuries, this suspension allowed humans to intervene in divine judgments – prayers from loved ones were thought to alter the fate of deceased souls (Course, 2022).

It is in this sense that Paul Rabinow (1999) once used the term to analyze the ethical practices that form a part of any 'problematization'. In an interview with Rabinow, Michel Foucault (1984, p. 389) gave 'problematization' a specific meaning: the 'transformation of a group of obstacles and difficulties into problems which the diverse solutions will attempt to produce a response'. Purgatory points to a 'suspended time' during 'problematization' in which judgments about what is a good and reasonable response to any particular group of obstacles have 'not yet been stabilized' (Keck, 2014, p. 49).

Yet among many critical scholars, such judgements have become surprisingly stable and even highly standardized. Making critical sense of the last big financial crisis, for example, has yielded an incredible cornucopia of academic and popular critique that has converged on a set of conventional wisdoms about what is finance and what are its various effects (Mizes, 2023). Many of these scholars have taken part in public denunciations of the Capitalism that they understand to be the cause of these effects.

This kind of critique is worthy of ethnographic investigation (see Boltanski, 2011). Scholars in science studies long ago began turning the proverbial microscope around in order to observe the cultural life of sciences like biology, physics, and chemistry. But similar research on the social sciences has largely been limited to the experts and expertises proper to the discipline of economics. Daromir Rudnyckyj (2024) recently offered ethnographers a set of methodological tools with which to approach the analysis of related phenomena, an approach that he termed the "econography" of "expert capitalism".

My provocation in this presentation is simple: what if ethnographers studied the rest of the social sciences in a similar manner? How would they do it? And what would be its effects?

My first experiments in this form of ethnographic investigation yielded a concept – the Capitalism effect – which aimed to understand the appearance of "Capitalism" as an analytical and metaphysical concept with which, in certain circumstances, critical scholars and the publics in which they participate make sense of the world and frame their action in it (Mizes, 2020). The idea is to approach capitalism as an empirical phenomenon that can be analyzed by observing practices of experts like critical scholars. The most important of these practices involve situations when scholars understand themselves to be observing, analyzing, or opposing a metaphysical form called "Capitalism". Studying this Capitalism effect, I propose, is a useful way to expand scholarly understandings of a scientific culture to which many of us belong or, at the very least, to which we seek to demonstrate belonging.

This proposition has presented a number of methodological issues. Principle among these issues is that my own research is not about critical scholars – it is about West African economists, investors, financial analysts and officials. These interlocutors do not always share the concerns, anxieties, or styles of reasoning popular among social scientists of finance and, as such, the analysis of these forms is immediately confronted with a troubling difference. Troubling in the sense that difference should provoke in the ethnographer the sense that the multiple groups to which they seek belonging are observing similar objects yet interpreting them in often radically different ways. Such difference can open the occasion for a dispute. It can also open the occasion for comparative analysis. Or both.

Problematizing this methodological issue (of having the seemingly wrong object of research for the type of analysis I have proposed) has led me to experiment with several different techniques in ethnographic research and writing. Like many ethnographers before me, I have looked for difference. I have also looked for

disagreement. And I have used disagreement as a research method to elicit difference – I look for how my interlocutors reason about problems in ways that are very different from my how my academic colleagues' reason about similar problems and similar objects. During fieldwork, I tell my interlocutors about these differences and I ask them what they think about it. At times, this generates interesting data.

But taking this approach has led me to understand data and evidence as something that should not be limited to what my interlocutors in the field say or do. To conduct a comparison, it is equally important to collect data on what my academic colleagues say and do. Conducting a comparison of how two different styles of reasoning make sense of similar problems requires an ethnographic understanding of both. Although much has been written about 'the field' as a site of ethnographic data collection, less clear is how to conduct a comparative ethnography that includes the social sciences.

Where and how should such a scientific culture be studied? In an implicit way, this is the purpose of scientific debate and literature reviews – learning how a scientific public to which we seek to belong reflects on and intervenes in various kinds of problems. In a written culture like the social sciences, reading the writing of other scholars is an important technique for understanding how they reason. So is observing and participating in their ritual practices. Reformatting these familiar experiences through ethnographic writing could include a number of techniques: treating the literature review as an ethnographic analysis, for example, or treating the scientific conference as an occasion for participant observation. I suspect that these techniques will help expand our scientific understanding of science and the world it seeks to observe. Beyond critique, observing the moral judgements that emerge in the purgatory of scientific reflection will make for better comparisons.

References

- Boltanski, Luc
2011 *On critique: A sociology of emancipation*. Polity.
- Course, Magnus
2022 The meaning of purgatory. Aeon. Retrieved March 11, 2024 from <https://aeon.co/essays/why-purgatory-is-less-a-holding-pattern-and-more-a-tribute-to-love>(open in a new window)
- Foucault, Michel
1984 Polemics, politics and problematizations. In P. Rabinow (Ed.), *The Foucault reader* (pp. 381–390). Pantheon Books.
- Keck, Frédéric
2014 From purgatory to sentinel: 'forms/events' in the field of zoonoses. *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, 32(1), 47–61. <https://doi.org/10.3167/ca.2014.320105>
- Mizes, James Christopher
2023 Anti-Public Finance? The Democratic Effects of Municipal Bond Markets. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 47(6), 917–939.
- Mizes, James Christopher
2020 The Capitalism Effect: A Review of "The Licit Life of Capitalism" by Hannah Appel. *Society and Space*. Accessed at <https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/the-capitalism-effect-a-review-of-the-licit-life-of-capitalism-by-hannah-appel>.
- Rabinow, Paul
1999 *French DNA: Trouble in purgatory*. University of Chicago Press.
- Rudnyckij, Daromir
2024 Econography: Observing Expert Capitalism. *Current Anthropology*, 65(4), 674–700.

Facilitation and the transformation of capitalism. On the moralisation of the field of business consultancy

Busch Frederick, EHESS & Paris Sciences et Lettres (PSL)

frederick.busch@ehess.fr

The sector of business consultancy has grown considerably since the second half of the 20th century. This shows quantitatively in rising sales, profits and the number of employees; qualitatively in the differentiation, professionalisation and internationalisation of the occupation; and practically in the increasing importance of consultancy services in everyday organisational life. (Armbrüster, 2009, ch. 2; Berrebi-Hoffmann, 2002; Faust, 2002)

For the social sciences, making sense of these developments represents a significant challenge: It requires nuanced understanding of different forms of 'consultancy' services in their unique features and contexts while respecting their 'epistemic jurisdiction' (Boyer, 2008). At the same time, analysing the common social

characteristics of an a priori heterogeneous set of actors and their practices' cross-cutting features becomes necessary (see the concept of *planneurs* of Dujarier (2015) or the work of Thine et al. (2013) on the social basis of the consultant's domination).

It is from this angle that I approach *facilitation*, a business service currently emerging in France. I propose studying it as part of the broader field of business consultancy, also including, inter alia, IT consulting, management consulting, coaching or in-house training. Like management consultants, facilitators are 'experts' supporting client organisations from the outside. However, their expertise lies in the design of 'processes' rather than 'content' (see Schein, 1978), as they help organisations to find 'new' ways of working together.

My contribution presents the preliminary results of an ongoing ethnographic research that began in September 2022 with a five-month internship in a small Parisian consulting firm, followed by participant observation of two facilitation workshops in hospitals (May 2023) and four interviews with facilitators (January-March 2024). Drawing from reflections on the study of expert capitalism (Rudnykyj, 2024), this contribution develops an empirical account of facilitation and links it to existing research on coaching and management consulting in particular. It further engages a reflexion on how to analyse this emerging form of consultancy against the background of the changing understanding of the capitalist firm's role in society (*nouvelle entreprise*, Boni-Le Goff & Laurens, 2013) and how this role is performed (see Codaccioni's et al. (2012) discussion of *institutional facades*).

A significant proportion of research has examined expert capitalism through discourses (see Thrift, 1997), thereby objectifying the *Lebenswelt* in which experts evolve – but also the one they want to show. By ethnographically studying the ways in which 'results' of facilitators' interventions are formalised, I attempt to analyse the mechanisms at the heart of performativity and symbolic power of expert discourse. The research ties in with broader literature about the evolution of social policies and intervention (*gouvernement par l'écoute*, Fassin, 2004), as well as a body of research focusing on fostering a 'humanist reform' of capitalism. At the same time, studying facilitation allows for a sociological perspective that takes into account how management 'makes its world' (Mitchell, 2005) through the careful administration of human capital as a form of intangible capital, trying to tap into unexploited resources and reduce hidden costs (see Cappelletti et al., 2018). Although a niche phenomenon, the study of facilitation therefore provides insights into the evolution of corporate modes of organisation, the governance and supervision of workers, and the growing importance of experts in transformations of capitalism.

References

- Armbrüster, Thomas
2009 *The Economics and Sociology of Management Consulting*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511488467>.
- Berrebi-Hoffmann, Isabelle
2002 "Les multinationales de l'expertise", in *Sociologies Pratiques*, 6, pp. 47–69.
- Boni-Le Goff, Isabel, Sylvain Laurens
2013. "Les entrepreneurs de la « nouvelle entreprise » : Acteurs, pratiques et dispositifs d'une écriture institutionnelle", in *Sociétés Contemporaines*, 89, 1, pp. 5–16, <https://doi.org/10.3917/soco.089.0005>.
- Boyer, Dominic
2008 "Thinking through the Anthropology of Experts", in *Anthropology in Action*, 15, 2, pp. 38–46, <https://doi.org/10.3167/aia.2008.150204>.
- Cappelletti, Laurent, Olivier Voyant, Henri Savall
2018 "Quarante ans après son invention: la méthode des coûts cachés", in *ACCRA*, 2, 2, pp. 71–91, <https://doi.org/10.3917/accra.002.0071>.
- Codaccioni, Vanessa, Nicolas Maisetti, Florent Pouponneau
2012 "Les façades institutionnelles : ce que montrent les apparences des institutions", in *Sociétés Contemporaines*, 88, 4, pp. 5–15, <https://doi.org/10.3917/soco.088.0005>.
- Dujarier, Marie-Anne
2015 *Le management désincarné: Enquête sur les nouveaux cadres du travail*. Paris, La Découverte.
- Fassin, Didier
2004 *Des maux indicibles: Sociologie des lieux d'écoute. Alternatives sociales*, Paris. La Découverte, <https://doi.org/10.3917/dec.fassi.2004.01>.
- Faust, Michael
2002 "Warum boomt die Managementberatung – und warum nicht zu allen Zeiten und überall?", in R. Schmidt, H.-J. Gergs, & M. Pohlmann (Eds.), *Soziologie des Managements und der betrieblichen Modernisierung: Vol. 1. Managementsoziologie: Themen, Desiderate, Perspektiven*, Augsburg, R. Hampp, pp. 19–55.
- Mitchell, Timothy
2005 "The work of economics: how a discipline makes its world", in *European Journal of Sociology*, 46, 2, pp. 297–320.

Rudnykyj, Daromir

2024 "Econography: Observing Expert Capitalism", in *Current Anthropology*, 65, 4, pp. 674–700, <https://doi.org/10.1086/731000>.

Schein, Edgar H.

1978 "The Role of the Consultant: Content Expert or Process Facilitator?", in *The Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 56, 6, pp. 339–343, <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2164-4918.1978.tb04644.x>.

Thine, Sylvain, Paul Lagneau-Ymonet, François Denord, Rémy Caveng

2013 "Entreprendre et dominer: Le cas des consultants", in *Sociétés Contemporaines*, 89, 1, pp. 73–99, <https://doi.org/10.3917/soco.089.0073>.

Thrift, Nigel

1997 "The rise of soft capitalism", in *Cultural Values*, 1, 1, pp. 29–57, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14797589709367133>.

Intermediation between markets and society in the realm of monetary affairs

Douglas Holmes, Binghamton University

dholmes@binghamton.edu

Drawing on ethnographic research in five central banks, I have explored how an inchoate politics operates within the field of monetary affairs. This paper is concerned with the distributional impact of monetary policy regimes by focusing on members of the public – and not solely markets – as agents of policy interventions. Central bank objectives – as a statutory matter – are codified as a function of specific macroeconomic aggregates: most notably, inflation, deflation, employment, growth, savings and investment. In this analytical realm, policy is understood to be 'data driven,' it's aims – notably regarding interest rates – legible to businesses and financial institutions. In practice, however, there is adjacent policy framework within which economic and financial conditions are modelled linguistically and communicatively to speak to various strata and segments of society, to address predicaments which operate outside of the data series and the stochastic models typically employed by these institutions. As diverse segments of the public assimilate policy intentions as their own personal expectations, they do the work of the central bank. Their anticipation, expectancy, and planning impel or impede the 'leaps of faith' which underwrite economic action prospectively. These protagonists employ what I term 'responsive knowledge' to further (or not) policy which can sustain a tractable future for themselves and others. From this perspective members of the public are not merely served by policy, they enact it.

Frontiersmen. Making people and places legible to extractivist capitalism

Nikkie Wiegink, Utrecht University

n.wiegink@uu.nl

This paper explores expert capitalism by focusing on resettlement managers at the coal mining frontier in Tete, Mozambique. Resource frontiers are essential to capitalist expansion and form contexts in which new categorizations of humans and non-humans are employed, and new forms of commodification emerge (Rasmussen and Lund 2017). The paper situates resettlement managers as part of a larger expert capitalist 'class' that includes consultants, financiers, and corporate actors who reshape the frontier landscape in the interest of extractive projects, underpinned by particular ideas of "development".

Resettlement is about the management of displacement of people caused by land use for extractive projects and are often-controversial displacement and compensation processes Resettlement managers (often hired as consultants) conduct baseline studies, do community consultations, manage expectations of affected populations, and develop and implement Resettlement Action Plans. Drawing from interviews with resettlement officers, participant observation during fieldwork, and my involvement in two government-led resettlement conferences in Mozambique, as well as a two-week course for resettlement professionals I attended in 2019, I explore the educational trajectories, careers, and everyday practices of resettlement managers, in other words, their trajectories into becoming an expert. This enables me to uncover some of the unstated assumptions framing the actions of expert capitalists.

I find it helpful to see resettlement managers as “frontiersmen.” In Kopytoff’s (1987) phrasing, the frontier is where “frontiersmen” went with ideas or mental models of a good society. Resource frontiers are no exception in this, as companies and all kind of other actors “arrive” at the frontier and simultaneously “create” the frontier with ideas of what a “good” society is. Mozambican resettlement managers are almost all male, highly educated and part of the political and economic elite. Which makes them some kind of outsiders to the places where resettlements take place, which are usually rural and marginal areas.

If the frontier is a “contact zone” I consider resettlement managers as mediators of various forms of contacts and encounters, as they translate international standards (such as IFC Social Performance Standards) to national and local contexts and manage the (diverging) interests of multiple actors (such as companies, NGOs, government, investors). I explore how Mozambican resettlement managers regard their role as being in-between the (often-foreign) extractive company and “local populations” and how they come to understand “local populations” as beneficiaries whom they can uplift potentially from poverty *and* as “profiteers”, who are likely to take advantage of the project. As mediators and translators, resettlement officers find themselves in a bounded yet powerful position.

Resettlement managers, in their roles as experts, play a critical part in making people and landscapes legible to extractive capitalism, categorizing and quantifying them in ways that facilitate extractive projects. A central concern of this paper is the notion of “legibility,” drawing on Scott’s work on state simplifications and Fabiana Li’s concept of “equivalences” (2019). Part of the training and work of resettlement managers involves processes of categorization, valuation, and the creation of equivalences between local land uses and meanings, and standardized compensation schemes. In the paper detail how resettlement managers through trainings, international standards, and company rules acquire the language, knowledge, and techniques to “make legible”, which is perceived as apolitical, technological, efficient, and time-sensitive process. In the processes displaced people’s lives become calculable and anatomized units, that can be processed and managed in the pursuit of the extractive project. The resettlement manager’s role in managing these processes exposes how the logics of extraction, finance, and “development” intersect in ways that render technical (T. Li 2005) what are highly political and violent processes of dispossession and displacement.

Attention to resettlement managers as experts, translators, and brokers, allows for the challenging of the monolithic image of the mining corporation. Hereby this paper contributes to the limited studies of experts and middle management working for transnational companies who play a strategic role in the ways foreign companies operate and govern resource frontiers. It argues for an ethnography that follows the processes knowledge production and the trajectories of becoming an expert. Such a lens on the analysis of expertise forms a concrete example of the “quieter registers of dispossession” (Frederiksen and Himley 2020) at the resource frontiers.

References

- Frederiksen, Tomas, and Matthew Himley.
2020. “Tactics of dispossession: Access, power, and subjectivity at the extractive frontier.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 45.1 (2020): 50-64.
- Kopytoff, Igor.
1987. *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press.
- Li, Fabiana.
2015. *Unearthing conflict: corporate mining, activism, and expertise in Peru*. Duke University Press.
- Li, Tania Murray.
2005. “Beyond “the state” and failed schemes.” *American anthropologist* 107.3: 383-394.
- Scott, James.
1988. *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. New Haven, Yale University Press.

30. Ethnographies of death and grief

Convenors: Giorgio Scalici (University of Palermo) & Nives Ladina (University of Roma)

Surviving the field. On the methodology of navigating the care of organ donors

Carmen Meslier, Nantes University

carmen.meslier@univ-nantes.fr

It is argued that sociologists should conduct their research in a way that creates the maximum opportunities for observation, and that interactions in the field should aim towards a better understanding of the social scene (Peneff, 2009). Such ethnographical philosophy, however, needs to be adapted when working in sensitive fields and this is often the case in studies addressing the areas of death and dying. In the same way that ethnographers working on gangs and delinquency need to remember that they may face physical and legal risks, researchers involved in death studies are conducting work that may endanger their mental health.

This abstract is based on a study first conducted during a master's degree in 2023, which led to the pursuit of this work in the form of an ongoing PhD thesis. The ethnographical work in this research takes place in the department that coordinates organ and tissue procurement in a French hospital (Coordination Hospitalière d'Organes et de Tissus). The researcher is able to observe the pathways of the organ donors from the creation of their medical file up until their surgery. The study focuses on the treatment of dead bodies during the process of organ procurement to consider how funeral practices are incorporated as part of medical procedures and investigate what mechanisms might improve the social acceptance of organ donation (Lock, 2001). Throughout this empirical work, the researcher is confronted with patients admitted into intensive care and their grieving families, and witnesses instances of limitation of therapeutic efforts (LTE) that concluded with death as well as various types of surgery on deceased patients. Such experiences for a researcher involve, by definition, an accumulation of events that could easily be difficult to live through, or result in trauma.

Social sciences have historically founded their scientific credentials on very rigorous methodological approaches to gain credibility in the academic world. In so doing, there has been a tendency to minimize the difficulties encountered during field work. This is particularly the case for qualitative research, as it could imply a lack of foresight and poor application of the scientific method. As a result, challenges that arose during a field study warrant only a passing mention in the final published work. In reality, however, research methods cannot strictly adhere to previously defined guidelines and they must be continually adapted during the empirical phase of the study. It has been argued that these methodological difficulties can actually add value to the research process and that their appearance should be of intellectual interest to the researchers involved. (Guionnet, Retif, 2015).

With this approach in mind, this paper focuses on the methodological difficulties of an ethnographic study in the area of organ transplantation and asks how they can be taken into consideration to improve the analysis being undertaken. Challenges that were encountered during this study can be examined as assets rather than obstacles. The analysis also emphasizes how important it is for the researcher to keep track of their impressions and feelings in their data collection to study their dialectical relationship with the field and plan their ethnographic approach with self-preservation in mind.

This paper will firstly address the shift that commonly occurs during the process of carrying out a field study at the hospital. The researcher's role moved on from strict observation to one of participation. Because of the continual movement in a medical environment, even in the operating theatre, there is always something to be done, from sticking labels on blood and organ samples to asking surgeons which size of cannula they need. Making oneself useful is part of the integration process as well as a way to further negotiate your place in the field (Peneff, 2021). By wearing a white coat, the researcher is assimilated into the professional group of nurses and doctors and can be addressed as such by grieving families. Certain coping mechanisms are deployed to deal with the emotional involvement of such interactions and these, in turn, allow access to further data. This was the case, for example, when the researcher chose to participate in cleaning a deceased patient after surgery.

Secondly, this paper will examine perception of the surgical act in different contexts. Impressions and feelings in the field varied and some operations were significantly more difficult to watch than others, reflecting the

social strength of spaces such as the operating theatre (El-Haik Wagner, 2023) or the mortuary. In the operating theatre, the activity revolves around the transgression of human flesh and is organized accordingly, similarly in the mortuary, this time with the caring of the dead. The irruption of such activities in the intensive care department however, contrasts with their main purpose, which is to actively maintain patients alive through very technical and invasive means.

Finally, this paper insists on the relevance of an on-going reflective practice during research on the dead and dying. Initial – perhaps personal – motivations for taking on such research topics may prove to be barriers that prevent the researcher from taking on certain areas of study. While working on sensitive topics such as the death and dying, it appears important to keep track of how one affects the field by their involvement but also how the field affects them in return.

It is argued that such attention towards the researcher's subjectivity will firstly improve the analysis, as it will spark interrogations that would not have been considered otherwise and will allow the researcher to properly separate personal moral judgement from facts (Scarfó Ghellab, 2015). In addition, this type of reflective practice serves a self-preservation purpose. By studying which circumstances cause distress and how to fight through it, the researcher should question their own personal history and take their own individual sensitivities into account to decide what doors should remain closed. By questioning the specific methodology of the sensitive situations often approached when studying the dead and dying, this paper aims to offer tools and spark a conversation on how researchers can take steps to ensure they survive such difficult research fields.

References

El Haik-Wagner, Nicolas.

2023 "Être au plus près sans être trop près Enjeu partagé de l'ethnologue et des équipes du bloc opératoire." *Zilsel*, N° 13 (2), pp. 203-222.

Guionnet, Christine, Retif, Sophie,

2015 *Exploiter les difficultés méthodologiques. Une ressource pour l'analyse en sciences sociales. Presses universitaires de rennes, coll. "Des Sociétés". Rennes,*

Lock, Margaret,

2001 *Twice dead. Organ Transplants and the reinvention of death.* University of California Press.

Peneff, Jean,

2009 *Le goût de l'observation.* La découverte, coll. Repères. Paris

Peneff, Jean,

2021 « Enquêter à l'hôpital ». *Sur le terrain. Un demi-siècle d'observation du monde social*, Presses universitaires de Grenoble. pp. 245-265.

Scarfó'Ghellab, Grazia,

2015 « L'auto-socio-analyse du sociologue ou les conditions pour garantir la rigueur scientifique de la sociologie », *SociologieS*.

Covering the Faces of the Dead. Lessons from and for research practice

Rachel Cummings, University of Bath

rc2499@bath.ac.uk

Should you cover the face of a corpse? Does doing so maintain or erode the dead person's dignity? What, indeed, does it mean for the dead to have dignity? These are some of the concerns that will be addressed in this presentation. It is rooted in a brief ethnographic encounter that occurred during seven months of research on a UK hospice inpatient unit. When one nurse described not covering the dead person's face as 'policy', another rejected this institutional framing, calling it instead simply 'dignity'. The exchange highlights key tensions in caring for the dead in modern, post-industrial societies, particularly when such care is undertaken by professionals with no affective relations to the deceased. This talk will consider these tensions and consider what close ethnographic observation of on-the-ground and/or institutional post-death practices can add to our understanding. It will link these insights to ethical questions about researching and writing of those soon-to-be or already deceased. In what ways do or should we as researchers expose or cover the faces of the dead? And how might we answer such questions with a truly iterative research process that both learns about and from our subjects?

The Emotional Labour of Suicide Bereavement. An ethnographic study of suicide and grief in Scotland

Joe Anderson, University of Edinburgh

jander23@exseed.ed.ac.uk

Sarah Huque, University of Edinburgh

shuque@exseed.ed.ac.uk

Amy Chandler, University of Edinburgh

a.chandler@ed.ac.uk

Emotion is a boundary crossing category of human experience that social researchers can use as a framework for understanding suicide. Emotions are felt and take place simultaneously within the privacy of one's mind-body system and in socio-cultural fields of interaction (Ahmed, 2004). For this reason, a focus on emotion within suicide research can illuminate the different meanings associated with, as well as the idiosyncrasies and juxtapositions that characterize suicide. This presentation draws on data from a qualitative, ethnographic research project investigating how suicide is constructed and understood in Scotland by interviewing people who have attempted or been bereaved by suicide, while spending time in community mental health groups who respond to suicide. In this presentation I explore *what emotions do* and *how emotions are narrativized* (Lupton, 1998) by people who have been bereaved by suicide. I propose that a critical engagement with the conceptual apparatus of *Emotional Labour* (Hochschild, 1983) is a useful way of understanding the kinds of "work" people bereaved by suicide have to do to both make sense of the raw, embodied emotions of bereavement, while also trying to remain within cultural norms of emotional expression in their communities in Scotland. *Emotional Labour* can illuminate the difficult and often contradictory emotional processes that bereaved people undertake following the death of a family member or friend by suicide. This presentation will also include reflections on the personal emotional struggles that accompany studying death by suicide through ethnographic and other qualitative methods. Several of our wider team members experienced challenging mental health responses to carrying out this research and as such our research group has implemented both internal peer-support and external opportunities for self-care while engaging with this sensitive topic.

References

Ahmed, S. 2004. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Hochschild, A. 1983. *The Managed Heart: The commercialization of human feeling*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press

Lupton, D. 1998. *The Emotional Self: A socio-cultural exploration*, SAGE Publications Ltd

Ethnography of mobilizations after a death perceived as unjust. Combining Different Methods to Address the Difficulty of Obtaining Interviews

Diarra Maëlle, Paris Nanterre University

maelle.diarra@gmail.com

This communication proposal centers on an ethnographic study of groups advocating for justice in response to an individual's death, focusing particularly on the challenges encountered during data collection. Existing sociological research predominantly examines mobilization and memory activism in response to collective deaths – such as wars, terrorist attacks, or mass shootings (Antichan 2017) (Baby 2013) (Clavandier 2009) (Truc 2016). However, far less attention has been given to activism arising from individual deaths, and the existing studies are largely limited to specific case studies. To address this gap, this research explores the transition from the denunciation of an individual's death to the broader fight for a cause, with a particular focus on the role of memory in this process. Through a multi-method approach, the study examines 10 French collectives formed in the aftermath of an individual's death and their subsequent activism around causes linked to that death. The presentation aims to shed light on the methodological and ethical complexities of studying these phenomena while demonstrating how a multi-method approach can enrich our understanding. It will address the following issue: What are the primary challenges in conducting interviews about these particular deaths and the subsequent mobilizations? And how can these challenges be overcome?

After briefly outlining the research and presenting its main findings, the presentation will discuss the different difficulties encountered in obtaining interviews with the various actors of the studied collectives. Interviews with those less closely connected to the deceased are often easier to arrange compared to interviews with close family members or intimate friends. As suggested in other studies gaining access to bereaved individuals poses significant challenges (Roudaut 2012). When relatives agree to participate, they frequently steer conversations away from their personal mourning, focusing instead on collective grief and the political aspects of the death (Francou et Meigniez 2021). Additionally, the inherently political nature of these deaths creates a paradox for researchers: they are perceived simultaneously as outsiders who cannot be fully trusted and as potential allies who can help publicize the death and its associated claims (Broqua 2009).

In the second part of this presentation, it will be argued that employing a combination of methods – primarily qualitative, with some quantitative approaches – helps to address these challenges and provides a comprehensive understanding of both individual and collective grief, as well as the mobilizations they inspire. In particular, participant observation has proven crucial for accessing aspects often omitted during formal interviews. Casual conversations during fieldwork, for example, reveal more personal relationships to the deceased, private dimensions of mourning, and tensions surrounding the memory of the individual. Additionally, methods such as online ethnography (Jouët et Caroff 2013) (Kozinets 2010) (Small 2022) and press archive analysis (Israël 2012) allow for an exploration of the distinct temporalities of public grief and mobilization and help to avoid overinterpretation (Olivier de Sardan 2015).

References

- Antichan, Sylvain. 2017. « Comment étudier les pratiques mémorielles liées aux attentats ? » *Geneses* n° 109 (4): 139-56.
- Baby, Sophie. 2013. « Vérité, justice, réparation : de l'usage en Espagne de principes internationaux ». *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps* 111-112 (3-4): 25-33. <https://doi.org/10.3917/mate.111.0025>.
- Broqua, Christophe. 2009. « L'ethnographie comme engagement: enquêter en terrain militant ». *Geneses* n° 75 (2): 109-24.
- Clavandier, Gaëlle. 2009. *Sociologie de la mort: vivre et mourir dans la société contemporaine*. Collection U. Paris: A. Colin.
- Francou, Lionel, et Maëlle Meigniez (dir.). 2021. *Mondes associatifs pluriels: saisir le politique par l'ethnographie des associations*. <http://journals.openedition.org/lectures>. Revue suisse de sociologie. Zurich: Seismo (Éditions). <https://journals.openedition.org/lectures/54944?lang=es>.
- Israël, Liora. 2012. « 8 – L'usage des archives en sociologie ». In *L'enquête sociologique*, 167-85. Presses Universitaires de France. <https://doi.org/10.3917/puf.paug.2012.01.0167>
- Jouët, Josiane, et Coralie Le Caroff. 2013. « Chapitre 7 – L'observation ethnographique en ligne ». *Collection U*, 147-65. <https://doi.org/10.3917/arco.barat.2013.01.0147>.
- Kozinets, Robert V. 2010. *Netnography: ethnographic research in the age of the internet*. 1st ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Olivier de Sardan, Jean-Pierre. 2015. *Epistemology, Fieldwork, and Anthropology*. Traduit par Antoinette Tidjani Alou. First edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Roudaut, Karine. 2012. *Ceux qui restent: une sociologie du deuil*. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes.
- Small, Mario L. 2022. « Ethnography Upgraded ». *Qualitative Sociology* 45 (3): 477-82. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-022-09519-1>.
- Truc, Gêrôme. 2016. *Sidérations: une sociologie des attentats*. 1re édition. Le Lien social. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.

Death in the terraces. Death, Mourning, Commemorations and Memorials around Italian Stadiums

Fabio Salomoni, Koç University, Istanbul

fsalomoni@ku.edu.tr

After having long noticed the denial of death in modern societies, sociological literature for some time now, has been detecting a return of death in public spaces and the transformation of funeral rituals and of the expression of mourning. My presentation focuses on death, mourning and commemorations in a specific space, football stadiums, and through the practices/performances implemented by "Ultras" groups .

The first part of my presentation reconstructs the relationship between death, the space of the stadium and spectators. Particularly in countries like Italy, the stadium has been a commemorative-memorial space since its birth in the early 1900s. Stadiums are in fact often dedicated to more or less famous people and become part of the toponymy of the city by inserting the names of dead people in public space/memory. Stadiums are also spaces in which "institutional" commemorative ceremonies such as the "minute's silence" take place, involving all the actors of the event, the public and the athletes. Furthermore, stadiums have often been places where

there have literally been victims caused by accidents – collapses, fires – or by the violence of fans or police. Recently, in different countries -Argentina, Spain, UK- stadiums have in some cases been transformed into spaces for the mourning or for the burial of fans, through the scattering of ashes on the pitch or the creation of cemeteries inside or near the stadium.

The second part of my presentation focuses on the relationship between death and fans in the Italian context. References to death have always been part of the language and practices of fans, through chants – “death to the referee!” “you must die!” – or through the display of funeral objects such as coffins or crosses. However, in recent years a new phenomenon has been recorded in Italy. Especially ultras groups are engaged in producing performances and rituals related to death and mourning for other fans. In this case, death is not used to degrade or intimidate opposing fans but rather to express mourning, commemorate and memorialize the death of their own fans but also that of opposing fans, the “enemies”. Ultras groups remember and commemorate the death of their teammates, regardless of the manner and place where the death occurred, through chants, display of banners but also through cultural performances, commemorative rituals that take place in the stands during the match.

Furthermore, the death of fans produces particular forms of memorialization in the stadium space, which include plaques, monuments, graffiti, or the naming of a part of the stadium – usually *la curva* – after the deceased. The implementation of this type of initiative often involves a plurality of actors beyond the ultras, in particular local political authorities, sports clubs and the media.

Particularly interesting in Italy is the case of fans who die violently in the stadium or in its vicinity during a match, that is, while they were carrying out their “work as fans”. In these cases, the ultras groups often produce a complex set of commemorative practices that include elaborate annual ceremonies of commemoration, in the place where the death occurred often transformed into a form of vernacular shrine, and the production of commemorative objects -gadgets-.

In the case of football fans and ultras too, social media are becoming increasingly important both as a means of communicating death and as a means of enabling forms of expression and participation in mourning.

While at an international level the stadium is transformed into a burial site, in Italy the stadium space – generally *la curva* – is becoming part of the -religious- funeral ritual. In this case, the deceased's coffin is placed in front of the ultras in the stands, often with the presence of a priest.

At the same time, ultras groups increasingly participate with specific practices and forms of expression – smoke bombs, banners, chants – in the funeral ceremonies of their members in traditional spaces – churches – contributing to a transformation of “traditional” rituals.

My presentation identifies the actors involved, the characteristics of the practices and forms used as well as the textual analysis of the materials produced – chants, banners, flyers, gadgets. It aims, through the specific perspective of the stadium and the ultras, to offer a contribution to the understanding of the transformations of the relationships between death, mourning, rituals and public space in contemporary Italian society.

My presentation is based on a research that has been ongoing for some years. From a methodological point of view it includes a plurality of techniques: analysis of newspaper articles and TV programs; analysis of materials produced by ultras groups – chants, flyers, banners, gadgets, plaques, murales -; participant observation during football matches and commemoration ceremonies, and semi-structured interviews conducted with different actors in various Italian cities, in particular in Bergamo, Trieste, Perugia, Jesi and San Benedetto del Tronto.

Technology-led teaching of anatomy. Will an absence of cadavers increase accessibility to the new medicine course in North Wales?

Isabella Palmer, Bangor University

llp22tgz@bangor.ac.uk

Historically, the study of anatomy has been taught using cadaveric material. However, there has been a gradual shift towards teaching anatomy using technology. I want to uncover the potential impact from students in

higher education across Wales learning anatomy from technology-enhanced educational methods, prosection learning, and dissection.

For my PhD thesis, I am undergoing an exploration of the similarities and differences in the student experience when learning from two main pedagogical practices; cadaveric, and technology-led. To do this, I have chosen to visit three field sites in Wales; University A, teaching through prosection learning. University B, teaching through technology, who teach using a virtual dissection table. And lastly University C, who teach through dissection.

My focus is from a sociological perspective; seeking to uncover phenomena relating to the sociology of emotion and the hidden curriculum when students are learning through their universities' chosen pedagogy. My thesis will be exploring these phenomena through an ethnographical approach. I shall be observing students' first encounter with cadavers at two of the Universities, then asking for interview and survey volunteers. At University B I shall be observing students' initial use of the Anatomage table, a virtual dissection table, then performing an additional observation at the end of their first semester to assess any differences in usage of the Anatomage table. I will also be asking for interview and survey volunteers to assess the impact from this method of learning.

The Materialization of Grief. An Ethnographic Study of Cemeteries as Spaces for Emotional Processing

Brian Due, University of Copenhagen

bdue@hum.ku.dk

Jens Fogh, independent researcher

fogh.jens@gmail.com

Allan Køster, The Danish National Center for Grief

This presentation explores how the cemetery influences and shapes grief processes as a material, social, and green space. The presentation seeks to develop a deeper understanding of how emotions, such as grief, materialise in the physical space and in interaction with natural elements, rituals, and social practices at the cemetery. We focus on how grief experiences are embedded in the material surroundings and social practices found at cemeteries. Through a post-praxeological approach, the project sheds light on the complex relationships between human emotions, space, materials, and nature, expanding our understanding of the materialisation of grief.

The presentation builds on data collected in the project *GriefScape -Gardens with Comforting Atmosphere*, conducted in Denmark, which investigates the cemetery's potential as a comforting place capable of supporting grief processing through individual and collective activities embedded in sociomaterial environments.

The project adopts and further develops a post-praxeological methodology, combining phenomenological ethnomethodology and new phenomenology with "new materialism" to understand spatiotemporal processes of dealing with grief at the cemetery. From ethnomethodology and multimodal interaction analysis (Heath, Hindmarsh, og Luff 2010; Mondada 2019), we apply detailed studies of actual, naturally occurring practices. From new phenomenology we build in particular on Gernot Böhmes (Böhme 1993) concept of atmosphere. From new materialism we get the understanding of materials agency and an ontology of becoming (DeLanda 2006). These traditions are weaved together into a post-praxeological approach (Due 2023, 2024) to the study of grief at the cemetery.

In this presentation, we put particular emphasis on how an emotion such as grief is embedded in the sociomaterial and spatial environment and thus can be said to be part of an atmosphere. According to Böhme (1993, p. 122), atmospheres are conceived "as something that proceeds from and is created by things, persons or their constellations. Conceived in this fashion, atmospheres are neither something objective, that is, qualities possessed by things, and yet they are something thinglike, belonging to the thing in that things articulate their presence through qualities conceived as ecstasies. Nor are atmospheres something subjective, for example, determinations of a psychic state. And yet they are subject like, belong to subjects in that they are sensed in

bodily presence by human beings, and this sensing is at the same time a bodily state of being of subjects in space."

In other words, human feelings are considered to be part of spatial atmospheres; they are bodily sensations of human's mode of being in their environment. We seek to apply this understanding to the grieving practices in cemeteries.

Based on fieldwork on cemeteries in Denmark using participant observation at cemeteries to study interactions and practices in their natural context, life-world interviews with grieving men, church staff, and priests to gather in-depth accounts of their experiences and perspectives and video recordings to document the spatial and material aspects of grief processing, we show naturally occurring practices of grief as embedded in material and spatial nature/culture. We will in this presentation take some time to reflect on the unique challenges and nuances of doing research on such sensitive topics using video ethnographic methodology.

Our analysis will show how place, nature, materials, rituals, and social interactions interplay and influence the grieving process. The project seeks to develop a relational approach that recognises the interaction between human and non-human elements. As opposed to conversation-based therapeutic interactions, we wish to explore the potential of managing grief on the spot in the cemetery as a materialised and spatial atmosphere that can continue to work as a different kind of healing and comforting practice as opposed to or supplementary to talking with the priest in his office.

The research is expected to generate new knowledge about the unique potential of cemeteries for grief processing, including how the physical characteristics support conversations around grief-related topics and the significance of bodily activity and movement for grief-related conversations.

This research has implications for several fields, including grief research, which offers a new understanding of how grief manifests in interaction with the environment and not just as an individual emotional state. We will also comment on cemetery design: promoting the development of cemeteries as biodiversity-rich and comforting places that invite activity and community. Finally, by challenging taboos around death and grief we will be fostering a more inclusive and understanding approach to grief processing in society.

