Introduction: Displacement and New Sociabilities

Heike Drotbohm
August, 2018

In this thematic week we aim to think through the notion of displacement. At a time that is marked by unprecedented movements of refugees and migrants on the one hand, and deep-seated anxieties of becoming a "stranger to one's own land" (Hochschild 2016) on the other, we believe that it is pivotal to reconsider this idea from various perspectives. Bringing together eight social anthropologists who give insights into their on-going ethnographic research in different parts of the world, we tackle this theme by giving precedence to the often-dialectical ways

displacement and emplacement are experienced, lived and made sense of by groups and individuals.

Can the social rupture experienced by a refugee be compared to the struggles of the poor who are being pushed out of their houses, or to the uprootedness of a homeless person endlessly wandering the city? And can the feeling of desperation over the loss of one's home and belongings be compared to the feeling of alienation that tends to creep up on people who feel that they can no longer connect to the "homes" they have? Is there a link between a political, a social and existential sense of displacement?

Rather than compartmentalising these challenging questions, this thematic week aims to bring them into conversation with each other. We do so by creating the space for engagements with displacement that look at it from radically different angles, socio-political contexts and experiential horizons. In this vein, this week unites entries from places as diverse as squats in São Paulo's city centre, gatherings of unaccompanied minors in the Swiss Canton of Bern, a Starbucks café in inner-city Philadelphia, the transnational space extending between Germany and relatives living in Afghanistan and Iran, a shopping centre in Buenos Aires, a small tourist town in the Alps, wildfire- and austerity-affected Athens as well as a documentary on a tourist enclave in Oaxaca, Mexico. This diversity will provide insights into the experiences of refugees and migrants, as well as into the chosen displacement of tourists and expats, or the feelings of estrangement expressed by people who, at first sight, might appear to be very much settled.

The ethnographic vignettes, stories and moments the authors present in their articles allow us to move beyond the programmatic and taken-for-granted ways the term displacement is frequently used in public as well as in academic discourse.

We start from the premise that displacement is neither a local nor a contemporary experience or condition. Whether we consider historical dislocations in the

context of slavery, violent conquests and forced resettlements, urban regeneration projects, agrarian land reforms, natural catastrophes caused by drought, floods and famines, or man-made environmental disasters caused by nuclear fallouts, mega-dam constructions and mining operations –

> *displacement as an act, a condition and an experience is as old as human history.*

Photo by <u>Sasha Freemind</u> on <u>Unsplash</u>

As a theoretical concept displacement is also not new. It has played a crucial role in Western theory and thought. Social figures such as the stranger, the outcast, the pilgrim or the nomad already appear in prominent places in the old testament and Hebrew Bible, and themes such as exile, eternal wandering, estrangement from "home" and alienation are central motifs European thinkers and writers return to again and again throughout history (Petersen 1999). Displacement thus

needs to be read against the backdrop of particular genealogies of dislocation – both as a *condition* driven by histories of war, colonialism and violent conflicts and as a conceptual *metaphor* for an existential sense of rupture and alienation.

In current debates, displacement is predominantly used as an operational concept to describe the movements of people who have been forced to leave their homes and countries due to violent conflicts (Hammar 2014). This use has been strongly shaped by the aftermaths of the Second World War, when countries started to develop techniques for managing mass displacements (Long 2013). With the creation of displaced persons' camps across Europe, the establishment of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 1951 and the birth the Geneva Convention relating to the status of the refugee, the figure of the refugee emerged as a knowable and nameable object of knowledge (Malkki 1995: 2). This figure has come to dominate contemporary representations of displacement. It stands for a sense of trauma, loss and disorder, a rupture of the "national order of things" (Malkki 1995) that needs to be "fixed" through international laws and humanitarian interventions.

Given its strong connections to legal, humanitarian and policy debates, this framing of displacement is largely operational and neither allows for a critical questioning of the social and political production of this figure, nor of the discrepancy between discourses and actual experiences of displacement. In this thematic week we intend to move beyond the policy-oriented interpretation of the notion of displacement.

We argue that the labeling and iconographising of certain types of displacement went along with narratives and images that contributed to its naturalisation, producing a subject category associated with chaos, emergency, victimhood and passivity.