References

- Böhme, Gernot.
1993. "Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics". *Thesis Eleven* 36(1):113–26. doi: 10.1177/072551369303600107.
- DeLanda, Manuel.
2006. "Deleuzian Social Ontology and Assemblage Theory". S. 250–66 i *Deleuze and the Social*, redigeret af M. Fuglsang og B. Meier Sorensen. Edinburgh University Press.
- Due, Brian L.
2023. "Situated socio-material assemblages: assemmethodology in the making". *Human Communication Research* hqad031. doi: 10.1093/hcr/hqad031.
- Due, Brian L.
2024. "An ethnomethodological misreading of Deleuze. Towards Post-praxiology?" S. 1–22 i *New Developments in Ethnomethodology: Seoul Workshop. Provocations in and For Ethnomethodology*. Sogang University, Seoul, Korea.
- Heath, Christian, Jon Hindmarsh, og Poul Luff.
2010. *Video in Qualitative Research*. Los Angeles; London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Mondada, Lorenza.
2019. "Contemporary issues in conversation analysis: Embodiment and materiality, multimodality and multisensoriality in social interaction". *Journal of Pragmatics* 145:47–62. doi: 10.1016/j.pragma.2019.01.016.

Giving voice and body to the deceased. An anthropological approach to the liminal phases of mourning through mediumistic interlocutions

Laure Montarry, Paris Nanterre University

laure.montarry@gmail.com

From a field survey conducted in France and England between 2017 and 2023, with professional "mediums" (1), their consultants and apprentice-mediums, with an anthropological approach, I will try to redefine the contours of the concept of "mourning", still too often associated, in our Western societies, with the materialistic paradigm of existence consisting of thinking that death would suddenly make an individual pass from a totally living state to a totally dead one (Bloch, 1992). To do so, I will follow the psychologist Magali Molinié's approach,

which inspired Laura Périchon, Vinciane Despret and Isabelle Duret's narrative survey (Périchon et al. , 2017), carried out with bereaved people in Belgium in the 2000s. Using a methodology at the crossroads of psychological and anthropological disciplines, these authors proposed a theory of "mourning" thought not only as an "intrapsychic process" consisting of detaching from a close deceased, but as the ability of a bereaved person to set up a "relational dynamic with the dead." This idea is supported by the results of a quantitative survey recently conducted by clinical psychologists between 2018 and 2020, in France and the United Kingdom, consisting of questionnaires designed to collect the testimonies of people who have experienced contact with the deceased, and the impact that these experiences would have had in their lives. The authors of this survey, in which Renaud Evrard and Chris Roe participated, propose the concept of "paradoxical mourning" which suggests that an individual who has had subjective experiences of contact with the deceased (which the authors call "necrophanies") would have an easier time completing the mourning process (Evrard et al. , 2021), before it turns into pathological mourning or "complicated mourning" (Ben-Cheikh et al. , 2020). This hypothesis would contradict the Freudian conception of mourning, or at least the interpretation that has been made of it (ibidem, 2021), which consists in thinking of the link between the deceased and the bereaved in terms of rupture; a conception that is mostly accepted in the Western imagination but also in the clinical treatment of mourning by contemporary psychologists.

Conversely, the approach proposed by the afore mentioned authors suggests that in the contemporary bereavement clinic, "the acts performed by the living to transform the dead person and the relationship with him/her" (Molinié, 2006). I propose to follow this approach by attempting to describe the way in which mediumistic communications contribute to reconfiguring the relationship that links a living individual, who has passed to the status of the deceased, to another individual who survives him or her, who has passed to the status of the bereaved. More precisely, I will show how mediumistic rituals (interlocutions rituals) allow the bereaved people to better negotiate psychically (i.e. to better accept) the physical absence of their loved ones, caused by their death, while recreating a new regime of presence, paradoxically involving both the body of the deceased through that of the medium, and that of the bereaved person, who has then punctually assumed the status of a consultant.

The description of these different regimes of presence that Albert Piette has theorized under the concept of "experiential anthropology" (Piette, 2008), and that the ethnography of mediumistic learning devices allows to highlight because of the modes of communication based on a sensitive language (mobilizing the body and the affects) that these devices implement, will undoubtedly help both the anthropologist and the psychologist to better understand, and to take in charge, without judgement, the testimonies of their interlocutors (interviewees or patients).

Indeed, if the methods of these two disciplines differ in part, the scientific aim of better understanding the human being through his or her modes of representation and interaction within a given socio-cultural context is, in my opinion, the same.

Thus, through a multidisciplinary approach inspired by medical anthropology (2), ritual studies (3) and clinical psychology, we will reflect together on how to improve the care of bereaved patients in our Western societies, in a phenomenological perspective aiming to describe the effects produced by the act of communication with a familiar deceased person, mediated by one of the contemporary specialists of this communication, called "medium". The examples that I will present in the course of this paper will concern both situations of consultations with a "medium" and/or of learning about devices aimed at developing a "gift" (4) of mediumistic communication. To do this, I will use both the data from my own participant observation and the data from my interviews.

Finally, in the last part of the presentation, I will discuss the difficulties that anthropologists may encounter in trying to describe phenomena related to death and the afterlife, because of the marginalised aspect that this field of investigation may involve in itself, and also because it very often implies a large degree of subjectivity on the part of the informants and the ethnographer in the description of these phenomena.

(1) In using the term "mediums", I am referring to the term coined in the United States in 1848 with "its particular meaning of intermediary between the living and the afterlife" (Edelman, 1995). The term "mediumship" will refer to the practice of communication between these two worlds.

(2) See in particular the work of medical anthropologists of the Harvard School, such as Arthur Kleinman and Byron Good (1985).

(3) See Michael Houseman and Carlo Severi's interactional definition of ritual, which I use in my analysis of mediumistic interlocutions.

(4) My respondents speak of predispositions in certain individuals to develop the ability to practice "mediumship. They define these selective predispositions, which will determine their future mode of affiliation (Van Gennep, 2019 [1909]) as a "gift".

References

- Ben-Cheikh I., Rachedi L., Et Rousseau C.
2020 (sous la direction de Diane Laflamme) « Deuil compliqué selon les cultures : défis diagnostiques et limites des classifications internationales », in *Trajectoires du mourir et du deuil, Frontières*, volume 32, numéro 1.
Bloch M.
1992 *Prey into Hunter: The Politics of Religious Experience*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
Edelman N.
1995 *Voyantes, guérisseuses et visionnaires en France 1785-1914*, Paris, Albin Michel.
Evrard R., Dollander M., Elsaesser E., Callum C., Lorimer D., Roe C.
2021 "Expériences exceptionnelles nécrophaniques et deuil paradoxal: études de la phénoménologie et des répercussions des vécus effrayants de contact avec les défunts." *Evolution psychiatrique*; 86 (4).
Houseman M., Severi C.
1994 [2017] *Naven ou le donner à voir: essai d'interprétation de l'action rituelle*, Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme 1994 [2017].
Kleinman A., Good B.
1985 *Culture and Depression. Studies in the Anthropology and Cross-Cultural Psychiatry of Affect and Disorder*, Berkeley (CA), University of California Press.
Molinie M.
2006 *Soigner les morts pour guérir les vivants*. Paris, Le Seuil.
Perichon L., Despret V., Duret I.
2017 "Laisser partir ou retenir les morts ? Réflexion sur les relations entre les vivants et les morts chez nous et ailleurs", *L'Autre*.
Piette A.
2008 "L'anthropologie existentielle : présence, coprésence et leurs détails", *Antrocom*, p. 131-138.
Van Gennep A.
2019 [1909] *The rites of passage* (second edition), Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

The contagion of suicide. Good and bad death in ethnoclinical context

Maria Elisa Dainelli, Independent researcher

dainelli.elisa@gmail.com

My contribution stems from three years of research work, as an anthropologist, in the field of ethnoclinical mediation for the Sprint 2 project, realized within a FAMI program by the Region of Tuscany. The case I want to examine concerns the accompaniment of mourning and the analysis of concepts of good and bad death in a group of Nigerian people housed in a CAS in the province of Livorno. Following the suicide of one of their compatriots, they had to deal with the oppression of their grieving process and with a silence imposed to quell discontent and riots among CAS users.

The ethnoclinical team was therefore faced with an extremely complex case, in which the triggering event represented an example of 'theoretical mistreatment' (Sironi, 2010) of a mournful event: the theories, practices and devices implemented by the reception system were totally inadequate and incongruous with what had happened. One might add, in fact, that the reaction of the CAS managers to the users' turmoil and demands is to be ascribed within a process of "deculturation" that Françoise Sironi (2010) describes in her work. The failure to recognize possible other forms of mourning or grief processing and the subsequent repression are in fact part of a broader system of institutional and legal mistreatment, in which the subjugation of users represents a widespread and persistent form of psychological and social violence. In this situation, the work started from the elaboration of a trauma that had assumptions linked to the individual and political experience of the users themselves.

Moreover, the individual bewilderment was also due to the confrontation with a 'bad death, that is, physical death accompanied by social death' (Collomb, 1970). The challenge was to compose a collective elaboration of mourning, focusing, at the same time, on the individual expression of pain and on different somatizations presented by users.

The contribution will therefore focus, at first, on the description of the ethnographic case, then concentrating on the analysis of the concept of 'bad death' and how this can influence, even in its pathological drifts, the life of those who remain.

In the second step, the host context will be analyzed as a site of pathology production (Perazzo, 2022). The

facts analyzed can be ascribed to what R. Beneduce describes as 'ethnographies of the third kind' (Beneduce, 2004). They are composed of critical, fringe scenarios in which indifference and unbalanced power relations describe conditions of humiliation and violence suffered both in life and in death. The central element of these contexts concerns precisely the impossibility of celebrating funeral rituals: migrant miners working in inhuman conditions with frequent fatal accidents, in South Africa; the Batsileo of Madagascar, enslaved by the Merina and uprooted from their places of origin are some examples.

Fundamental in this sense is the witchcraft reading of the power devices that have structured and structures most of the relationships between users and operators of the reception system (Taliani, 2017). The long wait for a residence permit then turns into a pathologizing path, in which the interpretation and vision of the state is frequently configured as a witch-like power

mechanism. Being subjugated, blocked in one's own path of social growth and emancipation, represents, in fact, a clear example of possession, 'being eaten', covertly, in one's own capacities and possibilities of success (Geshiere, 1994).

The importance of funeral rituals and expressions of mourning as moments of overcoming a 'social crisis' (Jindra; Noret, 2011) are thus highly relevant, even in transitional contexts such as reception centers. Gathering testimonies and following people in their migrations from 2021 to the present day, has in fact allowed me to understand the centrality of listening in care processes. In places like the CASs, where unprocessed mourning can become a pathologizing element, 'contagious' in its dark heaviness, 'multiplying universes' (Nathan; Stengers, 1996) and legitimizing them thus offers itself as a powerful tool, so that the past is no longer assimilated to 'a land of death' (Beneduce, 2004).

References

- Beneduce, Roberto
2004, *Politiche ed etnografie della morte in Africa Subsahariana*, in La Ricerca Folklorica, n° 49, Luoghi dei vivi, luoghi dei morti. Spazi e politiche della morte, pp. 89-102
- Bloch, Maurice; Parry, Jonathan
1982, *Death and the regeneration of life*, Cambridge University Press
- Collomb Henri 1970 in
Beneduce, Roberto; Collignon René
1995, *Il sorriso della volpe*, Napoli, Liguori editore
- Geschiere, Peter
1995, *Sorcellerie et politique en Afrique – la viande des autres*, Paris, Karthala
- Jindra, Michael, Noret, Joel
2011, *Funerals in Africa: Explorations of a Social Phenomenon*, Oxford, Berghahn Books
- Nathan, Tobie; Stengers, Isabelle
1996, *Medici e stregoni*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri
- Perazzo, Carlo
2022, *Quale rifugio? Razzismo di Stato e accoglienza in Italia. Una lettura antropologica*, Roma, Sensibili alle foglie
- Pussetti, Chiara
2004, *Le donne, la morte, il dolore: Pratiche funebri ed elaborazione del lutto tra i Bijagó dell'isola di Bubaque (Guinea Bissau)*, in La Ricerca Folklorica, n° 49, Luoghi dei vivi, luoghi dei morti. Spazi e politiche della morte, pp. 45-54
- Sironi, Françoise
2010, *Violenze collettive. saggio di psicologia geopolitica clinica*, Milano, Feltrinelli.
- Taliani, Simona
2017, *Per una critica dello Stato Edipico. Migrazione, stregoneria e razza*, pp. 237-259, in a.c. DEI Fabio, DI PASQUALE Caterina, *Stato, violenza, libertà. La "critica del potere" e l'antropologia contemporanea*, Roma, Donzelli

Living the space of the dead. Fieldnotes on the death rituals of a Romá Xoraxané community in Italy

Norma Baldino, University of Cagliari

This paper is an ethnographic discussion on the funeral rituals of a Romá community from Bosnia settled in Cagliari (Italy) for forty years. It aims to add new fieldwork results to the Roma everyday life studies fighting categorisation and stereotypes (Piasere 2015, Sigona 2015, Pontrandolfo, Solimene 2018). Following an interactionist approach (Brubaker 2000, 2002), the article's purpose is to illustrate how Romanì culture still features complex rituals which strengthen the community's cohesion and secure social bonds (Williams 1989,

Piasere 2004). The analysis reports ethnographic accounts of the ways the Romá community accepted me into their group and trained me to participate at their most private ritual in a nomad camp. In particular, the article will focus on funeral customs as practices of resistance and recognition in the space in which the community lives and in which the dead “return” (Saletti Salza, 2010, Gallone 2004). The ethnographic notes are held together by the constant dualism of hetero/self-identification, Romà/Gagè, formal/informal, right/wrong, clean/dirty, pure/impure (Douglas 1993), which emphasises the need to defend an identity constantly recognised (as undermined) in difference and otherness.

References

- Brubaker, R., Cooper F.
2000 Beyond ‘identity, Theory and Society, 29, pp. 1-47.
Brubaker, R.
2002 Ethnicity without Groups, Archives Europeennes de Sociologie XLIII (2) pp. 163-189.
Douglas M,
1993 Purezza e pericolo, un’analisi dei concetti di contaminazione e tabù, Bologna, il Mulino.
Gallone, M
2004, Perché non parlarne? Percorsi di senso di fronte alla morte fra i xoraxanè romà, In Italia Romani, vol. IV, Saletti Salza, C., Piasere, L. eds. Roma, CISU.
Herzfeld, Michael. 2006. Antropologia. Firenze: SEID.
Piasere, L.
2004 I rom d’Europa, Rome-Bari, Laterza.
Piasere, L.
2015 L’antiziganismo, Macerata, Quodlibet Studio
Pontrandolfo, S., Solimene, M.
2018 Introduction, in Nomadic Peoples 22, 1, pp. 10–26.
Saletti Salza, C.
2010 Evocare: toccare i morti. Una comunità rom nella Bosnia del dopoguerra, Roma, CISU.
Williams, P.
1989 Tsiganes: Identité, évolution, Paris, Syros.

Archive Alter(c)ations. Constructing a post-mortem management dataset of unknown decedent cases in the western Evros riverbank

Phevos Simeonidis, Durham University, DGSi

phevos.simeonidis@durham.ac.uk

While traversing the complex field of studying unidentified human remains through their post-mortem management, the researcher faces a dilemma. The current condition of the remains in limbo, bearing unknown and presumed identities, is often entrenched in the assumptions that various persons and bodies of authority made at the time of recovery. In order to navigate the ways in which these attributes attach to recovered human remains, an archive of forensic and judicial documents needs to be assembled.

Yet in the case at hand, such an archive does not exist in a singular and cohesive form, which allows the researcher to problematise both the nature of said fragmented archive, and its creation. This archive does not exist within, or as, a singular repository, but rather appears as a multiplicitous entity sprawling across different repositories held by judicial, political, and law enforcement authorities, forensic files, and press clippings and oral history vignettes.

This paper, drawing from two sets of fieldwork periods, the first between 2020 and 2022, and the second from 2024 onwards, in the vicinity of the Evros borderland in Greece, seeks to explore and highlight the notions of constructing and assembling such an archive. The process that this paper investigates, includes also observing this production of the archive, but most importantly, understanding one’s involvement in it.

The daily interactions and immersion in the work of a forensic examiner’s office, are at the heart of this paper, which addresses the microprocesses of producing the archive, and its institutional power relations. This archive, as it expands during my fieldwork with the registration of new remains, extends twofold, in the past and future, allowing for synchronous and asynchronous engagement. This allows for the exploration of temporal expansiveness (Hall, 2001), multiple deaths, and the production of the governance of death as it unfolds.

In this paper, I revisit the ways in which border crossers' unidentified bodies are themselves constructed. In doing so, I pay special attention to the chains of custody of the bodies themselves, but also the chains of custody of the information about the said bodies. In this regard, care, and lack of care, is exhibited, or unseen through what is recorded and what isn't.

In contrast to studying an already produced archive, as other ethnographies of biopolitics have done (Stoler, 2009; Tarlo, 2003), my ethnographic work consists also of participation in the production of the archive. Aware of the lessons of previous ethnographies, I am interested in what appears, disappears and reappears from the record as this transitions from the field to the forensic examination, to the physical documentation in hand-written forms, and to their transposition in digital forms. Finally, seeking to engage with questions around the positionality of the researcher when working with these data typologies, I am also addressing the fragility of these records, and their disappearability throughout the years. At the same time, by challenging the dominant modes of archive practice (Zavala et al, 2017) and through the archival document's continual process of becoming, (Trundle, Kaplonski 2011), this paper discusses the actors who create and fill out these documents in the first place, and as an extension, their pre-existing points of view.

References

Hall, Stuart

2001 Constituting an archive. *Third Text*, 15(54), 89–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09528820108576903>

Stoler, Ann Laura

2009 *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*, Princeton University Press

Tarlo, Emma

2003 *Unsettling Memories: Narratives of the Emergency in Delhi*, C. Hurst & Co.

Trundle, Catherine, Kaplonski, Chris

2011 Tracing the Political Lives of Archival Documents. *History and Anthropology*, 22(4), 407–414. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2011.626777>

Zavala, Jimmy, Migoni, A. A., Caswell, M., Geraci, N., & Cifor, M.

2017 'A process where we're all at the table': community archives challenging dominant modes of archival practice. *Archives and Manuscripts*, 45(3), 202–215. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2017.1377088>

31. Watching the watchers: Policing and ethnography of the coercive state

Convenor: Michael Sierra-Arévalo (University of Texas at Austin, Princeton University)

On Patrol with the 'Gypsy Police'

Ana Ivasiuc, University College Dublin

ana.ivasiuc@ucd.ie

In 2010, during the so-called *Emergenza Nomadi* – the state of exception declared by the Berlusconi government in relation to informal settlements of Roma migrants – the far-right mayor of Rome, Gianni Alemanno, set up a special police unit: the Operative Coordinating Unit for Nomad Settlements. The unit was tasked with policing those to whom Italians erroneously refer as nomads – heterogeneous, but generally precarious Roma groups that started to migrate from Eastern Europe in the 1960s, searching for better lives. In the 1980s, amid the multiculturalist policies advocated for by the Council of Europe, Italian regions passed laws that officially established camps as culturally appropriate housing solution for groups that they lumped together under the same misnomer: thus were born the infamous *campi nomadi*. Inevitably, *campi nomadi* figure in political debates and the Italian media as sources of blight and insecurity that mayoral candidates promise to eradicate in every electoral battle. The responsibilities of the sixty police that make up the unit created by Alemanno concern mainly the eviction of informal settlements of Roma, patrolling the authorized and tolerated camps, and fighting “Gypsy crime” more broadly. With the term *nomadi* in its original title, the unit had been conceived, in fact, as racial police. However, the name was later changed, masking the initial intention of policing a specific racialized and criminalized population. While in Italy the national average of police per capita is 4.5 police per thousand inhabitants, by setting up this particular unit the Roman administration allocated no less than ten police for every thousand inhabitants of the *campi nomadi* (Ivasiuc, 2020).

In 2015 and 2016, I gained access to this police unit in the peripheries of Rome and carried out archival research on police reports over five consecutive years, group and individual interviews, as well as ethnographic fieldwork, accompanying police teams on patrol around *campi nomadi* in Rome. In my paper, I will discuss policing as a tool of racial governance that exacerbates the marginalisation and exclusion of Roma migrants. I show how cultural tropes grounded in a profound misconception of ‘nomadism’ and the criminalisation of the Roma are mobilised in police work, and how officers in this special police unit legitimise their interventions through moral, racial, and class boundary work. I also discuss the ambivalences around the impact of this police unit on the lives of precarious Roma from camps. Finally, I discuss some of the ethical conundrums that I encountered in my ethnographic fieldwork with this police unit.

References

Ivasiuc, Ana

2020 The Gypsy Police: The Social Division of Police Labor in Rome. Society for the Anthropology of Work. DOI: 10.21428/1d6be30e.e9e30d29. Available at [The "Gypsy" Police: The Social Division of Police Labor in Rome · Policing and Labor](#), last visited on 18/12/2024.

Policing the Segregated City. Insights from a Police Ethnography and Challenges of “Studying Up”

Daanika Gordon, Tufts University

daanika.gordon@tufts.edu

For 13 months, I shadowed police officers in two districts in “River City,” a pseudonym for a profoundly segregated city in the American midwest. I found officers in predominately white neighborhoods providing responsive service and engaged in community problem-solving. Meanwhile, officers in predominately Black communities reproduced longstanding patterns of over-policing and under-protection. While such differences have marked U.S. policing throughout its history, racial divides in River City widened through strategic innovations in policing that many would see as progressive. How did this happen? I argue that unequal policing

expanded as police executives and officers aligned seemingly innovative place-based policing strategies with goals of urban revitalization. Urban growth logics in River City prioritized protecting and investing in downtown corridors and gentrified neighborhoods, and they represented marginalized central city neighborhoods as sources of criminal and civic threat. As policing strategies diverged based on growth logics, they rearticulated racial segregation in ongoing ways. I explore the intersections of policing and segregation through examples of district-level strategic initiatives and the case of policing in a gentrifying neighborhood. Ethnographic evidence reveals how segregation endures as a powerful social structure, even as segregation boundaries shift. In addition to presenting an overview of the study and its central findings, this presentation incorporates reflections on the affordances and challenges of “studying up,” or seeking to understand “the processes whereby power and responsibility are exercised” (Nader 1972, p. 284). I suggest that focusing on dominant institutions and actors is an important complement to research that investigates the lived consequences of mass incarceration and overpolicing. It reveals how these phenomena emerge and how they are justified and maintained through organizational decisions and everyday practices. It can render processes of governance and the exercise of power more transparent and, thus, accountable to the public. As anthropologist Laura Nader argued in her canonical piece, *Up the Anthropologist*, “the quality of life and our lives themselves may depend upon the extent to which citizens understand those who shape attitudes and actually control institutional structures” (Nader 1972, p. 284).

However, studying up raises unique epistemological and ethical challenges. In naming the assumptions and dynamics underlying data collection, I offer a foundation to assess the claims made in this project. These claims have been shaped by the theoretical frames informing research design and by the micropolitical processes involving my own social position and those of the people with whom I interacted (Haraway 1988; Bhavnani 1993; Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis 2002). I also have practical motivations for this appendix. Several graduate-level courses in qualitative methodology did not fully prepare me for fieldwork. I faced countless decisions, large and small, for which there was no technical direction. The experience was messy – far more conditional and unpredictable than I had imagined. I hope that recounting aspects of the experience offers some guidance for those considering similar projects.

References

- Bhavnani, Kum-Kum
1993 “Tracing the Contours: Feminist Research and Feminist Objectivity.” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 16(2): 95-104.
- Haraway, Donna
1988 “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.” *Feminist Studies* 14(3): 575-599
- Nader, Laura
1972 “Up the Anthropologist – Perspectives Gained from Studying Up.” Pp. 284-311 in *Reinventing Anthropology*, edited by D. Hymes. New York: Pantheon
- Stoetzler, Marcel and Nira Yuval-Davis
2002 “Standpoint Theory, Situated Knowledge and the Situated Imagination.” *Feminist Theory* 3(3): 315-333.

The uniform of last regard? Prison officers’ frustrations and the effects on everyday prison life

Alessandro Maculan, University of Padua

alessandro.maculan@unipd.it

Luca Sterchele, University of Turin

luca.sterchele@unito.it

In Italy, the prison officers are a civilian police force that is part of the four national police forces directly under government control (the other three are the State Police, the Financial Guard, and the Carabinieri). This force was established by Law 395 of 1990, which replaced the previous military-styled Custody Guards corps and female prison wardens (who worked in female prisons and in female wings within male prisons). As stated by the law, Italian prison officers “have to guarantee order and security within prisons, ensure the execution of the detainees’ restrictive measures, and participate in the activities of observation and treatment of the prisoners”. In the everyday prison life, however, most of their duties still focus on controlling prisoners, while their role in inmate treatment remains an unclear aspect of their responsibilities.

An important aspect that clearly distinguishes the prison officers from the other Italian law enforcement agencies is the fact that almost all of their work is carried out within the prison walls (with the exception of officers assigned to the transportation of prisoners to other correctional facilities, courts, or hospitals and their sporadic public safety activities outside prisons), away from the gaze of civil society. This fact contributes to making their daily work little known outside the prison walls and subject to distorted representations and perceptions, often fuelled by stereotypical portrayals in the media (movies, TV series, novels), where officers are often depicted as ruthless, cruel tormentors without scruples (cf. Santorso, 2021). At the same time, the fact that their work is primarily carried out within prison walls contributes to the development of a well-defined esprit de corps (Maculan and Rodelli, 2022) as well as a professional culture (Farkas and Manning, 1997; Higgins *et al.*, 2022; Schoenfeld and Everly, 2023), which, deprived of the scrutiny and mediation from civil society, can lead to arbitrariness, abuse, and various forms of violence towards the incarcerated population.

This contribution aims to develop some reflections on these topics based on two ethno-graphic research experiences conducted through participant observation and semi-structured interviews in four prisons located in Northern Italy. These studies were carried out at different times: the first, between 2013 and 2014, aimed to explore the work experience of prison officers, while the second study, conducted between 2022 and 2023, sought to investigate the dimension of violence in the work of prison officers.

This presentation aims to explore some dimensions of the professional culture of prison officers and its effects in the activity of governing social order in prison, that is, their specific policing practices (see (Sparks *et al.*, 1996; Liebling, 2000). In particular, the sense of social isolation (and the resulting sense of abandonment by State institutions that gave them the official mandate to carry out these tasks, as well as their perceived disinterest from civil society) felt by prison officers will be considered, along with the frustrations generated by a job that often comes to resemble mere control with little gratification – the “dirty work” using Hughes’ words (1962) – over a detained population hostile to them. Their sense of inferiority to other Italian police forces will be taken into consideration together with the attempts made by some officers to counter this condition – working outside as public security officers during public events – which, however, sometimes ends up fuelling further frustrations linked to the inability to perform such tasks (since they are not adequately trained) and feeling judged by other police forces as unprepared. Finally, we will observe how these factors have significant repercussions on everyday life within the prison. They contribute to shaping a distinct professional culture which – similarly to what has been observed in other law enforcement agencies (cf. Farkas and Manning, 1997; Higgins *et al.*, 2023; Sierra-Arévalo, 2024) – tends to perceive the prison as a dangerous and unpredictable environment, where incarcerated individuals end up to be seen as potential threats to personal safety (Higgins *et al.*, 2022; Maculan, 2022). It is therefore from these factors that specific attitudes and daily practices of the prison officers take shape, especially in relation to the detained population. These practices can foster specific treatments and inequalities based on class and race, as well as depending on whether detainees have or have not internalized dispositions that confirm their subordinate position within the prison system, without questioning the legitimacy of the officers’ position of power.

References

- Farkas, Mary A., & Manning, Peter K.
1997 «The occupational culture of corrections and police officers», in *Journal of Crime and Justice*, 20(2), 51-68.
- Higgins, Ethan M., Smith, Justin, Swartz, Kristin
2022 «“ We keep the nightmares in their cages”: Correctional culture, identity, and the warped badge of honor», in *Criminology*, 60, 3, pp. 429-454.
- Higgins, Ethan M., Swartz, Kristin, Navarro, John C., & Hughes, Katie
2023 «‘They might not kill you today but they’re going to get you in the end’: The correctional subculture and the schematization of danger», in *The British Journal of Criminology*, 63(6), 1539-1556.
- Hughes, Everett C.
1962 «Good people and dirty work», in *Social Problems*, 10, 1, pp.3-11.
- Liebling, Alison
2000 «Prison officers, policing and the use of discretion», in *Theoretical criminology*, 4(3), 333-357.
- Maculan, Alessandro
2022 *La galera incorporate. Etnografia della polizia penitenziaria*, Maggioli Editore.
- Maculan, Alessandro, Rodelli, Maddalena
2023 «Prison officers and esprit de corps. Ingroup and outgroup relationships in prison», in *Punishment & Society*, 25, 4, pp. 1023-1041.
- Santorso, Simone

- 2021 «Rehabilitation and dynamic security in the Italian prison: Challenges in trans-forming prison officers' roles», in *The British Journal of Criminology*, 61, 6, pp. 1557-1574.
- Schoenfeld, Heather, Everly, Grant
- 2023 «The security mindset: Corrections officer workplace culture in late mass incarceration», in *Theoretical Criminology*, 27, 2, pp. 224-244.
- Sierra-Arévalo, Michael
- 2024 *The Danger Imperative: Violence, Death, and the Soul of Policing*, Columbia University Press.
- Sparks, Richard, Bottoms, Anthony, Hay, Will
- 1996 *Prisons and the Problem of Order*, Oxford University Press.

Between search and rescue, law enforcement and human rights violations. An ethnography of aerial surveillance in the Central Mediterranean Sea

Chiara Denaro, University of Palermo

chiara.denaro01@unipa.it

Starting in 2017, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) launched the Multipurpose Aerial Surveillance service, (MAS). This purpose of this new aerial surveillance device at Europe's borders was migration control and law enforcement (Jumbert, 2018; Mazzeo, 2021; Smith, 2021; Papachristodoulou, 2024). In the central Mediterranean, the deployment of this device had a significant impact on search and rescue policies at sea, already strongly reshaped by Italy's cooperation with North African countries such as Libya and Tunisia. As several organisations pointed out, including Human Rights Watch and Border Forensics (2022), the EU agency has contributed – through the daily deployment of planes and drones – to the systematization of the interception of migrant boats by Libyan authorities and their return to places from which they were trying to flee (Klein, 2021; Kapogianni e Magugliani, 2023). Beyond constituting a violation of the principle of non-refoulement, these practices entailed the exposure of migrants to structural violence and abuses amounting to inhuman and degrading treatments, which are clearly forbidden by international human rights law (Goodwin-Gill, 2011; Mann, 2018).

Using a socio-legal approach – which combines digital and border ethnography with in-depth interviews and document analyses – this contribution aims to explore the role of aerial surveillance infrastructures within policies of search and rescue and law enforcement in the Central Mediterranean region, as well as the politics of data management, and the key notions behind them. In particular, it focuses on the political and legal discourses that attempt to legitimise, de facto, violations of maritime law, human rights and asylum law faced by people who engage in possibly lethal journeys by sea.

References

- Goodwin-Gill, Guy S.
- 2011 «The right to seek asylum: Interception at sea and the principle of non-refoulement», in *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 23, 3, pp. 443-457.
- Human Rights Watch and Border Forensics
- 2022 «Airborne complicity. Frontex aerial surveillance enables abuses», <https://www.hrw.org/video-photos/interactive/2022/12/08/airborne-complicity-frontex-aerial-surveillance-enables-abuse>, visited 07/04/2025
- Jumbert, Maria Gabrielsen
- 2011 «Control or rescue at sea? Aims and limits of border surveillance technologies in the Mediterranean Sea», in *Disasters*, 42, 4, pp. 674-696.
- Kapogianni, Vicky & Magugliani, Noemi
- 2023 «When aerial surveillance becomes the Sine Qua Non for interceptions at sea: mapping the EU and its member states' complicity in border violence», in Czech, P. Heschl, L., Lukas, K., M. and Oberleitner, G. (eds.), *European Yearbook on Human Rights 2023*. Intersentia, pp. 475-506.
- Klein, Natalie
- 2021 «Maritime autonomous vehicles and international laws on boat migration: Lessons from the use of drones in the Mediterranean», in *Marine Policy*, 127, pp. 1-10.
- Mann, Itamar
- 2018 «Maritime legal black holes: Migration and rightlessness in international law», in *European Journal of International Law*, 29, 2, pp. 347-372.
- Mazzeo, Antonio
- 2021 «Border surveillance, drones and militarization of the Mediterranean», in *State Watch*, <https://www.statewatch.org/analyses/2021/border-surveillance-drones-and-militarisation-of-the->

mediterranean/#:~:text=The%20growing%20use%20of%20drones,migrants%20and%20refugees%20face%20arbitrary, visited
07\04\2025
Papachristodoulou, Aphrodite
2024 «The exercise of state power over migrants at sea through technologies of remote control: Reconceptualizing human rights
jurisdiction», in *International & Comparative Law*, 73, 4, pp. 931-961
Smith, Angela
2021 «Eyes on the sky: European aerial surveillance», in *Forced Migration Review*, 68.

32. Tasting and judging “natural” wines and artisanal agri-food products

Convenors: Davide Sparti & Clelia Viecegli (University of Siena)

Mathesis singularis. The issue of singularity in wine tasting

Davide Sparti, Università degli studi di Siena

davide.sparti@unisi.it

In *Camera lucida* Barthes says that his strenuous attention to detail, and to the *punctum* was functional to the project of a “mathesis singularis” that could replace the “universalis” one cultivated by Leibniz. A science not of averages and norms, but of exceptions and singularities. My paper moves in this direction by examining the case of wine tasting. According to a widespread conception that is normatively enforced in wine label classification and professional tasting practices, wines must correspond to a type, a variety of grape, a specific terroir or a standardized consumer taste. Is it ‘right’ to subsume and place (dissolving it) the individual case within a general typology of which it is a mere occurrence? What happens when a wine does not conform to such typologies? How is it evaluated? What happens when a wine turns out to be not a homogeneous and stable entity but something particular and alive, hence changing? How does one relate to incommensurability? Ethnographic data but also the neo-Kantian theoretical distinction between idiographic and nomothetic knowledge will be taken into consideration to discuss the relationship between wines and singularity.

References (minimal)

- Barthes, Roland,
1980 *Le chambre claire*, Paris, Gallimard
Karpik, Lucien.
2010, *Valuing the Unique: The Economics of Singularities*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Phillips, C.J.
2016 The taste machine: sense, subjectivity, and statistics in the California wine world. *Social studies of science*, vol. 46 (3) pp. 461-481
Reckwitz, Andreas.
2017 *Die Gesellschaft der Singularitäten. Zum Strukturwandel der Moderne*. Berlin: Suhrkamp (English translation: *The Society of Singularities*. Cambridge: Polity, 2020).
Shapin, S.
2012 “The taste of wine. Towards a cultural history”, *Rivista di estetica*, 51 3/2012 anno 1.II, pp. 49-94

Tasting singularity or the “unfinished” taste of natural wines

Clelia Viecegli, Università degli studi di Siena

clelia.viecegli@unisi.it

Produced through a minimal interventionist approach which is based on the rejection of synthetic chemical substances in the vineyard and oenological additives in the cellar, natural wines are a debated product category which polarises opinion and lacks a legally recognised definition both at the national and European levels due to their alternative sensorial aesthetics (Black, 2013). At the intersection of traditional claims to *terroir*, emerging environmental sensitivities, and consumers’ desires for ecologically and socially embedded food products, natural wines represent a flourishing niche market supported by a transnational network of sales agents and cultural intermediaries (Pineau, 2019; Viecegli, 2021).

By producing wines through a careful sensorial engagement which preserves the non-human elements inhabiting their vineyards and cellars, natural winegrowers promote a relational understanding of *terroir* and taste which emphasises the unfolding materiality of production and consumption, while challenging existing normative frameworks of quality (such as the Italian DOCG appellation system).

Drawing on ethnographic data collected since 2017 among natural winegrowers, professional tasters, and other influential cultural intermediaries – such as wine journalists, educators, and critics – across various Italian locations, this paper will focus on the alternative taste of these wines. In particular, the two contrasting notions of “singularity” and “typicity” will be introduced to analyze the meanings and values surrounding the sensorial qualities of natural wines.

As the result of a process of co-production between different human and non-human living agents, these wines seem to reflect the unique, singular characteristics of the place and the individual worldview of those who craft them. The relational and reflexive approach to *terroir* characterising the artisanal work of these producers finds a parallel in the way these wines are tasted and assessed. As such, they can be compared to the artisanal cheeses described by anthropologist Paxson (2012), that is “unfinished commodities” whose value rests on unfolding ecological relations and an alternative aesthetics.

As the contingency and materiality of *terroir* is not repressed but actively embraced through a perceptual engagement with its living properties, taste is likewise framed as a reflexive and relational activity that is open to unpredictability and uncertainty. While natural producers invite consumers to cultivate this “taste for uncertainty” (Krzywoszynska, 2015), conventional winemaking and wine-tasting techniques as well as national systems of denominations are based on pre-set quality standards that reject the living and unstable multiplicity of natural wine and impose a crystallised notion of “typicity”.

The paper will also offer a reflection on the challenges associated with using ethnographic research methods to study specific artisanal products – in this case, natural wines – whose value rests on unfolding ecological relations and the cultivation of a taste that actively embraces risk, uncertainty, and inconsistency.

References

- Black, Rachel E.,
2013 «Vino Naturale: Tensions between Nature and Technology in the Glass», in Rachel E. Black and Ulin, R.C. (Eds.), *Wine and Culture: Vineyard to Glass*, London and New York, Bloomsbury, pp. 279-294.
Krzywoszynska, Anna
2015 «Wine is not Coca-Cola: Marketization and Taste in Alternative Food Networks», in *Agriculture and Human Values*, 32, pp. 491-503.
Paxson, Heather
2012 *The life of Cheese: Crafting Food and Value in America*, Berkley and Los Angeles, University of California Press.
Pineau, Christelle
2019 *La Corne De Vache Et Le Microscope: Le Vin “Nature”, Entre Sciences, Croyances Et Radicalités*, Paris, La Découverte.
Viecelli, Clelia
2021 «Local Bubbles: Natural Wines between Globalisation and Locavorism», in *Ethnologie Française*, 51, 3, pp. 589-599.

The return of nature in the bottle. The making of a peasant economy in the Swiss vineyards

Flavian Pichonnat, Institute of Geography, University of Bern, Switzerland

flavian.pichonnat@unibe.ch

«*Encore marginal en Suisse, le vin nature se fait peu à peu une place* » (Still marginal in Switzerland, natural wine slowly makes its marks), was a title article published by the Swiss public media RTS in 2022 (RTS Info. (23.08.2022). *Encore marginal en Suisse, le vin nature se fait peu à peu une place*). The article sheds light on an approach to wine-crafting, in contrast to industrial production: natural wine. Even if this wine-crafting is minor in Switzerland, less than two percent of wine-crafters, this marginality incarnates a *modus operandi* different from the wine industry. Behind the bottle of natural wine, there is a peasant economy, foreshadowing an alternative to the industrial dead-ends.

In Switzerland, on the 11th of January 2021, some winegrowers instituted the *Association Suisse Vin Nature* to promote natural wines. The association defines « natural wine » as fermented grape juice from organic or biodynamic agriculture without inputs, additives, filtration, or sulphur during winemaking. From a broader perspective, beyond organic and biodynamic wine production, natural wine is a step further: fermented grape juice with minimum intervention.