This partial understanding of displacement does not just generate analytical blind spots. As the events surrounding the European refugee "crisis" demonstrated, an understanding of displacement that is based on the panicked logic of crisis

(Holmes and Castañeda 2016) risks reproducing exclusionary ideas of belonging, entitlement and territoriality. We argue that these dynamics should be part and parcel of our critique and that we can therefore neither take the figure of the refugee nor the meaning of displacement as a social phenomenon for granted.

By creating a tapestry of divergent voices, stories and images, we aim to show that far from being a straightforward term to describe a disconnection from a given "natural" place of belonging,

> *displacement is a complex and multi-layered condition that is inextricably linked to the ailments of advanced capitalist societies.*

The sense of anguish, alienation and rupture inherent in displacement might therefore appear in the lifeworlds of people who have lost their homes due to a natural catastrophe amidst a country that is – politically and socially – "at fire" (Cabot) as much in the ceaseless struggles of refugees and "locals" to find a place they can call "home" amidst the increased gentrification and social fragmentation of urban centres (Drotbohm). A sense of 'being-out-of-place' can show in young refugees' attempts to work against societal forces that make them feel unsettled (Lems) as much as in the experiences of people whose freedom to move within a city is contested because of their racialized appearance (Ramsay). Displacement, two of our four entries make clear, can also correlate with time, when individuals relate their experiences of non-belonging to former times or to the ruptures lived simultaneously by their loved-ones living in other places (Moghaddari). Finally, also those living amidst touristic "paradises" can feel distant, trapped and out of place in their struggle to find a common temporal frame in which to live and to interact with other individuals inhabiting the same space (Leitenberg).

Photo by [Pedro Gabriel Miziara](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Importantly, the articles show that displacement cannot be thought of without its counterpart of emplacement. Places such as shopping centres that are often thought of as epitomes of displacement turn out to be important social spaces that allow for the creation of new sociabilities amongst people who struggle to claim a space of belonging elsewhere (Reiffen). Likewise, struggles *against* displacement – such as the fight against gentrification, or the young refugees' resistance against being pushed out of place – prove to be essentially struggles *for* emplacement. New sociabilities, according to Glick Schiller and Çağlar, that include relationships of social support, help, protection, resources and further social connections (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016: 19), can provide a sense of commonality, belonging and 'being-in-place' despite conditions of fragmentation and social exclusion. The contributions show that one and the same place can simultaneously harbour conditions of emplacement and displacement.

While analysing displacement from people's actual lived experiences allows us to bestow the concept of displacement with more nuance and complexity, this does not mean that we block out the political forces and power inequalities playing into

these experiences. Power discrepancies and structural impacts therefore form an important element of our analytical angles. A coastal fishing village in Mexico that forms the long-dreamed of escape from the pressures of capitalist society to some, can thus be experienced in terms of the exhaustive struggle against government forces attempting to expropriate their land by others (Reade's film). And a landscape that might be experienced as symbol of a primordial sense of belonging by some (Leitenberg) can violently reject other people's attempts at being included in the very same space (Lems).

By giving space to these divergent perspectives and experiences, we aim to explore displacement as a multidimensional and contradictory phenomenon that does not only allow us to reflect on the experiences of those who have been displaced, but also on the long and short-term processes that lead to exploitative and exclusive political configurations.

The authors of this thematic week are circumspect not to reproduce labels, categories and discursive figures that are based on a binary ontology of belonging and non-belonging to bodies, families, territories, cities, and nation states. By paying attention to the ambiguous and often-contradictory ways displacement appears in people's lifeworlds in socio-economic settings as divergent as those united here, we aim to move the discussion of displacement beyond (forced) migration literature and the citizen-migrant divide. Instead, we use displacement as a timely tool for examining processes and experiences of rupture, dispossession and estrangement on different scales and contexts.

References

Glick Schiller, Nina and Ayse Çağlar. 2016. "Displacement, Emplacement and Migrant Newcomers: Rethinking urban Sociabilities within Multiscalar Power." *Identities* 23 (1): 17-34.

Hammar, Amanda 2014. *Displacement Economies in Africa. Paradoxes of Crisis and Creativity*. London, New York: Zed books.

Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 2016. *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. New York: New Press.

Holmes, Seth and Heide Castañeda 2016. "Representing the "European Refugee Crisis" in Germany and Beyond: Deservingness and Difference, Life and Death." *American Ethnologist* 43 (1): 12–24.

Long, Katie 2013. "When Refugees Stopped Being Migrants: Movement, Labour and Humanitarian Protection." *Migration Studies* 1 (1): 4-26.

Malkki, Liisa. 1995. "Refugees and Exile: From "Refugee Studies" to the National Order of Things." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1): 495-523.

Peters, John Durham. 1999. "Exile, Nomadism, and Diaspora: The Stakes of Mobility in the Western Canon", in H. Naficy (ed.), *Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media, and the Politics of Place*. New York: Routledge, pp. 17–44.

Featured image by [Samuel Austin](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Shifting Sands – A film by Paul Reade

Heike Drotbohm
August, 2018

Tourism creates and depends on an entanglement of temporary and permanent displacements; at the same time it manipulates and projects dreams of freedom. This film looks at visions of freedom at "La Punta" on the coast of Oaxaca, Mexico. Peasants formed the community in the 1980s. At the same time tourism began to grow, first with surfers and backpackers, and now with retiree communities. The ongoing project explores the tensions and contradictions of those who wish to escape capitalism, those who wish not to be crushed and exploited by it, those who revel in its excess, and those who salvage a life at the fringes.

About the Author

Paul Reade is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Institute of Social Anthropology at the University of Bern. He completed his PhD in 2014 at Swinburne University in Melbourne, Australia. He is currently employed as part

of the SNF funded research project, "Trapped in Paradise: entangled mobilities and imaginaries of freedom," and is working in the tourist town of Puerto Escondido, Mexico.

https://vimeo.com/276265566

Reading the Signs: Dust, Smoke, and Displacement in Athens

Heath Cabot
August, 2018

'At home,' we are in full command of the dialectics of knowledge and recognition.
Jean Améry, "How Much Home Does a Person Need?" (1966: 47)

Thus we may reason as follows—'There is smoke; there is never smoke without fire; hence there has been fire.' Yet smoke is not the cause of fire but the effect of it.
Charles Sanders Peirce, "Grounds of Validity of the Laws of Logic" (1991: 95)

Where there's smoke there's fire?

Monday, July 23, the light changed suddenly outside my window in Athens: a dirty, yellowish tinge colored the pale buildings opposite my balcony. Wondering

what was going on, my partner and I went up onto the roof to find that the familiar summer blue sky, punctuated by soft clouds, had been obscured by a sulfurous haze traveling from beyond one of the surrounding mountains.

Fire? He hypothesized, alarmed.

Fire was certainly a good guess. Almost every year there are wildfires in Greece, some closer to Athens than others. [Just a few years ago (2015) we watched as airplanes circled our beloved mountain of Ymittos dumping tons of water to stifle the encroaching blaze—clearly visible from a high perch we found in the city center](). We had walked our dog through the wildflowers on Ymittos all that spring, but fire left the green trails, pines, and cypresses a charred bald mess. I have not returned there but once since then. Except for the church at the base of the mountain that remained undamaged, with its lush internal gardens, the whole mountainside had become unrecognizable.

Or 11 years ago: when I took the bus through the Peloponnese to Kalamata, [after the horrific fires of 2007]() destroyed olive groves, villages, and houses, killing 84 people, many of them elderly people in their village homes. My mouth hung open alongside other passengers as we passed through kilometers and kilometers of burned countryside: [as if the rolling hills had been turned inside out to expose the land of the dead]().

But for some reason, this time, we shook our heads. And just like others we spoke with throughout the afternoon, we somehow decided that what looked like smoke must be what Athenians tend to call "the dust from Africa:" the wind carrying the desert sand all the way across the Mediterranean basin, bringing an uncanny light to the city and spilling a thin layer of dust, necessitating new cycles of mopping. We walked to the city center in the strange yellow-red light, as wild winds turned potted plants upside down and pulled fig trees into the street. What is going on? People asked.

"Dust from Africa" seemed to be the consensus.