In the Swiss landscapes, these winegrowers' practices seem *a priori* counter-intuitive – due to the increased risk-taking – in a highly competitive market. Indeed, there were around 7'000 Swiss wine estates in 2000; this number shrank to around 4'300 in 2022 (Data provided by the Federal Office for Agriculture (OFAG) on 09 April 2024). Furthermore, the area of the vineyard has remained more or less stable: 14'600 ha (OFAG. (17.04.2024). *L'année viticole 2023*). Hence, the concentration phenomenon due to industrialisation in agriculture also affects viticulture.

This research's goal is to understand to what extent winegrowers producing natural wines strive for two distinct but interrelated values: autonomy and nature. They exemplify, with their values and practices, the consciousness of necessity, autonomy, and the desire to strive for a harmonious relationship between winegrowers and their wines, from the vine to the cellar, nature. They reflect how ecological and peasant issues are two faces of the same coin.

Social research on natural wine movements has gained attraction for one decade. Internationally, these winegrowers are part of the « second-wave food phenomenon », as an alternative food network (Alonso González & Parga-Dans, 2023). Despite different techniques, they reflect wines of care and not of choice (Perullo, 2020). But this choice, crafting natural wine, reflects a « recovered freedom » as winegrowers tend to be more independent from the agricultural industry and give meaning to their activities by restoring the importance of the soil (Pineau, 2021).

This ethic resonates with a discourse about a return to nature, where humans and non-humans are allies (Pineau, 2016). For example, wine-crafters mention their wines as « savage », « living », « naked » or even « free ». It shifts from nature's instrumental rationality to a cooperative, reflexive one. During vinification, winegrowers' *laissez-faire*, which does not mean less effort, creates the conditions of heterogeneous tastes. In this sense, natural wines can reflect the product of the *terroir* even if they can end up in their own « bubbles » for cosmopolitan cities (Viecelli, 2021).

This search for a diversity of tastes is a reaction to the taste standardisation induced by the industrial logic of the 20th century. These winegrowers wish to offer all the richness that a single wine offers against this « *servitude sensorielle* » (sensory servitude) (2023). This diversity of smells and flavours results in artisan practices that aim for a « *liberté sensorielle* » (sensory freedom), i.e. non-conformist to a pre-established scheme. Therefore, natural wine is more a renewal of traditions, and craft practices than a novelty.

Indeed, in this paper, I present the results of 27 semi-structured interviews with Swiss winegrowers and participation in different wine festivals, undertaken from April to December 2024, to understand motivations and obstacles to crafting natural wine. *In situ* interviews, in wine domains, allow us to understand the extent to which these people tend to a peasant economy: imperatives to domestic reproduction, not capital accumulation, shape wine-crafters' everyday in a subsistence perspective (Bennholdt-Thomsen & Mies, 1999). I use a dialectical approach between the micro-scale with practices and values and the macro-scale with institutions such as the state, market, and science that shape the hegemonic structures. In this sense, this analysis is very similar to a Polanyian economic geography approach, which aims to understand the emergence and dynamics of alternatives with institutional constraints (Misleh, 2022). Thus, place-based processes' analysis to macro-scale dynamics can provide information about social transformations.

To make sense of the winegrowers' experiences, I mobilise the French thinker Bernard Charbonneau (1910 – 1996), who alerted decades ago about the *Grande Mue* (Great Molt), i.e. the dramatic shift with industrialisation since, especially, the First World War (Charbonneau, 1990). For the Gascon geographer, it puts at risk two fundamental values: nature and freedom. Because this phenomenon is a *fait social total* as technoscientific and economic growth tends to define all aspects of people's everyday lives.

This paper argues for the « politics of experience » of Bernard Charbonneau (Clark, 2002). Because humans participate in nature by embodying nature, daily experiences reflect the interrelationship between individuals and their milieu. Individuals make sense of personal experiences with their senses and perceptions through their body. Hence, political changes must be cultural ones – for which values do we stand for: « *La révolution dans la vie mène forcément à des changements sociaux et politiques.* » (The revolution in life leads necessarily to social and political changes.) (Charbonneau, 1991, p. 147)

The paper contributes to an appropriate understanding of the political and ecological implications of producing natural wines. While the 20th century heralded the « death of peasantry » (Eric Hobsbawm), there is a peasant revival, albeit marginal, which is resisting the techno-scientific onslaught in the name of autonomy and nature through wine.

Finally, these peasants of the vine, in the name of an ideal, i.e. a wine without artifice, put in place peasant practices which reflect the final product. Wine incarnates nature as a cultural product: « *A table, la nature donne corps à la culture, elle l'in-carne* ». (At the table, nature gives body to culture, it em-bodies.) (Charbonneau, 1991, p. 175)

References

- Alonso González, Pablo & Parga-Dans, Eva, 2023, The natural wine phenomenon and the promise of sustainability: Institutionalization or radicalization? *Culture, Agriculture, Food and Environment*, 45(2), 45–54. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cuag.12310>
- Bennholdt-Thomsen, V., & Mies, M. (1999). *Subsistence perspective*. Zed Books Ltd.
- Charbonneau, Bernard, 1990, *Le système et le chaos. Critique du développement exponentiel*. Economica.
- Charbonneau, Bernard, 1991, *Sauver nos régions: Écologie et sociétés locales*. Sang de la Terre.
- Clark, John, 2002, *Bernard Charbonneau: Regionalism and the Politics of Experience*. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 13(3), 41–48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10455750208565487>
- Le Gris, Michel, 2023, *Dionysos Crucifiée*. Editions Syllepse.
- Misleh, Denise, 2022, *Moving beyond the impasse in geographies of 'alternative' food networks*. *Progress in Human Geography*, 46(4), 1028–1046. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03091325221095835>
- Perullo, Nicola, 2020, *Epistemology: Wine as Experience*. In *Epistemology*. Columbia University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7312/peru19750>
- Pineau, Christelle, 2016, *Vins vivants: À l'abreuvoir de la nature*. Actes des congrès nationaux des sociétés historiques et scientifiques, 138(7), 63–77.
- Pineau, Christelle, 2021, *La vitiviniculture «nature» et ses risques*. *Études rurales*, 207, Article 207. <https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesrurales.25493>
- Viecelli, Clelia, 2021, *Local bubbles: Natural wines between globalisation and locavorism*. *Ethnologie française*, 51(3), 589–599. <https://doi.org/10.3917/ethn.213.0589>

Natural wine bars in neocraft atmoculture. A Lisbon case study

Andrea Pavoni, Instituto Universitario de Lisboa

andrea.pavoni@iscte-iul.pt

Gianmarco Peterlongo, Università di Milano

gianmarco.peterlongo@unimi.it

The contribution investigates the role of natural wine bars in Lisbon as pivotal mediators in the cultural, economic, and logistical relationships between producers and consumers of Natural Wines [NWs]. Unlike conventional wine intermediaries, these establishments not only serve as retail spaces but also play a critical role in orienting consumption practices, shaping aesthetic values, and fostering connections within the ecosystem of natural wine production and appreciation. Through their distinct spatial, sensory, and discursive dynamics, natural wine bars emerge as central to urban neocraft culture.

Neocraft, encompassing artisanal businesses like craft brewing, sourdough micro-bakeries or coffee roasting, signifies the rediscovery and resignification of traditional crafts within post-industrial imaginaries, aesthetics, and subjectivities (Land, 2018; Gandini & Gerosa, 2023). Mainly, though not exclusively, a middle-class phenomenon, neocraft is perceived as an ethical, environmental and 'cool' alternative to traditional capitalist firms (Gandini et al., 2025), promising more autonomous and less alienated work. The extent to which such a promise dangerously flirts with neoliberal ideology, however, has been subjected to critical scrutiny, framing neocraft within contemporary urban creative food economy and related processes of gentrification, touristification, and foodification (Donald & Blay-Palmer, 2006; Bourlessas et al., 2022).

Our research intends to nuance this structuralist reading, however, by integrating insights from critical food studies on the embodied materiality of production and consumption (Lavis & Abbots, 2020; Pavoni 2020) to complement the "discursive materiality" encompassing neo-craft products (Gandini & Gerosa, 2023; Gerosa, 2024). Specifically, we explore how NW bars foster sensorially rich urban atmospheres, a concept we term "neocraft atmoculture" (Brighenti & Pavoni, 2018), where taste and space coalesce into symbolic and affective experiences (Steadman & Coffin, 2024). NW bars operate as aesthetic and discursive platforms where the singularity and authenticity of natural wines – rooted in unique terroirs and artisanal production processes – meet urban atmospheres that cultivate specific affective and normative outcomes. These spaces mediate not only economic transactions but also cultural imaginaries, shaping how natural wines are perceived, judged, and valued in urban contexts.

The eminently *urban* space of mediation contributed by NW bars is crucial, we believe, also to articulate the complex, at times contradictory relations that characterise the discourse and practice of NW: the relation between the rural dimension of production and the urban dimension of consumption, as NW aims to "rediscover" the singular quality of local production while entering in increasingly global avenues of consumption along complex value chains; the challenge to conventional wine hierarchies and the risk of

generating other processes of hierarchisation and social distinction between classes (for what concerns taste and price, for instance); the insistence on difference, authenticity and singularity and the risk of a novel forms of homogenisation (e.g. the search for 'funky wine'); the experiment with alternative, non-strictly economic notions of value, and the commodification of the phenomenon as a booming trend; the ongoing debate over the question of certification, institutionalisation and trust. While NW bars play an important role in articulating these complex interrelations, they do so in very different ways, which begs for ethnographic exploration.

The ethnographic component of this project combines in-depth interviews with bar owners, alongside auto-ethnographic field notes to examine the interplay of corporeal consumption, aesthetic settings, and the broader socio-political narratives of natural wine. Key themes include the relational materiality of taste, the politics of artisanal singularity versus conventional typicality, and the ecological and ethical stakes of natural wine production in an era of climate uncertainty.

In this vein, Lisbon emerges as an illuminating research case for several reasons. First, Portugal is a traditional wine country with an emerging NW community that is still lacking strong association bodies and heated debate as in France Italy or Spain. Secondly, Lisbon is a city undergoing radical changes, where a strong emphasis on cultural and creative politics is matched by an accelerated process of gentrification, touristification and foodification.

By situating this research within Lisbon's dynamic urban fabric, this study contributes to ongoing debates on neocraft food cultures, urban consumption, and the socio-political dimensions of taste. It highlights the critical role of natural wine bars as urban mediators, reframing their significance beyond mere nodes of gentrification to sites where ecological values, sensory aesthetics, and artisanal ethics intersect and unfold. Anything but romanticising the NW movement, our perspective recognises the presence of apparently conflicting aspects not as a contradiction *per se*, but as a key feature of the NW and, more broadly, of neo-craft urban economies.

References

- Brighenti, A. M. & Pavoni, A. (2023) On urban trajectology: Algorithmic mobilities and atmocultural navigation. *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory* 24(1), 40–63.
- Bourlessas, P. Cener, S. & Vanolo, A. (2022) The work of foodification: An analysis of food gentrification in Turin, Italy. *Urban Geography* 43(9), 1328–1349.
- Donald, B. & Blay-Palmer, A. (2006) The Urban Creative-Food Economy: Producing Food for the Urban Elite or Social Inclusion Opportunity? *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 38(10), 1901–1920.
- Gandini, A. & Gerosa, A. (2023) What is 'Neo-Craft' Work, and Why it Matters. *Organization Studies*, online first.
- Gandini A, Casagrande G, Giorgi G, Peterlongo G, Tonetta M (2025). Platform-ised'work? The case of neo-craft work. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 28(1):204–22
- Gerosa, A. (2024) *The Hipster Economy: Taste and authenticity in late modern capitalism*. UCL Press.
- Land, Chris (2018). Back to the future. Re-imagining work through craft. *Futures of Work*. Retrieved August 25, 2023, from <https://futuresofwork.co.uk/2018/11/19/back-to-the-future-re-imagining-work-throughcraft/>
- Lavis, A. & Abbotts, E.J. (2020). Corporeal Consumption: Materiality, Agency, and Resistance in Body/World Encounters. *Cultural Politics* 16(3), 340–345.
- Pavoni, A. (2020) Profanating Gastro-Normativity: Exploring the Nonhuman Materiality of Making and Tasting Wine in the Natural Wine Movement. *Cultural Politics* 16(3), 367–386.
- Steadman, C. & Coffin, J. (2023) *Consuming Atmospheres: Designing, Experiencing, and Researching Atmospheres in Consumption Spaces*. Taylor & Francis.

A 'singularity' without 'typicality'? The case of a Sicilian native coffee

Paolo Do, University of Trento

paolo.dox@gmail.com

This contribution focuses on specialty coffee, a type of non-industrial agricultural product whose particular quality and flavour are the result of meticulous care in cultivation and processing (Daviron, 2002). As coffee growers remind us through their emblematic motto: "the plantation owns you, not the farmer owns the plantation", this underlines the extraordinary dedication and constant attention that specialty coffee producers devote to the cultivation of this product, where the producer becomes the custodian of a precious agricultural legacy (Perriot, Ribeyre and Montagnon, 2003).

But it is not just a question of agriculture and farming practices: in the world of coffee, the 'chain of custody' plays a fundamental and crucial role (Pendergrast, 2010). The singularity of a coffee is largely determined by its journey through different hands and around the world, a journey that shapes its identity and defines its characteristics (Liberman, 2022). It is therefore not only the initial agricultural gesture that determines its quality, nor the unique flora, altitude and microbes found in a particular place, nor the meticulous attention of the producer: it is the entire logistical chain, with its many stages and actors, that contributes to the creation of a truly unique coffee bean.

Following a comprehensive overview of the distinctive characteristics of specialty coffee, this study undertakes an analysis of the singularity of specialty coffee introducing the contemporary debate that is transforming coffee evaluation criteria (SCA, April 2024). This debate is progressively placing intrinsic attributes (closely related to the material reality of coffee: its shape and appearance, its chemical composition, and the sensory properties derived from these material constituents, also known as 'material attributes') alongside extrinsic attributes (also known as 'informational' or 'symbolic' attributes, or characteristics of coffee that go beyond the material aspect. These include elements such as the geographical origin of the coffee, the identity of the producer, the type of cultivation, working conditions, and sustainability claims).

The following question is posited: is it possible to perceive the extrinsic qualities of a coffee through the act of tasting? Moreover, and perhaps more intriguingly, can the extrinsic qualities of specialty coffee, linked to the artisanal production on the plantation and its unique history, actually contribute to defining and reinforcing the coffee's singularity, thereby creating a product that goes beyond mere organoleptic characteristics to embrace a more holistic dimension in the coffee quality assessment system?

The experimental section of this paper aims to explore in depth the concept of singularity in a context where it cannot be opposed to a traditional notion of typicality. By typicality, in this specific context, I refer to the complex set of sensory characteristics that normally allow experts to formulate precise expectations of flavour (based on both the geographical origin of the coffee and the processing methods employed in the production process).

In order to address this intriguing issue, the contribution focuses on the detailed analysis of the singularity of a coffee that avoid typical categorisations precisely because of its absolute uniqueness: the singularity of Sicilian native coffee. This product, which emerged as a direct consequence of contemporary climatic changes, is the result of the pioneering experimental cultivation of the Finca Balistrieri located in Santa Maria Camerina, in the province of Ragusa, an area traditionally foreign to coffee cultivation.

Through careful documentation based on participant observation, encompassing all the crucial stages of production – from the harvesting of the beans to the fermentation process and roasting – the article will offer an in-depth analysis of the different stages in the evaluation of this coffee. This analytical journey ranges from the visual and tactile examination of the raw material to the cupping. It will document in detail how a selected panel of professionals and expert tasters approached and evaluated this Sicilian coffee. It will describe the empirical process through which the singularity of this coffee from the Mediterranean, with no taste-historical precedent and therefore no predefined expectations, was analysed, described and evaluated.

References

Daviron, Benoit

2002 "Small farm production and the standardization of tropical products." *Journal of Agrarian Change* 2: 162-184

Perriot Jean-Jacques, Ribeyre Fabienne, Montagnon Christophe

2006 The qualities of a coffee. in: *Coffee: terroirs and qualities*, Christophe (ed.) Versailles, Ed. Quae

Kenneth, Liberman

2022 *Tasting Coffee. An Inquiry Into Objectivity*, State University of New York Press

33. Ethnographies of expert knowledges in mental health, neurodivergence, and disability

Convenors: Luca Sterchele (University of Turin) & Fabio Bertoni (University of Lisboa)

'Doing' Disability 'Right'. Rumour, Speculation and Preparatory Practices amongst Disability Benefit Claimants in the UK

Lilliana Buonasorte, University of Bristol

lilly.buonasorte@bristol.ac.uk

To be a benefit claimant in the UK is to enter a space comprised of competing narratives; a cacophony of commonsense logics on what a disability claimant 'should' be. The benefits process, managed through the Department of Work and Pension, is a multi-stage and multi-actor system. Biomedical classifications of disability are used to score applicants through a metrified 'points-based system' with increasing rigidity. Being passed down the bureaucratic production line of metrification, claimant's cases become once-twice-thrice removed from their textured biographies, leading to a biographical flattening (Robinson, 2020; Cicourel, 1995) of disabled lifeworlds. Across the various stages of the benefits process, different care-givers, legal advisors, medical professionals, benefit assessors, judicial staff, paperwork, images and descriptions become entangled as active agents (Mol, 2002) in the narrative construction of disability benefit eligibility.

The deeply etic 'shrinking eligibility category' (Roulstone, 2015: pp.678) sits against a wider, morally contentious landscape which portrays many benefit claimants as 'undeserving' or 'workshy' 'scroungers' (Tyler, 2015). Reverberating from the 2010 austerity programme, cultural narratives of a 'broken Britain' and/or 'broken benefit system' place many benefit claimants find at the forefront of precarity, blame and individualisation. Discordantly, my interlocutors find themselves trying to 'fit' their disabled lifeworlds within the officialised parameters of disability taxonomies (Bowker and Starr, 2001), and its broken system(s) of allocation, with varying levels of success.

In this paper, I explore how disability applicants, as well as third-party disability organisations, make sense of this allocation process. Across the UK, pockets of former, current and potential disability benefit applicants have collectivised through benefit workshops, coffee mornings and semi-formal gatherings. Applicants train one another to 'inhabit' institutional identities – the hegemonic and increasingly 'shrinking eligibility category' (Roulstone, 2015: p.678) enacted within disability benefit assessments – in order to be deemed eligible for financial support.

Evocative of Cassandra Hartblay's 'disability expertise' (2020), my research explores how rumour, speculation and performativity are exercised by benefit claimants in preparation for their benefit assessment(s). Characterised by opacity and scepticism, disability benefit advisors warn claimants to 'show [benefit assessors] what you're like on your *worst day*'. Facial expressions and physical appearance, my interlocutors warn one another, will be narratively reconfigured as able-bodiedness and, therefore, ineligibility. However, the opacity of the DWP's decision-making process, paired with the inconsistency of their own rule-enforcement, shrouds understandings and reimaginings of disability benefits in rumour and speculation. For the many benefit applicants denied welfare eligibility, similar negotiative tensions take place during their tribunal hearing – where testimonies of disablement are epistemically in/validated (Kidd and Carel, 2017) or sabotaged (Porter, Watson and Pearson, 2023). Through rumour, speculation and preparatory practices, the hegemonic expectation of disability is simultaneously reaffirmed and resisted amongst applicants. My interlocutors (and their implicated social networks) 'do', or perform, disability.

Overarchingly, my research proposes the following questions: can we disentangle the ontological 'truth' of disability from 'expert knowledges'? Or rather, extricate the multiple biomedicalised and moralised truths of disability (legitimised through classificatory schemas)? Through rumour, speculation and preparatory practices, how might we reconceive disability as a relational category?

References

- Cicourel, Aaron
1995 *The social organization of juvenile justice*. Transaction Publishers.
Hartblay, Cassandra

2020 Disability expertise: claiming disability anthropology. *Current Anthropology*, 61(S21), pp.S26-S36.
 Kidd, Ian James and Carel, Havi
 2017 Epistemic injustice and illness. *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 34(2), pp.172-190.
 Mol, Adrienne
 2002 *The body multiple: Ontology in medical practice*. Duke University Press.
 Porter, Tom, Watson, Nicholas and Pearson, Charlotte
 2023 Epistemic sabotage: The production and disqualification of evidence in disability benefit claims. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 45(6), pp.1164-1186.
 Robinson, Kelly
 2019 The form that flattens. In *Medical Materialities*, pp. 126-143, Routledge.
 Roulstone, Alan
 2015 Personal Independence Payments, welfare reform and the shrinking disability category. *Disability & Society*, 30(5), pp.673-688.
 Tyler, Imogen
 2015 Classificatory struggles: Class, culture and inequality in neoliberal times. *The Sociological Review*, 63(2), pp.493-511.

Unstrange cities. Embodied marginalities in the Neurodivercity

Bianca Solari, Università di Genova

bianca.solari@edu.unige.it

In recent years, there has been a significant "neurohype" surrounding the concepts of neurodiversity and neurodivergence. Neurodiversity, akin to biodiversity, refers to the infinite variety of neurocognitive functioning, while neurodivergence, a politically rooted term, describes neurological functioning that diverges from what is considered typical. This growing attention has led to a "crisis of meaning" (Valtellina, 2020), further fueled by the digital sphere. Initially through blogs and later social networks, neurodivergent individuals and self-advocacy movements have connected, formed collective identities, demanded rights, and called for social transformation – though not without contradictions or risks of neoliberal co-optation. Rather than focusing on the biological dimension of the condition, the neurodiversity movement, which is highly heterogeneous, emphasizes the processes of stigmatization, exclusion, and privilege experienced by individuals based on their perceived neurological differences, regardless of a formal medical diagnosis. This challenges the dominant biomedical perspective, which tends to reduce neurodivergent individuals to individualizing, pathologizing, or paternalistic logics, or to exploit differences for economic value. Neurodivergent individuals are often framed as subjects to be controlled and normalized due to their non-conformity, implying a lack of agency, or as weak, fragile, or exceptional, deserving assistance out of pity or because their exceptional talents are deemed useful. While the neurodiversity movement has gained visibility in digital spaces, in urban contexts – understood as the physical space, social relationships, and atmospheres – neurodivergent individuals continue to face systemic exclusion and oppression. Physical barriers, such as sensory overstimulation, and social barriers, such as judgmental gazes and stigmatization, limit access to services, work, and social life. Urban spaces, through their relational, physical, symbolic, and normative dimensions, shape parameters of inclusion and exclusion over time, determining who belongs and how spaces are to be used.

Neurodivergent individuals are often made to feel "out of place" (Cresswell, 1996) due to the dominance of ableist regimes that uphold an unattainable ideal of neurocognitive ability – rendering them either (hyper)visible or invisible as deviant body-minds. Practices of control and surveillance in urban spaces reflect and reproduce systems of privilege based on bodily and social differences. This reproduces social order and reinforces the idea that certain lives are less worthy, desirable, or fulfilling, thus justifying exclusion, differential inclusion, violence, and denial of rights.

Despite systemic oppression, neurodivergent individuals are not passive. They actively negotiate their presence in urban spaces, engaging in actions that challenge implicit norms of cognitive and behavioral normality. These actions often result in forms of resistance, such as spatial tactics (De Certeau, 1984), re-appropriations, minor gestures (Manning, 2016), visibility and presence politics, and the creation of safe spaces, communities, and counterspaces that question ableist regimes.

Although urban studies have shown interest in issues of socio-spatial justice, bodily difference, diversity, and multiplicity that shape cities, neurodivergence as a spatialized condition of difference has received relatively

little attention. However, neurodivergent urban experiences offer valuable insights into how neurocognitive norms are socialized, internalized, and spatialized, shaping both spaces and subjects.

By bringing together theories of socio-spatial justice, embodiment, and Neurodiversity Studies, this contribution seeks to investigate two key aspects: the role urban spaces play in shaping neurodivergent subjectivities and urban experiences, and the processes by which urban spaces are produced through neurodivergent experiences. Specifically, this work examines the processes of marginalization and resistance that unfold in and through urban space.

The research adopts an ethnographic approach combined with creative social research methods (Giorgi et al., 2021; Vannini, 2015) to analyze counterspaces created by neurodivergent individuals in response to systemic exclusion. These spaces differ in terms of narratives about neurodivergence, relationships with the various actors building neurodivergence as cultural phenomenon, and the ways individuals are socialized into neurodivergence: diagnosis, self-diagnosis, or the absence of a formal diagnosis but with behaviors attributable to a form of neurodivergence. The methodological combination aims to challenge the limitations of traditional tools in producing data that do not merely reflect the neurotypical gaze and its associated value hierarchies. By doing so, the study seeks to rethink what we believe we know (Perry, Bertilsdotter, 2024), the way we use to explain and conceptualize observations, and how we relate to people.

As this is a work in progress, the presentation will share some preliminary findings and reflections.

References

- Bertilsdotter Rosqvist, Hanna, Jackson-Perry, David,
2024, *The Palgrave Handbook of Research Methods and Ethics in Neurodiversity Studies*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan
Cresswell, Tim,
1996 *In place/out of place: Geography, ideology, and transgression*, Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press.
de Certeau, Michel
1984, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press
Valtellina, Enrico,
2020 *L'autismo oltre lo sguardo medico*, Trento, Edizioni Erickson
Vannini, Philipp
2015, *Non-Representational Methodologies Re-Envisioning Research*, London, Routledge

Challenging the Paradigms of Care and Control. Disability and Migration Intersections

Maria Giulia Pascariello, University of Bari

maria.pascariello@uniba.it

This contribution develops some reflections that emerged during my PhD research in Gender Studies at the University of Bari. The project aims to investigate the relationship between disability and migration, as well as the accessibility of services for individuals embodying this intersection. The relationship between disability and migration is a topic that has been scarcely explored in the international scientific literature (Colombo, Tarantino, Boccagni 2022). Disability Studies, rooted in a Western perspective, have often overlooked factors such as geographical origin, while Migration Studies have generally ignored the aspect of disability. The experiences of people with disabilities, especially those coming from the so-called Global South, have been marginalized and interpreted through categories and models that fail to consider their socio-cultural background (Grech, 2011). The connection between disability, poverty, and marginalization is often overlooked, despite its importance having already been highlighted by the so-called "social models of disability" (Oliver, 2023), which focus on the politics of disablement enacted by societies. The issue of disability and the issue of migration are deeply interconnected: first and foremost, in their nature as social constructs and in presenting an intrinsic "contextuality" (Bernardini, 2022), meaning that they are inextricably linked to their material and historical contexts. Furthermore, both issues have been and continue to be managed through the paradigms of "care and control." The spread of social interpretations of disability and the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) have contributed to de-pathologizing disability, shifting the focus from a purely stigmatizing and rehabilitation/normalization-oriented framework to a paradigm centered on human rights and social justice. However, many of the current studies on the subject continue to adopt a bio-medical approach. Furthermore, it is important to consider that contemporary discourses on disability are

situated within a global context that celebrates the so-called “diversity management” and “valorization of differences,” which are often understood as a means of control and the capitalization of human resources within a corporate framework, detached from rights and social protections. On the other hand, today’s migration policies are subject to increasingly restrictive regimes, and the possibilities of “reception” appear to be linked either to presenting oneself as a productive subject or as vulnerable – and therefore harmless. The absence of a social and intersectional perspective results in the field of services and public policies related to disability and migration adopting a “satellite” model, characterized by minimal or nonexistent communication between these sectors. This fragmentation prevents a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between disability and migration; for instance, consider the widespread occurrence of disabilities acquired as a result of migratory trauma or due to exhausting living, working, or housing conditions. This gap leads to a state of ontological and epistemological invisibility (Pisani, Grech, 2015), which hinders the full assertion of rights and fails to recognize the connection between vulnerability and social stratification. This contribution offers a critical reflection on the need to consider the power dynamics inherent in the processes of categorization and social “labeling.” The lack of an analysis grounded in historical and material relations prevents an understanding of the structural configurations of the issue and hinders the challenge to the hegemonic paradigms of care and control through which both topics under examination are currently approached.

References

- Bernardini, Maria Giulia
 2022 Imprevisti. La “lotta per i diritti” delle persone migranti con disabilità, in *Mondi Migranti*, 3, pp. 77-89.
- Casalini, Brunella
 2016 Governo neoliberale dei corpi disabili e immaginari di resistenza, in: Zappino, Federico (Ed.), *Il genere, tra neoliberalismo e neofondamentalismo*, Verona, OmbreCorte, pp. 86-96.
- Colombo, Maddalena, Tarantino, Ciro, Boccagni, Paolo
 2022 Disabilità e migrazione. Gli studi in Italia, *Mondi Migranti*, 3, Milano, Franco Angeli.
- Grech, Shaun
 2011 Recolonising debates or perpetuated coloniality? Decentring the spaces of disability, development and community, in *The Global South. International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 15, 1, pp. 87-100.
- Oliver, Michael
 2023 Le politiche della disabilitazione: il modello sociale della disabilità, Verona, OmbreCorte.
- Pisani, Maria, Grech, Shaun
 2015 Disability and Forced Migration: Critical Intersectionalities in Disability and the Global South, 2, 1, pp. 421-441.

“Don't depend on the other people”. Anger, care and shadows of normality in an Italian-Bangladesh family in Turin

Antonio Paciello

antonio94paciello@gmail.com

The work is the result of a research activity carried out, in parallel with a voluntary work of socio-educational assistance, within the domestic walls of an Italian-Bangladeshi family in the northern suburbs of Turin. Aiming to go beyond the individualizing and ontologizing contribution of neuropsychiatric diagnostics, the research seeks to highlight the cultural, social and political origins of the restlessness of the family's first-born son – who has been diagnosed by social services with several behavioral disorders (ADHD – attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, ODD – oppositional defiant disorder) and an intellectual disability (Intellectual development disorder) – in relation to the migratory history, transnational habitus and transnational social fields that all family members experience and that determine the difficult condition of a “second generation” (Sayad 1999) child constituting the young person's experience. In this way, the research observes the ways in which ideas such as care, nurture, and suffering of the boy and his parents collide within the transnational habitus, which is the result of the encounter/clash between the Bangladeshi habitus and the Western habitus (Zeitlyn 2010), both living within the family unit and generating, in their conflictuality, a crisis of normality that jeopardizes the horizon of meaning of each of the parties involved, generating a scenario of crisis of signification (De Martino 2019) and an emotional complexity in which feelings of anger and shame emerge, primarily. Such a clash is seen as determining the boy's restlessness, which for services is a psychological distress, for parents an

educational problem, and for him a tangle of conflicting emotions in whose narrative political, social, and cultural determinants surface, which social welfare services, through the exclusive use of neuropsychiatric diagnostics, have treated in an individualizing and ontologizing form, running the risk of fueling its scope and increasing its phantasmal dimension (Gordon 2022).

For the services, "Ridwan was born this way" and "parents have to learn to be Italian parents raising an Italian child with psychiatric problems, they have no tools to understand their child's difficulties and struggle to accept them" (Field Diary, September 2022). In continuity with what has already been observed by Taliani (2012; 2014), I assessed the involvement of social welfare services in a structural complex of symbolic (Bourdieu 1970), racial and epistemic (Guha, Spivak 2002) violence that does not allow family members to be-in-the-world (de Martino 2019) by banishing their cultural, political and social specificities, their autonomous constructions of meaning related to Ridwan's suffering-which are medicalized, blamed trivialized or voluntarily unheard – keeping them trapped, etiologically and pedagogically, in an enclosure of domination (Carofalo 2021), a crushing condition of subalternity, which is accompanied by an attempted colonization of the imaginary of care and education of both parents and Ridwan (Gruzinski 1994), evidence of the postcolonial nature of our institutions (Mellino 2012).

In contrast to the ontologizing and individualizing work done by social and health services, I found it necessary to investigate such sentiments by trying to sink my gaze into the spontaneous work of socioanalysis (Sayad 2006) that the boy carried out autonomously by telling himself and that constituted a tight critique of the complexities of his transnational habitus (Zeitlyn 2010) and from the deep sense of frustration at the threat of being enclosed in the enclosure of domination (Carofalo 2021, Fanon 1952) to which the migratory history and post-colonial present of his parents exposed him.

The reflections of the presentation will extend to the positioning necessary for the work to have a social meaning not limited to the accumulation of academic knowledge (Grosfoguel 2016) and the accumulated debt to the research subjects, who offered their trust by involving themselves in a work of self-reflection. In order to conduct my research, I had to *takesides* (De Martino 2013) and side with the family to try to clean up the incrustations of alienations complicated even more by structural racism and superficiality acted out by the socio- health care that had individualized and ontologized the suffering of Ridwan deaf to the crisis that was stirring within those domestic walls and that required a renegotiation of social and cultural meanings (Belmonte 2021) through *an ethos of transcendence* (De Martino 2019) that attempted to imagine a new order of meaning beyond the crisis. Although my research has been flanked by attempts at critical reflection with social and health services and the production of materials of militant critique against the institutional racism of social and health services, it has gradually become clearer to me how much the real restitution of my work has taken shape in the construction of a solid bond between me and the family: the bond is thus what remains of the ethnographic relationship. Allowing myself to be manipulated, to make myself materially available allowed me to abdicate my role as researcher/educator, making the ethnographic relationship a cross-curricular one, in which family members could also be involved, trying to create the basis for a real dimension of experience (Agamben 2001) directed toward a process of mutual care and re-imagination.

References

- Agamben, Giorgio
2001 *Infanzia e storia. Distruzione dell'esperienza e origine della storia*. Torino, Einaudi.
- Belmonte, Thomas
2021 *La fontana rotta*. Torino, Einaudi.
- Bourdieu, Pierre
1970 *Pour une sociologie des formes symboliques*, Parigi, Minuit.
- Carofalo, Viola
2021 *Può il subalterno desiderare? Auto-colonizzazione, disagio mentale, liberazione collettiva: Fanon e Han*. Medea, 7(1).
- De Martino, Ernesto
2019 *La fine del mondo. Contributo all'analisi delle apocalissi culturali*. Torino, Einaudi.
- 2013 *Furore, Simbolo, Valore*. Milano, Il Saggiatore.
- Fanon, Frantz
1952 *Peu noire, masques blancs*. Paris, Seuil.
- Gordon, Avery
2022 *Cosa di fantasmi. Hunting e immaginazione sociologica*. Bologna, Deriveapprodi.
- Grosfoguel, Ramon
2016 *Del «extractivismo económico» al «extractivismo epistémico» y al «extractivismo ontológico»: una forma destructiva de conocer, ser y estar en el mundo*, in "Tabula Rasa", 24, pp.123-143.

- Gruzinski, Serge
 1994 *La colonizzazione dell'immaginario. Società indigene e occidentalizzazione nel Messico spagnolo*. Torino, Einaudi.
- Guha, Ranajit & Spivak Gayatri Chacravorty
 2002 *Subaltern Studies. Modernità e (post)colonialismo*. Verona, Ombre Corte.
- Mellino, Miguel
 2012 *Cittadinanze post-coloniali. Appartenenza, razza e razzismo in Europa e in Italia*. Bologna, Carocci Editore.
- Sayad, Abdelmalek
 1999 *La double absence: Des illusions de l'émigré aux souffrances de l'immigré*. Paris, Editions du Seuil.
- 2006 *L'immigration ou les paradoxes de l'alterité. 2. Les enfants illégitimes*. Paris, Edition Raison d'Agir.
- Taliani, Simona
 2012 I prodotti dell'Italia. Figli nigeriani tra tutela, diritto e amore materno (molesto?). *Minorigiustizia*, 2(2), p. 39 – 52.
- 2014 *Il perito, il giudice e la bambina-che-non-morirà*. *Minorigiustizia*, 7, p. 158 – 164.
- Zeitlyn, Benjamin
 2010 *Growing up Glocal in London and Sylhet*. Anthropology PhD Thesis, University of Sussex.

"Dearest world, I will be the one to die"¹. Consideration on in/exclusion processes and vulnerability from a research experience on dis/ability, gender and sexuality in Covid time
Chiara Paglialonga, University of Milano-Bicocca

In my recent work, I have dealt with experiences that lie at the intersection of different normative systems (patriarchal sexism, compulsory heterosexuality and ableism). Specifically, my work wanted to explore the experience of subjectivities that self-define themselves as 'women' and 'persons with disabilities', marginalised subjectivities in whose regard full social recognition and, consequently, full sexual and gender assignment does not seem to take place, thus being invested by processes of de-sexualisation (or hyper sexualisation) and pathologization. Between 2020 and 2023 I therefore conducted a qualitative work aimed at investigating the processes of social construction of the sexuality of disabled women in Italy, questioning disability as a social and cultural construction, an unstable category. I collected self-narratives about the experiences, the meanings, the practices, the beliefs, and the desires that women with physical and/or sensory disability, both congenital and acquired, reported about their bodies, their relationships and their intimate and sexual life. I also collected interviews with professionals that work in sexual and reproductive health services, to investigate the level and quality of access and to analyse the discourses and practices implemented by health care professionals on their bodies.

This work took place in a specific space-time: the Covid-19 pandemic. During this "epochal global event", the personal and lifestyle changes affected not only those who showed the symptoms of the infection, but the entire population, with not only medical and health effects, but also cultural and social ones. Quickly, the possibility of action decreased, and the tragedy and violence of the situation increased.

Biopolitical and thanato-political technologies soon began to show themselves in all their evidence (Foucault 2001; 2019), with the conception of bodies, life, subjectivity and community they supported. As Esposito (2022) states, any biopolitics brings a paradox, since the protection of a community inevitably involves an immune definition of it. This means that the community claims the power to decide who to sacrifice, for the benefit of an idea of its own sovereignty. The anthropologist Emily Martin (1995) states that the concept of immunity is not a merely biological fact, but on the contrary is constructed collectively according to cultural and political variables, alternatively producing sovereignty or exclusion, protection or stigmatization, life or death.

It is therefore interesting to examine which discourses, rhetorics and practices, in those weeks, were mobilized when talking about disability (or rather, disabled people, *s/object* in a common category with elderly, immunosuppressed, and all the people 'most vulnerable' to the virus). Those who had the right to speak and choose on these categories were subjectivities who did not identify with them, but who asserted their own personal scale of priorities on them.

Disability emerged as a stigmatized identity towards which there are extremely deep-rooted prejudices: the idea that disabled people are exclusively objects of care (not subjects), passive, without personality, whose lives are superfluous, unworthy. The sacrifice required (in some cases, put it down in black and white, as Liddiard 2020 and Paolini e Paolini 2022 stated), was justified by proclaiming the defence of the survival of those whose

lives were truly worth it – because conceived as adhering to the canons of physical and cognitive perfection and adequacy, but also, above all, of *utility* – doing resound the echo of eugenic practices of other times.

In these years of the pandemic, there has been a constant use of language and vocabulary that aimed to constantly underline the lethal danger of the virus for some categories of people with the aim of reassuring the other part (the so-called non-fragile or non-vulnerable). The violence of these messages has circulated and permeated both public and media discourse as well as interpersonal and private ones. The impact that this same message may have had on the people directly affected by these speeches has not been problematized or criticized enough, nor has it been able to gain adequate space for discussion. Instead, it follows the same ableist attitude which tends not to consider the opinion of disabled people, speaking in their place or asking others (invariably, non-disabled people) questions for/about them (people with disabilities). Therefore, it is interesting to shift our gaze to the other party involved, the (counter)narratives of individuals, associations and committees for the defense of the rights of people with disabilities.