The fires (for they were, in fact, fires …) had moved as fast as that wild wind—faster than news could travel, at least by mouth. Within a half hour, the village of Mati, just outside Athens, where one of my friends grew up, was "no longer recognizable as a settlement anymore," in a quote that has been repeated often in the newspaper since. As the sky over Athens began to clear, and the wind calmed, only later did we check the news to learn that droves of people had been forced into the sea, or stuck on the highway owing to the worst fires to rip through Greece since 2007. People had burned in groups of families, friends, and strangers. Hundreds lost their homes.

Tragedies and Solidarities

The following day I visited one of my recent fieldsites, the Social Pharmacy of Vyronas, located in a separate municipality just outside the Athens city center. There, people draw on the theory and practice of solidarity to collect and redistribute medicines, at no cost, to those who need them: Greeks and non-Greeks; pensioners, refugees, long-term migrants (Bonanno Dissertation in process; Cabot 2016; Teloni and Adam 2013). Along with other "solidarity initiatives" such extra-state, grass-roots responses are a key way in which residents of Greece have dealt with the economic difficulties following the debt crisis and the ongoing devastation of austerity (Loukakis 2018; Rakopoulos 2014; Rakopoulos 2016; Rozakou 2016; Rozakou 2018; Theodossopoulos 2016).

Those who assist at the Vyronas social pharmacy are a chatty and generous bunch, though they face their own difficulties with money, work, family, health, and otherwise. And yet, through the daily work of sorting and redistributing medicines, they offer assistance and also—in the words of one of my interlocutors— "pass their time," finding purpose and sociability.

We discussed the horror of the stories that had been surfacing:

Mati was like a contemporary Pompei.

People had drowned in the sea seeking protection; they had also drowned from

the smoke.

A group of twenty-six people had burned embracing one another, in some cases making it impossible to tell bodies apart.

And then we discussed the political aspects of this "natural" disaster:

[The suspicion (and now certainty) that a fire this bad cannot have been accidental](#).

That the government had yet again failed to protect the people: How could people have been left to drown in the sea? [Why had the coastguard or rescue boats not come for them](#) (though they had saved many in the nearby port of Rafina, and [Egyptian fishermen saved numerous people stuck in the sea](#))? Meanwhile, the poor response had also been linked to austerity: there had been 30% cuts in the state's fire-fighting capacity, and people had not been able to maintain their properties in ways that would ameliorate fire, owing to ongoing financial difficulties. And finally, [there was the inaccessibility of escape routes owing to years of unregulated development](#), which trapped hundreds on the highway seeking to flee the fires, leaving some to die in the charred skeletons of their cars.

We also discussed the solidarities: That locals and foreign tourists (Germans and Danes and Dutch) had also been working in the rescue effort. That municipal collection centers have had to make a plea to people to STOP SENDING SUPPLIES—so many have rallied to respond to the need in the wake of the fires.

And finally, we collectively expressed surprise and even shame at how each of us had assumed that the uncanny light in the city was simply "dust from Africa," while fires raged just down the coast.

"Greece is burning"

Against the backdrop of such fires, ["Greece is burning"](#) has often been used as a kind of metaphor for the political and economic ferments that have rocked the

country since even before the debt crisis and the onset of austerity. Particularly when cited by Greeks themselves, "burning" often seems to signify what many characterize as a failure of the state to protect its people. In the massive protests following the 2007 fires, "they burn our forests and our lives" resonated as a cry against what many saw as the poor response of the state to keep the fires under control and rescue victims.

In these latest fires—some of the largest casualties any country has suffered in forest fires in the last hundred hears—structural and political-economic factors (combined with climate change, arson, and strong winds) seem to have produced the perfect crucible for the Attic coast to burn.

But the "burning" of Greece extends beyond forest fires. In 2008, the massive protests against the shooting, by a police officer, of fifteen year old Alexandros Grigoropoulos, led to the burning of banks in the city center by certain groups of protesters (and the deaths of four workers); as well as, of course, the violent response of police (Dalakoglou and Vradis 2011). In 2011, fascist attacks against migrants constituted what the press called out-and-out "pogroms" (Cheliotis 2013). In 2013, the killing of anti-Fascist rapper Pavlos

Fyssas was met not just with outrage and disorientation by many citizens on the Left, but also with speculation that many members of the police were in collusion with the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn. Such revelations highlighted, yet again, how Greece was "burning:" how many saw the state apparatus as not just irresponsible but perhaps actively enacting violence on its citizens.

After Alexis Tsipras of the Syriza Coalition was elected in 2015, amid an atmosphere of rising hope among much of the population, the re-imposition of austerity—despite the referendum of July 5, 2015, in which the vast majority of Greeks voted "no" to austerity measures—led again to extensive unrest, as well as a glaring mistrust of the state that has resurfaced and, for many, remained. Protests following the referendum were marked by the usual tear gas and Molotov cocktails—another instance of the "burning" of Greece. Now, as Greece

leaves "the troika," incessant discussions in the international press in Mid-August, 2018, focus on the instability that will now face the country as it strikes out "on its own," so to speak.

These 2018 fires are thus the latest and most dramatic example of the ongoing precaritization of a populace that increasingly does not recognize itself "at home," and which has (in the view of many) been left "to burn" by the state—and also by Europe.

Selves and Others

From my safe position in Athens (uninformed as I was), the consensus that what hung over the city was "dust from Africa" is telling. The alien haze was assumed to come from somewhere else: not unlike the over-a-million seekers of refuge who have passed through Greece since 2015.

It was not unreasonable to interpret the uncanny light in Athens that day as "dust from Africa," as it has been a particularly heavy season of "African Dust" this year in Greece. News coverage sometimes describes the African dust in terms of "waves" (like waves on the sea, or "waves" of migration). Health warnings highlight the respiratory risks, and how dust (like smoke, like water) can "drown" those who breathe it. But this time, that alien fog indexed the horror of a burning village just down the coast, where many Athenians go to the sea on hot summer weekends.

As Charles Sanders Peirce noted long ago, where there is smoke there is usually fire. Smoke is my standard classroom "go to" example of indexicality: a sign that necessarily points to the attendant causal (if not always visibly present) reality of fire. In this case, however, the smoke—misread as dust from Africa—has since come to index also the failure of the state to fulfill its protective role; and a failure of Europe, which, through austerity, has demanded absurd cuts in the state's protective capacities—the winnowing away of the state's "Left Hand" (Bourdieu 1999).

Since doing research in Greece in the context of austerity, I have had to learn to think differently about displacement. In my earlier work, [an ethnographic study of asylum in Greece](#) (Cabot 2014), I focused on the legal processes affecting refugees and asylum seekers and the role of human rights lawyers and humanitarian workers in responding to their predicaments. At the end of the book (written in 2013) I hypothesized that with the debt crisis and austerity the meaning of citizenship—and understandings of the relationship between self and other—might be changing even more dramatically. But I had not, at that time, fully comprehended how the Greece of today would so radically alter the way both I and my field interlocutors drew the line between insiders and outsiders.

The displacements of hundreds and maybe thousands by the fire speak to an overarching context in which the shape of the socio-political body in Greece has radically changed. The dominant liberal vision of European citizenship—in which citizens are *entitled* to civil rights, and non-citizens (or "aliens") must claim and seek human rights—no longer seems to apply on Europe's margins.

At the social pharmacies, diverse categories of people—some who have crossed national borders, others of whom may have only moved from their home villages to Athens many years ago—have had to negotiate often urgent forms of need. Basic "rights" such as shelter, food, medicine—not to mention civil rights such as education and pensions—have been thrown, for various populations in Greece, deeply into question. As such, so-called "regular Greeks" have often sought assistance at diverse extra-state initiatives (grassroots networks, as well as formal humanitarian organizations like Médecins du Monde and Médecins Sans Frontieres); alongside people who, not so long ago, might have been clearly marked as "others:" migrants and refugees, the chronically poor, and addicts.

Indeed, Medicins' Sans Frontieres—not just the Greek state—has now set up a major intervention in the aftermath of the fires in Mati.