Although in recent years there has been a shift in discourses and meanings given to illness, health, social categories, well-being and life and we have also perceived and recognised in our bodies and in those around us their intrinsic and common fragility and vulnerability, the latter have been – and continue to be – looked at with discomfort, pushed away from the gaze, denied, condemned.

Control over bodies is not a new or exclusive phenomenon because we are talking about disability. It is part of a broader discussion on Western medical science and the treatment of marginalized bodies, a topic that requires a critical look and reflection and the recognition of medical knowledge as a non-objective and 'neutral', but cultural system. (Lock e Scheper-Hughes in Quaranta 2014): its knowledge, representations and practices are to be read as products of the social and cultural context to which they belong. A knowledge that at the same time produces and reproduces, in continuous change, the very context in which it is located, which is crossed by a historical asymmetry of power based on the dimensions of sex, gender, race, ability, and so on, similarly to other social spheres.

This contribution aims to reflect on the impact that structural systems of oppression such as ableism and sexism, as well as capitalist logic, have in shaping so-called "expert knowledge", concretely impacting the life trajectories of disabled people. To do so, I will examine two different examples: the discourses and policies related to the global Covid-19 pandemic, and access to sexual and reproductive health services for women with disability in Italy.

1 Chiara Bersani: <https://pasionaria.it/body-count-la-disabilita-nella-narrazione-sul-coronavirus/> (ultima lettura: 14/01/2025).

References

- Esposito, Roberto
2022 *Immunità comune. Biopolitica all'epoca della pandemia*. Torino: Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi.
- Foucault, Michel
2001 *La volontà di sapere. Storia della sessualità*. Milano: Feltrinelli.
- Liddiard, Kirsty
2020 «Surviving ableism in Covid Times: Only the vulnerable will be at risk... but your 'only' is my everything'». *Disability and Covid19: The global impacts*, 2020, iHuman edizione.
- Lock, Margaret, e Nancy Scheper-Hughes
2014 «Un approccio critico interpretativo in antropologia medica. Rituali e pratiche disciplinari e di protesta». In *Antropologia medica. I testi fondamentali*, a cura di Ivo Quaranta, 115–62. Trento: Erickson
- Martin, Emily
1995 *Flexible bodies*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Paolini, Elena e Maria Chiara Paolini
2022 *Mezze persone. Riconoscere e comprendere l'abilismo*. Palermo: Aut Aut Edizioni.

The Attitude of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing towards Russian Sign Language Interpreters **Nikita Bolshakov**, HSE University

nbolshakov@hse.ru

In recent years, significant changes have occurred in the field of sign language interpretation in post-Soviet countries. These changes include the establishment of a professional standard for interpretation, the

recognition of sign language status, and the development of requirements for interpreter training, all guided by a neomanagerialist approach within the welfare state. These factors collectively contribute to a shift in the practices of Deaf individuals and alter the perception of Russian Sign Language (RSL) interpreters, particularly among their primary audience – Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals (DHoH).

Building on previous research regarding the evolving relationships between interpreters and the community (Cokely, 2005), including studies within the Russian context (Bazoev, 2022), this research investigates the sociocultural dynamics that shape perceptions of RSL interpreters within the Deaf community in Russia. The study was conducted with the team of Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing, and hearing young adults from the "Researching the Deaf Community" Laboratory at the "GES-2" House of Culture, employing a mixed-methods approach that included qualitative interviews with members of the Deaf community and a quantitative survey of DHoH individuals.

The study's findings indicate that state support mechanisms, such as the opportunity to request interpreter services through individual rehabilitation and habilitation programs, are viewed as essential resources for community support. However, many Deaf individuals refrain from utilizing these services, citing inconvenience and bureaucratic hurdles as reasons. Consequently, they often seek alternative methods, turning to relatives, acquaintances, or freelance interpreters for financial compensation.

Furthermore, various models of perception regarding RSL interpreters coexist in contemporary Russia. These models reflect diverse expectations concerning interpreter competence, ethics, the significance of personal relationships, and associated terminological ambiguities. Both the Soviet term "surdoperevodchik" ("surdointerpreter") and the modern term "sign language interpreter" are employed by DHoH individuals but are understood and defined semantically in distinct ways. The former term is frequently associated with viewing the interpreter as a helper, emphasizing emotional support and problem-solving assistance without focusing on formal qualifications. In contrast, the latter term is linked to the perception of the interpreter as a professional, prioritizing high proficiency in RSL, ethical conduct, and cultural understanding.

As a result, the accelerating professionalization of RSL interpretation leads, on one hand, to an improvement in the quality of interpretation, while on the other hand, it may create gaps between the traditional expectations of DHoH clients and the evolving requirements for the work of an interpreter. And the position of a good interpreter in the eyes of the DHoH audience today is ambivalent and requires a balance between informal inclusion in the Deaf community and formal qualification requirements.

References

Bazoev, Vladimir

2022 What do deaf people say about RSL interpreters?, in *VES Journal of the All-Russian Society of the Deaf*, pp. 16-17, 19 (in Russian).

Cokely, Dennis

2005 Shifting positionality: A critical examination of the turning point in the relationship of interpreters and the deaf community, in *Sign language interpreting and interpreter education: Directions for research and practice*, pp. 3-28.

Just a little more different than the others: neurodivergence and the re-articulation of diagnostic practices and knowledge production in autism research

Alessandro Cazzola, Università degli Studi di Trento

alecazzola1@gmail.com

Since its first conceptualization in the early 20th century as infantile schizophrenia, autism has represented a category in constant evolution, not exclusively within what is commonly referred to as "scientific practice" but in continuous interaction across various domains of knowledge. It is impossible to examine the history of autism without considering the role of situated knowledge – first from parents of autistic children and later from autistic individuals themselves – in constructing understanding on the subject. Not coincidentally, an initial conceptualization of autism as rooted in biological factors was developed in opposition to the psychoanalytic theory of "refrigerator mothers," shifting parents from being viewed as the cause of the condition to becoming its most knowledgeable advocates. The paradigm of neurodivergence, that is not only shaping public

discourse and perception about autism but also gaining traction among researchers and medical experts, has emerged from autistic individuals themselves, who claim autonomy in defining their condition and needs, often opposing the idea of a cure advocated by many parent groups. Building on these observations, this paper analyses how the paradigm of neurodivergence is currently molding the development of a «biomedical platform» (Keating, Cambrosio, 2000) on autism in which basic neurobiological and genomic research intersects with diagnostic and clinical practices. The aim of the paper is to show how neurodivergence has been establishing as a «style of thought» (Fleck, 1979) within the clinical and research collectives on autism and how it is re-orienting their «styles of reasoning» (Hacking, 2010) – the ways in which what counts as objectivity comes into being. Through semi-structured interviews with researchers active in the field of biomedical and clinical research on autism, this paper shows how the acknowledgement of cerebral individuality and diversity, originated outside inner scientific circles, is involved in a process of re-articulation of diagnostic categories and practices. Moreover, the paper shows how neurodivergence as a style of thought is also informing the post-genomic approach on genetic bases of autism: having abandoned the idea of the “autism gene”, researchers have started to search for polymorphisms associated with different autism sub-types in connection with a diagnostic and clinical redefinition of neurodivergent categories. This paper thus underscores how the evolving concept of neurodivergence is contributing to the reshaping of the landscape of autism knowledge production, diagnosis and clinical practice, demonstrating how styles of thoughts originating outside inner scientific circles are actively appropriated in scientific research and the clinics, in this case re-articulating, but not changing established biomedical logics.

By tracing the historical interplay of diverse forms of knowledge – ranging from parental advocacy to self-advocacy by autistic individuals – it becomes evident that the production of knowledge about autism remains deeply political, situated, and contested. While the growing recognition of cerebral diversity reflects a broader shift toward valuing individuality, it simultaneously reinforces biomedical paradigms that prioritize modulation and control or management over holistic inclusion. As classifications continue to be redefined and negotiated, the study highlights the necessity of critically examining how these shifts both challenge and perpetuate entrenched logics, paving the way for more nuanced and inclusive understandings of autism within and beyond clinical and biomedical frameworks.

References

- Fleck, Ludwik, 1979 *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact* (1935), Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
Hacking, Ian, 2010 *Ontologia storica* (2002), Pisa, Edizioni ETS.
Keating, Peter, Cambrosio, Alberto,
2000 «Biomedical Platforms», in *Configurations*, 8, 3, pp. 337-387.

Recovery Narratives and Participation Practices in Mental Health Services. Perspectives from Experts in peer support

Ludovica Aquili, University of Padua

ludovica.aquili@unipd.it

In the field of mental health services, *recovery orientation* and a *participatory approach* have gained increasing attention in recent years, encouraging the development of many innovative practices (Negrognolo & Saraceno, 2023). The development of services focusing on the co-construction of care practices and the promotion of collaboration between users, families and professionals is also encouraged by the WHO European Mental Health Action Plan (2021). A prerequisite of the participatory approach is the value placed on the knowledge of users, gained from their own lived experience of mental distress and direct experience of services. Recognised *best practice* includes the role of 'expert by experience' or expert in peer support (ESP). These

individuals draw on their direct experience of psychiatrization to provide valuable insights that not only inform service design, but also support other users on their recovery-oriented pathways (Toikko, 2016). Adopting a non-medical approach, ESPs intervene in support practices through a more patient-centred view (Barlott et al., 2020) by highlighting the connections between recovery and the social and structural barriers that facilitate or impede recovery (Friehe, 2024).

In parallel with the affirmation of ESPs, there has been a growing body of research over the years, particularly from the field of Mad Studies and studies of psychiatric survivor movements, that highlights the instrumentalisation of ESP inclusion for institutional purposes (Costa et al., 2012). Processes of co-option by services are already produced in the construction of *recovery narratives* (Repper and Perkins, 2009; Fisher & Lees, 2016). Costa et al. (2012) highlight how coercion in recovery narratives can lead to disempowerment, as individuals may feel pressured to align their stories with service demands and neoliberal agendas (Voronka & Grant, 2022). The overwhelming pressure to pursue 'successful' recovery pathways is closely shaped by the neoliberal logic that subsumes recovery as a performance activity based on individualism and personal empowerment (Swords & Houston, 2024).

Also in the Italian context, a participatory and recovery-oriented approach strongly shapes the concept of 'best practices' to be implemented in mental health services. Among the proposed experiments, the first nationally organised training course for ESP was completed in 2023. The proposed training model included a practical part consisting of two internships in mental health services.

This paper aims to explore how trainees in the course reconstruct their experience of mental health services to understand:

- The role and space they are given within the services where they have been placed or where they currently work.
- What recovery stories are allowed.
- How ESPs contribute to changing the logic of services.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 trainees. The narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008) reconstructs a complex and varied picture of the experiences of ESPs in mental health services. In terms of role recognition, the narratives reflect the service's valorisation of the ESP's professionalism and emancipation from the role of user (P: *from the very beginning, my psychiatrist told me: 'When you're in the office, and we're having a therapy session, that's one thing. As soon as you step out the door, you're the ESP'*) alternate with others that instead underline movements of chronicisation of subjectivities within the psychiatric framework (P: *It's almost like they give you a consolation prize, right? 'Do you want to be an ESP?' First, you're in the SPDC, then the community, the group home, and eventually, you become an ESP. It feels like a career path, but it seems they're working to keep people there, not help them move on*).

With regard to the type of recovery story allowed, we highlight the risks of excluding those stories that do not conform to the expected recovery narrative model. Finally, we reconstruct the potential of the role of the ESP, which can be summarised in the ability to offer validation, empowerment, hope, alternatives and non-stigmatising conceptualisations of suffering. The results open up some reflections, not only on the frictions that embody ESP's relationship with professionals, but also on whether the appropriation by services of concepts born within psychiatric survivors' movements can lead to the erosion of activist roots.

References

- Barlott, T., Shevellar, L., Turpin, J. M., and Setchell, M.
2020 "Destabilising social inclusion and recovery, and pursuing lines of flight in the mental health sector", in *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 42(6), pp. 1328–1343.
- Costa, L., Voronka, J., Landry, D., Reid, J., Mcfarlane, B., Reville, D., and Church, K.
2012 "Recovering our stories: A small act of resistance", in *Studies in Social Justice*, 6(1), pp. 85–101.
- Fisher, P., and Lees, J.
2016 "Narrative approaches in mental health: preserving the emancipatory tradition", in *Health*, 20(6), pp. 599–615.
- Friehe, E. C.
2024 "Resistance to the biomedicalization of mental illness through peer support: The case of peer specialists and mental health", in *Social Science & Medicine*, 341, 116521.
- Morrow, M., and Weisser, J.
2012 "Towards a social justice framework of mental health recovery", in *Studies in Social Justice*, 6(1), pp. 27–43.
- Negrogno, L., and Saraceno, B.
2023 "Ma come si curano le malattie mentali?", in *Machina, DeriveApprodi*. Available at: <https://www.machina-deriveapprodi.com/post/ma-come-sicurano-le-malattie-mentali-prima-parte>

- Repper, J., and Perkins, R.
2009 "Recovery and social inclusion", in *Mental Health Nursing Skills*, pp. 85-95.
- Riessman, C. K.
2008 *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Sage.
- Swords, C., and Houston, S.
2024 "Service user perspectives on recovery: the construction of unfulfilled promises in mental health service delivery in Ireland", in *The Journal of Mental Health Training, Education and Practice*, 19(2), pp. 96-107.
- Toikko, T.
2016 "Becoming an expert by experience: An analysis of service users' learning process", in *Social Work in Mental Health*, 14(3), pp. 292-312.
- Voronka, J., and Grant, J.
2022 "Service user storytelling in social work education: goals, constraints, strategies, and risks", in *Social Work Education*, 41(5), pp. 977-992.
- World Health Organization
2021 *Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2030*. World Health Organization.

Integrating Experiential Knowledge into Mental Health Services in Friuli Venezia-Giulia. A Qualitative and Interdisciplinary Analysis of the Role, Benefits, and Challenges of Involving Peer Support Workers in Mental Health Care

Giulia Pollice, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy

giulia.pollice@unimore.it

Delia Da Mosto, Centro di Salute Internazionale e Interculturale, Bologna, Italy

deliadamosto@gmail.com

Luca Negrognolo, Istituzione Gian Franco Minguzzi, Bologna, Italy

luca.negrognolo@gmail.com

In response to the marked increase in complex needs and the increase and diversification of social marginalisation associated with mental illness, there is a need to develop flexible and personalised responses in terms of the organisation of social and health services. The WHO contends that an effective strategy is to involve the people who use these services (WHO, 2019). The present study focuses on the analysis of a particular participatory model: that of the Peer Support Worker (PSW), i.e. an individual who has personally experienced mental suffering and has chosen to share it with others facing similar challenges (Davidson et al., 2012). This figure was introduced in Italy approximately two decades ago; however, its integration remains experimental and heterogeneous across different regional contexts (Guzzetta et al., 2024). This study explores the factors enabling meaningful involvement of this role within services, as well as the structural and systemic dynamics that constrain its potential to drive care and service innovation. To study these aspects, we have chosen as the field of research the mental health services of Friuli Venezia-Giulia. This choice stems from the historical, cultural and organisational peculiarities of these services: indeed this region was the birthplace of the Italian deinstitutionalization movement, which led to a profound transformation of the Italian (and, to some extent, international) psychiatric healthcare, through the abolition of asylums and the de-institutionalisation of the sick with a dense network of community care, with open doors, without restraints and with the aim of self-determination and empowerment of the individuals (Bono, Lapierre, and Morin, 2024).

Methods. The ethnographic methodology was chosen, suitable for offering a comprehensive perspective that considers both structural determinants and the lived experiences of study participants (Quaranta, 2020, pp.253-267). A six-month field study was conducted, involving participant observation and 22 semi-structured interviews with 12 PSWs and 10 mental health professionals. The subjects addressed during the interviews encompassed the following: the professional profile of PSWs and its role within the service, the perceived benefits, the critical issues encountered, and the strategies employed or deemed appropriate for implementation. The results were analysed using a deductive-inductive approach, specifically the framework method (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The findings were shared and discussed with the study participants.

Results. Overall, the study portrays the role, the benefits and the challenges of integrating peer support in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region by analysing the perspectives and experiences of both PSWs and professionals. PSWs in Trieste engage in a variety of activities, such as facilitating peer support groups within Mental Health

Centres or organizing meetings in specific micro-areas (Micro-areas are small territorial units in Trieste designed to promote community well-being through an integrated, participatory, and proximity-oriented approach. For further information see: <http://habitatmicroaree.online.trieste.it/>) of the city. These activities primarily aim to rebuild the social fabric and enable individuals to process and re-value their personal experiences. According to the interviewees, this work yields benefits not only for those receiving peer support but also for the Mental Health Service itself, as it is aided in humanizing its practices and aligning them with recovery-oriented approaches. Finally, the PSWs themselves view this work as an integral part of their own recovery and empowerment journey.

Moreover, our study also identifies the critical challenges related to the involvement and recognition of PSWs. For instance, the study examined the impact of role and power dynamics on PSWs' work (and thus their measurable effectiveness in quantitative biomedical studies), revealing mechanisms that risk the exploitation and manipulation of this hybrid role, situated between being a patient and being a professional. In response, interviewees suggested several protective strategies for PSWs, including teamwork, professional training, periodic *interview*, institutional recognition and appropriate contractual arrangement.

Finally, the study highlights the need for a cultural shift within mental health services – one aligned with person-centred care, human rights, and social justice – as a necessary condition for peer support workers to fulfil their roles effectively.

Discussion. Experiential knowledge proves to be a valuable resource for service users: the interconnectedness of individual experiences emerges as a critical element in constructing a new narrative of one's lived experience (Quaranta, 2012, pp.264-290). It is argued that PSWs, in addition to their clinically proven effectiveness, extensively documented in the literature (Gillard, et al. 2022), also possess *symbolic effectiveness*, in fostering the creation of an original representation the *embodied experience* (Pizza, 2005, pp.205-210). Similarly, the involvement of PSWs can have significant effects on mental health services and the broader community in which they operate, by emphasizing the centrality of the social experience of illness and its treatment (Cooper et al., 2024). Moreover, PSWs positively influence the implementation of quality mental healthcare practices, such as humanization, person-centred and rights-based approaches, and mediation between users and professionals. The study also noted the positive impact of peer support on the PSWs' own recovery.

Despite these benefits, challenges exist in implementing PSWs. Stigma and prejudice from professionals persist. There is a risk that PSWs may be instrumentalized, using them for compliance or as service quality markers. Professionals may be reluctant to acknowledge power imbalances and hierarchical structures within services (Gillard et al., 2024). Institutional recognition is needed for appropriate contracts and reduced burnout but risks undermining the peer nature and leading to assimilation. Genuine inclusion requires managerial commitment and resources, not just superficial integration (Gillard et al., 2024). Moreover, evaluating peer support needs to go beyond clinical outcomes to include personal recovery, quality of life, and social inclusion.

Finally, we argue that a meaningful cultural shift requires the active involvement of peer support workers in both service decision-making and research. Such a cultural transformation among professionals also constitutes an epistemic shift – one that enhances the understanding of the social determinants of mental health and the value of lived experience. Our findings suggest that integrating experiential knowledge into mental health services may help catalyse the epistemic transition proposed by Nikolas and Diana Rose: a move from merely involving individuals in mental health services to embedding services within the lived realities of those they aim to support (2023).

Conclusions. In conclusion, our study suggests that PSWs represent a valuable opportunity for mental health services to engage in critical reflection on their own practices and underlying cultural assumptions, potentially fostering meaningful and lasting innovation in psychiatric care.

References

- Bono, Margherita, Judith Lapierre, and Paul Morin
2024 Caring for People and Territories: Brief Historical Review of the Intersectoral Social Innovation Experience of Trieste and Its Habitat Micro-Area Program. *Canadian Journal of Nonprofit and Social Economy Research* 15(S1): 13 pp-13 pp.
- Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke
2006 Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3(2). United Kingdom: Hodder Arnold: 77–101.
- Cooper, Ruth E., Katherine R. K. Saunders, Anna Greenburgh, et al.
2024 The Effectiveness, Implementation, and Experiences of Peer Support Approaches for Mental Health: A Systematic Umbrella Review. *BMC Medicine* 22(1): 72.
- Davidson, Larry, Chyrell Bellamy, Kimberly Guy, and Rebecca Miller

- 2012 Peer Support among Persons with Severe Mental Illnesses: A Review of Evidence and Experience. *World Psychiatry* 11(2): 123–128.
- Gillard, Steve, Stephen Bremner, Akshaykumar Patel, et al.
- 2022 Peer Support for Discharge from Inpatient Mental Health Care versus Care as Usual in England (ENRICH): A Parallel, Two-Group, Individually Randomised Controlled Trial. *The Lancet Psychiatry* 9(2). Elsevier: 125–136.
- Gillard, Steve, Rhiannon Foster, Sarah White, et al.
- 2024 Implementing Peer Support into Practice in Mental Health Services: A Qualitative Comparative Case Study. *BMC Health Services Research* 24.
- Guzzetta Francesca, Badolato E., Biavati S., Brunelli S., Cosatto E., Gotti S., Hvalić S., Monti R., Negri M., Puecher A., Saibene A., Ruta R., Tincani M., Tuori C., Zanni G., Zucchi C., Lucchi F., Menchetti M., Salamina G.
- 2024 Gli Esperti in supporto tra pari in salute mentale in Italia: risultato di un'indagine conoscitiva sulle realtà contrattuali, Congresso Nazionale Società Italiana Psichiatria, Verona, 2024
- Pizza, Giovanni
- 2005 *Antropologia Medica. Saperi, Pratiche e Politiche Del Corpo* 205-210. Roma: Carocci.
- Quaranta, Ivo
- 2012 La trasformazione dell'esperienza. *Antropologia e processi di cura. Antropologia e Teatro. Rivista di Studi* 253-267. <https://antropologiaeteatro.unibo.it/article/view/3187>
- 2020 *Etnografia e Incorporazione*. A cura di Vincenzo Matera, 264-290. Roma: Carocci.
- Rose, Diana, and Nikolas Rose
- 2023 Is 'Another' Psychiatry Possible? *Psychological Medicine* 53(1): 46–54.
- WHO
- 2019 *QualityRights Materials for Training, Guidance and Transformation*. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/who-qualityrights-guidance-and-training-tools>, accessed January 9, 2025.

Talking to social care. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities as experts in the coproduction of social care

Abigail Croydon, King's College London

abigail.croydon@kcl.ac.uk

Collaboration between professionals and those on the receiving end of their expertise has come to be seen as essential in health and social care systems. In the UK, coproduction is the prescribed approach to the design and implementation of services, research and policy, written into legislation and guidance (e.g., UK Department of Health and Social Care, 2024). Dissenting voices point to the woolly and even 'magical' character of the concept (e.g., Osborne et al., 2016; Voorberg et al., 2015); the financial and other costs of implementing coproduction (Meriluoto, 2018; Oliver et al., 2019) and the lack of persuasive evidence of impact (Chinn, et al., 2023; Pizzo et al., 2015). Professionals engage in various forms of collaboration with non-professional groups, especially those considered to be marginalised, on the basis that coproduction is a means to ethical and democratic ends. Partners may be understood as service users, people with relevant 'lived experience' or 'experts by experience', but a clear distinction is made between the professional and non-professional groups. The idea of giving such people a strong voice in research, policy and service design has instrumental and intrinsic appeal: services can become more relevant and acceptable to the people who use them, resulting in better outcomes, while the client group gain knowledge about service provision and are empowered as citizens. Yet the emancipatory and democratic aims for co-produced services co-exist with service retrenchment and cost-saving agendas, making it important to understand how these priorities play out in practice.

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are clearly among the marginalised communities who might benefit from having a strong voice in services and policy, and social care is widely acknowledged to need innovative reform, making a strong case for coproduction. A key assumption of 'expert by experience' roles is that knowledge and learning have a central role on both sides of the citizen-professional divide. Collaboration involves 'teaching and learning together' – people articulate lessons from lived experience for the benefit of services, and develop as teachers and as learners.

This presentation will first examine the epistemic basis of the expertise of lived experience, considering questions of representation, identity and authenticity, and drawing on feminist and social epistemology (e.g., Andersen, 2001; Longino, 2012). The presentation will then report preliminary findings of a qualitative research study of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities acting as expert by experience in social care settings. The study explores examples of the roles in practice, recruiting people with intellectual and

developmental disabilities in different social care settings and the staff who work with them. It will record and describe the activities and tasks undertaken, interactions between experts and staff, and the perspectives of both on the role. It will focus on learning, as a dimension of collaboration (e.g. Wenger, 2000; Tomasello, 2020) and a core purpose of co-production.

Three methodological approaches are used: document analysis, video methods and conversation analysis. Documentary analysis will be applied to organisations' public statements of policy regarding experts by experience and internal records of participants' role and work. Tasks and meetings will be video recorded and will support dialogue with recruited experts and staff members, in an adapted form of video stimulated dialogue (Nind, Kilburn and Wiles, 2018). Conversation analysis will be applied to video recorded meetings. The analysis will focus on social and participatory learning as a dimension of collaboration, with attention to the epistemic perspectives of staff as well as 'experts by experience'. As a measure of impact, the study will explore how the learning occurring through co-production is reflected at the service level.

References

- Anderson, Elizabeth (2012) "Epistemic Justice as a Virtue of Social Institutions," *Social Epistemology*, 26(2): 163–173.
- Chinn, D., Brickley, K., & Power, A. (2024). Involvement of Lay Assessors in the Inspection and Regulation of Public Services: A Systematic Review. In *Health and Social Care in the Community* (Vol. 2024). Wiley-Hindawi. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2024/1282674>
- Longino, Helen (2001) *The Fate of Knowledge*, Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Meriluoto, T. (2018). Turning experience into expertise: technologies of the self in Finnish participatory social policy. *Critical Policy Studies*, 12(3), 294–313. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2017.1310051>
- Nind, M., Kilburn, D. and Wiles, R., 2018. Using video and dialogue to generate pedagogic knowledge: teachers, learners and researchers reflecting together on the pedagogy of social research methods. In *The Teaching and Learning of Social Research Methods* (pp. 117-132). Routledge.
- Oliver, K., Kothari, A., & Mays, N. (2019). The dark side of coproduction: Do the costs outweigh the benefits for health research? *Health Research Policy and Systems*, 17(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-019-0432-3>
- Osborne, S. P., Radnor, Z., & Strokosch, K. (2016). Co-Production and the Co-Creation of Value in Public Services: A suitable case for treatment? *Public Management Review*, 18(5), 639–653. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2015.1111927>
- Pizzo, E., Doyle, C., Matthews, R., & Barlow, J. (2015). Patient and public involvement: How much do we spend and what are the benefits? *Health Expectations*, 18(6), 1918–1926. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hex.12204>
- Tomasello, M., 2020. The role of roles in uniquely human cognition and sociality. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 50(1), pp.2-19.
- Voorberg, W. H., Bekkers, V. J. J. M., & Tummers, L. G. (2015). A Systematic Review of Co-Creation and Co-Production: Embarking on the social innovation journey. *Public Management Review*, 17(9), 1333–1357. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2014.930505>
- Wenger, E. (2000). Communities of practice and social learning systems. *Organization*, 7(2), 225–246.

"And then what exactly is your experiential expertise?". Performing professionalism and madness in Dutch welfare landscapes

Charlotte van der Veen, University of Amsterdam

c.vanderveen@uva.nl

During fieldwork, I heard the following question countless times: *"En waarin ben jij dan ervaringsdeskundig?"*, which translates to: "And then what exactly is your experiential expertise?". In this paper, I take that question as a starting point to analyze the position of experts by experience in welfare and care arrangements, and the ways in which they are tasked with performing professionalism as well as specific types of citizenship. Experts by experience, who draw on their personal experiences with distress and recovery to support others, have to perform the role of professional as well as of marginalized citizen, and both have to be legible in different settings. To take up the role of expert by experience entails a shift in subjectivity; from client or recipient of care, to volunteer or professional. Experts by experience can draw on a variety of lived experiences; with addiction, homelessness, poverty, or client experience in psychiatry, for instance. I look at the ways in which becoming an expert by experience is not just a process of becoming familiar with a terrain of knowledge; it is also about performing and communicating that familiarity (Carr 2010). By inhabiting a new institutional identity, experts by experience have to embody professionalism as well as madness or marginalization. They have to be "recovered enough" to be a reliable employee or volunteer, but simultaneously remain legible as an "authentic citizen." Experts by experience are often imagined as bridge-builders or brokers, and navigate who and what they are mediating between in daily encounters (Lindquist 2015). They straddle this paradoxical position: embodying recovery, but also making disability visible when needed (Voronka 2019).

To fully grasp the paradoxes faced by experts by experience, I briefly trace how the figure of the expert by experience has become so central in Dutch mental health care and welfare landscapes. Experiential expertise gained prominence in the 1970s in the context of antipsychiatry and client movements, prefiguring futures built on peer support, which reject psychiatry's narratives of chronicity (e.g. Hunsche 2008). Today, the figure of the expert by experience is being folded into mainstream health and welfare services in the Netherlands, tasked with making "intimate welfare" real (Vollebergh, de Koning, and Marchesi 2021). In this context, the expert by experience is called upon to transform top-down paternalist welfare by crafting horizontal relations. They are seen as capable of connecting with people deemed "hard-to-reach" or "care avoidant." The role is increasingly standardized, exemplified by a proliferation of training programs and the development of a job occupation guideline. In this paper, I draw on one year of ethnographic fieldwork across different settings in the Netherlands, where I followed around experts by experience. I participated in two training programs for experts by experience, and conducted participant observation in several organizations employing experts by experience. To ask an expert by experience about the specifics of their experiential expertise is to ask for disclosure of categories that diverge from societal norms. As such, it can reiterate existing lines of in- and exclusion. During my fieldwork, an expert by experience once likened the question to being asked to present your resume. Her comment dripped with sarcasm. To her, the question was a request for proof of having enough distressing experiences to earn the title of expert by experience. This question of earning the title is not new. In client movements of the 1960s and 70s in the Netherlands, which strived for deinstitutionalization and emancipation for clients, there were recurring discussions, for instance, about whether you are truly a client (and by extension, can speak for clients), if you have never been institutionalized. And the question surfaces among experts by experience in the present as well, with people gatekeeping who qualifies as a "real" expert by experience.

One of the organizations I did fieldwork with, *In Charge*, which is entirely run by experts by experience, aims to circumvent the question altogether. In their logic of experiential expertise, which is widespread across the Netherlands, you develop experiential knowledge by reflecting on your own experiences, as well as hearing about others' experiences. As such, experiential knowledge doesn't focus on the specifics of your experience, but on what are understood as shared experiences, of loneliness or stigma, for instance. At *In Charge*, then, to ask "what is your experiential expertise" is taboo. The organization presents a challenge to biomedical registers and exclusionary care regimes. To do so, *In Charge* invests a great deal in crafting new vocabularies, which strive to undo institutional hierarchies.

The figure of the expert by experience is center stage in Dutch mental health care and welfare landscapes, full of promises of depathologization and peer support, as well as of more intimate and horizontal relationalities. In this paper, I show the struggles over language experts by experience engage in, trying to make good on these promises.

References

- Carr, E. Summerson.
2010. "Enactments of Expertise." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39 (October):17–32. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.012809.104948>.
Hunsche, Petra.
2008. *De Strijdbare Patiënt: Van Gekkenbeweging Tot Cliëntenbewustzijn: Portretten 1970-2000*. Het Dolhuys.
Lindquist, Johan.
2015. "Brokers and Brokerage, Anthropology Of." In *International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioral Science*, Second Edition, 2:870–74. Elsevier Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.12178-6>.
Vollebergh, Anick, Anouk de Koning, and Milena Marchesi.
2021. "Intimate States: Techniques and Entanglements of Governing through Community in Europe." *Current Anthropology* 62 (6): 741–70. <https://doi.org/10.1086/718140>.
Voronka, Jijian.
2019. "The Mental Health Peer Worker as Informant: Performing Authenticity and the Paradoxes of Passing." *Disability and Society* 34 (4): 564–82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2018.1545113>.

Navigating uncertain assumptions in a research project on housing for persons with complex mental health needs

Elisabeth Huber, University for Continuing Education Krems

elisabeth.huber@donau-uni.ac.at

This contribution is inspired by autoethnographic research and focusses on the inter- and transdisciplinary nature of the research project SPUR (Socio-sPatial framework conditions for inclusive housing for persons with complex mental health needs in rural and small-town areas) and how the composition of the team impacts the genesis, discussion and testing of (theoretical) assumptions on mental health, housing, spatial dimensions and inclusivity.

The project SPUR is set up as an interdisciplinary project in Lower Austria with six academic researchers and three citizen scientists as co-researchers. In its conceptual and initial phase, a non-profit organization which provides support and services for people with mental health issues was collaborating with the project team. The project started in February 2023 and is now in its last year. Ambitious in its aims, the project's work packages include qualitative interviews, PhotoVoice, short-term visits to housing projects and "Scenario Planning" workshops. Research participants have included people with complex mental health needs for the interviews and PhotoVoice workshops, co-housing initiatives, foster families, care-receiving and care-giving persons for the visits to housing projects as well as diverse stakeholders in rural areas for the "Scenario Planning" workshops.

Whereas the focus of the project is on mental health needs, none of the academic researchers is a psychologist, psychiatrist or psychotherapist. Disciplinary backgrounds are to be found in educational sciences, social sciences, philosophy and architecture. The three citizen scientists – experts by experience – share both their own practical knowledge as well as professional knowledge with their team members. Experienced with psychiatric care and having attended an EX-IN training as peer workers, the citizen scientists are more knowledgeable on mental illness than average people with mental health needs. Citizen scientists participated and contributed to the development of the semi-structured interview guide, analysis of interview transcriptions and transcripts of group discussions, short-term visits in housing projects, dissemination and strategic decision-making.

The following assumptions which were subject of repeated and extensive discussions in the project team will be treated:

- Mental health and mental illness are not dichotomies but can co-exist at the same time. Recovery can be understood as a journey to rediscover or reinvent oneself and one's place in society.
- The design of built environment and natural spaces have significant impact on mental health.
- Institutionalized care settings influence self-determination of users and residents and limit their care options, social interactions as well as their spatial and temporal scope of action.
- Appropriating and designing one's home and living environment is beneficial for mental health, as it promotes agency, control and choice.
- Communal living such as co-housing contributes positively to the wellbeing of people with mental health needs due to informal social support and community care.

As a trained social and cultural anthropologist and sociologist I have participated in all project phases since the official start of the research project. Documentation of project steering committee meetings, advisory board meetings and working sessions will serve as the basis of this contribution. I will trace the course of the discussions, the definitions of terms and concepts proposed as well as arguments and evidence brought in by academic researchers, citizen scientists and advisory board members. In particular, the collaborative qualitative analysis of interviews and group discussions shed light on different forms of knowing. Data analysis included a qualitative method called "Dokumentierendes Interpretieren" (Bareis, Kolbe, 2013; Stefan, Vettori, 2025), which allows for a polyphonic mode of analysis. Academic researchers and citizen scientists were equally entitled to select text segments, to suggest interpretations and to extend or contest those of other participants. Implicit and experiential knowledges can help comprehend why paternalism, lack of transparency and lack of choice are rarely criticized by users of mental health services in Lower Austria. The citizen scientists' personal experiences and lessons learned from peer work may also inform our understanding of care, psychosocial rehabilitation and compliance with medical diagnosis.

The contribution will conclude with reflections on the status of knowledge claims. Co-researching with citizen scientists can be seen as a strategy to minimize “epistemic injustice” (Fricker, 2007). But how to integrate knowledge from citizen scientists? What happens to experiential knowledge if it is not applied to oneself, but to research participants? Are subjective perceptions and feelings still of relevance? Or do they distort conclusions drawn by trained researchers who tend to be more distanced and aligned with pre-conceived concepts and criteria? I therefore raise the question whether citizen scientists’ reasoning offers a way out of the trap of “objectification” (Armstrong, 2024) because it prefers associative ways of analysis, metaphors, empathy and comprehension over theoretically based reasoning. Finally, I will reflect on the scientific advancements within the research project and potential gains for peer networks and self-help groups.

References

- Armstrong, Neil
2024 *Collaborative Ethnographic Working in Mental Health: Knowledge, Power and Hope in an Age of Bureaucratic Accountability*, London and New York, Routledge.
- Bareis, Ellen, Christiane Kolbe
2013 Ein Werkstattbericht vom dokumentierenden Interpretieren – Wege der Reflexivität, in Ellen Bareis, Christian Kolbe, Marion Ott, Kerstin Rathgeb, Christian Schütte-Bäumner (Eds.), *Episoden sozialer Ausschluss. Definitionskämpfe und widerständige Praxen*, Münster, Verlag Westfälisches Dampfboot, pp. 54-68.
- Fricker, Miranda
2007 *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Stefan, Barbara, Hanna Vettori
2025 From Below. Dokumentierend und kollektiv Interpretieren mit Studierenden der Sozialen Arbeit, in Katharina Auer-Voigtländer, Kathrin Bereiter, Manuela Brandstetter, Ruth Hecht, Johanna Muckenhuber, Gerald Poscheschnik, Moritz Reisberger, Lukas Richter, Elias Schaden (Eds.), *Forschung (in) der Sozialen Arbeit in Österreich. Methodische Perspektiven, ausgewählte Beispiele und innovative Ansätze*, Basel, Beltz Juventa, pp 92-105.

The observation of mandatory health treatments (TSO) in the City of Turin: forcing care to protect society

Carolina Di Luciano, University of Turin.

The mandatory treatment for mental illness (Trattamento Sanitario Obbligatorio, TSO) is a legal institution introduced for the first time in Italian legal system by Law 180 of 1978, also known as “Basaglia” law. Contrary to the *ratio* of the law itself – which aimed to make care voluntary and to close asylum institution for mentally ill patients – the TSO introduces a health treatment that can be imposed by the use of force, regardless of the patient’s consent. As the final remnant of the asylum-based logic for mental disorder, TSO is today the primary case of “coercive care” as recently clarified by the Constitutional Court (Corte Cost., judgment no. 22 of February 22, 2022). In practice, TSO fulfills the dual purpose of treating the individual and restraining the non-compliant body (Basaglia F., 1968; Cardano M. et al., 2020), thus revealing its dual nature as an instrument of control as well as care (Conrad P., 1992).

The research presented here aimed to analyze the ontological ambiguity of involuntary treatments, examining the complexity of the practices through which they are implemented. The objective was to connect the micro-physical level of TSO execution in a specific context (the city of Turin) with the evolution of the re-institutionalization paradigm in mental health care over the past decades.

The study was conducted within the framework of the Observatory on mandatory health treatments of the City of Turin (Osservatorio sui Trattamenti sanitari obbligatori della Città di Torino), a research group established in 2023 at the University of Turin, with support from local authorities and healthcare providers.