Among my field interlocutors, I have heard new accounts of the relationship between Greeks and "foreigners." Such accounts attest to how categories of

mobile and more sedentary populations, "migrants" and "citizens," have become increasingly unclear—both to scholars and interlocutors themselves—in ongoing contexts of precaritization. [1] In 2015-16, I heard the frequent sentiment that because Greeks have experienced displacement themselves throughout their modern and contemporary history (specifically via the 1923 population exchange), they are particularly well-equipped to assist newly arrived refugees. Or that Greeks during the crisis have become "internal refugees," and so their struggles and interests overlap with those of recent arrivals. Of course, there are also narratives that redraw the boundaries of the *ethnos* even more robustly: that Greeks have been abandoned by their state—why should refugees receive housing, food, and a stipend? Or as I heard repeatedly in Lesvos this past summer, many locals on the island (which became an international symbol not just of the refugee crisis but of local solidarity with refugees) resent not just new arrivals, but the foreign humanitarian organizations and workers who have taken on such a powerful and interventionist presence in the Aegean. Recent fascist attacks attest to the unstable and shifting "mood" that indexes relationships between self and other (Borneman and Ghassem-Fachandi 2017).

The Uncanny

Last summer I met with a friend who has been living and working in elsewhere in Europe for the past few years. He seeks to mobilize Greeks who, like him, have had to leave to find work elsewhere (an enormous outmigration that has accompanied austerity). He helps to organize shipments of pharmaceuticals from other European countries to numerous social pharmacies within Greece.

He mused that when he comes back to Athens to see his family he experiences a feeling of ανοίκειο.

This is a word I had never heard in all my years in Greece, so we looked it up: the *uncanny*. He explained that he no longer really recognizes the city where he grew up; and yet, it remains strangely familiar. Panoramas and encounters (of and with public space, objects, persons, practices) seem simultaneously utterly

transformed and ineluctably the same.

Ανοικειο references the German *unheimlich* which, [as Bettina Stoetzer (2014) highlights in her work on public space in Berlin](#), connotes both "being without a home" and Freud's description of being unable to trust one's senses. The uncanny thus captures affective, sensual, and psychic aspects of displacement. Jean Améry (1980) , in his exquisite essay "How Much Home Does a Person Need?" locates the experience of displacement in an incapacity to "read the signs" and decipher them correctly (47). He tells the story of how, having fled the Holocaust, he encounters an SS officer in Belgium who addresses him in his local dialect; he is moved by the irrational desire to unveil himself, to answer in the same dialect—even though he knows this would mean imprisonment and even death. But he moves on, and swallows that yearning for the home that has become strange and even hostile.

Displacement, as I am learning to understand it in contemporary Athens, is never complete. It entails twists and turns: moments of shock and surprise that the displaced (the persecuted, the burned, who fled into the sea) were actually very much at "home," as well as the slow accretion of experiences that turn one's home and homeland inside out. Displacement speaks not just of the loss of a home across national borders but also of the uncanny: that home that has become unfamiliar or even hostile. The police officer who might kill or threaten you, the government that does not protect you, the uncertainty about whether and how to trust one's senses or read the signs. An Attic village and popular spot for swimming has become the land of the dead. Dust from Africa—a displacing wind that itself calls up the Mediterranean's own long history as a sea of displacements—is in fact a fire burning just over the hills.

Works Cited

Améry, Jean. 1980. At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on

Auschwitz and its Realities. S. Rosenfeld and S. P. Rosenfeld, transl. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Anderson, Bridget. 2017. Keynote address: "Troubling Migration?". *In* IMER: International Migration and Etniska Relationer. Örebro, Sweden.

Bonanno, Letizia. Dissertation in process. Pharmaceutical Redemption: reconfigurations of care in austerity – ridden Athens. University of Manchester.

Borneman, John, and Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi. 2017. The concept of Stimmung: From indifference to xenophobia in Germany's refugee crisis. Journal of Ethnographic Theory 7(3):105-135.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1999. Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market. New York, New York: The New Press.

Cabot, Heath. 2014. On the doorstep of Europe : asylum and citizenship in Greece. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Cabot, Heath. 2016. Contagious solidarity: reconfiguring care and citizenship in Greece's social clinics. Social Anthropology 24(2):152-166.

Cheliotis, Leonidas. 2013. Behind the veil of philoxenia: The politics of immigration detention in Greece. European Journal of Criminology 10(6):725-745.

Dahinden, Janine. 2016. A plea for the 'de-migranticization'of research on migration and integration. Ethnic and Racial Studies 39(13):2207-2225.

Dalakoglou, Dimitris, and Antonis Vradis. 2011. Spatial legacies of December and the right to the city. Revolt and crisis in Greece:77-88.