The group was formed following an increase in TSO cases in the years immediately after the pandemic in Turin. Based on this trend, the aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, its causes, and its impact on the protection of the rights of individuals subjected to it. The Observatory analyzed over 1,000 TSO case files from the past eight years and conducted interviews and focus groups with personnel involved in these operations. This included nine interviews with psychiatrists (some working in the city’s main Psychiatric Service for Diagnosis and Treatment (SPDC) and others in two different Community Mental Health Centers (CSMs)), an interview with the Commander of the Local Police responsible for TSO activities, and two focus groups with local police personnel (both from territorial services and the special operational unit dedicated to this activity)¹

1 The personnel selected for the interviews were identified according to the following criteria. Regarding healthcare personnel, two Community Mental Health Centers (CSMs) were chosen for their accessibility to the field, facilitated by the inclusion of the director of the relevant Mental Health Department (DSM) in the working group. In any case, the centers belonged to an area of the city that, according to the quantitative data collected, showed a high use of mandatory health treatments (TSO). Furthermore, although both centers were part of the same territorial health network (ROT), they were located in two different areas of the city: one more central and affluent, the other more peripheral and popular. The identified Psychiatric Service for Diagnosis and Treatment (SPDC) was situated within the city's university hospital and served as a reference point for hospitalizations outside the province and region. In selecting the healthcare personnel to interview, attention was given to their years of professional experience as well as to gender diversity.

As for the police personnel, interviews were conducted with members of the Special Operational Unit (ROS), trained to carry out TSO procedures, and members of the territorial service, with varying years of professional experience. In this case as well, the selection took into account different ranks (officers, agents) and the gender of the interviewees.

The observations revealed that the use of coercive treatment (law in action – Nelken, 1984) often diverges significantly from the legislation and its original spirit (law in the books – Nelken, 1984). Data show that, in Turin, TSO is almost always a so-called "planned" treatment, prearranged among competent actors and applied to patients already known to public institutions due to previous clinical histories or ongoing involvement with territorial services. In numerous case files, "coercive care" appears as a repeated therapeutic practice, diverging from the exceptional nature intended by the legislation. Similarly, data reconstruction revealed the average duration of treatment, which, in some cases, was strikingly extended, raising questions about the effects of coercive hospitalization, the role of consent, and the existence of less intrusive alternatives. Finally, the nearly unanimous validation of requests by administrative and judicial authorities suggests that the procedural safeguard for treatment validation has been replaced by a serial, rapid practice typical of so-called "routine justice", where medical authority gains renewed and uncontested power.

In conclusion, TSO is an intrusive practice in an individual's life, often part of an already ongoing process of incapacitation (Piccione D., 2019). While breaking the association between madness and incapacity was one of the cornerstones of the Basaglia reform, some current treatment practices bring TSO back into the paradigm of re-institutionalization in mental health care, as already observed in recent decades. Coercive care, in fact, resembles those social control practices where the need for "protection" leads to exclusion, and asylum-based logic is revived. The similarities are evident in cases where individuals, deemed "vulnerable," are confined to places of segregation (Merlo and Tarantino, 2018) and subjected to perpetual control by state or para-state agents, with limited self-determination and minimal judicial authority to safeguard fundamental rights, particularly concerning personal liberty and freedom of movement.

References

- Basaglia, Franco
1968 *L'istituzione negata*, rapporto da un ospedale psichiatrico, Torino, Einaudi.
Cardano, Mario, Algostino Alessandra, Caredda Marta, Gariglio Luigi, Pardini Cristina
2020 *La contenzione del paziente psichiatrico. Un'indagine sociologica e giuridica*, Laboratorio dei Diritti Fondamentali, Torino, Il Mulino.
Castel, Robert
2004 *L'insicurezza sociale. Che significa essere protetti?*, Torino, Einaudi.
Conrad, Peter
1992 *Medicalization and Social Control*, in *Annual Review of Sociology*, 11, p. 209-232.
Daly, Enrico
2024 *Profili costituzionali dei trattamenti medico-psichiatrici*, Pisa, Pacini Giuridica.
Foucault, Michel
1963 *Storia della follia nell'età classica*, Milano, Rizzoli.
Goffman, Erving
1968 *Asylums, le istituzioni totali: i meccanismi dell'esclusione e della violenza*, Torino, Einaudi.
Merlo, Giovanni, Tarantino, Ciro
2018 *La segregazione delle persone con disabilità, i manicomi nascosti di Italia*, Maggioli Editore.
Nelken, David
1984 *Law in action or living law? Back to the beginning in sociology of law*, in *Legal Studies*, 4(2), p. 157-174.
Piccione, Daniele
2019 *Incapacitazioni e disabilità nella prospettiva evolutiva del diritto costituzionale*, in *Minority Reports. Cultural Disability Studies*, vol. 9, Mimesis editore.
Tarantino, Ciro

2024 Il soggiorno obbligato. La disabilità fra dispositivi di incapacitazione e strategie di emancipazione, Bologna, il Mulino.
Zola, Irving Kenneth
1972 Medicine as an institution of social control, *Sociological Rev.*, 20, 487-504.

Crippling ethnography

Yvonne Wechuli, University of Kassel

wechuli@uni-kassel.de

The suggested contribution asks the question what it would mean to crip auto-/ethnography. Based on an empirical project conceptualized in a mixed-abled research team with a participatory ethnographic design respectively a collaborative ethnography (Bettmann, 2022) in its planning stages, methodological reflections on the dis-/advantages of collaborative ethnography will be shared:

Ethnographic research seems attractive for co-researchers. After all, ethnographic field work centrally relies on the researchers' (and co-researchers') presence in the field and cultivates an attitude of curiosity (Breidenstein *et al.*, 2013), which both seem more enjoyable than, e.g. deductive analyses of interview materials. Moreover, ethnographic research seems to offer the possibility to negotiate and jointly decide on crucial aspects of the research process due to a certain opportunism and freedom regarding research methods (Breidenstein *et al.*, 2013) as well as a processual sharpening of the research question (Flick, 1995). Further, ethnography allows for polyphony in final texts (Emerson *et al.*, 2001; Saukko, 2003).

Also, ethnography does attempt to create experiences of alienation in one's own society in order to analyze everyday assumptions. Therefore, an appreciation of disabled researchers – and other minoritized researchers – as observation experts for societal relations is not new to ethnography (Breidenstein *et al.*, 2013, p. 29). Such approaches following feminist standpoint theories (Flick & Hoppe, 2021) tie in well with discourses on Crippling (see e.g. Liddiard & Watts, 2022) that postulate the lived experiences of disabled people can be used positively as an epistemological moment, e.g. to reveal social norms that are harmful to all members of society.

Nonetheless, ethnographic research might be specifically challenging to design as participatory. The above mentioned opportunism and freedom also means that there is no consensus on methods/techniques (Breidenstein *et al.*, 2013; Schmid & Eisewicht, 2022). Therefore, ethnography is described as a particularly demanding – even stressful (Schmid & Eisewicht, 2022) – research strategy, that requires researchers to be competent in various ways in order to display openness, flexibility and reflexivity (Breidenstein *et al.*, 2013; Flick, 1995). With a circular approach, it is more difficult to involve co-researchers only in certain aspects of the research process – if they should prefer so. Field work usually accumulates an unsystematized corpus of field notes, which are incomprehensible to others (Emerson *et al.*, 2001).

Further, this time- and energy-consuming approach might clash with co-researchers' time constraints or unwillingness to pay the emotional costs of analyzing and discussing discrimination of one's own community (Hilscher, 2021; Thompson, 2021) – especially given the asymmetric recognition of co-researchers and researchers for their work (Russo, 2021).

References

- Bettmann, Richard
2022 "Kollaborative Ethnografie", in Angelika Pöferl, Norbert Schröer (eds.): *Handbuch Soziologische Ethnografie*, Wiesbaden, Springer Fachmedien/Springer VS, pp. 615-624.
- Breidenstein, Georg, Stefan Hirschauer, Herbert Kalthoff, Boris Nieswand
2013 *Ethnografie: die Praxis der Feldforschung*, Konstanz, UVK.
- Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz, Linda Shaw
2001 "Participant Observation and Fieldnotes" in Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffey, Sara Delmont, John Lofland, Lyn Lofland (eds.), *Handbook of Ethnography*, Los Angeles, Sage, pp. 352-368.
- Flick, Sabine, Alexander Herold
2021a "Zur Kritik der Partizipativen Forschung: eine Einführung" in Sabine Flick, Alexander Herold (eds.), *Zur Kritik der Partizipativen Forschung: Forschungspraxis im Spiegel der Kritischen Theorie*, Weinheim, Beltz Juventa, pp. 7-16.
- Flick, Sabine, Alexander Herold
2021b "Epistemischer Paternalismus und transformative Reflexivität? Zur immanenten Kritik der partizipativen Forschung" in Sabine Flick, Alexander Herold (eds.), *Zur Kritik der Partizipativen Forschung: Forschungspraxis im Spiegel der Kritischen Theorie*, Weinheim, Beltz Juventa, pp. 287-313.
- Flick, Sabine, Katharina Hoppe

- 2021 "Reflexivität als Mantra? Voraussetzungen und Grenzen partizipativer Forschung" in Sabine Flick, Alexander Herold (eds.), *Zur Kritik der Partizipativen Forschung: Forschungspraxis im Spiegel der Kritischen Theorie*, Weinheim, Beltz Juventa, pp. 18-40.
- Flick, Uwe
- 1995 *Qualitative Forschung: eine Einführung*, Hamburg, Rowohlt.
- Hilscher, Annette
- 2021 "Doing reflexivity: Wissensproduktion in partizipativen und ethnografischen Settings" in Sabine Flick, Alexander Herold (eds.), *Zur Kritik der Partizipativen Forschung: Forschungspraxis im Spiegel der Kritischen Theorie*, Weinheim, Beltz Juventa, pp. 129-153.
- Liddiard, Kirsty, Lucy Watts
- 2022 "Co-production, Participatory and Emancipatory Disability Research" in Kirsty Liddiard, Sally Whitney-Mitchell, Katy Evans, Lucy Watts, Ruth Spurr, Emma Vogelmann (eds.), *Living Life to the Fullest: Disability, Youth and Voice*, Bingley, Emerald, pp. 25-42.
- Russo, Jasna
- 2021 "Von Emanzipation zu Partizipation und zurück: Erfahrungswissen in der psychiatrischen Forschung" in Sabine Flick, Alexander Herold (eds.), *Zur Kritik der Partizipativen Forschung: Forschungspraxis im Spiegel der Kritischen Theorie*, Weinheim, Beltz Juventa, pp. 265-285.
- Saukko, Paula
- 2003 *Doing research in Cultural Studies*, London, Sage.
- Thompson, Vanessa
- 2021 "Partizipative Reflexivität postkolonialer Ethnografie und Möglichkeiten des Schweigens als Kritik" in Sabine Flick, Alexander Herold (eds.), *Zur Kritik der Partizipativen Forschung: Forschungspraxis im Spiegel der Kritischen Theorie*, Weinheim, Beltz Juventa, pp. 248-264.

Queering Neurodivergence. Practices of resistance in a neuronormative urban space

Miriam Serini, Milano-Bicocca University

m.serini1@campus.unimib.it

The term neurodiversity was first introduced in the late 1990s by Australian sociologist Judy Singer (1999) and American journalist Harvey Blume (1998). This term is not intended to deny the neurological difference between human beings but rejects the pathologising process that is constructed from this difference, recognising them as diversities and not pathologies. The purpose of this reconceptualisation and resignification is to demedicalise non-neurotypical conditions: the expression neurodiversity is meant to emphasize how autism, ADHD, and learning disabilities etc. are atypical forms of brain functioning, regardless of a pathologising negative value judgment.

From the emergence of the neurodiversity paradigm to the present day, a thriving debate has developed in both academia and activism. This study fits into this debate, and it is positioned within a queer strand of research on neurodivergence, embracing a perspective able to problematise the neurotypical domain in institutions and practices by questioning the boundaries between the predominant neurotypicals and the "others" (Bertilsdotter Rosqvist et al., 2020) that are acting in defining the public space. To this end, this contribution presents the preliminary results of an ethnographic study I am conducting in the city of Bologna, focusing on the spatialisation of neuronormativity in urban space.

As far as institutional policies are concerned, the 'Piano Attuativo Salute Mentale 2024' has recently been implemented by the Emilia-Romagna Region, which has allocated 40 million for projects, actions and interventions to be carried out in the territory to support the "most vulnerable persons", e.g. autistic persons. Therefore, the policy analysis (Lascoumes, Le Galès, 2009) focuses on how neurodivergence is generally represented at this level, the theoretical and cultural framework within which norms, dominant discourse and related practices are constructed. From an initial analysis of the phenomenon, it seems that institutional actors are still pursuing a vision of neurodivergence anchored to a biomedical model, resulting in care policies mainly focused on the socio-medical sphere. Furthermore, a fragmentation has been noted, leading to the absence of specific policies on neurodivergence, but rather to a series of policies focused only on certain categories (i.e. autism and learning disabilities).

As far as non-institutional actors are concerned, I have identified a group of activists who recently founded the second neurodivergence collective in Italy (the first one is in Turin). At this stage of the research, I have conducted a participant observation in which I have participated in some events and demonstrations. Participant observation allowed me to focus on how the issue of neurodivergence is thematised in terms of discourses, representations, ideas, values, symbols, etc. within these collectives, and how the mobilisation

processes related to the struggle for fair and more accessible spaces also intersect with other demands stemming from other axes of marginalisation.

The work of analysis therefore focused on this collective of neurodivergent people who are trying to “neuro-queering neurodivergence and co-create a safe space” within the city, with the aim of breaking out of purely pathologising and medicalised visions of neurodivergence. In a public space where the pathologising vision is still hegemonic, movements are beginning to emerge from below, for a claim and resignification of space that seeks to subvert the biomedical paradigm. The analysis dwelt on the practices of resistance carried out by activists, practices through which resistance is built from the margins, constructing a space in which one's identity can be renegotiated and can live a condition of neurodivergence without having to hide it, in order to fit into a neurotypical model.

The study used a queer/crip approach to highlight the normalisation practices towards neurodivergent bodyminds, to analyse the logics of power and normalisation processes underlying the construction of the “normal” and “abnormal” dichotomy and the ways in which abnormal subjects (crip people) attempt to subvert and renegotiate these logics and processes in urban space (McRuer, 2006). Through neurodiversity theories built on crip and queer studies, using neurodiversity as an epistemological and ethical paradigm, we can decentralise dominant perspectives: using an intersectional approach to analyse space, it is possible to investigate how neurodivergence intersects with other forms of marginalisation in society (e.g. gender, sexual orientation, race, class, disability and so on) and how people with “atypical” bodymind could claim their right to the city (Egner, 2019; Kafer, 2013; Harvey, 2008).

References

- Bertilsdotter Rosqvist, Hanna, Nick Chown, Anna Stenning (Eds)
2020 *Neurodiversity Studies: A New Critical Paradigm*, New York, Routledge.
- Blume, Harvey
1998 «Neurodiversity. On the neurological underpinnings of geekdom», in *The Atlantic*, September 30.
- Egner, Jutine E.
2019 « “The disability rights community was never mine”: Neuroqueer disidentification» in *Gender&Society*. 33, 1, pp. 123-147.
- Harvey, David
2008 «The Right to the City» in *New Left Review*, 53, pp. 23–40.
- Kafer, Alison
2013 *Feminist, queer, crip*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.
- Lascoumes, Pierre, Patrick Le Galés
2009 *Gli strumenti per governare*, Milano, Mondadori.
- McRuer, Robert
2006 *Crip Theory. Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability*, New York, New York University Press.
- Singer, Judy
1999 «Why can't you be normal for once in your life? From a problem with no name to the emergence of a new category of difference» in Corker Mairian, French Sally (Eds), *Disability Discourse*, London, Open University Press, pp. 59-67.

Intersecting Frameworks of Care. Indigenous and Biomedical Approaches to Disability in Sierra Leone

Hanna Luetke Lanfer, Bielefeld University, Germany

hanna.luetkelanfer@uni-bielefeld.de

Sierra Leone is home to a large population proportion of people living with disabilities (PLWD) (World Health Organization, 2023). Beliefs about disability are shaped by a complex interplay of historical, cultural, and socio-political factors, influencing how different types and forms of disability are perceived and interpreted in the country. For instance, congenital or early-onset conditions are often rooted in beliefs about curses or divine punishment and stigmatized (Frobisher et al., 2019). By contrast, war-related disabilities, such as amputations, are seen as markers of victimhood, aligned with reparative justice frameworks (Berghs & Dos Santos-Zingale, 2011). These beliefs are embedded in a healthcare system marked by pluralism in which distinct frameworks of health, illness, and healing influence how disability is understood and addressed by different healthcare providers (Nelissen et al., 2020). Shaped by colonial legacies which institutionalized Eurocentric *biomedical* practices as the dominant model of care while marginalizing traditional, *Indigenous* practices, Sierra Leone's

contemporary healthcare system is characterized by diverse healthcare providers who operate within sometimes overlapping and often contested frameworks (Barr et al., 2019).

This study examined how these frameworks intersect and collectively shape care for PLWDs, focusing on the interactions between different providers. The research involved in-depth, semi-structured interviews with five Indigenous (IHP) and five biomedical healthcare providers (BHP), all Sierra Leonean citizens, conducted in May 2024. The team included a local researcher who led most interviews, an NGO providing care for PLWDs, and myself – a White woman from Germany, engaged in work and research in Sierra Leone since 2015. All transcripts were collaboratively reviewed to ensure cultural and contextual accuracy. I analyzed the data independently using an inductive coding approach.

In our study, participants from both groups described their frameworks of expertise as rooted in different paradigms. IHPs emphasized their connection to spiritual and cultural knowledge and care practices. These providers conceptualized disability through a relational lens, where conditions believed to have supernatural causes were treated with rituals and spiritual consultations as well as with herbal remedies. As one participant noted, “We consult with our gods to understand the problem. If it is not spiritual, we treat with herbs.” This approach reflects an embeddedness in local epistemologies that see disability not merely as a physical condition but as one intertwined with social and spiritual life. BHPs, by contrast, described their expertise as grounded in standardized education and technical diagnostics. Disabilities were framed as physical or neurological conditions requiring precise and universal interventions, often contrasted implicitly with other approaches, as one participant articulated: “Here, we use tests to confirm the illness before we treat. You cannot just assume based on what you see.” The biomedical framework positions disability as a condition that must be approached through evidence-based practices. The divergence in these frameworks is further underscored by the disabilities they primarily address. IHPs in the study focused on conditions perceived to have supernatural causes or on which they had specialized, e.g., one participant referred to treating paralysis while another explicitly refrained from treating such conditions. BHPs, on the other hand, concentrated foremost on physical manifestations of disability, which were framed as requiring technical interventions and rehabilitation. The differences in frameworks give rise to notable tensions in care dynamics. BHPs expressed frustration about delays caused by patients seeking help from IHPs first, which they perceived as compromising outcomes: “They come to us after going to the herbalist, but by then it is sometimes too late.” This sentiment reflects a broader critique of traditional practices as ineffective or, in some cases, harmful. BHPs also described their interactions with IHPs as one-sided, often focused on educating IHPs about the importance of timely referrals and discouraging the overuse of herbal remedies. IHPs, however, provided a different perspective and highlighted the accessibility of their services, particularly in rural areas where biomedical facilities are geographically or financially out of reach. They showed a pragmatic understanding of their role within the healthcare system and a willingness to collaborate with both BHPs and other IHPs when necessary. Despite this, IHPs also expressed frustration at being dismissed or undervalued by BHPs, particularly given their cultural resonance and the holistic nature of their care.

These tensions are not simply the result of differing epistemologies but embedded in the historical and structural dynamics of Sierra Leone’s healthcare system. The hierarchies established during colonial rule persist, shaping perceptions of legitimacy and authority as BHPs in the study framed their expertise as superior to that of IHPs. However, this framing overlooks the structural inequities in biomedical care – such as resource shortages and geographic disparities – that position IHPs as ubiquitous providers, often serving as the first point of contact for PLWDs. IHPs address gaps left by biomedical care, e.g., providing culturally resonant care, particularly for disabilities associated with stigma, and doing home visits. For many PLWDs, IHPs explained, they offer not only treatment but also social and spiritual validation, which is often absent in biomedical contexts. This dual role complicates their position within the system, as they are simultaneously relied upon by patients and systematically devalued.

Hence, the pluralistic healthcare system in Sierra Leone offers both challenges and opportunities for disability care. While the tensions between IHPs and BHPs highlight systemic and historically-shaped inequities, both groups bring distinct strengths to the care of PLWDs: IHPs address the relational and spiritual dimensions of disability, while BHPs provide technical precision and evidence-based interventions. Achieving meaningful collaboration requires addressing the power imbalances, structural barriers, and mutual distrust that currently undermine integrative approaches (Cleall, 2024). Moving toward an inclusive model of care requires recognition of the contributions of both IHPs and BHPs beyond tokenistic gestures. Centering the experiences

of PLWDs – particularly their strategic navigation of these care systems – can provide a starting point for rethinking disability care in Sierra Leone. By addressing the intersecting dimensions of disability, care, structural, and historical inequities, healthcare providers can better respond to the needs of PLWDs while fostering respect for diverse forms of expertise (Conteh, 2016).

References

- Barr, A., Garrett, L., Marten, R., & Kadandale, S.
2019 Health sector fragmentation: Three examples from Sierra Leone. *Globalization and Health*, 15, 1. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-018-0447-5>
- Berghs, M., & Dos Santos-Zingale, M.
(2011). A Comparative Analysis: Everyday Experiences of Disability in Sierra Leone. *Africa Today*, 58, 2, pp. 18–40.
- Cleall, E.
2024 Disability and postcolonialism. *Postcolonial Studies*, 27, 1, pp. 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2024.2322252>
- Conteh, F. M.
2016 The promise and reality of decentralization: A critical appraisal of Sierra Leone's primary health care system. *Critical African Studies*, 8, 3, pp. 350–369. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21681392.2016.1223550>
- Frobisher, E., Elbers, W., & Okwany, A.
2019 Gendered disability advocacy: Lessons from the Girl Power Programme in Sierra Leone. In M. Berghs, T. Chataika, Y. El-Lahib, & K. Dube (Eds.), *Routledge international handbooks. The Routledge handbook of disability activism* pp. 412–427. Routledge.
- Nelissen, H. E., Brals, D., Ameen, H. A., van der List, M., Kramer, B., Akande, T. M., et al.
2020 The prominent role of informal medicine vendors despite health insurance: A weekly diaries study in rural Nigeria. *Health Policy Plan*, 35, 3, pp. 354–363
- World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund.
2023 Global report on children with developmental disabilities: From the margins to the mainstream. <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/372864/9789240080232-eng.pdf?sequence=1>

Fractured Selves, Fractured Wills? Constructing the Eating Disordered Patient in an Italian Treatment Centre

Giulia Scioli, Italian National Research Council; University of Cambridge

giulia.scioli@cnr.it

Drawing on eighteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in a public treatment centre for eating disorders in Italy, the paper examines to what extent and in what ways the notion of an externalised mental disorder that 'takes over the self' of the patient is employed by the professionals to justify care practices that would seem to go against patients' will.

Patients with eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia nervosa do not present a unified will as assumed by the principles of consent that are at the heart of medical ethics (Giordano, 2005). The eating disorder is experienced by most patients, even by those who recognize its dangers and negative sides, as a form of caring for themselves, as their only way out of suffering providing them with 'safety'. This is why, even when patients feel that the eating disorder is harmful and that they need help, they may also want to maintain it (Lavis, 2016) – something that questions the notion of an individuated, unified self who can give informed consent to treatment. During treatment patients' behaviours, deemed pathological by healthcare professionals, are constantly challenged: they have to eat complete meals under close supervision to restore their weight, are prevented from doing physical exercise, and are subjected to psychological therapy to understand the reasons behind their condition. Professionals often characterize patients as 'unaware' of the severity of their condition, as 'manipulative' and 'resistant to treatment'.

As McKearney (2021, p. 159) has noted regarding the complexities of caring for people with 'cognitive disability' in a charity Community in the UK, without a unified self to relate to, care will inevitably coerce and neglect at least part of the patient. He shows that when it comes to respecting patients' 'independence' and to assigning responsibility for acts of resistance to care, responsibility is, in his context, distributed by the carers 'across selves', including 'the ill self' of cognitive disability. This seems to occur with eating disorders too, when professionals blame treatment resistance on 'the eating disorder talking'. In her ethnography of eating disorder treatment in the United States, Lester (2009, 2019) suggested that by talking about some patients as having traits of borderline personality disorder, clinicians frame subjects whose eating disorder appears impossible to treat, which makes them feel OK when insurance coverage is denied because they cannot provide the required

proof of treatment effectiveness. This way practitioners reframe unbearable choices by creating 'a blindness to the existence of conflict' (Sturm, 2004, 107).

In this paper, taking McKearney's and Lester's arguments further, I suggest that the professionals in my field site construct a specific eating disordered self as a way of making sense of and making bearable not only the impossibility to treat particularly difficult patients, and therefore the *failures* of treatment, but also everyday acts of care that contribute to the *working* of treatment: I show how the professionals construct patients – how they think, what they want, how they act – as the result of an external controlling agent 'which took over their mind and body through malnutrition'. Common military metaphors characterize the eating disorder as 'an alien monster' who divides and conquers both the patients' self and their families, with patients in treatment becoming 'warriors'. Externalizing the disorder helps both professional and family carers to avoid assigning full responsibility to the patients for what they do or say, and to legitimate actions of their own that seem to go against the patients' will. In this framework, going against the patients' perceived will is just a way to 'help them win the battle'. By framing the eating disorder as an externalised agent that fractures patients' will, and their coercive care as directed 'to the eating disorder, not to the person', professionals attempt to resolve the tension between care and coercion, going beyond the binaries of 'patient choice' versus 'enforced treatment'. However, whereas in McKearney's context carers construct their care as ethical on the assumption that they cannot know what goes on in the patients' mind, embracing that very 'opacity' (Robbins, 2008, 426), in my field site the professionals do it on the assumption that they *do know* what is in the patients' mind: which is, thoughts and desires 'determined by the illness'. This difference may be related to the difference between a reversible 'illness' in which there is a 'normal state of health' that patients can potentially return to and whose mechanisms can be understood through psychotherapy and 'shown' by science, and a permanent 'disability' the bearers of which are deemed incapable of articulating.

Moreover, I argue that in the case of eating disorders responsibility is not only distributed 'across selves', but across *parts* of the self. Framing their everyday acts of care as ethical would not be possible for the professionals without a notion of the self as not only 'multiple' (cf. Lester 2017) but also 'partible'. Only a partible conception of the self allows professionals to reconcile the tensions inherent in their job: between the stated aim of treatment – bringing patients back to an 'independent, autonomous and responsible state' – and the demands of clinical work, which include everyday activities of intrusion, surveillance and coercion directed at people who are mostly capable of making competent decisions in all aspects of their life other than their food intake. Following Strathern's (1988, 2018) notion of 'partible persons' as 'potentially partible minds and bodies', I show how patients' actions are conceived as the way they select – or are incapable of selecting – one of their 'multiple compositions'. The notion of a 'partible self' anticipates the possibility of 'partition' of one or more of its parts. In fact, the aim of treatment is the 'partition' of 'the disordered part of the self', which can happen only once it is recognised by the patient as an external agent. Ethnographically, seeing patients' selves as partible allows professionals to frame the 'internal battle' that patients feel they undergo during treatment, and the suffering that comes with it, as something temporary that can be overcome and is therefore worth enduring.

References

- Giordano, Simona
2005 *Understanding Eating Disorders: Conceptual and Ethical Issues in the Treatment of Anorexia and Bulimia Nervosa*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Lavis, Anna
2016 «A Desire for Anorexia: Living through Distress», in *Medicine Anthropology Theory*, 3, 1, 68-76.
- Lester, Rebecca J.
2009 «Brokering Authenticity: Borderline Personality Disorder and the Ethics of Care in an American Eating Disorder Clinic», in *Current Anthropology*, 50, 3, pp. 281-302.
- Lester, Rebecca J.
2017 «Self-governance, Psychotherapy, and the Subject of Managed Care: Internal Family Systems Therapy and the Multiple Self in a US Eating Disorders Treatment Center», in *American Ethnologist*, 44, 1, 23-35.
- Lester, Rebecca J.
2019 *Famished: Eating Disorders and Failed Care in America*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- McKearney, Patrick
2017 «L' Arche, Learning Disability, and Domestic Citizenship: Dependent Political Belonging in a Contemporary British City» in *City & Society*, 29, 2, pp. 260-80.
- McKearney, Patrick
2021 «What Escapes Persuasion: Why Intellectual Disability Troubles 'Dependence' in Liberal Societies», in *Medical Anthropology*, 40, 2, pp. 155-68.

Robbins, Joel
 2008 «On Not Knowing Other Minds: Confession, Intention, and Linguistic Exchange in a Papua New Guinea Community», in *Anthropological Quarterly*, 81, 2, 421-29.
 Strathern, Marilyn
 1988 *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
 Strathern, Marilyn
 2018 Persons and Partible Persons', in Matei Candea (Ed.), *Schools and Styles of Anthropological Theory*, London and New York, Routledge, pp. 236-46.
 Sturm, Bonnie A.
 2004 «Ethics and Care: An Ethnographic Study of Psychiatric Community Health Nursing Practice', in *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*», XVIII, 3, pp. 106-115.

Performing Care. A Digital Ethnography of Masculinities, Mental Health, and More-Than-Human Entanglements on TikTok

Nicoletta Guglielmelli, University of Genoa

nicoletta.guglielmelli@edu.unige.it

The present paper aims to explore how cisgender men engage with mental health on TikTok. In particular, it focuses on the ways in which gender performs and co-constructs experiences of distress and care in collaboration with more-than-human actors such as algorithms, hashtags, and videos. The study is grounded in queer theory, transfeminist studies, and posthumanist feminism. It is based on a digital ethnography examining the fragmented narratives and transient connections that shape identities and discourses surrounding mental health within the neoliberal, hetero-cis-patriarchal digital ecosystem (Haraway, 1991; Barad, 2007).

The centrality of mental health to the social sciences is well-documented (Fanon, 1952; Durkheim, 1969; Goffman, 1961, 1963; Foucault, 1963, 1974; Ehrenberg, 2010) and its prominence in public and global debates has progressively increased (Brossard & Chandler, 2022). While this heightened focus might appear to challenge the medicalised and pathologising narratives that have historically dominated the field, the framing of mental health remains deeply rooted in neoliberal ideals. Mental health is regarded as a resource, defined as a biological and social asset that can be managed and optimised for productivity (Fisher, 2009; The Care Collective, 2020). The present paper aims to provide a critical perspective on these dynamics, interrogating how mental health discourses are entangled with gender and how these entanglements shape contemporary understandings of mental health.

The study of mental health in a sociological context has seen an emergence of gender as a crucial dimension. Early interpretations, for instance Durkheim's analysis of male suicide rates, were grounded in flawed gendered assumptions. Contemporary studies (De Boise & Hearn, 2017; Chandler, 2019; Connell, 1995) have illuminated how normative masculinity enforces silence around men's mental health, often framing emotional expression as acts of courage or defiance. However, these narratives risk reinforcing rather than disrupting hegemonic masculinity. This study draws upon Butler's concept of performativity (1990, 2014) to explore the notion that mental health, akin to gender, is an iterative and socially embedded practice, continuously shaped by norms and expectations.

From a methodological point of view, this study combines non-participant observation, visual and discursive analysis, and interviews conducted on TikTok. It draws upon a range of feminist, queer and posthumanist theories (Haraway, 1991; Barad, 2007), emphasising the relational and co-constructed nature of digital practices. The present study explores the function of visibility and invisibility on TikTok, focusing on the interplay between user agency and the platform's algorithmic logic. The performativity of masculinity is not isolated but intricately tied to these socio-technical dynamics, where the platform's incentives for engagement and visibility compel users to reproduce content aligned with their digital identities.

The theoretical foundation for this examination is posthumanist feminism, which provides a framework for analysing the co-creation of representations of mental health by human bodies and more-than-human actors, such as algorithms and hashtags. On TikTok, these elements actively shape not only what is shared but also how mental health is embodied and performed. This perspective challenges the notion of a cohesive digital

self, suggesting instead a fluid, fragmented assemblage continuously reshaped by interactions with socio-technical infrastructures (Haraway, 1991; Barad, 2007).

In conclusion, the present study aims to critically analyse how TikTok mediates representations of mental health, with a particular focus on the experiences of cisgender men. During and following the pandemic, TikTok emerged as a pivotal platform for the sharing of experiences, the seeking of support, and the dissemination of professional knowledge concerning mental health. However, the platform's dualistic nature, functioning as both a conduit for advocacy and a potential contributor to mental health challenges, renders it a pivotal space for investigating the nexus of digital technologies, mental health, and gender.

This paper aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on mental health, gender, and digital ethnography by framing mental health as a performative and co-constructed process. During the presentation, the discussion will centre on the co-construction of discourses and bodies by male creators and TikTok's more-than-human actors. Specifically, the discussion will centre on the manner in which the lived experiences of mental health on TikTok are inextricably linked to the platform's algorithmic functioning and the strategies users adopt to navigate or subvert its constraints. This discourse invites broader reflections on the manner in which digital spaces mediate care, visibility, and identity, thereby providing a critical lens through which to analyse the complex entanglements of gender, technology, and mental health in contemporary society.

References

- Ahmed, Sara, 2017, *Living a Feminist Life*, Duke University Press.
- Barad, Karen, 2007, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Duke University Press.
- Brossard, Baptiste, Chandler, Daniel, 2022, *Mental Health in the Digital Age*, Routledge.
- Butler, Judith, 1990, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge.
- Butler, Judith, 2014, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, Routledge.
- Chandler, Daniel, 2019, *Resilience: The Governance of Complexity*, Routledge.
- Connell, Raewyn, 1995, *Masculinities*, University of California Press.
- De Boise, Sam, Hearn, Jeff, 2017, "Are Men Getting More Emotional?", *Emotion, Space and Society*, 24, pp. 134–142.
- Durkheim, Émile, 1969, *Le Suicide: Étude de Sociologie*, Presses Universitaires de France.
- Ehrenberg, Alain, 2010, *La Fatigue d'être Soi: Dépression et Société*, Odile Jacob.
- Fanon, Frantz, 1952, *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs*, Seuil.
- Fernando, Suman, 2008, *Cultural Diversity, Mental Health and Psychiatry: The Struggle Against Racism*, Routledge.
- Fisher, Mark, 2009, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*, Zero Books.
- Foucault, Michel, 1963, *Naissance de la Clinique*, Presses Universitaires de France.
- Foucault, Michel, 1974, *Surveiller et Punir: Naissance de la Prison*, Gallimard.
- Goffman, Erving, 1961, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*, Anchor Books.
- Goffman, Erving, 1963, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Prentice-Hall.
- Haraway, Donna J., 1991, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, Routledge.
- Lewis, Beatrice, Yaems, Clara, 2022, *Health Communism: A Surplus Manifesto*, Verso.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, 1990, *Epistemology of the Closet*, University of California Press.
- The Care Collective, 2020, *The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence*, Verso.

Over a Decade of Stigma. Living with Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder in the UK

Annette Thompson, University of Brighton.

a.thompson6@brighton.ac.uk

Stigma is defined as: "to refer to an attribute that was deeply discrediting," as set out in "Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity," (Goffman, Erving, 1963 p 13). Goffman comes to this definition, by going to through history to the time of Ancient Greece. Where the term 'stigma' was used to refer to signs of being exposed to something bad or morally corrupt, Goffman (1963 p 11). Over sixty years since this seminal publication, Goffman's definition is still widely used. However, it has been developed during this time. (Thornicroft, Graham *et al.*, 2022), broke stigma down into three different branches; self, stigma by association, public stigma and structural discrimination. Each of which can be used in a macro and micro context.

On a macro level, stigma can be combined with power when viewed on a public level. The United Kingdom, having just come out of 14 years of Conservative Governments, where neoliberal policies were rife, led to chronic underfunding of the National Health Service (NHS), and the welfare state. Those in need of mental health and financial support, are labelled as "work shy" during the 2024 March budget, highlights how stigma

combined with those in power, can influence from the top down. On a micro level, stigma can have just as devastating impact on a person. Self – stigma, also known as internalised stigma, is when the person (with a mental health condition), agrees with the negative accusations made about them, Thornicroft et al (2022, p 1442). This impacts on the persons self – esteem and image, leading towards the potential for self-fulfilling prophecy. Meaning that stigma, no matter which scale it is on, leads to discrimination of those who have a mental health condition.

Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder (EUPD), also known as, Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), is a controversial diagnosis, with 2 in 100 people in the United Kingdom, being diagnosed with the condition in their lifetime, (Mind, 2022). Martyn and Thompson in Bolt, David (ed), (2021), chapter the “Metanarrative of Mental Illness,” explore Thompson’s auto – ethnographic account of living with this mental health condition. Where a diagnosis did not automatically lead to treatment on how to manage the condition.

“For many years, it was just me and my general practitioner (GP) battling against the mental health system in the Brighton area. I was seen by a psychiatrist in that time who confirmed that alongside depression and anxiety, I had Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). But I did not receive proper help from the mental health services until my mum had lifesaving heart and lung surgery in 2015.” Martyn and Thompson in Bolt (Ed, 2021, p 53).

“I started to volunteer my time in a local charity shop. I was serving a woman who decided to comment on my scars – saying that I had ruined my life because of them. I tried to tell her a story that has worked in the past, that I got them from working in a sheet metal factory. But she did not believe me and kept on at me. Other people were queuing to be served and did nothing.” Martyn and Thompson in Bolt (Ed, 2021, p 54).

Auto – ethnography, is used as the core method as it is the “...most simplified definition is the study of the self.” Reed-Danahay, 1997, p9). Documentation through the use of an online blog and journals, allows for reflexivity. Using reflexivity is a central criterion which provides researchers with a means of expressing their awareness of their connection with the research context and thereby their influence on it, Hughes and Pennington, (2017, p 93). The author has collected the research data through the use of a public online blog and journals.

From this research, the key question that occurs is how can we as a society move away from the continuous stigmatising attitudes, at all levels of society, and treat those with mental health conditions as equals?

References

- Bolt, David (ed) (2021) *Metanarratives of Disability Culture, Assumed Authority and the Normative Social Order*. Oxford: Routledge.
- Goffman, Erving (1963) *STIGMA Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. London: Penguin Books.
- Hughes A. Sherick Pennington L. Julie (2017) *Autoethnography Process, Product, and Possibility for Critical Social Research*. London: Sage.
- Mind (2022) *Mental health facts and statistics*. Available at: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/mental-health-facts-and-statistics/> (Accessed: 20 January 2025).
- Reed-Danahay, D (1997) *Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social*. Oxford.
- Thornicroft, Graham et al. (2022) *The Lancet Commission on ending stigma and discrimination in mental health – ProQuest*. Available at: <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2726902081?accountid=9727&parentSessionId=w6ArqM9f6jW%2B0YMvycDbQ74dyFdg8tHuRNyc98ZiqU%3D&pq-origsite=summon> (Accessed: 31 July 2023).

On psychiatization. An Interview-based research with patients and caregivers

Federica Nota, Università di Torino

federica.nota@unito.it

This study focuses on the narratives of psychiatric patients and their relatives about TSO (Compulsory Health Treatment) through the lens of psychiatization. It is possible to trace this phenomenon back to Foucault's writings, which document the process of categorizing purely human conditions within the realm of psychic pathology (Foucault, [2003] 2015) – similar to medicalization (Conrad, 1992). Over time, psychiatry has increased its discretionary power, extending its diagnostic categories to non-pathological conditions. Foucault outlined how, over time, psychiatric power has been constituted, which in this field is – drawing on the concept of medical dominance proposed by Freidson – better understood as psychiatric dominance. In this way, psychiatry has interpreted and categorized as pathological certain behaviors that are more accurately attributed to the concept of deviance.

This association, consolidated over time, enables us today to describe the phenomenon of psychiatry as the process through which the moral career of a mentally ill person is constituted (Goffman, [1961] 2001), similar to what happens with deviance. One could therefore speak of a primary psychiatrization, referring to the moment when a person first comes into contact with care services, and a secondary psychiatrization, which concerns the establishment of chronicization and institutionalization arising from the lack of resources and instruments to overcome this condition of suffering – resources that are economic, cultural, and social in nature. This proposal, which derives from a reworking of the Labelling Theory in the context of mental health, aims to use theory to explain the consolidation of chronicization and institutionalization in Italian public psychiatry, independently of clinical considerations. Thus, it prioritizes the perspectives of patients, aiming to shift the focus from a purely medicalized view of mental health to a more nuanced understanding of the individual as a whole. Patients were approached not only as individuals experiencing illness but also as citizens whose agency extends beyond their treatment context. This approach acknowledges the multiplicity of their identities and the importance of considering their broader roles and rights within society.

Using an interview-based approach, the research studies the agency of psychiatric patients and how it is expressed in the doctor-patient relationship to understand the establishment of institutionalization. The participants' narratives, recounting either their own therapeutic experiences or those of close family members, reveal whether current therapeutic practices are still influenced by the legacy of asylums and how power dynamics between patient and doctor take shape today. They shed light on how care practices often retain characteristics reminiscent of outdated care models; for example, many users report that the assistance they received is perceived as a cure – predominantly pharmacological and standardized – rather than care that holistically addresses the complexities and diverse needs of individuals. Furthermore, the testimonies also reveal how any reflection on psychiatric care is permeated by domination and control.

Indeed, the psychiatric care system plays a critical role in redefining social identities and applying stigmatizing labels that further marginalize individuals with mental disorders. Participants recount how TSO is often perceived as a form of symbolic violence, undermining trust in healthcare institutions and reinforcing a sense of alienation for both patients and caregivers, as coercive and pharmacological practices still prevail, often overshadowing alternative approaches. This reinforces the view of patients as passive recipients of treatment, limiting opportunities for meaningful engagement or personalized care strategies. The people interviewed in the study frequently display evidence of institutionalization, as their testimonies often reflect a tendency to justify even the most coercive care practices by invoking the criterion of necessity and often highlight the challenges they face when attempting to question the power asymmetries between professionals and patients. For instance, physical restraint seems to be widely accepted by both patients and caregivers, signifying a normalization of the practice. Moreover, sedation or pharmacological restraint is considered "essential" in certain situations, demonstrating that patients and caregivers alike have internalized and accepted the professionals' logic in an uncritical manner. Although tapping into this rhetoric is very common, it is possible to distinguish two distinct positions – albeit loosely defined. Those who criticize coercive practices and those who have absorbed such rules and stigma more thoroughly, which are not critical of psychiatric practices and justify their means, even in cases of coercive or paternalistic interventions. In these cases, as emerged from the narratives, when the person accepts the label of psychiatric patient – a subject incapable of possessing mental capability or agency – clinical choices default to the psychiatrists. They administer treatment in a paternalistic manner and leave no room for any questioning of their actions.

The discussion of diagnoses with patients is characterized by a hasty and unclear exchange because diagnoses are seen as operational tools at the disposal of the professional rather than elements of patient empowerment. The assimilation of all practices that, over time, increase the association of psychic pathologies with social dangerousness prevents users from forming a negative assessment of their treatment, even when they experience coercion. The internalization of stigma – whether by the patient or reflected onto the family member – remains a pivotal element influencing psychiatric dominance and consequently the chronicization of patients' conditions.

From the narratives collected, it also became clear that the treatment of mental illness is still deeply rooted in class dynamics. Although the Basaglia Law represented a significant revolution for Italy, contemporary psychiatric care is still characterized by services that are inadequate and, above all, insufficient to meet user demand. This, coupled with continued cuts in healthcare and the resulting shortage of staff, has led to the phenomenon of revolving doors in psychiatry, occurring with increasing frequency – not due to clinical needs

but as a product of socio-economic dynamics. In fact, the mental illness label continues to compromise all other aspects of an individual's life, from relationships to work. Patients who lack a social support network appear to have greater difficulty reclaiming different identities beyond that of a patient. These considerations stem from the analysis of data gathered in this exploratory research and should be regarded as empirically grounded reflections.

References

- Basaglia Franco Author's Surname, First's Author Name, Second Author's Name Surname
1968 L'istituzione negata, Torino, Einaudi editore.
- Burti Lorenzo
2017 Attualità di Goffman: Quanto contribuisce alla carriera morale di malato mentale la psichiatria di comunità italiana contemporanea?, *Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane*, 51(2), 211–246.
- Cardano Mario, Algostino Alessandra, Caredda Marta, Gariglio Luigi & Pardini Cristina
2020 La contenzione del paziente psichiatrico. Un'indagine sociologica e giuridica, Bologna, il Mulino.
- Conrad Peter
1992 Medicalization and social control, *Annual review of Sociology*, 18(1), 209-232.
- Foucault Michel
2009 Gli anormali. Corso al Collège de France 1974-1975 (1999), Milano, Feltrinelli
2015 Il potere psichiatrico. Corso al Collège de France 1973-1974 (2003), Milano, Feltrinelli.
- Goffman Erving
2001 Asylums. Le istituzioni totali: i meccanismi dell'esclusione e della violenza (1961), Torino, Einaudi.
1983 Stigma, l'identità negata (1963), Milano, Giuffrè Editore.
- Parsons Talcott
1965 Il sistema sociale, Ivrea, Edizioni di Comunità.
- Scarelli Daniele
2015 Medicalizzazione della devianza, controllo sociale e social work, *Sociologia del diritto*, 1, 37-64.
- Simon Donatella
2009 Sociologia e psichiatria. Parsons, Garfinkel, Goffman, Torino, Il Segnalibro Editore.

Amor fati: How patients learn to embrace the institution that subjectivated them. Ethnographic insights from a forensic psychiatric facility in Italy

Riccardo Girolimetto, Università degli Studi di Padova

riccardo.girolimetto@phd.unipd.it

Through the Law 833/1978 and the DPCM of April 1, 2008, the beginning of the deinstitutionalisation process of psychiatric hospitals (Foot 2014), and later of Judicial Psychiatric Hospitals (OPGs), found its legal ratification in the formal separation between the penitentiary system and the National Health Service, which was entrusted with Italian psychiatric care. This division is depicted in the literature as a way to counteract the iatrogenic and inhumane consequences of the previous asylum system (Catanesi et al., 2019; Cardano, Gariglio, 2020). The Italian State decreed the definitive closure of the six remaining OPGs and the establishment of Regional Residential Facilities for the Execution of Safety Measures (REMS) by Law 81/2014: facilities for individuals judged not guilty by reason of insanity and socially dangerous (Pelissero, Scomparin, Torrente, 2022). REMS represent a paradigmatic shift in psychiatric care, as they are designed with a socio-health rehabilitation function, following principles of territoriality (widespread territorial distribution of facilities) and voluntary treatment, binding the intervention of law enforcement to perimeter security and surveillance activities (Rivellini et al., 2019). However, a dual mandate persists, entrusting doctors and psychiatrists with the roles of both "supervisors" and "therapists." The literature critically acknowledges and interrogates this antinomic dual mandate of care and custody (Alessi et al., 2021; Pellegrini, 2019).

While the legal possibility of framing danger as a disease has historically contributed to legitimising medicine as the knowledge responsible for intervening with the aim of care and custody, the legal grasp on the "mad offender" persists in the realm of topological administration (Tarantino, 2016), particularly concerning the management of waiting lists and, thus, the governmental uses of REMS no longer as *extrema ratio* (Miravalle, 2022).

Beyond the formal distinction enshrined in Law 81/2014, the REMS can be conceived as a crossroads of medico-legal semantics through which care and custody requirements are articulated in everyday ward practices. This

overlap simultaneously accounts for an institutional contradiction, namely the antithetical relationship between the voluntariness of treatment and the obligation to reside. This contradiction necessarily raises the problem of legitimising the social rehabilitation pathway that the REMS internment should address. This issue entangles the clinical act of imposing a new perceived being upon the patients and their life trajectories.

Drawing on eight months of ethnographic results collected during participant observations (Hammersley, Atkinson, 2019) inside a REMS in northern Italy, this work aims to describe the processes of subjectivation at stake within REMS by comparing two patients' biographical experiences, conceived as a "successful" and a "failure" story by the institutions about its public purpose. Through Bourdieu's Field Theory and especially engaging with the concept of *amor fati* (Bourdieu, 1983), I aim to describe how, under the same structural conditions of internment, different dispositions to consciously or unconsciously accept and legitimise the patient position can be produced, namely: how a taste for necessity is configured in the face of life trajectories leaving no other path (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 186-1879). Considering the moral career of the patient (Goffman, 1961), as well as the categorisation processes attributable to the different social microcosms crossed that led to hospitalisation in REMS, the question I pursue is: how can forms of power-knowledge be incorporated or rejected based on prior subjections and available resources? This critical issue highlights those structured-structuring processes of embodied or incarnate dispositions that traverse the REMS space, specifically those power relations existing in a field that goes beyond the medical and the legal domains, while simultaneously including them.

With this proposal, I intend to focus on two antinomic modes of establishing a relationship of filiation – or *amor fati* – with the institution. On the one hand, adherence to the patient position is grounded in the patient's belief system, which frames the institutional pathway as an opportunity to accumulate institutionalised symbolic capital – enabling the reconstruction of a legitimate perceived self and promising reintegration into the previous social and working fabric. On the other hand, adherence to the inmate position is grounded in the legitimation of the institution as the only recognised and valid symbolic and social resource for the patient – beyond which lies a desolate landscape, a torn social fabric, with no place to return to or to be recognised otherwise. This work aims to address the issue of the legitimation of therapeutic intervention through a Bourdieusian reading of the stories mentioned above. The concepts of habitus and capital are mobilised to analyse expert-patient positions in relation to the trajectories of social agents, both of which are crucial for analysing how actors position themselves about one another throughout the rehabilitative pathway.

The research highlights how social and symbolic capitals are not only essential resources for determining positions within the field but also constitute the stakes around which care-custody relationships between staff and inmates revolve – and, by extension, the legitimacy or resistance of the treatment pathway. Furthermore, this work aims to emphasise the heuristic value of *amor fati* for analysing subjectivation-subjection processes concerning both positions and *nomos* of the medico-legal field. Lastly, I argue for the potential of intertwining ethnography and Bourdieu's Field Theory to contribute to broader sociological, ethnographic, and forensic-psychiatric debates and thus impact policy. Ethnography should entail an effort to grasp larger structural forces that inscribe themselves into micro-events and interactions to avoid reducing the explanation to individual conducts and decisions, and to account for the observed variations over time and space.

References

- Bourdieu, Pierre
1983 *La distinzione. Critica sociale del gusto* (1979), Bologna, il Mulino.
- Cardano, Mario, Gariglio Luigi
2020 «The neoliberal politics of otherness in Italian psychiatric care: Notes on a team ethnography in six acute psychiatric wards», in J. Gabe, M. Cardano, & A. Genova (Eds.), *Health and illness in the neoliberal era in Europe*, Emerald Publishing Limited, pp. 161–175. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-83909-119-320201009>
- Catanesi, R., Mandarelli, G., Ferracuti, S., Valerio, A., Carabellese, F.
2019 «The new Italian residential forensic psychiatric system (REMS). A one-year population study», in *Rassegna Italiana di Criminologia*, 13, pp. 7–23.
- Ferracuti, S., Pucci, D., Trobia, F., Alessi, M. C., Rapinesi, C., Kotzalidis, G. D., Del Casale, A.
2019 «Evolution of forensic psychiatry in Italy over the past 40 years (1978–2018)», in *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 62, pp. 45–49.
- Foot, John
2014 *La "Repubblica dei matti": Franco Basaglia e la psichiatria radicale in Italia, 1961-1978*, Milano, Feltrinelli.
- Goffman, Erving
1961 *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*, New York, Anchor Books.
- Hammersley, Martyn, Atkinson, Paul

- 2019 *Ethnography: Principles in practice*, London, Routledge.
- Miravalle, Michele
- 2022 «Non solo REMS. Le "altre" misure di sicurezza tra cura e controllo», in Pelissero, M., Scomparin, L., & Torrente, G. (Eds.), *Dieci anni di REMS. Un'analisi interdisciplinare*, Napoli-Torino, ESI, pp. 357-384.
- Pelissero, Marco, Scomparin, Laura, Torrente, Giovanni
- 2022 *Dieci anni di REMS. Un'analisi interdisciplinare*, Torino, ESI.
- Pellegrini, P., Visentini, C., Tadonio, L., Pellegrini, C.
- 2019 «Residenze per la Esecuzione delle misure di Sicurezza (R.E.M.S.)», www.conferenzasalutementale.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2019_06_report-REMS-giugno-2019.pdf, visited 09\04\25.
- Rivellini, G., Pessina, R., Pagano, A. M., Giordano, S., Santoriello, C., Rossetto, I., ..., Clerici, M.
- 2019 «Il sistema REMS nella realtà italiana: autori di reato, disturbi mentali e PDTA», in *Rivista di Psichiatria*, 55(6), pp. 83S-134S.
- Tarantino, Ciro
- 2016 «Il manicomio criminale come forma simbolica», in *Minority Reports: Cultural Disability Studies*, 3, 2, pp. 75-93.

Negotiating Care and Control. Ethnographic Perspectives on Expert Knowledge in Italy's Forensic Mental Health System

Perla Arianna Allegri, University of Turin

perla.allegri@unito.it

This paper provides a socio-legal examination of Italy's transition from Ospedali Psichiatrici Giudiziari (OPG) to Residenze per l'Esecuzione delle Misure di Sicurezza (REMS) under Law no. 81/2014. It explores how judicial actors and psychiatric experts define social dangerousness and shape custodial measures for individuals with mental disorders. Through an ethnographic approach – including site visits, focus groups with REMS personnel, and interviews with judges at both preliminary and trial stages – the study investigates the interplay between legal decision-making, forensic psychiatric evaluations, and extra-legal considerations that inform rulings on compulsory treatment versus community-based alternatives.

A central focus lies in understanding how judges integrate psychiatric evaluations into their broader interpretive frameworks. While clinical findings hold substantial weight, legal actors also consider extra-legal elements such as prior criminal history, family support systems, and perceived public sentiment. The research underscores that judicial discretion emerges not only from statutory norms but also from personal, social, and institutional factors. Judges may reference forensic psychiatric evaluations to justify longer-term confinement (Conrad 1992), particularly when medical diagnoses are ambiguous or when public backlash is anticipated. Conversely, some judges argue that supportive networks and comprehensive outpatient services can mitigate risk, favouring less restrictive pathways.

The construct of "dangerousness" arises from an interplay of clinical diagnoses and the judiciary's cautious approach to security needs (Garland 2002). Legal categories of mental illness, while informed by psychiatric expertise, do not always align neatly with medical criteria. Certain conditions may fall short of official definitions yet still trigger concerns about recidivism. Decisions are further influenced by local contextual elements, including resource availability and perceptions of rehabilitative efficacy. Although the law aims to prioritize therapeutic interventions, judges may defer to traditional penal logics when the capacity for community-based care is questionable.

From a sociology of law perspective, this decision-making process reflects a broader tension between formal legal standards and discretionary judgment. When judges opt for a REMS placement, they rely on forensic psychiatric evaluations indicating significant societal risk (Castel 1991). However, interviews suggest that moral evaluations, institutional constraints, and anticipated societal reactions also influence their decisions. This constellation of factors positions the forensic psychiatric report as just one component of a multifaceted judgment, rather than a definitive sentencing blueprint.

The study also reveals that the implementation of Law no. 81/2014 has not fully displaced the punitive framework once embodied by OPGs. Legal and mental health practitioners highlight how new community-based secure facilities may replicate elements of the old custodial system. The reform's goal of humanizing mental health care for offenders faces structural barriers, such as insufficient outpatient services and judicial reluctance to authorize alternatives. This gap between principle and practice raises concerns that mentally ill

offenders continue to experience "transcarceration," (Lowman *et al.*, 1987) moving from one institutional setting to another without meaningful reintegration.

Ultimately, the research contends that the transformative potential of Law no. 81/2014 depends on acknowledging the multiple influences that shape judicial decisions about dangerousness. While forensic psychiatric evaluations provide clinical insights, judges also draw on legal precedents, discretionary norms, and cultural assumptions. Such layered decision-making can perpetuate stigmatization (Goffman 1961, 1963) when the threshold for risk is set conservatively but can also foster progressive rulings when rehabilitative models are embraced. By examining how judges navigate statutory guidelines and extra-legal pressures, this paper highlights the interplay of expertise, culture, and law in determining custodial measures versus community treatment. In doing so, it offers a sociological framework to assess whether Italy's new forensic mental health system genuinely transcends punitive practices or merely reconfigures them under a therapeutic guise.

References

- Castel, R. (1991), From dangerousness to risk. In G. Burchell, C. Gordon, P. Miller (Eds.) *The Foucault Effect. Studies in Governmentality* (pp. 281-298). University of Chicago Press.
- Conrad, P. (1992), Medicalization and Social Control. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 18, pp. 209-232.
- Garland, D. (2002), *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society*. Oxford University Press.
- Goffman, E. (1961), *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Anchor books.
- Goffman, E. (1963), *Stigma, Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Lowman, J, R. Menzies, T. Palys (1987), *Transcarceration; essays in the Sociology of Social Control*, Aldershot.

Defying Absence. Managing Juvenile Offenders: At the Crossroads of Control Policies and Systemic Abandonment

Lorena La Fortezza, Independent Scholar

lorena.lafortezza@gmail.com

The rehabilitative principle underpinning the Italian juvenile justice system, aimed at reintegrating young offenders into society, entails the active participation of various socio-assistance, educational, and psychological support professionals tasked with the case management of minors. Their prominent role in shaping, implementing, and influencing the judicial trajectory of minors positions them as central actors within a moral economy: within this framework, they employ not only "tactics" but also "strategies" (De Certeau, 2011) that allow them to shape the rules of the juvenile penal institution, demonstrating an ability to act autonomously while contributing to the definition of its regulations. This professional conduct, increasingly bureaucratic and technical, diminishes informal meetings with the minor, which are progressively less focused on fostering trust, support, and listening. Instead, these interactions serve more to evaluate the minor's compliance with judicial expectations and their adaptation to the socio-educational project. This shift is facilitated by highly technical and bureaucratic tools, such as psycho-social assessments and formal reports, confining the rehabilitative and re-educational encounter envisioned by juvenile court judges to these formalized acts.

The professional approach often displays a degree of arbitrariness in interactions with the minor, oscillating between two extremes: on the one hand, the minor (particularly those benefiting from alternative measures such as probation) is burdened with a demanding schedule of commitments requiring dedication and effort. On the other hand, they may experience neglect by the assigned services. This fluctuation between presence and absence shapes the rehabilitative journey of the minor, often leading to a sense of abandonment. Such neglect undermines the socio-educational project's significance and compels the individual to seek «self-determination as a survival strategy for the "species", each according to their capabilities and opportunities» (Cerbini, 2012, p. 36, *my translation*). This approach risks perpetuating disparities between those with accessible resources and those without (Palomba, 2002, p. 493), thereby reproducing systemic injustices.

It is not uncommon to observe alternative measures being implemented for "deserving" youth, often already embedded in more stable social networks, while being dismissed for those deemed "difficult," "unruly," or "inappropriate." Given that the juvenile justice process disproportionately involves minors from marginalized or migratory backgrounds, such disparities likely contribute to negative evaluations of the system, thereby

perpetuating inequities within the penal justice framework. The most evident outcome is the emergence of two parallel judicial approaches based on constructed categories and stereotypes, with non-punitive measures presumed more applicable to Italian minors while punitive responses are reserved for the more “challenging” or “elusive,” often including young migrant people (Prina, 2003, p. 149).

This neglect fosters forms of control and subjugation that transcend mere disciplinary measures, instead permeating the granular fabric of individual bodies and imaginaries. The social services’ inattention reflects broader state practices that reproduce exclusion through absence, destabilizing trust in society, the world, and oneself (Riina in La Fortezza, 2024).

Concurrently, healthcare professionals, increasingly involved by socio-educative professionals in the minor’s care through diagnostic evaluations, often center their interventions on the administration of medication and psychotropic drugs. When employed within juvenile penal institutions, these pharmaceutical tools contribute to a violent, disciplinary, and anesthetizing custodial experience.

Faced with a cold, unwelcoming total institution that confines the youth within diagnostic labels and rigid categories, a profound tension arises between the ethical mandate of care inherent in these professional roles and the demands of surveillance and control imposed by the judicial system. By attempting to resolve or mitigate the latent conflict between the accused minor and the judge through «technical actions that appear reparative and non-violent» (Basaglia, 1968, p. 462, *my translation*), institutional agents ultimately reinforce the subjugation of the excluded in relation to their excluders. The educational act, tasked with overseeing the technical control of the minor’s actions and reactions within the institution, risks becoming a new iteration of coercion and oppressive violence when it leads the excluded to accept and adapt to their marginalization (Basaglia, 1968, pp. 462–463).

Unsurprisingly, in this condition of «soft annihilation» (1968, p. 8, *my translation*), where the minor’s identity and its meaningful foundations risk dissolution, some youths resort to extreme practices involving their bodies and existence. The potential erasure of their *presence* in the History (De Martino, 2002), in themselves, and in their personal narrative, coupled with the loss of speech as a creative space for self-assertion (De Certeau, 2007), manifests on the corporeal and epidermal level of young offenders. This realm becomes the sole remaining medium for resisting the existential crisis. Bodily investments (Deleuze, Guattari, 1972), such as self-inflicted wounds or substance abuse (including psychotropic drugs), represent a profound effort to seek escape routes from homogenization, total control, indifference, and the fear of disintegration. These acts serve as forms of resistance against the oppressive and absent power of both the juvenile penal process and the circulating epistemologies by dispossessing their privileged objects of study and action: the physical body (medicine), the mental body (psychiatry), and the social body (socio-educational professions).

True rehabilitation, therefore, can only be achieved by awakening the young offenders’ sense of opposition to «the power that has so far determined and institutionalized them» (Basaglia, 1964, p. 297, *my translation*). This entails recognizing power as a potential catalyst for care and redemption, enabling the subject’s repositioning within a supportive relationship that embraces, rather than conceals, conflict. Such a relationship must account for each individual’s «need for freedom» (p. 297, *my translation*) and choice.

References

- Basaglia, Franco
2017 *Scritti, 1953-1980*
Cerbini, Francesca
2016 *La casa di sapone. Etnografia del Carcere Boliviano di San Pedro*
De Certeau, Michel
2007 *La presa di parola e altri scritti politici*
2011 *The practice of everyday life*
Deleuze, Gilles, Guattari, Félix
1972 *L’Anti-Edipo. Capitalismo e Schizofrenia*
De Martino, Ernesto
2002 *La fine del mondo. Contributo all’analisi delle apocalissi culturali*
Didier, Fassin (a cura di)
2015 *At the heart of the state. The moral world of Institutions*
La Fortezza, Lorena
2024 *Esistere nel mezzo. Contributo per un’antropologia delle ambiguità nei percorsi di messa alla prova di quattro adolescenti*
Palomba, Federico
2002 *Il sistema del processo penale minorile. Aggiornato con la legislazione e la giurisprudenza al 2001*
Prina, Franco

- 2003 *Devianza e politiche di controllo. Scenari di tendenze nelle società contemporanee*
 Riina, Martina
 2021 *L'Erba Tinta. Dentro le crepe di Borgo Vecchio a Palermo: un racconto antropologico*
 Sterchele, Luca
 2019 *Il carcere invisibile. Etnografia dei saperi medici e psichiatrici nell'arcipelago carcerario*

Women in prison. Study of mental health conditions of women prisoners

Chiara Morganti, Università degli studi di Torino

chiara.morganti@unito.it

Despite the great resonance that the topic of mental health has had in recent times in both public and academic debate, the issue of the mental health of female defendants, first, and convicted and imprisoned women, later, remains yet unexplored. Only in recent years has the need to look at gender within the prison universe been grasped at the supranational level: first with the *"Women's health in prison. Correcting gender inequality in prison health"* by the WHO (2009) and then the *"The United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders"* by the UN (2010) established the first set of international human rights standards geared towards the specific needs and experiences of women deprived of their liberty. However, despite a renewed awareness of gender, the Italian sociological landscape tends to continue to neglect the issue of health in prison (Ronco, 2018), making research on female prisoners' subjectivities even rarer and more marginal (Ahmed et al., 2016). Furthermore, studies on the topic represent more quantitative and not qualitative investigations: there is therefore a lack of a scientific approach that knows how to enhance the processual and relational dimension that allows us to capture, with greater accuracy and depth, the perspective of the actors and actresses involved in the process of care within the prison field. Thus, the present contribution intends to trigger a broader reflection as it aims to probe, with microsociological attention, the conditions of possibility and interactions that constitute the practices of care and custody within the female penitentiary. The empirical material on which the present work is based derives from a research course conducted in a female section of a male adult penitentiary institute in central northern Italy, through a triangulation of practices, observation, documentary analysis and discursive interviews. Within the study, which lasted approximately one year, an attempt was made to trace the voices, narratives, biographical experiences as well as the strategies implemented by women prisoners to cope with their cure/care needs (Sterchele, 2021). That is, to find out how things are from their point of view. How does the care of patients take place within the walls? Do imprisoned women feel that they are the protagonists of their care pathway? How do they evaluate the services inside? What expectations, misalignments and inconsistencies? Thus, an attempt was made to reconstruct the health configuration in prison and to analyse the mechanisms that make the right to health possible, starting from the tactical gaze of female prisoners, who, even though they are inserted in a context in which agency is severely limited, adopt practices of resistance. Despite the limitations posed by qualitative research conducted within a prison (Sbraccia, Vianello, 2010), this study contributed to the emergence of an issue experienced by both the institution and the inmate population as urgent in everyday prison life. Although health protection in prison does not recognise specific etiopathogenesis exclusively in prisons, even in frequent environmental concomitance, it has its own specificities linked to the particular type of users, the prison context and the accessibility of services. Ab origine, in fact, women, due to the prevalence of poverty, discrimination, street lifestyles and victimisation processes (Ahmed et al., 2016) as well as difficulties in accessing social and health services on the territory (Lines, 2006), manifest more problems related to mental health (Rastrelli, 2016), substance abuse and sexually transmitted diseases (Bangkok Rules, 2010; Who, 2009). Although, it cannot be overlooked that, in some cases, the level of social marginalisation is such that it produces the paradox of allowing many female prisoners their first contact with health services within a prison and thus giving them the opportunity to benefit from more continuous care that was previously inaccessible. Female prisoners have been identified as having higher levels of emotional distress than their male counterparts (Quaker Council, 2007) and the free population. A dramatic past facilitates the emergence of mental disorders and alcohol or drug addiction, which are very common among female prisoners who therefore present a greater severity of chronic mental and physical health outcomes. Added to these considerations is the circumstance that the place where the restriction of personal liberty takes place follows the canons dictated by the needs and conditions of male

prisoners: the stay in prison is therefore manifestly inadequate to address the specific vulnerabilities of the female component of the inmate population. Some studies (e.g., Giacomello, 2023) identify the problem of the systematic nature of male violence as a lived and shared experience of women prisoners: it becomes clear that female offenders and victims of crime are often not distinct, but overlapping groups (cf. Carlen, 1987; Vianello, 2023). And as the Handbook on Women and Imprisonment or the Factsheet on women in prison of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment confirms, violence, in its physical, psychological or sexual form, has a clear impact on the health, both physical and psychological, and on the emergence of risk behaviour (such as alcohol, drug or psychopharmacological addiction) on the part of women who are victims. However, if the relationship between violence and health is now established, the issue of women's psychological suffering remains inadequately considered by health professionals and in the context of social and judicial services. This is why the issue of the mental health of women prisoners inevitably raises more far-reaching questions that relate not only to the materiality of imprisonment, but also to the protection of health from a gender-specific perspective and from an intersectional perspective. And finally, they lead us to reflect on life paths between the inside and the outside, questioning the resilience of welfare systems, reception systems, networks of mental health services and primary health care.

References

- Ahmed, Rabia, Agel, Cybele, Martel, Rebecca, Pyne, Diane, Keenan, Louanne,
2016 *Access to healthcare services during incarceration among female inmates*. Int J Prison Health.
- Carlen, Pat
1983 *Women's Imprisonment: A Study in Social Control*, Routledge Revivals.
- Giacomello, Corina,
2023 *A monster called justice: Female incarceration and motherhood in Mexico's prison system*, Global Campus Human Rights Journal, pp. 92-113.
- Lines, Rick,
2006 *From equivalence of standards to equivalence of objectives: The entitlement of prisoners to health care standards higher than those outside prisons*, International Journal of Prisoner Health.
- Quaker Council for European Affairs,
2007 *Women in prison: a review of the conditions in member states of the Council of Europe*.
- Rastrelli, Elena
2016 *La salute genere-specifica in ambito penitenziario*, Journal of sex and gender-specific medicine.
- Ronco, Daniela,
2018 *Cura sotto controllo: il diritto alla salute in carcere*, Carocci, Roma.
- Sbraccia Alvise, Vianello, Francesca,
2010 *Sociologia della devianza e della criminalità*, Laterza, Roma, 2010.
- Sterchele, Luca
2021 *Il carcere invisibile. Etnografia dei saperi medici e psichiatrici nell'arcipelago carcerario*, Maltemi Editore, Milano.
- United Nations Secretariat,
2010 *United Nations rules for the treatment of women prisoners and non-custodial measures for women offenders (the Bangkok Rules): Note/by the secretariat (A/C.3/65/L.5)*, New York.
- WHO,
2009 *Women's health in prison. Correcting gender inequity in prison health*.
- Vianello, Francesca,
2023 *Maternità in pena. L'esecuzione penale delle donne con figli minori*, Maltemi Editore, Milano.

34. Ethnography of violence in intimate relationships

Convenors: Maria Urso & Martina Lo Cascio (University of Palermo)

Image work vs. institutional accountability: analysing the Italian State Police's digital strategy on IPV. A mixed-method analysis of social media strategies and public perceptions

Elisa Begnis, Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna

elisa.begniss2@unibo.it

Simone Tuzza, Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna

simone.tuzza2@unibo.it

This study investigates the strategies utilized by the Italian State Police to leverage social media in representing their role in addressing intimate partner violence (IPV). By examining the concept of 'image work' introduced by Manning (1977) and applying Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical analysis, it explores how emotional communication is tactically employed to construct a narrative of proactive intervention. These frameworks reveal the performative dimensions of police communications, emphasizing how law enforcement navigates its public mandate by carefully managing appearances and addressing community expectations through curated portrayals of its mission and actions. This perspective is further enriched by Mawby's (2001) analysis of police presentational strategies, which highlights the significant resources allocated to sustain a communication framework that integrates both traditional and digital media, thereby reinforcing institutional legitimacy.

Understanding the intricate and multifaceted nature of police practices requires a broader theoretical lens, such as the 'policing web' described by Brodeur (2010). This concept highlights how systemic barriers within law enforcement persist, even as social media is employed to project a unified and responsive institutional image. Similarly, the analysis of media portrayals by Reiner (2000) underscores the tendency of institutional narratives to prioritize positive representations, often neglecting critical issues of accountability.

Strategically navigating the digital space to manage and curate public visibility is a critical aspect of contemporary policing. This dynamic is well-explained by Thompson's (1995) 'management of visibility,' which elucidates how the Italian State Police control the aspects of their activities presented to the public. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter/X enable direct engagement with audiences, bypassing traditional media intermediaries. Insights from Lee and McGovern's (2013) work on social media's role in corporate and institutional communication further reinforce the significance of these platforms in fostering public trust and enhancing institutional legitimacy.

Despite these carefully crafted portrayals, IPV survivors frequently encounter secondary victimization when seeking institutional assistance. This troubling discrepancy becomes particularly evident in high-profile cases such as the femicide of Giulia Cecchettin, where the Italian State Police leveraged emotionally charged social media posts to underscore their commitment to combating gender-based violence. However, a qualitative analysis of public reactions to these posts revealed significant skepticism and criticism, particularly from women sharing personal experiences of neglect, inadequate institutional responses, and instances of re-victimization. These responses highlight a profound disconnection between the State Police's public image and the lived realities of victims, raising questions about the efficacy of such emotional communication strategies.

This research adopts a mixed-method approach to analyse this dissonance. Through a detailed content analysis of social media posts and their reception, combined with qualitative interviews with legal professionals specializing in IPV cases, the study provides a nuanced understanding of the gaps in institutional accountability. The comments analysed reveal not only public distrust but also a collective sense of frustration among survivors, whose experiences often starkly contrast with the optimistic narratives promoted online. Interviews with legal professionals further expose systemic shortcomings, including inadequate training of law enforcement personnel and a lack of victim-centered protocols, which contribute to these recurring issues.

By situating these findings within established theoretical frameworks such as image management and encounter theory, the paper critiques the superficial engagement strategies employed by the Italian State Police on digital platforms. It argues that while the performative gestures of institutional commitment might momentarily attract public approval, they fail to address the structural reforms necessary for meaningful

support and protection of IPV survivors. This critique not only underscores the need for more transparent and accountable institutional practices but also situates the discussion within the broader context of public safety communication. The findings ultimately advocate for systemic changes to bridge the gap between the police's digital self-presentation and the substantive actions required to support survivors effectively.

References

- Brodeur, Jean P.
2010 *The policing web*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Goffman, Erving
1959 *The presentation of self in everyday life*, Garden City, New York, Anchor Books.
- Lee, Murray, McGovern, Alyce
2013 *Policing and media: Public relations, simulations and communications*, London, Routledge.
- Manning, Peter K.
1977 *Police work: The social organization of policing*, Cambridge, The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press
- Mawby, Rob C.
2001 "Promoting the police? The rise of police image work" in *Criminal Justice Matters*, 43, 1, pp. 44–45.
- Reiner, Robert
2000 *The politics of the police*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 3e ed.
- Thompson, John B.
1995 *The media and modernity. A social theory of the media*, London, Polity Press.

Shedding light on hidden forms of domestic violence. Towards a harm-based approach

Anita Lavorgna, University of Bologna

anita.lavorgna@unibo.it

The major reference point on domestic violence is the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). It defines 'domestic violence' as 'all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim' (art 3b). Hence, domestic violence is not necessarily between partners and it does not require an element of physicality, even if in common understanding other forms of domestic relationships and/or psychological violence tend to be neglected, possibly because of the context in which this definition was developed. Indeed, criminological attention to the topic has mostly focused on gendered forms of domestic violence among partners (e.g. Day & Gill, 2020; Demir & Park, 2022), with psychological forms of violence receiving some attention only in very recent years (e.g. Hester, 2021; Schokkenbroek et al., 2022). When it comes to other domestic relationships, some (scarce) attention has been given to physical forms of child-to-parent violence (e.g. Holt & Lewis, 2021); conversely, parent-to-child forms of violence have been overlooked, with the exception of cases of serious physical and/or sexual abuse (e.g. Font & Kennedy, 2022). This limited focus does not allow us to recognise the full amount of harms that are linked to domestic violence and its symbolic manifestation of power. When it comes in particular to parental psychological violence, there is currently paucity of studies. The existing ones have been carried out mostly by scholars in psychology, where attention to the topic has been getting traction in the last decade (Dube et al., 2023). Overall, these studies demonstrate how parental psychological violence is not uncommon, and it has been associated with developmental or adjustment problems, both internalized and externalized (Gagné & Melançon, 2013). These are also forms of interpersonal violence that might also be misinterpreted as normalized behavioural attitudes, escaping their full recognition as sources of victimisation (in line with Schindeler, 2014); or they can be linked to forms of (diagnosed or undiagnosed) mental disabilities, and again the harms to the daughter/son (who in practice might be the caregiver) might go unseen (Jacasia et al., 2023). The key hypothesis in this study is that there are forms of domestic violence that are currently overlooked in socio-criminological research (and in public policies), but that deserve more attention because of the major psychological and social injuries they can cause; this might be due to assumptions on certain social characteristics (such as age and gender) and related power dynamics, or roles (such as motherhood) and related normative values. Online, however, discourses around these forms of violence are surfacing more easily,

through discussion in support groups, and through the work of psychologists, advocates/survivors, and other forms of expert knowledge on mental health.

This exploratory research aims to clarify and map the types of harm linked to parent-to-child psychological violence, trying to move beyond the state of the art on socio-criminological literature on domestic violence, advocating on a harm-based approach as a way to allow the emergence of underreported victimization. I am particularly interested in the possibilities offered by cyberspace, and specifically by ethnographic work online, for the emergence of hidden harms and hidden victimization.

Considering the sensitivity of the project, and the exploratory nature of the research, it would be ethically problematic to directly access some of the relevant online communities for research purposes, as most are closed to outsiders, and considered by participants as a safe space where to share their experiences. As such, the gatekeepers of these communities (that is, those with expert knowledge on mental health running informative pages or moderating dedicated groups on social media such as Facebook Meta) have been interviewed. Most of these groups are closed to externals, but administrators/moderators' contacts are visible and openly accessible; also, many of these communities run multi-platform, e.g. the searchable Facebook page redirects to more hidden Telegram chats. As such, interviews become windows to see within the walls of otherwise difficult to access communities.

References

- Day, Aviah Sarah, Gill, Aisha K.
2020 «Applying intersectionality to partnerships between women's organizations and the criminal justice system in relation to domestic violence», in *The British Journal of Criminology*, 60, 4, pp. 830-850.
- Demir, Mustafa, Park, Suyeon
2022 «The effect of COVID-19 on domestic violence and assaults», in *Criminal Justice Teview*, 47, 4, pp. 445-463.
- Dube, Shanta R., Li, Elizabeth T., Fiorini, et al.
2023 «Childhood verbal abuse as a child maltreatment subtype: A systematic review of the current evidence», *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 144, 106394.
- Font, Sarah A., Kennedy, Reeve
2022 «The centrality of child maltreatment to criminology», in *Annual Review of Criminology*, 5, 1, pp. 371-396.
- Gagné, Marie-Helene, Melançon, Claudiane
2013 «Parental Psychological Violence and Adolescent Behavioral Adjustment: The Role of Coping and Social Support», in *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 28, 1, pp. 176-200.
- Jagasia, Komel, Saunders, Peter, & Roufeil, Louise
2023 «"Now I Can See Things for What They Are": The Experiences of Adult Children of Narcissists», in *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 36, 4, pp. 524-546.
- Hester, Marianne
2021 «Domestic violence and abuse through a criminological lens», in *The Routledge International Handbook of Domestic Violence and Abuse*, Routledge, pp. 55-67.
- Schindeler, Emily
2014 «Workplace violence: Extending the boundaries of criminology», in *Theoretical Criminology*, 18, 3, pp. 371-385.
- Schokkenbroek, Janneke M., Ouytsel, Joris Von, Hardyns, Wim, & Ponnet, Koen
2022 «Adults' online and offline psychological intimate partner violence experiences», *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 37, pp. 15-16.