Isin, Engin. 2018. Mobile peoples: Transversal configurations. Social Inclusion 6(1):115-123.

Loukakis, Angelos. 2018. Not Just Solidarity Providers. Investigating the Political Dimension of Alternative Action Organisations (AAOs) during the Economic Crisis

in Greece. PArtecipazione e COnflitto 11(1):12-37.

Nieswand, Boris, and Heike Drotbohm. 2014. Einleitung: Die reflexive Wende in der Migrationsforschung. *In* Kultur, Gesellschaft, Migration. Pp. 1-37: Springer.

Rakopoulos, Theodoros. 2014. The crisis seen from below, within, and against: from solidarity economy to food distribution cooperatives in Greece. Dialectical Anthropology 38:189-207.

Rakopoulos, Theodoros. 2016. Solidarity: the egalitarian tensions of a bridge concept. Social Anthropology 24(2):142-151.

Rozakou, Katerina. 2016. Socialities of solidarity: revisiting the gift taboo in times of crises. Social Anthropology 24(2):185-199.

Rozakou, Katerina.2018. Από «αγάπη» και «αλληλεγγύη»: Εθελοντική εργασία με πρόσφυγες στην Αθήνα του πρώιμου 21ου αιώνα [From "Love" and "Solidarity:" Voluntary work with refugees in early 21st centure Athens. Athens: Alexandria.

Stoetzer, Bettina. 2014. A path through the woods: remediating affective landscapes in documentary asylum worlds. *Transit*, *9*(2).

Teloni, Dimitra-Dora, and Sofia Adam. 2013. Solidarity Clinics and social work in the era of crisis in Greece. International Social Work:00208872816660604.

Theodossopoulos, Dimitrios. 2016. Philanthropy or solidarity? Ethical dilemmas about humanitarianism in crisis afflicted Greece. Social Anthropology 24(2):167-184.

[1] I, like other scholars, would suggest that in fact this distinction has always been fluid and, in many ways arbitrary (Anderson 2017; Dahinden 2016; Isin 2018; Nieswand and Drotbohm 2014). Yet how interlocutors and scholars themselves understand what these categories connote tends to change according

to social and political-economic context.

Stranger in paradise

Danaé Leitenberg
August, 2018

This post explores the notion of displacement through the experience of Franziska, who has spent her whole life in a peaceful touristic village of the Swiss Alps. I argue that her experience of displacement can be explained through conflicting temporalities.

"To live where others spend their holiday", says Franziska admiring the breath-taking panorama on the Swiss Alps before telling me what a luxury she thinks this is. It is a perfect winter morning of February; the sun is high and the snow is fresh. We are sipping our coffees on the terrace of a winter ski bar between two ski descents. It is still early and we're almost alone. The crowd of skiers is probably about to arrive but, for now, I also feel privileged.

Franziska is a local woman from a touristic village at the foot of these mountains, the place where I have conducted fieldwork for a year[1]. Now in her late 40es, she was born a couple of kilometres further down the valley and has been living here her whole life. The idyllic depiction Franziska gives me that morning sounds familiar. Firstly, because she is a genuinely joyful and positive person who never gets bored with this view, and secondly, because I have read similar touristic slogans on advertisement boards in virtually every cable car, bus or train I have travelled within the region. Later that day, however, she describes another reality: that of feeling lonely and suffering from a lack of social connections in the village, despite her deep affection for the place she has grown up in and a house she has been cherishing for the past twenty-three years.

At first, the difficulties she encountered with building and maintaining relationships in the village over the years came as a surprise. While I had been warned early on that the locals were right-wing conservative, "cold and not easily approachable mountain people", I did not expect them – probably naively – to suffer from this distance too.

This post explores how feelings of displacement can occur in a context that is nonetheless not solely defined by outburst of violence, forced exile, migration and spatial movement.

Instead, I propose to examine other facets of the experience of displacement through the accounts of one local woman living in a picturesque and peaceful touristic village in the Swiss Alps. More precisely, I will stress the role of temporality in her experience.

As a first step, let me go back to my naive expectations of finding a strong social community in my fieldwork location. I now believe it was in fact not just naïve; it was rooted in an imaginary of the Swiss Alps as the epitome of Home. To fully understand the implications of such discourses for Franzika's experience, I will provide a brief historical overview on how the Swiss alpine landscapes became home for international tourists and nationalists.