Patriarchal violence as Gender Violence. Resistance and Challenges of women empowerment through Aurat March (Women Movement) in Pakistan

Tehseen Nisar, Independent Research

nisar.tehseen@gmail.com

Women everywhere are calling for a greater share in employment, health care, maternity care, emergency and humanitarian care, fair work practices and an end to violence; Violence against women is a serious violation of their human rights, regardless of when, where or how it occurs. There are many forms of violence against women, which have many potential negative consequences for women's health. Violence against women can lead to death.

The effects of violence are very often long-lasting. Violence, in all its forms, can impact a woman's well-being for the rest of her life. Worldwide, almost a third (27%) of women aged 15 to 49 who have been in a relationship report having experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence from their partner.

This paper offers a salient resonance on the debate on structural patriarchy and the debate on rights, freedom, equality for women in Pakistan. The paper also covers a discussion on patriarchy in the background of a legal study of women rights in Pakistan. Such a study plays a valuable role in assessing the dynamics of feminist movements like Aurat March and Me-Too Movement and its relevance sociological, religious, and political trends in Pakistan and places where women movements are gaining pace against the politics of status quo in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and India.

The Women's March in Pakistan has emerged as a non-violent movement advocating for the social and political empowerment of women. Initiated in 2018, this annual event is held on International Women's Day (March 8) to challenge societal norms, and demand policy changes and vociferously emphasizing and renewing the need for equal rights for women in all spheres of life, including education, employment, and politics and has called for strict enforcement of laws against gender-based violence and discrimination.

Another point of utmost urgency that the movement raises is the question of women's Reproductive Rights, following which it calls for women's autonomy over their bodies (*Mera Jism meri marzi*); *My body my rights* advocating women's access to healthcare services, including family planning and maternal health resources. Towards realising the most significant aspect which is the economic empowerment of women; the movement not only calls for decreased gender pay gaps and barriers insisting on women's access to employment, one of the most ardent activists of the movement have called for argue for policies that support women's economic participation and entrepreneurship and political representation demanding increased political representation for women at all levels of government.

Arguing that Aurat March is a non-violent liberation struggle in Pakistan, the research finally aims to contribute to enrich the literature on Women and Social revolutions, Feminism and liberation in Islam, Gender, Religion and Violence; as well as Social Movements and Non-Violent education.

References

Annual Report

2020 Aurat Foundation. Retrieved from http://www.af.org.pk/Annual%20Reports/Report_2020/Annual%20Report%202020.pdf

Connolly, James

2015 *On the fight against patriarchy by any means necessary*. <http://bermudaradical.blogspot.com/2008/08/on-fight-against-patriarchy.html>

D. Juan, Baron, B.M

Facing the challenges of girl's education in Pakistan, Available @ <https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/facing-challenges-girls-education-pakistan>.

Fakhrul, L, L.S.

Feminism in an Islamic Perspective, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2024), pp. 23~32

Irum, K.A.

Domestic Violence Policy Brief. National Commission for Human Rights,

Pakistan. Retrieved from <https://www.nchr.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/DomesticViolence-Policy-Brief.pdf>

UN Women Pakistan, National Report on the Status of Women in Pakistan- A Summary, <https://pakistan.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/07/national-report-on-the-status-of-women-in-pakistan-a-summary>

Wadud, A.

2021 Reflections on Islamic feminist exegesis of the Qur'an. *Religions*, 12(7), 497.

Reflections on the configurations of domestic violence in the penal and penitentiary field

Elena Sonnini, Università degli Studi di Torino

elena.sonnini@unito.it

The contribution will attempt to analyze the phenomenon of male violence against female offenders and prisoners, who, as such, are integrated into the criminal justice system.

There are three possible "cases" that can emerge in the configuration of gender-based violence in the criminal context. The first case involves men accused and convicted of crimes of violence against women: femicides, stalking, domestic violence, etc. The rarer case, although more frequent than one might think, concerns women incarcerated for killing their domestic abuser, usually after years and years of abuse and mistreatment, which then raises the thorny legal issue of self-defense (cfr. Pecorella). Lastly, the case that will be given attention to is that of women imprisoned and who are offenders, previously victims of abuse and violence – psychological,

physical, and sexual – by men, especially in domestic settings. The blurred borders between victimization and criminalization has been a subject of interest since the rise of radical feminist criminology. According to representatives of this movement, it became clear that often female offenders and crime victims did not belong to distinct groups, but rather were overlapping (cfr. Carlen, 1987; Chesney-Lind and Rodriguez, 1983; Daly, 1992; Klein, 1988; Vianello, 2023).

The regulations in Italy regarding the detention of women are limited to the protection of imprisoned motherhood, and thus are only related to the biological sphere (Gonnella, 2023). Law and penitentiary regulations have considered the prison institution to be female only when it is reduced to the singular identity of mother, specifically those with children under the age of ten. In contrast, the issue of male violence suffered by many female prisoners prior to their incarceration, which may have been "(...) directly or indirectly at the origin of the committed crime" (Taccardi, 2023, p. 72), does not enter into the public and legal discourse in Italy, even though it is strongly present in international standards, such as the European Prison Rules, the UN Mandela Rules (2015), and the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules, July 2010).

The questions that this analysis addresses are: how does this phenomenon take shape, from a sociological perspective, within prisons and female sections? What role does this dimension play in daily prison life? And from a methodological and ethical point of view, how can this issue be addressed in a context of pain and high stress? Starting from reflections arising from an empirical ethnographic study conducted between 2021 and 2022, it will be shown how the social phenomenon of male violence is pervasive and seems to be considered a given, both in terms of being a woman on one hand and being someone raised in situations of marginalization and degradation on the other. It is therefore something "expected" from the profiles of women who populate prisons. It is hypothesized that the prison may play two roles in experiences marked by prior violence: prison as a continuum of violence, from the home to incarceration (Davis et al., 2023; Epstein et al., 2014), and prison as a refuge from domestic violence (cfr. Carlen, 1990). In conclusion, the attempt of this contribution is to make visible the prior victimization of imprisoned women by linking prison studies and feminist criminologies. In addition to the legal necessity of considering this aspect, as required by regulations, it is believed that this topic forces a dialectic between *inside* and *outside* the prison, useful both for enhancing knowledge about the phenomenon of male violence against women and girls in general, and for understanding the prison as a mechanism that reproduces violent processes, often deeply gendered.

References

- Carlen, Pat
1987 *Women and Crime: A Critical Introduction*, London, Macmillan.
1990 *Alternatives to women's imprisonment*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes.
Chesney-Lind, Meda, Randall G. Shelden
1998 *Girls, Delinquency, and Juvenile Justice*, New Jersey, L. Erlbaum Associates.
Davis, Angela, Dent, Gina, Meiners, Erica, R., Richie, Beth E.
2023 *Femminismo. Abolizionismo. Adesso*, Rome, Alegre.
Epstein, Rebecca, Rosenthal, Lindsay, Saada Saar, Malika, Vafa, Yasmin
2014 «The sexual abuse to prison pipeline: the girls' story», report by *Human Rights Project for Girls Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality Ms. Foundation for Women*, https://rights4girls.org/wp-content/uploads/r4g/2015/02/2015_COP_sexual-abuse_layout_web-1.pdf.
Gonnella, Patrizio
2023 «Le norme per le donne detenute: analisi e mancanze», in *Associazione Antigone*, «Dalla parte di Antigone. Primo rapporto sulle donne detenute in Italia», <https://www.rapportoantigone.it/primo-rapporto-sulle-donne-detenute-in-italia/>.
Klein, Dorie
1988 *Criminal Women: A New Theory of Women's Crime*, Colorado, Westview Press.
Pecorella, Claudia
2022 *La legittima difesa delle donne. Una lettura del diritto penale oltre pregiudizi e stereotipi*, Milan, Mimesis.
Taccardi, Cristiana
2023 «Note ai margini dei rapporti tra detenzione femminile e pregressa vittimizzazione», in *La Rivista di Associazione Antigone*, XVII, 2.
Vianello, Francesca (Ed.)
2023 *Maternità in pena, L'esecuzione penale delle donne con figli minori*, Milan, Meltemi.

Challenges in Researching Police Practices. Studying Police-Sex Worker Interactions in Poland

Izabela Ślęzak, University of Lodz, Poland

izabela.slezak@uni.lodz.pl

Many studies have shown that sex workers are often reluctant to report experiences of violence or victimization to the police (Campbell, Sanders, 2021; Dewey, Germain, 2014; Sanders et al., 2022; Stardust et al., 2021; Struyf, 2022). One of the primary reasons for this hesitation is their negative perception of law enforcement and fear of maltreatment by police officers. This tendency is particularly evident in countries where sex work is fully criminalized (e.g., in most US states; Williamson et al., 2007). However, similar attitudes are also evident in countries where sex work is only partially criminalized (e.g., in Great Britain; Kinnel, 2008; Klambauer, 2018) or decriminalized (e.g., Slovenia; Ferlih, 2017).

Although the provision of sexual services itself is not criminalized or penalized in Poland, existing legal regulations (which criminalize third parties who organize, coordinate, or facilitate the provision of sexual services for financial gain) bring sex workers under the scrutiny of police operational activities.

Having spent many years researching sex workers in Poland, I have observed that even partial criminalization of sex work (through the criminalization of third parties) frames sex work as suspicious, potentially criminal activity (Ślęzak, 2023). This applies both to instances where sex workers seek help and to scenarios where police involvement is unwelcome, such as during inspections of premises offering indoor sex services.

As a result, the power asymmetry between police officers and sex workers is further exacerbated. In such a context, police officers may be more prone to abusing their authority, while sex workers often avoid interactions with the police as a preventative measure. Many female sex workers in Poland perceive encounters with the police as unpredictable and heavily influenced by the personal beliefs and attitudes of individual officers and their superiors. Sex workers with immigrant status, those who use psychoactive substances, and those concealing their involvement in sex work from family members are particularly apprehensive about such interactions.

Given these dynamics, I sought to explore the perspectives of police officers who interact with sex workers as part of their professional duties. My aim was to understand how officers perceive sex work and how these perceptions influence their professional responsibilities. However, this research faced significant resistance from the police units I approached for permission to conduct the study.

The purpose of this speech is to examine the challenges associated with conducting research with police officers regarding their approaches to sex workers in Poland. I draw upon existing literature and my own experiences to reflect on the difficulties of securing institutional permission and individual cooperation for such research. I explore various forms of resistance, both institutional and individual, that I encountered during the research process. These included strategies employed to discourage me from pursuing the study and the challenges of gaining the trust of potential gatekeepers who could facilitate my access to the institution. Additionally, I highlight the role of informal relationships with research participants, which provided deeper access to data but also raised ethical dilemmas concerning the boundaries of using such data.

A significant focus of this analysis is the influence of cultural norms related to masculinity, femininity, and sexuality. These norms shaped the process of obtaining consent for the research and influenced the dynamics of my interactions with male participants as a female researcher. I also examine how such norms are reflected in the officers' narratives and how they shape their perceptions of sex workers.

Finally, I consider the external factors that frame police officers' actions, including legal regulations and internal police procedures. While these frameworks structure their actions, they are often subject to individual and collective interpretation within teams of officers.

This speech sheds light on the complex interplay of cultural norms, institutional resistance, and legal frameworks in shaping police interactions with sex workers in Poland. By addressing the challenges of conducting research in this sensitive field, it underscores the importance of nuanced and context-aware approaches to understanding these dynamics.

References

Campbell, Rosie, Sanders, Teela

2021. «Why Is Hate Crime a Helpful Concept to Respond to Violence Against Sex Workers?» in *Sex Work and Hate Crime: Innovating Policy, Practice and Theory*, 1-14.

Dewey, Susan, St. Germain, Tonia

2014. «It depends on the cop:» Street-based sex workers' perspectives on police patrol officers,» in *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 11, 256-270.
- Frelih, Mojca
2017. «Relationships With the Police: Between Protection and Abuse,» in Radačić, Irena, Pajnik, Mojca (Eds.), *Prostitution in Croatia and Slovenia. Sex Workers' Experiences*, Zagreb, Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar, pp. 165-175.
- Kinnell, Hilary
2008. *Violence and Sex Work in Britain*, Cullumpton, Willan.
- Klambauer, Eva
2018. «Policing roulette: Sex workers' perception of encounters with police officers in the indoor and outdoor sector in England,» in *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 18(3), 255-272.
- Sanders, Teela, Scoular, Jane, Campbell, Rosie
2022. «Sex work, hate crime and the criminal law,» in *The Journal of Criminal Law*, 86(2), 109-125.
- Stardust, Zahara, Treloar Carla, Cama Elena, Kim Jules
2021. «I wouldn't call the cops if I was being bashed to death': Sex work, whore stigma and the criminal legal system,» in *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, 10(3), 142-157.
- Struyf, Pia
2022. «To Report or Not to Report? A Systematic Review of Sex Workers' Willingness to Report Violence and Victimization to Police,» in *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 15248380221122819.
- Ślęzak, Izabela
2023. «Officer in the Line of Duty, Client, Third Party. Female Sex Workers' Interactions with the Police in Poland,» in *Politička misao: časopis za politologiju*, 60(4), 82-111.
- Williamson, Celia, Baker Lynda, Jenkins Morris, Cluse-Tolar, Terry
2007. «Police-prostitute interactions: Sometimes discretion, sometimes misconduct,» in *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, 18(2), 15-37.

“You Drive Me Crazy!”. Representations of Masculinities, Femininities and Intimate Violence in Italian Popular Music

Chiara Paglialonga, University of Milano-Bicocca

chiara.paglialonga@unimib.it

The contribute examines the cultural representations emerging from the songs that dominate contemporary Italian music weekly charts, based on qualitative research conducted over a three-year period (2021 – 2023). The sample comprises 81 songs – the majority in Italian, but also some in English and Spanish – some of which remained in the top positions for many weeks, others only for one.

The focus is on the representations of masculinity and violence – both intimate and broader forms – expressed in these lyrics, aiming to understand the role violence plays in shaping gender identities, imaginaries, and interpersonal relationships.

The study begins with an overview of the key characteristics of the analyzed charts, highlighting the dominant musical genres and the gender of singers and authors represented. It then delves into the content and themes conveyed in the lyrics.

As a phenomenon both individual and collective, omnipresent in daily life and embedded in a multiplicity of practices and discourses, music serves as a complex cultural artifact interwoven with social relations (DeNora 2000). The analysis reveals the predominance of genres and artists representing a specific generational cohort: music created by young people, for young people. The violence depicted in these songs largely falls along two axes: gender-based violence and violence within intimate relationships, and representations of criminal or illegal behaviours.

Examining popular music provides insights into the worlds, contexts, and imaginaries it portrays, such as the dynamics between urban centers and peripheries, and themes like romantic love, sexism, homophobia, and racism. It also sheds light on the identities and roles of both those who create music (singers, authors) and those who consume it. This analysis considers the appeal of certain roles, identities, and narratives while also addressing societal concerns and malaise (Benasso, Benvenga 2024).

Another avenue to explore could be the role of artists as influencers in shaping social values. Some artists may consciously or unconsciously perpetuate harmful stereotypes, while others might challenge or subvert them. There are several media cases that in recent months have fueled the public debate in Italy on the misogyny of artists and songs, and on its potential social and cultural impact. Delving into artists statements and public

reception of these songs/cases could reveal the complex relationships between the creators' intentions, audience interpretations, and societal impact about gender-based violence.

Through the analysis of the lyrics of the studied songs, an attempt will then be made to answer the following research questions:

What models of masculinity and femininity can be traced?

How does the representation of masculinity, femininity, gender relations change and what characteristics does it take on in the different musical genres?

Which relational, love, affective and sexual models are predominant?

What kind of violence is represented, by whom is it enacted and through what languages?

This article approaches musical lyrics as socio-cultural objects, interpreting them as both expressions of and vehicles for shared social meanings. Viewed as both products and producers of society (Frith 1987), music provides a valuable lens for exploring how gender is "done" and for analyzing the representations of masculinity and violence embedded within it (Magaraggia, 2022).

Jealousy, possession, madness are some of the recurring themes in these songs; around them, concepts, imaginaries and narratives about love and the dynamics of couple relationships are modelled, delineating a normativity always poised between transgression and tradition.

References

Benasso, Sebastiano, Benvenga, Luca (a cura di)

2024 *Trap! Suoni, segni e soggettività nella scena italiana*, Anzio-Lavinio, Novalogos.

DeNora, Tia

2000 *Music in everyday life* (Vol. 665) , Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 28.

Frith, Simon

1987 Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music, in *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception*, R. Leppert, S. McClary (a cura di.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 137.

Magaraggia, Sveva (a cura di)

2022 'Singing with a different voice?': Transition towards hegemonic masculinity in Italian top charts songs, in Giomi, Elisa e Magaraggia, Sveva (a cura di) *Male and Female Violence in Popular Media*, London/New York/Dublin, Bloomsbury Academic.

35. Ethnographies of migrant detention, new forms of confinement and the securitarian turn in migration policies

Convenors: Francesca Vianello & Omid Firouzi Tabar (University of Padua)

"Saving Lives", Securing Borders. Anti-trafficking Narratives and Border Practices in Southern Italy

Jacopo Anderlini, University of Parma

jacopo.anderlini@unipr.it

This paper examines how anti-human trafficking discourse in the European Union shapes and legitimizes exclusionary border practices while paradoxically reinforcing the securitization of migration. Drawing from extensive ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2016-2024 at the Italian southern border, particularly in the hotspot facilities of Lampedusa and Pozzallo, the research analyzes the friction between humanitarian narratives and security-focused border operations.

The study reveals how law enforcement actors and EU agencies deploy anti-trafficking rhetoric to justify increasingly restrictive border procedures. Through participant observation of landing operations and identification procedures, the research documents how humanitarian reasons are evoked to represent border violence as natural while obscuring its structural causes. Border practices emerge as inherently exclusionary, resembling crime investigation operations rather than human rights activities.

The ethnographic analysis demonstrates how the categorization of migrants as either victims or perpetrators serves to legitimize exceptional interventions beyond legal boundaries. This classification process relies heavily on racial profiling to define hierarchies of criminality among migrants. The research highlights how border actors frame their actions by merging humanitarian narratives with security-focused approaches, using anti-trafficking discourse to sustain exclusionary policing operations and strict classification of migrants as "bogus asylum seekers," "smugglers," or "victims."

This work contributes to critical border studies by documenting the revival of what scholars term the "humanitarian border" – a specific mode of border governance where humanitarian reasoning enables exceptional responses while concealing structural violence. The findings illuminate how anti-trafficking policies, sustained by humanitarian/security discourses and a flawed legal framework, have led to increased professionalization of smuggling networks, producing the opposite effect of their intended aims.

Real or Fake Border Crosser. A Perspective on How Volunteer Practices Shape Categories of Inclusion and Exclusion at the Italian-French Border

Laura Contini, Independent researcher

laura.contini@edu.unito.it

This paper situates itself at the intersection of themes developed by militant research (Garelli, Tazzioli, 2013), critical studies on humanitarianism (Harrell-Bond, 1986; Ticktin, 2014; Malkki, 2015), and the securitization of borders (De Genova, 2017; Mezzadra, 2007). Based on ethnographic research conducted at the Italian-French border in the town of Oulx (TO) between September 2022 and February 2023, my discussion will be focused on the tensions that arise between humanitarianism and solidarity, analyzing how volunteer practices of aid and support directed at *people on the move* are operated by the many volunteers present in a shelter named "Rifugio Fraternità Massi". The shelter is an institutional space based on humanitarian principles, managed by a cooperative that addresses the basic needs of *people on the move* trying to cross the border. Within this space, in addition to the employees of the cooperative, several people work, voluntarily and free of charge, supporting, hindering or enriching the work of the shelter. The research context considers what, at the time of fieldwork, was the reference point for initiatives supporting *people on the move* crossing the Susa Valley on the Italian side. For this reason, the shelter, designed to respond to the moral imperatives of humanitarian

governance, is presented as a prism of responses in solidarity and hospitality, revealing the complexity of a space where multiple actors with differing ideological and political positions converge.

My research developed mainly through participant observation and semi-structured interviews, with the aim of investigating the repercussions on the relationships developed between activists or volunteers and *people on the move* at the border. My positioning in the field was deliberately aligned with that of a volunteer or activist, as their actions, commitment and motivations were central to the research. By actively participating in the daily activities and living the daily routine of the shelter, I tried to get as close as possible to their experience. The epistemological choice to direct the ethnographic gaze towards activists and volunteers stems from the desire to understand how the daily practices, positionalities, and beliefs of those who do not personally experience migration contribute to either challenging or reaffirming the categories of migration governance. Drawing on Fassin and Rechtman's (2020) reflections on the construction of the *victim* category and critical studies on the widespread investigation in determining who is a *real* or *fake refugee* (Vacchiano, 2011; Cabot, 2014), I introduce a new dichotomy between *real* or *fake border crossers*. Although this distinction is specific to the observed context, it is useful for analyzing new forms of hierarchization, racialization, and exclusion occurring at the borders, even by those who oppose the current migration governance system. This dichotomy allows for reflection on how aid and solidarity practices may unintentionally reinforce distinctions between those deemed *worthy* of support and those who are not. Through the daily actions of volunteers, the implications of this dichotomy are revealed to be internalized: within the activist group, some *people on the move* are considered more *deserving* of mountain equipment and clothing than others based on their perceived *vulnerability* and geographical origin. This distinction leads to the inclusion or exclusion of certain individuals from receiving appropriate clothing when crossing the border, inadvertently reinforcing the governance of human mobility and the emergence of a *biopolitics of migration* (Andersson, 2018). This dichotomy opens new reflections on the stereotypes and further forms of exclusion faced by *people on the move* even in explicitly supportive settings. These contexts clarify how critical studies on political categories concerning migration movements (De Genova, 2017; Sorgoni, 2022) are essential and should be enriched with reflections and ethnographies that also consider explicitly solidaristic settings. Moreover, ethnographic examples from the field help understand the widespread belief that the reason why people decide to move is to flee from war or persecution, reinforcing and developing the opposition between *victim* and *imposter*. While people act with a viewpoint that challenges the existence of borders, they seem to have internalized sedentism as a *natural* condition for humanity. This internalization leads to suspicion towards those not considered *worthy* of mountain clothing, fueling attitudes of mistrust from some activists towards certain possible *border crossers*. The important reflections on the dangerous relationships between humanitarianism and securitization put forward by Fassin (2018) seem particularly relevant in this case, where practices of aid and solidarity at the border clash with the establishment of hierarchical relationships. These reflections invite research to engage in more ethically demanding considerations, urging a deeper examination of how these solidarity practices might inadvertently sustain and reproduce forms of exclusion.

References

- Andersson, Ruben,
2018 «Profits and Predation in the Human Bioeconomy», in *Public Culture* 30, 3, pp. 413–39.
- Cabot, Heath
2014 *On the Doorstep of Europe: Asylum and Citizenship in Greece*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- De Genova, Nicholas,
2017 *The borders of Europe: autonomy of migration, tactics of bordering*, Durham, Duke University Press.
- Fassin, Didier
2018 *Ragione umanitaria: una storia morale del presente*, Roma, DeriveApprodi.
- Fassin, Didier, Rechtman, Richard
2009 *The Empire of Trauma*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Garelli, Glenda, Tazzioli, Martina,
2013 «Challenging the Discipline of Migration: Militant Research in Migration Studies, an Introduction», in *Postcolonial Studies* 16, 3, pp. 245–49.
- Harrell-Bond, Barbara,
1986 *Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to refugees*, New York, Oxford University Press.
- Malkki, Liisa,
2015 *The need to help: the domestic arts of international humanitarianism*, Durham, Duke University Press.
- Mezzadra, Sandro,
2007 «Confini, migrazioni, cittadinanza», in *Papers. Revista de Sociologia*, 85, pp. 31–41.

- Sorgoni, Barbara,
 2022 *Antropologia delle migrazioni: l'età dei rifugiati*, Roma, Carocci editore.
 Ticktin, Miriam,
 2014 «Transnational Humanitarianism», in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 43, 1, pp. 273–89.
 Vacchiano, Francesco,
 2011 «Discipline della scarsità e del sospetto: rifugiati e accoglienza nel regime di frontiera», in *Lares* 77,1, pp. 181–98.

Policies of Eviction. Making the European Border in the Sicilian Campagne

Giulia Gianguzza, University of Palermo

giulia.gianguzza@unipa.it

Maggie Neil, University of Oxford

margaret.neil@qeh.ox.ac.uk

Our article is based on ethnography in self-organised settlements and informal living contexts in the «interstices» of the countryside (Fontanari & Ambrosini, 2018) in western Sicily where migrant workers live. Through examples in Campobello di Mazara and Cassibile, Sicily, we discuss how workers are treated with a form of functional ambivalence: their cheap labour is clearly desired, yet their presence is framed through the logic of a humanitarian-securitarian paradigm. Through humanitarian and police action, these result in new and familiar forms of confinement and detention that compose the 'humanitarian border' of Europe (Walters 2011).

Workers are desired because cheap labour is needed to support Europe's agricultural industries. Yet, official action must also correspond to EU rules, which aim towards 'the overcoming of informal settlements'. Such 'overcoming' should have made a provision for a 'dignified' housing situation, but it has been met rather with evictions, and related covering up. Rather than enabling further rights, it has produced further controls that often result in the detention, confinement, and invisibilisation of workers. We can thus say that such informal settlements are 'occulted' – concealed, hidden.

As such, we can understand police and humanitarian actions to be a response to EU policy. Although the Sicilian countryside presents certain unique characteristics, we argue that these are dynamics that can be seen across Europe (Sajir, Molinero-Gerbeau & Avallone, 2022). They are not specific to Sicily, but part of 'making Europe'. These examples also show how the countryside is becoming an ever clearer site in which to view new and familiar forms of selective confinement and detention, that are part of the ongoing 'humanitarian bordering' of 'Fortress Europe', and go hand-in-hand with enabling Europe's agri-business, which is sustainable solely through the access to cheap forms of labour.

Each year thousands of people arrive in Sicily looking for work in the agricultural sector. In the autumn, there is the olive harvest in the groves near Campobello di Mazara, in the spring many of the same workers move to Cassibile, on the other end of the island, for the potato harvest. What attracts seasonal workers to the area is the demand for labour. Most are African, and labelled 'seasonal migrant workers' because they arrive from other agricultural jobs across the peripheral spaces of southern Italy, across which they are highly exposed to forms of 'differential and selective inclusion' (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013; Cutitta 2016) and limitations in access to fundamental rights – as they fall into the category of 'migrant workers' (Sharma, 2006) – in order to maintain a precarious and overexploited labour force.

Until a few years prior, housing for labourers mostly consisted of semi-autonomous informal settlements. This form of housing is fundamental to the self-organisation of migrant daily labourers, even as it also reflects rising forms of racialization of the Italian territory (Anderlini & Fravega, 2023).

Since 2018, police activity has made living in these informal settlements increasingly difficult. In Campobello di Mazara, the biggest informal settlement (at the Ex-Cement factory) was definitively razed and evicted in 2023. In this time, in other Sicilian areas as well, we notice what can be called a 'policy of evictions' which aims, as the official EU language states, 'overcome' informal settlements. In their stead, there was supposed to be the creation of publicly-funded – through EU funds – humanitarian-run 'labour camps'. Actually, what we saw in Campobello is just the recreation of an informal settlement, this time on the private property of one of the largest landowners of the area.

The events in Campobello echo what has been called the 'Cassibile model'. In Cassibile, in 2021, EU funds were likewise used to create a 'Workers' Hostel'. Today, the hostel is managed by a private, third-sector cooperative, and asks individuals to pay €35 per week to share a 'container' room, alongside five or six other people. This hostel often attracts Italian police and border agency officials, who come looking for people 'in *accoglienza*' to check their documents. These controls have resulted in various cases of individuals being forcibly sent to detention centres, or given expulsion decrees (often illegitimate).

Such actions reflect in part one aspect of the process that Dines and Rigo (2015) call the 'refugeeization' of the agricultural workforce in Italy. Often, authorities also explain their actions to the public using the narrative of contrasting labour exploitation and humanitarian reasoning (Fassin, 2011). For instance, they describe the informal settlements as unsafe, unhygienic, or not in the interest of the people who live in them. Often a key event – such as the death of a worker – might spur controls, evictions or further razing of these encampments. As a result, these policing activities have resulted in a variety of more confined, invisible spaces of migrant worker housing. This dispersion of housing forms makes individual migrant workers simultaneously more controllable by employers and local police forces, while at the same time makes them less visible and less accessible to socio-legal workers or to the public eye. As a result, these evictions amount to a border policy that aims to confine and further marginalise these workers.

Crucially, these actions often make use of EU funding, and shape their aims to conform to EU policy. They can thus be read as part and parcel of the ongoing makings of the EU and of its borders. We see the Italian *campagne*, or agricultural sites, thus emerge as key places wherein to see the ongoing makings of the European 'humanitarian border'. Different to ports or other sites of the 'border spectacle' (De Genova, 2002), agricultural sites are typically viewed as empty or invisible. And yet, our research indicates that they are sites which show particularly clearly the intertwinement of border, humanitarian, and market activities.

1. What can we learn from Campobello and Cassibile about how the relationship between 'humanitarianism' and 'securitarianism' plays out in local migration governance and police activity?
2. To what extent can we understand labour camps, such as the workers' hostel of Cassibile, as mechanisms of control? How might we read aims to 'overcome informal settlements' through this lens?
3. What does the prominence of agricultural sites in bordering efforts suggest about the intertwinement of agro-industry and 'humanitarian bordering' in Europe?

This article is based on ethnography from the past four years in Campobello di Mazara and elsewhere in western Sicily. Our positionality, as both practitioners and ethnographers in the area, greatly informs both our approach and the outcomes of our research. For instance, it is because we are also practitioners that we have noticed certain things – for instance, how the dispersal of housing following the evictions makes it harder for people to gain access to legal aid. We reflect on the necessity of using qualitative methodologies – such as ethnography – in these specific contexts. This means a way of 'being' on the ground that does not burden the already precarious lives of workers, that is not extractive, that contains good doses of auto-reflexivity about our own dual role (Fontanari, Gaiaschi & Borri, 2019). In other words, a participatory ethnography that fits into the strand of a public sociology (Burawoy, 2005) and as emancipatory social science (Wright, 2010). This vision allows us to give as well as receive, providing our support – with our tools and aware of our positionality – to the people we meet.

Our ethnographic methods include participant observation, fieldnotes, interviews and case studies. We base our work on cases in Campobello di Mazara and Cassibile. However, we place this work among other studies across Europe to indicate how these are not isolated events but entwined in broader Italian and European securitarian and humanitarian policies that affect Sicily as a borderland. These animate both the care-and-control bordering apparatus of the European border (c.f. Pallister-Wilkins, 2022) and create 'zones' of a southern Italian encampment archipelago (Peano, 2024).

References

- Anderlini, Jacopo, Enrico Fravega
2023 «Razzializzazione in corso: Il caso degli insediamenti informali dei migranti nei distretti agricoli del mezzogiorno», in *Sociologia urbana e rurale*, n.131, pp.42-58.
- Burawoy, Michael
2005 «For Public Sociology», *American Sociological Review*, 70, pp 4-28.
- Cutiitta, Paolo
2016 «Mandatory Integration Measures and Differential Inclusion: The Italian Case», in *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 17, 1, pp. 289–302.

De Genova, Nicholas

2013 «Spectacles of migrant 'illegality': the scene of exclusion, the obscene of inclusion», in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36 (7), 1180-1198.

Dines, Nick, Enrica Rigo

2015 «Postcolonial Citizenships and the "Refugeeization" of the Workforce: Migrant Agricultural Labor in the Italian Mezzogirone», in Ponzanesi, S. & Colpani G. (eds.) *Postcolonial Transitions in Europe: Contexts, Practices and Politics*, Lanham, MD: Rowmand and International.

Fassin, Didier

2011 *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present*, Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Fontanari, Elena, Maurizio Ambrosini

2018 «Into the Interstices: Everyday Practices of Refugees and their Supporters in Europe's Migration "Crisis"», in *Sociology*, 52, 3, pp. 587–603.

Fontanari, Elena, Camilla Gaiaschi e Giulia Borri

2019 «Precarious Escapes. Participative research and collective knowledge production inside and beyond the academia», in *Quaderni di Teoria Sociale*, n. 1/2019, Morlacchi Editore, Perugia.

Mezzadra, Sandro, Brett Neilson

2013 *Border as method, or, the multiplication of labor*, Durham: Duke university press, London.

Pallister-Wilkins, Polly

2022 *Humanitarian Borders: Unequal Mobility and Saving Lives*, London and New York: Verso.

Peano, Irene

2024 «The camp, the zone, and sovereign sediments: Querying paradigms through the politics of Made-in-Italy agribusiness operations», in *Anthropological Theory*, Vol. 24(3) 258–281.

Sajir, Zakaria, Yoan Molinero-Gerbeau e Gennaro Avallone

2022 "Everything changes, everything stays the same". The governance of migrant labour in Spanish and Italian agriculture in the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, *Estudios Geográficos*, 83 (293), e114

Sharma, Nandita

2006 *Home economics : nationalism and the making of 'migrant workers' in Canada*, Toronto : University of Toronto Press.

Walters, William

2010 «Foucault and Frontiers: Notes on the Birth of the Humanitarian Border», in *Governmentality*, eds. Ulrich Bröckling, Susanne Krasmann, and Thomas Lemke, New York: Routledge.

Confined mobilities. Racial carcerality and resistance along the Balkan Route in Bihać, Bosnia-Herzegovina

Sara Marilungo, Sapienza University of Rome

sara.marilungo@uniroma1.it

The proposed contribution examines the intersection of coloniality, mobility and resistance within the European border regime, focusing on fieldwork conducted in Bihać, Bosnia-Herzegovina, along the Balkan Route. The Balkan Route, a critical pathway to Europe, has become a site emblematic of systemic violence, racialized bordering practices, and carceral logics. Drawing on ethnographic data collected in 2021 and 2024, the contribution employs militant research methodologies (Garelli, Tazzioli, 2013) to foreground the lived experiences of people on the move navigating this hostile landscape shaped by pushbacks, displacement, and criminalization. The contribution situates mobility struggles within a framework of coloniality and racial capitalism, critiquing the European border regime as a rearticulation of colonial devices that sustain racial hierarchies and stratify mobility.

Building on the concept of border regimes as contested and negotiated spaces (Casas-Cortes et al., 2015), the contribution explores how the European border regime, through its biopolitical and necropolitical dimensions, racializes mobility, rendering illegalized and racialized bodies expendable (Mbembe, 2002; Puar, 2007; Giuliani, 2020) in line with humanitarian and securitarian discourses. Ethnographic evidence from Bihać illustrates how these processes are enacted and contested on the field.

A comparative analysis of fieldworks further reveals the necessity for border regime to adapt to the diverse and dynamic mobilities of illegalized and racialized individuals crossing borders. Since the redirection of the Balkan Route to Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2018, state authorities initially left migrant needs to local and international solidarity networks. However, over time, these efforts became entangled with racial violence and racialized categorizations and discourses (Rexhepi, 2018, 2023). This evolution was marked by growing state-sponsored hostility, which delegitimized grassroots solidarity and facilitated the development of a more restrictive and securitized environment (Bez nec, Kurnik, 2020). The European Union's increasing reliance on external organizations – particularly the International Organization for Migration (IOM) – further entrenched

Bosnia-Herzegovina's neocolonial dependency, as resources were channeled through international agencies rather than national institutions (Ahmetašević, Mlinarević, 2019; Kurnik, Razsa, 2020).

This analysis must be situated within the conceptual framework of *Balkanism* (Todorova, 1997) which casts Balkan societies as politically and culturally immature, requiring Western oversight, control and intervention. The Yugoslav wars intensified this tropes, erasing socialist legacies and portraying EU integration as both inevitable and necessary. As a result, Balkan states – whether EU members or not – have been rendered passive recipients of externally imposed policies, particularly through EU-led state-building initiatives.

Against this backdrop, the Balkans have become integral to the European border and migration regime, functioning as a geopolitical buffer zone tasked with managing and racializing migratory flows, through mechanisms rooted in colonial and geopolitical hierarchies. As Kurnik and Razsa (2020) argue, this Europeanization process in the region reinforces existing racial, religious and national boundaries, with Bosnia-Herzegovina particularly affected due to its status as a quasi-protectorate governed under international oversight.

These dynamics position the region as a racialized "cordon sanitaire" within the broader colonial architecture of the European border regime. Racialization operates as a central logic along the Balkan Route, where racist discourses construct Balkan Muslims as embodying a more acceptable, assimilable "European Islam" in contrast to Arab migrants – thus serving both colonial imaginaries and border-control agendas (Rexhepi, 2023). This discourse has contributed to the intensification of Islamophobic anxieties, even influencing institutions such as the Islamic Community to withdraw support for humanitarian initiatives. Consequently, people on the move increasingly relied on formal reception centers designed to deter movement and settlement. The proliferation of restrictive local policies – such as housing prohibitions and bans on access to public transportation – has further dismantled community-based support networks. These developments reflect the emergence of what Tazzioli (2023) describes as "extractive humanitarianism", where migrant lives are commodified within the broader infrastructure of the border-industrial complex.

In this context, the urban geography of Bihać, once marked by informal settlements and localized forms of solidarity, has undergone significant transformation under intensifying regimes of repression and criminalization. By 2024, field observations revealed significant changes: informal settlements were largely dismantled, people on the move were relocated in isolated and heavily monitored reception centers and access to the city center was restricted, reflecting a "politics of migrant dispersal" (Tazzioli, 2020) aimed at fragmenting communities and undermining collective sociality and resistance.

The comparative analysis between the two fieldworks identifies shifts in racialized bordering mechanisms, noting an intensification of carceral practices and an evolution in the political tactics employed to resist and subvert these restrictions. Despite these changes, practices of refusal and subtraction remain critical strategies of contestation used by people on the move, resulting in the disruption of the extractive and racialized logics underpinning the European border regime.

Ethnographic research conducted in Bihać during the initial fieldwork in 2021 revealed how individuals on the move engaged in acts of refusal – such as avoiding formal reception centers – to create informal spaces of livability beyond securitized and restrictive frameworks. These actions redefined mobility and solidarity, demonstrating the capacity to reconfigure spaces of autonomy. By contrast, findings from the second fieldwork in 2024 showed that these practices of refusal and subtraction had mostly evolved into a strategic engagement with and appropriation of state-imposed categories. In particular, the appropriation of categories such as "refugee status" emerged as a counter-hegemonic tactic through which people on the move asserted autonomy and challenged dominant narratives. This strategic deployment of such categories disrupts exclusionary discourses that portray people on the move as either passive victims in need of rescue or as potential threats, while simultaneously denying them rights and recognition.

Finally, the persistent tension between humanitarian and securitarian – then colonial – framings of people on the move as vulnerable or threatening subjects and their embodied enactments of autonomy and resistance underscores the limitations of dominant discourses that depoliticize and dehistoricize postcolonial mobility. These preliminary observations, while recognizing illegalized bodies as sites of political contestation rather than as passive objects of pity or securitization, reorient scholarly attention to the enduring coloniality of migration governmentality. In doing so, this ethnographic material contributes to a broader decolonial critique, challenging the way in which Western framings have politicized social conflicts, through advancing the

transformative potential of a *fugitive politics* that centers the struggles of illegalized and racialized people on the move as a crucial site of political and epistemic innovation.

References

- Ahmetašević, Nidžara, Gorana Mlinarević
2019 *People on the Move in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2018. Stuck in the corridors to the EU. Sarajevo*, Heinrich Böll Foundation.
- Barbara, Beznec, Andrej Kurnik
2020 «Old Routes, New Perspectives. A Postcolonial Reading of the Balkan Route», in *movements. Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies*, 5, 1.
- Casas-Cortes, Maribel, Sebastian Cobarrubias, Nicholas De Genova, Glenda Garelli, Giorgio Grappi, Charles Heller, Sabine Hess, et al.
2015 «New Keywords: Migration and Borders», in *Cultural Studies*, 29, 1, pp. 55–87.
- Garelli, Glenda, Martina Tazzioli (Eds.)
2013 «Challenging the Discipline of Migration: Militant Research in Migration Studies», in *Postcolonial Studies*, 16, 3.
- Giuliani, Gaia
2020 *Monsters, Catastrophes and the Anthropocene: A Postcolonial Critique*, London, Routledge.
- Kurnik, Andrej, Maple Razsa
2020 «Reappropriating the Balkan Route: Mobility Struggles and Joint-Agency in Bosnia and Herzegovina», in *Two Homelands*, 52, pp.7-23.
- Mbembe, Achille
2003 «Necropolitics», in *Public Culture*, 15, 1, pp. 11-40.
- Puar, Jasbir
2007 *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*, Durham, Duke University Press.
- Rexhepi, Piro
2018 «Arab Others at European Borders: Racializing Religion and Refugees along the Balkan Route», in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 41, 12, pp. 2215–34.
- 2023 *White Enclosures: Racial Capitalism and Coloniality along the Balkan Route*, Durham, Duke University Press.
- Todorova, Maria
1997 *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford University Press.
- Tazzioli, Martina
2020 *The Making of Migration: The Biopolitics of Mobility at Europe's Borders*, London, Sage Publications.
- 2023 *Border Abolitionism. Migrants' containment and the genealogies of struggles and rescue*, Manchester University Press.

Punishments Without Crimes. A Legal Ethnography of Migrants' Administrative Detention

Federica Borlizzi, Roma Tre University

federica.borlizzi@uniroma3.it

The “administrativization of criminal law” entails the introduction of measures formally labeled as “administrative” but which, due to their afflictive nature, can be equated to actual penalties, resulting in the “emptying of all criminal and procedural safeguards” (Ferrajoli, 2000). This trend, as is well known, is not new and has historically been used for the social control of marginalized categories first, and subsequently, dissident groups as well. The very establishment of the personal preventive apparatus in post-unification Italy can indeed be justified by the need to preserve the formal “purity” of the penal system while continuing to ensure control and repression of marginality and political opposition (Petrini, 1996). In other words, despite centuries of efforts to limit the “terrible” power to punish by anchoring it to principles and safeguards (now of constitutional rank), it continues to find new means to pursue its original function: producing greater social cohesion [of the majority] through the selective exclusion of those deemed socially dangerous (Durkheim, 1893).

The detention of migrants for the purpose of expulsion represents the most afflictive consequence of the administrativization of criminal law, leading to the incarceration of individuals guilty solely of violating an administrative norm regarding entry and stay in the national territory. This institution was introduced into the Italian legal system by article 12 of Law n. 40/1998 (the so-called Turco-Napolitano Law), which established the Centers for Temporary Stay and Assistance (CPTA). In practice, as noted by the Constitutional Court in its landmark ruling n.105/2001, this measure significantly impacts personal freedom, resulting in the “*debasement of human dignity that occurs in every instance of physical subjugation to another's power*”. The ruling is characterized by a dangerous ambivalence, serving both to “limit and simultaneously «legitimize» the differential «violability» of the personal freedom of foreigners”(Benvenuti, 2020). Moreover, on that occasion, the Constitutional Court failed by upholding the only form of detention without the prior commission of a

crime in the Italian legal system, merely recognizing it as a restriction of personal freedom and thus subject to the guarantees provided by Article 13 of the Constitution. This clarification was nonetheless necessary in light of a legislator who, in introducing the institution of administrative detention, sought by all means to affirm its non-penal nature: avoiding the term “detention”; initially and nominally assigning the measure purposes of “assistance”; providing for a different regime from that of the penitentiary system; even designating the detained individuals as “guests” rather than “detainees”. Similar expedients have been used by other European governments regarding administrative detention, in a “constant attempt at institutional mimicry and semantic softening”, aimed at “masking the repressive nature” of such structures (Campesi, 2013). This “label fraud” continues to persist in Italy. Moreover, administrative detention has progressively expanded, now encompassing even asylum seekers (D.L. n. 20/2023) and recently undergoing externalization efforts (the so-called Italy-Albania Protocol). In practice, the establishment of a parallel punitive system for foreigners has been normalized, with different levels of guarantees compared to those granted to the rest of the Italian citizenry (Ferrajoli, 2024).

In light of this context, the aim of this research is to:

- Provide an overview of how, over the past 27 years, the Italian system of administrative detention of migrants has evolved. To this end, we will share the findings of a monitoring project conducted in Italian CPRs (Centers for Repatriation), involving inspections and interviews with institutional actors (prefectures, police headquarters, local health authorities, and private management entities). This will help to understand the consequences of the progressive privatization of these detention facilities. In particular, two dangerous consequences have emerged: (i) the de-responsibilization of public authorities, which fail to fulfill even the minimal oversight duties imposed by scant secondary legislation; (ii) the pursuit of profit maximization by private management entities, often through unlawful means that violate the rights of detained individuals. This analysis will illustrate how the administrative detention of migrants is among the sectors most exposed to various practices in which “official illegality is realized through the non-application and administrative manipulation of rules” (Bricola, 1977). We will also present the monitoring of an ongoing trial at the Potenza Court concerning the management of the CPR in Palazzo San Gervasio, where 27 individuals (including representatives of the managing entity, doctors, lawyers, and law enforcement officers) are accused of serious crimes ranging from public supply fraud to abuse and torture.
- Share the stories of migrants who have been detained in Italian CPRs, through their direct testimonies (collected via semi-structured interviews) and the analysis of their case files. The interviewed migrants include women (held in the only center with a female section, Ponte Galeria in Rome), newly of age individuals, and persons with significant physical and psychological conditions that should have rendered them incompatible with detention. Through this qualitative research, we intend to share: (i) the life stories of these individuals and the paths that led to their irregular status; (ii) their reflections on their detention experiences in the centers, focusing on conditions of confinement, respect for fundamental rights (right to defense, freedom of correspondence, right to health), and abuses suffered (e.g., unlawful administration of psychotropic drugs); (iii) the consequences of administrative detention in terms of physical and psychological well-being, socio-labor impacts, and potential secondary criminalization effects.

References

- Benvenuti Marco, “La libertà personale”, in *Dizionario dei diritti degli stranieri*, Ed. Scientifica, 2020, p. 408.
- Bricola Franco (a cura di), “Il carcere riformato”, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1977.
- Campesi Giuseppe, *La detenzione amministrativa degli stranieri: Storia, diritto, politica*, Carocci editore, 2013.
- Durkheim Emile, *La divisione del lavoro sociale* (1892, 1a ed.), Il Saggiatore, 2021.
- Ferrajoli Luigi, “Diritto e Ragione. Teoria del garantismo penale”, Laterza, Roma-Bari, seconda edizione 2000.
- Ferrajoli Luigi, “Giustizia e Politica: crisi e rifondazione del garantismo penale”, Laterza, 2024.
- Petrini Davide, “La prevenzione inutile: Illegittimità delle misure praeter delictum”, editore Jovene; 1996.

Clinical Gaze and Colonial Continuum. Preliminary theoretical and methodological considerations for an ethnography of administrative detention

Luca Ceraolo, Università degli Studi di Milano – Università degli Studi di Torino

luca.ceraolo@unito.it

The moral economy of asylum has undergone various phases, unfolding through an oscillation between the neoliberal approach aimed at the inclusion of low-cost labour force and a humanitarianism progressively shaped by a culture of suspicion. Within this oscillatory movement, what is too often overlooked is the cumbersome and spectral return of the colony, whose disciplinary strategies have bequeathed to the present an inheritance traceable in the «necropolitics of borders» (Khosravi, 2010) which constitutes the contemporary mode of migration management by Western nation-states. Acknowledging the border-*dispositif* as a specific postcolonial technology implemented also through the legal apparatus enables to shed light on the exercise of governmentality that provides the basis to produce the conditions of criminalization that shifts the «migration issue» to the terrain of the «criminal issue» (Campesi, 2011).

The operationalization of the protocol signed between Italy and Albania anticipates the aim of further strengthening the institution of administrative detention on the national territory through the implementation of internal borders and external boundaries, and the enforcement of the provisions contained in the European Pact on Migration and Asylum: specifically, the introduction of the practice of detention at the border, its fictional and mobile nature, and the enactment of specific practices of *screening* that identify the biological dimension as privileged terrain for the exercise of practices of irregularization, criminalization, and confinement, together with selection of deportable bodies (De Genova, 2002) through the complicity of health professionals.

In these terms, the pervasive nature of the colonial project, characterized by a programmatic intent to implement forms of domination, control, and exploitation of native populations through the logic of appropriation of bodies – perpetrated also through the hygienist and biomedical paradigm (Beneduce, 2010) – let its echo resonates insistently once again in contemporary migration policies, enabling to depicting a *continuum* between colonization and «Schengenization» (Garnaoui, Sakhi, 2024).

Given these premises, the present contribution aims to present the research question and the theoretical framework of my doctoral research, advancing some considerations on the dynamics of negotiation to the field and ethnographic accessibility to institutional contexts that resist to be subjected to study.

The intersection between the realms of law and health emerges as a possible space for political and moral action (Harper et. al, 2015) and for the public engagement of socio-anthropological knowledge in highlighting mechanisms and dynamics of migrants' detention.

Italian legislation convokes the bodily and health sphere in Article 3, c. 1 of the Directive of May 19, 2022, establishing that before accessing a CPR, the individual must be examined by an ASL or hospital with a certificate confirming whether (s)he could be declared "fit" for detention conditions.

Starting from the WHO's declaration (2022) on the «pathogenicity» of administrative detention, associations and movements have promoted a campaign of awareness-raising among doctors and health professionals, bringing public attention to critical issues concerning public health, medical ethics, and medico-legal responsibility.

What emerges is the need for an urgent reflection on the relation between medical knowledge and migration governmentality: in what ways does border – understood as a device through which the *continuum* of the colony and the underlying necropolitical administration of lives (Mbembe, 2016) can be recognized – shape the mandate of public health institutions? How is the clinical gaze directed towards migrant racialised bodies within the context administrative detention? What is the nature of the mandate delegated to medical knowledge in its intertwining with law and borders governance?

In order to develop a research able to provide answers to these issues, the theoretical framework is identified in the dialogue between critical criminology of borders and «physico-political» ethnography (Pizza, 2012), according a central relevance to the theoretical and practical inheritance of Frantz Fanon account on the continuity of the role played by psychiatric and medical knowledge both in colonial and postcolonial contexts together with the recovery of the concept of «crimes of peace» (Basaglia, Ongaro, 1975) related to the positionality of technicians in segregating institutions.

The discussion of the ongoing negotiation for my access to the field aims at collectively reflect upon «methodological opportunism» (Sterchele, 2021) and multi-sited ethnography as strategical tools to overcome the constraints posed by the study of total institutions. Following this direction, trying to have access to “secondary” institutions involved in administrative detention praxis – such as the ASL, as far as health issues are concerned – together with observant participation in legal trials, connections with associations and social movements, and analysis of «documental devices» (Gargiulo, 2023) could constitute the «field of struggles» (Bourdieu, Wacquant, 1992) to understand the necro-physico-politics of migrations and postcolonial borders governmentality as an interplay between State, institutions, criminalization, moral economies, bodies, and epistemic powers.

References

- Basaglia, Franco, Ongaro, Franca (eds)
1975 *Crimini di pace. Ricerche sui tecnici e gli intellettuali come addetti all'oppressione*, Milano, Balini Castoldi.
- Beneduce, Roberto
2010 *Corpi e saperi indocili. Guarigione, stregoneria e potere in Camerun*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, Wacquant, Loïc
1992 *Réponses. Pour une anthropologie reflexive*, Paris, Seuil.
- Campesi, Giuseppe
2011 «Il controllo delle nuove classi pericolose. Sotto-sistema penale di polizia ed immigrati», in *Dei Delitti e delle Pene*, 1, 3, pp. 146-243.
- De Genova, Nicholas
2002 «Migrant “Illegality” and Deportability in Everyday Life», in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31, pp. 419-447.
- Gargiulo, Enrico
2023 «Mettere in discussione le istituzioni: un approccio posizionato all'analisi dei documenti», in de Nardis, F., Petrillo, A., Simone, A. (eds.), *Sociologia di posizione. Prospettive teoriche e metodologiche*, Milano, Meltemi, pp. 229-250.
- Garnaoui, Wael, Monstassir, Sakhi
2024 *From Colonization to Schengenization. Socio-history of Migrations from the Maghreb to Europe*, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, online at: <https://rosaluxna.org/publications/from-colonization-to-schengenisation/>, visited 21/01/2025.
- Harper, Ian, Kelly, Tobias, Khanna, Akshay (eds.)
2015 *The Clinic and the Court. Law, Medicine and Anthropology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Khosravi, Shahram
2010 *'Illegal' Traveller; An Auto-Ethnography of Borders*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mbembe, Achille
2016 *Necropolitica*, Verona, Ombrecorte.
- Pizza, Giovanni
2012 «Fisica e politica delle migrazioni in Italia: prospettive etnografiche», in *AM Rivista della Società italiana di antropologia medica*, 33-34, pp. 13-24.
- Sterchele, Luca
2021 *Il carcere invisibile. Etnografia dei saperi medici e psichiatrici nell'arcipelago penitenziario*, Milano, Meltemi.

Interstitial spaces and trespassing practices in administrative detention. Resistance experiences of migrants and non-security state agents in Italy

Francesca Cimino, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

francesca.cimino@unive.it

Fabio Perocco, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

fabio.perocco@unive.it

In the last two decades, in Western countries (and beyond), there has been a strong expansion of administrative detention, so much so that in these times of structural crisis took place a globalisation of administrative detention as a “model” of governance of dissent and social control. Parallel and within this process, the administrative detention of migrants is one of the main elements of the contemporary migration policy regime and the preferred response by Western countries to “irregular” migration. In recent years, the administrative detention of migrants has gained momentum, along with the construction of new facilities across Europe, USA, transit countries and globally.

In Italy, the detention of migrants awaiting forced repatriations is categorized as “administrative”. This form of detention involves the restriction of personal liberty for individuals who have not committed any crime, functioning primarily to facilitate return orders. Constitutionally, it is grounded in Article 13, which permits

restrictions on personal liberty “save by a measure for which reasons must be stated issued by a judicial authority, and only in such cases and in the manner provided for by law”. However, the specific procedures governing administrative detention are not defined within *hard-law* instruments but are instead outlined – albeit non-exhaustively – in *infra-legal* documents (Costa-Lascoux, 1989).

First, our study examines forms and dimensions of resistance and coping of migrants and non-security state agents (e.g., social workers, psychologists, nurses, doctors) operating within Centres for repatriation (CPR).

Then, employing the “strategic non-regulation” framework (Natter et al., 2023), our study investigates how they open or exploit interstitial and discretionary spaces created by this strategic non-regulation of migrant detention, how they engage in trespassing practices. It explores if strategic non-regulation has negative consequences on strategies and practices of coping and resistance in the case of administrative detention or if, as scholars have argued, it works for them (Eule et al., 2019).

This contribution draws on empirical data from the Horizon Project “MORE. Motivations, experiences, and consequences of Return and Readmission policy”. Specifically, it is based on seven months of ethnographic research conducted in Italy between 2024 and 2025, involving state agents, non-security state agents, migrants at risk of deportation or awaiting repatriation, and supporting professionals.

References

Costa-Lascoux, J. (1989). *De l'immigré au citoyen*. La Documentation Française.

Eule, T.G., Borrelli, L.M., Lindberg, A., & Wyss, A. (2019). *Migrants Before the Law: Contested Migration Control in Europe*. Springer.

Natter, K., Norman, K., & Stel, N. (2023). Strategic non-regulation as migration governance. *Migration Politics*, 2. <https://doi.org/10.21468/MigPol.2.1.004>

Punishing Illegalised Migration. The role of detention in Italy

Giulia Fabini, University of Bologna

giulia.fabini@unibo.it

This presentation offers an in-depth analysis of the current data on administrative detention in Italy, with particular attention to its evolution over time and the differences between detention sites. Building on this empirical groundwork, the discussion will first explore administrative detention as a tool of policing, before shifting towards a more sociological reflection on the concept of punishment. Central to this will be a critical – though often slippery – comparison between prisons and Immigration Detention Centers (CPRs). The presentation will conclude by emphasizing the need to seriously reconsider the tenuous link between crime and punishment, in order to shed light on the broader social and political factors that shape practices of penalization. In this sense, studying CPRs – both empirically and theoretically – is crucial not only for denouncing the unjust detention of migrants, but also for interrogating the highly selective and uneven mechanisms of punishment in contemporary society.

Between borders and bars. An insider perspective on the criminalization of marginalized adolescents under the shadow of the Caivano Decree

Elton Kalica, Padua University, Italy

elton.kalica@unipd.it

The recent increase in the detention of foreign minors has drawn the attention of socio-legal studies to a phenomenon that, since the enactment of the “Caivano Decree,” continues to be addressed primarily through security and repressive measures (Massaro, 2024). The analysis of juvenile delinquency requires a critical approach (Sykes, 1974) that considers the structural causes of this phenomenon, with a particular focus on migration policies and practices of exclusion and discrimination that contribute to the criminalization of foreign adolescents, especially unaccompanied minors and second-generation ones.

On the one hand, difficulties related to the regularization of migratory status create precarious conditions that expose minors to conflictual situations and dynamics of marginalization. On the other hand, stigmatization processes fuelled by negative perceptions in public and political discourse pose further obstacles to integration. Specifically, minors from marginalized or culturally stereotyped backgrounds are frequently labelled as “delinquents,” perpetuating a social representation that exacerbates their vulnerability (Backer, 1963; Goffman, 1963; Bourdieu, 1996).

Moreover, repressive and judicial systems often fail to address the specific protection needs of migrant minors, applying disproportionate surveillance and intervention measures that increase the risk of arrest and detention. These interventions reflect the overlap between migration and penal policies, whose consequences significantly shape detention policies (Sbraccia & Scivoletto, 2004; Rigo, et al. 2012; Sciurba, 2024).

This study, based on a qualitative approach, investigates the role of these intersections and their impact on the prison system. Drawing inspiration from the Convict Criminology framework, the author integrates research with his personal experience, having lived through both migration and incarceration. (Ross & Richards, 2003; Degenhardt & Vianello, 2010; Aresti & Darke, 2018). The author returned to prison as a researcher to conduct interviews with detainees who experienced incarceration during adolescence (Kalica & Santorso, 2018). By reconstructing individual biographies, the study analyses critical aspects such as migratory restrictions, the criminalization of mobility, and the experiences of violence produced by border control mechanisms (Tazzioli, 2020).

Special attention was given to the selective practices adopted by law enforcement and the judiciary, which often attribute greater severity to the behaviours of young foreigners involved in group dynamics or criminalized activities. Finally, the study sought to understand how the absence of support networks in local communities and systemic discrimination processes have shaped life trajectories that culminate in detention. Detention emerges as a recurring tool for managing and containing migrant minors, who continue to be perceived more as “threats” to security than as vulnerable individuals in need of protection.

References

- Backer, H. S.,
1963 Outsiders: Studies in The Sociology of Deviance in American sociological review: pp. 134–135.
- Bourdieu, P.
1996 The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power, Stanford University Press.
- Darke, S. & Aresti, A.
2018 Developing Insider Perspectives in Research Activism. In *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, Volume 27(2), 2018, 3-16.
- Degenhardt, T. & Vianello, F.
2010 Convict Criminology: provocazioni da oltreoceano. La ricerca etnografica in carcere, *Studi sulla questione criminale*, V (1), 9-23.
- Goffman, E.,
1963 Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Kalica, E. & Santorso, S.,
2018 Farsi la galera: spazi e culture del penitenziario, Ombrecorte.
- Massaro A.,
2024 The “punitive” response to youth distress, educational poverty and juvenile criminality: penal profiles of the so-called Caivano Decree, in *Processo penale e giustizia*, n. 2/2024, pp. 488-500.
- Rigo, E., Inverno, A., Bicocchi, L. (a cura di),
2012 *Minor rights: access to justice for children at risk of social exclusion. Roma: Università degli studi Roma Tre.*
- Sbraccia A. & Scivoletto C. (a cura di),
2004 Minori migranti: diritti e devianza, Torino: Harmattan Italia, pp. 271.
- Sciurba A.,
2024 Dove le cose accadono. Storie di razzismo istituzionale e lotte di comunità nella Sicilia di inizio millennio, Navarra Editore.
- Sykes G. M.,
1974 Criminology, *The Rise of Critical Criminology*, in *The Journal of Crim. L. & Criminology*, Vol. 206, n.2, p. 208.
- Tazzioli, M.,
2020 *The Making of Migration: The Biopolitics of Mobility at Europe’s Borders*, Sage publications Ltd.

36. Ethnographies of translocality and transnationalism

Convenor: Nicholas Dines (University of Milano-Bicocca)

Mafia ubiquity and radicalisation of resentment. A digital ethnography of Calabrian parochialism and 'ndrangheta values on TikTok

Anna Sergi, University of Essex

asergi@essex.ac.uk

This study examines the interplay between the 'ndrangheta, a mafia-type organisation from Calabria, Italy, and the cultural narratives that surround it, particularly in the context of social media platforms like TikTok. The research explores how the 'ndrangheta operates as both a local cultural phenomenon and a global criminal enterprise, leveraging digital technologies to shape identity, community, and narratives surrounding criminality. Employing a digital ethnography framework, data was collected through algorithm-led passive observation of TikTok content focusing on Calabrian identity and 'ndrangheta values. Over a three-month period, a total of 226 videos were analysed, revealing how users navigate the complexities of cultural expression and criminal affiliation on the platform.

The findings are organised into a typology that intersects parochialism and mafia values, illustrating how local identities can intersect with global narratives. The analysis considers two forms of parochialism: superficial parochialism, which includes occasional expressions of Calabrian pride, and radical parochialism, marked by intense local allegiance. Additionally, the typology considers the presence or the absence of mafia values, ranging from implicit support to overt apology of mafia behaviours. The four categories within the typology cover the spectrum of behaviours on the social media platforms.

This exploration contributes to a deeper understanding of how digital environments influence cultural identity and the normalisation of criminality, reflecting broader social dynamics within and beyond Calabrian communities. This study sheds light on the complex interplay of culture, crime, and technology in the context of the 'ndrangheta. The discussion places this interplay within the concepts of 'mafia ubiquity', translocal and transcultural, that shapes the behaviours of the 'ndrangheta today, and the radicalisation of resentment that puts Calabrian parochialism at risk of mafia values proximity.

Navigating Intersection of Difference. A Qualitative Sociological Study with Adult Autistic Migrants in the UK

Anya Ovcharenko, University of Exeter, UK

ao465@exeter.ac.uk

This paper explores the lived experiences of adult autistic migrants in the UK, a group often overlooked in both migration and autism research. As they navigate complex socio-cultural landscapes, these individuals contend with systemic barriers, including racism, ableism, and linguistic exclusion. The experience of being labelled a migrant and autistic constitutes multiple otherness – at once constraining and generative – that shapes how individuals experience self, exclusion, and recognition.

Situated at the intersection of medical sociology and empirical ethics, this research draws on decolonial feminist scholarship, including the work of Anzaldúa and Lugones. It engages critically with global discourses of neurodiversity and migration to examine how categories are constructed, lived, and resisted within specific cultural and institutional contexts. Preliminary findings from in-depth narrative interviews suggest that autistic migrants often inhabit liminal and precarious spaces, where they are simultaneously hyper-visible and marginalised. Yet, through contradictions and tensions, experiences of exclusion and otherness can be reimagined as acts of agency and tools of resistance.

This paper asks how processes of categorisation and discrimination shape autistic migrants' self-understanding and life narratives, and how strategies of resistance emerge in response. It conceptualises "estrangement" not

merely as exclusion, but as a relational, embodied, and political condition that offers insights into the human condition.

Given the 280 million international migrants worldwide and the growing recognition of adult autism diagnoses in the Global North, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how marginalised individuals navigate difference, power, and resistance – drawing on Global South epistemologies to inform more inclusive frameworks.

Space, Place, and Taste in a Las Vegas Megachurch. An interpretive continuum of place and sensorial immersion

Josiah Kidwell, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

josiah.kidwell@unlv.edu

Using ethnographic methods, this study analyzes how leaders and attendees in a US megachurch interpret the religious built environment, exploring how they experience different levels of sensorial engagement with physical, virtual, and/or hybrid religious spaces. The church's network-like structure and endless groups and activities make it impossible to formulate a single form of space relations among members. Therefore, the concept of micro-place attachments is coined by the author to refer to the different spatial meanings the church has for attendees. Instead of discussing place and space in the megachurch in a monolithic way, this concept highlights the multiple possible meanings of the space and the ways that visitors reinterpret it. That is, members may understand specific spaces, such as local campuses, differently based on their involvement there. I also, however, discuss certain limits of this, focusing on how organization and material structures shape the interpretive process and individuals' experiences.

The study explores differences between main campus, satellite campus, and online experiences of place. In line with Milligan's (1998) scholarship, it was found that satellite campus attendees (in contrast with main campus attendees) articulated a relationship with the space tied more to satisfaction with social interactions among members and community attachment (Trentelman 2009). Although satellite members sometimes complained about a lack of technological resources (compared to the main campus) and the limitations of live-streamed sermons (among other issues), they often expressed an attachment to the campuses' close-knit community and their fellow parishioners or staff members. Similarly, more active members/staff from the main campus who volunteer, work at the church, or belong to church groups, tended to describe similar community or interactional attachments. However, these main campus attendees were also, understandably, more likely to note an attachment to the immersive, technological, entertainment-focused quality of the place, speaking positively about the sensuous pleasures, anonymity, and other environmental characteristics of their experiences. A key distinction was between a positive sense of place rooted in things like multisensory immersion, technology, entertainment, production value, etc., at the main campus and a more exclusively community-focused attachment at satellite campuses.

The megachurch seems to offer, for some, the best of both worlds: anonymity and virtuality without having to sacrifice sensuous, embodied experience, and it also provides a type of religious belonging without demanding social obligations. There is a broad continuum of types of engagements with space, with each position (online, main campus, satellite, etc.), however, inscribed with certain qualities and/or limitations of the technology-human relationship, including elements such as efficiency, immersion, anonymity, flexible temporality, dynamism, and information saturation (Lyon 2000). The church's adoption of broader contemporary technological and culture industry trends also reveals another problematic dimension that is analyzed further in this study (Horkheimer and Adorno 1944).

References

- Horkheimer, Max, Theodor W. Adorno
1944 *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press.
Lyon, David
2000 *Jesus in Disneyland: Religion in Postmodern Times*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
Lofland, Lyn H.
1998 *The Public Realm*. New York, Routledge.

Milligan, Melinda J.

1998 «Interactional Past and Potential: The Social Construction of Place Attachment», in *Symbolic Interaction* 21, 1, pp. 1-33.

Trentelman, Carla

2009 «Place Attachment and Community Attachment: A Primer Grounded in the Lived Experience of a Community Sociologist», in *Society & Natural Resources* 22, 3, pp. 191-210.

The Politics of Belonging in Milan Youth Centers

Giovanni Antonio Albertinale, Università degli Studi di Milano.

giovanni.albertinale@unimi.it

This research aims to delve into what politics of belonging is practiced toward the so-called "second generation" migrant youth in Youth Centers in Milan. In recent years with the rise of nationalist movements and parties throughout the West, the topic of belonging and the politics of belonging with respect to the relationship between migrants and the nation state has gained relevance (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Rather than in dichotomous terms (either exclusion or inclusion) belonging is produced in hierarchical terms, in which rank is conditioned by the amount of possession of national cultural and racial capital (Hage 1998; Weiß, 2010), which implies a certain nationalist symbolic violence in defining what are the criteria of belonging (Hage, 1998). In this context the so-called "second generation" youth are often placed in a "subaltern" or "conditional" belonging within the spaces of the nation-state (Hackl, 2022). This means both lower educational achievements, leading to precarious and low-wage jobs, and a symbolic devaluation of "non-Western" cultural practices (Pratsinakis, 2017). However, nation-state and nationality remain a contested field in which different actors struggle to define who belong to the nation and to impose as dominant a certain "practical nationality", i.e. the right way to be "Italian". Youth center and youth workers, as welfare agents in the caring side of nation-state (Bourdieu, 2014; Hage, 2003), take part through their work to this struggle as a form of "everyday politics". These can be categorized as "social infrastructure" (S.M. Hall, 2020) as their aim is to enhance youth empowerment, active citizenship and a sense of belonging in marginalized urban areas. However, while a recent attention has been paid to understand how these local policies mobilize affects and relationality to "manage the unease" as an instrument of governmentality in marginalized areas (Fortier, 2010), scarce efforts has been put to understand the role of these actors in the politics of belonging' "battleground" (Ambrosini). Thus, this research employs a Bourdesian theoretical framework and through ethnographic observation, focus groups and interviews with youth and youth worker's, aims to understand how and what kind of politics of belonging is practiced by these actors.

References

Ambrosini, Maurizio

2021 «The battleground of asylum and immigration policies: a conceptual inquiry» in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 44.3: 374-395.

Fortier, Anne-Marie.

2010 «Proximity by design? Affective citizenship and the management of unease» in *Citizenship studies* 14.1: 17-30.

Hackl, Andreas.

2022 «Good immigrants, permitted outsiders: conditional inclusion and citizenship in comparison» in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 45.6 : 989-1010.

Hage, Ghassan

1998 «*White Nation. Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society*» New York, Routledge.

Hage, Ghassan

2003 *Against Paranoid Nationalism*, Pluto Press Australia.

Hall, Sarah Marie

2020 «Social reproduction as social infrastructure» in *Soundings* 76.76 (2020): 82-94.

Pratsinakis, Manolis

2018 «Established and outsider nationals: Immigrant-native relations and the everyday politics of national belonging» in *Ethnicities*, 18(1), 3-22.

Yuval-Davis, Niura

2006 «Belonging and the politics of belonging» in *Patterns of Prejudice* 40 (3), pp. 197-214.

Weiß, A.

2010 «Racist Symbolic Capital A Bourdieuan Approach to the Analysis of Racism» in Hund, W. D., Krikler, J., & Roediger, D. *Wages of Whiteness & Racist Symbolic Capital*.

Intergenerational "Family-like" Ties, Intercultural Community and Care. The Role of Shared Care Practices in the Growth Pathways of Preteens with Migration Backgrounds

Sara Damiola, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

sara.damiola1@unicatt.it

Migration is understood as a transnational phenomenon with a deep family connotation: indeed, there is a lack of understanding when these life trajectories are considered without questioning the relationships between family members living in different countries. The international literature has explored extensively the various nuances of transnationalism. To name but a few: economic, affective, identity and gender dynamics (Parreñas, 2005) have been taken into account. Particular attention has also been paid to care practices for children and the elderly, especially when they remain in the country of origin when one or both parents initiate the emigration process (Fan, Parreñas, 2018).

The study of childcare practices has led, among other aspects, to focus on a specific thematic area: that of intergenerational relations, i.e. relations between grandparents and grandchildren. The picture that emerges is one of a composite and complex map, with variable geometry, unfolding within multifaceted and mobile relational geographies. "Mobile" because in transnational families both grandchildren (Mazzucato et al., 2017) and grandparents (Nedelcu, Wyss, 2020) seem to be more inclined to move between countries of origin and immigration, for longer or shorter periods. Very often both grandparents and grandchildren move because of family needs related to childcare practices. Alongside these needs there are also reasons related to the desire to maintain family ties despite the distance, or to the identity dimension (to ensure that young people feel a sense of cultural and family belonging). It is precisely the opportunity to experience the relations up close, albeit for a limited time, that seems to play a central role in ensuring that intergenerational relationships are built and strengthened despite geographical distance: the educational and caring dimensions appear to be crucial in this sense (Baldassar et al., 2016).

The experience of children and teenagers with a migration background is thus shaped by constant references to the country of origin, but it unfolds every day in the *here*, in the country where the family migrates to. It therefore appears important to understand in the same way the intergenerational relationships that they may establish in the context of their daily lives, especially when these are interculturally characterised.

Some research has focused on this relational opportunity, particularly on the processes of *intercultural kinscripting*, here understood in its specific intergenerational connotation. One example is Souralová's (2019) study on Vietnamese immigrant families in the Czech Republic, which shows how young people perceive the relationships with their Czech caregivers in terms of grandparenthood. However, these ties don't replace those based on a common bloodline. Further references in this sense are reported in the literature (Ambrosini, 2019; Bonizzoni, 2014): what emerges is the possibility of building bonds that are experienced as "family", even if they are not based on shared biological belonging. These ties can fall under the definition of "fictive" (a term that is not exempt from critical views) or "voluntary kinship": in other words, kinship ties that are built independently of a common bloodline (Nelson, 2013). A relevant aspect concerns the fact that these bonds seem to be built and strengthened precisely around care practices (Drotbohm, Alber, 2015), similar to what happens within the family dimension in the narrower sense.

Given these references, the research project *Nurturing the Roots: Memory and Intergenerational Responsibility in an Intercultural Perspective* aimed to explore intergenerational ties in the experiences of preteens with migration background, both in the transnational family dimension and in the local intercultural community. A participatory and child-centred approach (Christensen, James, 2000) was used in this qualitative research to give children a voice. Two case studies were carried out within non-formal education services (in the cities of Brescia and Bergamo, in Northern Italy), identified through purposeful sampling (Merriam, 1998), for typical cases. Indeed, these are educational contexts that young people attend on a daily basis, but at the same time they have a community connotation, involving people from a plurality of ages and cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.

The case studies allowed, firstly, to collect the views of the preteens, focusing on the bonds with the figures they perceive as "grandparents" in their everyday life contexts, and to identify the factors that lead to such an attribution. These relationships are experienced both spontaneously and in the educational services. It emerged that the reasons why preadolescents ascribe the role of "grandparent" to these figures are not related to their

age or experience, but rather to a way of being and being in the relationship, which is characterised by care and affection. The dimension of care, in an educational sense, seems to be central in such relationships. In a further step, the points of view of older people (retired or soon to be retired) were gathered in addition to those of the preteens. They volunteer in these educational environments and accompany children and young people in extracurricular activities. The elderly highlighted the reasons for their involvement, the difficulties and obstacles they encounter, but also the mutual benefits they see in the possibility of establishing such ties. In conclusion, therefore, the contribution aims to report on the findings of the research, focusing on how these intergenerational care practices, experienced both in the informal dimension and in educational contexts, can express a transformative value. In this sense, they operate not only at a personal level, but also at a community dimension, generating a sense of co-belonging, relational goods and acting from a perspective of social justice. Finally, the study focused on possible ways to support and accompany these processes of collective and "civic care" from a pedagogical point of view.

References

- Ambrosini, Maurizio
 2019 *Famiglie nonostante. Come gli affetti sfidano i confini*, Bologna, Il Mulino.
- Baldassar, Loretta, Nedelcu, Mihaela, Merla, Laura, Wilding, Raelene
 2016 «ICT-based co-presence in transnational families and communities: Challenging the premise of face-to-face proximity in sustaining relationships», in *Global Networks*, 16(2), 133–144.
- Bonizzoni, Paola
 2014 «Immigrant Working Mothers Reconciling Work and Childcare: the Experience of Latin American and Eastern European Women in Milan», in *Social Politics*, 1-24.
- Christensen, Pia, James, Allison (Eds.)
 2000 *Research with Children. Perspectives and Practices*, New York, Routledge.
- Drotbohm, Heike, Alber, Erdmute (Eds.)
 2015 *Anthropological perspectives on care work, kinship, and the life-course*, Londra, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fan, Yu-Kang, Parreñas, Rachel Salazar
 2018 «Who Cares for the Children and the Elderly? Gender and Transnational Families», in Viorela Ducu et al. (Eds.), *Childhood and Parenting in Transnational Settings*, Cham, Springer International Publishing, pp. 83- 99.
- Mazzucato, Valentina, Dankyi, Ernestina, Poeze, Miranda
 2017 «Mapping Transnational Networks of Care from a Multi-actor and Multi-sited Perspective», in Claudio Bolzman et al. (Eds.), *Situating Children of Migrants across Borders and Origins. A Methodological Overview*, Cham, Springer International Publishing, pp. 269-284.
- Merriam, Sharan B.
 1998 *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publisher.
- Nedelcu, Mihaela, Wyss, Malika
 2020 «Transnational grandparenting: an introduction», in *Global Networks*, 20(2), 292–307.
- Nelson, Margaret K.
 2013 «Fictive Kin, Families We Choose, and Voluntary Kin: What Does the Discourse Tell Us?», in *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 5(4), 259-281.
- Parreñas, Rachel Salazar
 2005 «Long Distance Intimacy: Class, Gender and Intergenerational Relations Between Mothers and Children in Filipino Transnational Families», in *Global Networks*, 4(5), 317-336.
- Souralová, Adéla
 2019 «Grandparents, kinship ties, and belonging after migration: the perspective of second-generation grandchildren», in *Global Networks*, 20(2), 362–379.

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Chiara Bassetti, University of Trento
Elena Bougleux, University of Bergamo
Andrea Mubi Brighenti, University of Trento
Sebastiano Citroni, University of Insubria
Nick Dines, University of Milano Bicocca
Giolo Fele, University of Trento
Elena Fontanari, University of Milano
Paola Gandolfi, University of Bergamo
Pier Paolo Giglioli, University of Bologna
Alberta Giorgi, University of Bergamo
Marco Marzano, University of Bergamo
Cristina Mattiucci, University of Napoli "Federico II"
Gianmarco Navarini, University of Milano Bicocca
Francesca Pasquali, University of Bergamo
Domenico Perrotta, University of Bergamo
Federico Rahola, University of Genova
Timothy Rayermakers, University of Bologna
Stefania Yapo, University of Trento

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Chiara Bassetti, University of Trento
Andrea Mubi Brighenti, University of Trento
Viola Ciulli, University of Trento
Giolo Fele, University of Trento
Julia Tena Mensa, University of Trento
Stefania Yapo, University of Trento



**UNIVERSITÀ
DI TRENTO**

**Dipartimento di
Sociologia e Ricerca Sociale**

ETNOGRAFIA E RICERCA QUALITATIVA



il Mulino