Back in the 17th century, scientist Johannes Hofer theorized the concept of homesickness or *Heimweh* to describe the illness of Swiss soldiers abroad, longing for their homeland. When hearing a Swiss shepherd song called *the Kuhreihen*, the soldiers would be reminded of the place and the life (as peasants) they had left behind and fall into deep sadness (Lems 2016). According to Hofer, only a return to the Swiss Alps could cure this potentially deadly pathology.

> *For the two next centuries, Romantic artists and authors' use of Heimweh mirrored their own understanding of nostalgia. No longer symptomatic of an illness caused by displacement, nostalgia became a sign of the modern times and a positive reaction against the galloping industrialization processes taking place in Europe.*

The figure of the Swiss soldier became that of a rebel, deeply bounded to place and traditions in a world of movement and discontinuity (Lems 2016:7). This contributed to a mythification of the Alps as a place of resistance, where one could reconnect with Nature in its purity. The valleys that saw their inhabitants leave for war in the 17th century welcomed their first[2] Romantic tourists in the 18th century. Voluntarily leaving their own urban and industrialized homes, they sought for experiences of the Sublime in the Alps, where they believed Man truly and naturally belonged. Ironically, this paved the way for further technological progress with the industrialization of tourism in the Alps. At the turn of the 20th century, Switzerland's peaks had become touristic hotspots, usually accessible by train and/or cable car.

In the 1930s, in response to the rising nationalism of its neighbours, Switzerland's alpine identity was no longer synonymous with hospitality but hostility (Zimmer 1998). Hotels welcoming tourists were now hosting soldiers as part of the national defence strategy and guests turned into potential enemies[3]. Mountains became barricades, standing physically and metaphorically against the German invader. Not only did the Alps serve as a unifying force against external threat but also as a means to maintain social cohesion in a country with no ethnolinguistic nor political commonality and transformed unevenly by industrialization processes. Building up on Romantic ideals of natural purity, the mountains were increasingly perceived as a conservative safeguard against modernity and its abuses, such as "cosmopolitanism and foreign immigration" (Zimmer 1998: 665). The word *Heimat* – approximately translated as "homeland" in English – gained popularity, especially in the context of Nazi Germany.

Between feelings of love/loss, patriotism, nationalism, political propaganda and administrative categories, the concept of Heimat is not easily definable and still debated nowadays.

However, its political use and especially calling for its protection and preservation has often legitimized exclusion of those perceived not to belong in it, in Switzerland as well as in the rest of the German-speaking world until today (Groebner 2017). The Alps have often stood for Swiss identity, traditions, a certain idea of resistance, security and freedom, and, in political discourses and popular imageries, as a symbol of *Heimat*. A *Heimat* in which not everyone is welcome. Even less so with the rise of the now strongest political party of Switzerland – the far-right Swiss People's Party (SVP) – which has been posing immigration as a threat for the past four decades. Historically popular in the Alpine regions of the Swiss German part, like Franziska's village, the SVP has coexisted with a successful hospitality industry that has been welcoming tourists from all over the world until today.[4]

During more than two centuries, artists, scientists and politicians theorized ideas

of nostalgia, *Heimweh* and *Heimat* around the landscape Franziska and I were looking at from the ski bar's terrace on that morning of February. While she did not express any feelings of homesickness, I came to realize that being in her homeland, her *Heimat* and at home, did not mean that she was not longing for another idea of home. To make this point clearer, I have to shed light on the objects of Franzika's yearning.

Franziska and I are chatting in her kitchen. The walls are covered with posters of Swiss mountains and Edelweiss flowers (the national symbol). After a while, she confesses that she genuinely wishes she had lived in the past, in a previous era she has never even witnessed. She would have liked to live before tourism appeared in the region, to experience something different from the "fast, non-committal, hurried times" (*schnelle, unverbindliche, hetzige Zeit*), as she puts it. Franziska feels lost in a world of increasing technology and fast mobility "where one can take his car and leave anytime if he feels like it". Building long-term, meaningful relationships in that context seems not to be possible nor important for others, even superficial. But not for Franziska, who does not like the current atmosphere in the village: "We're anonymous to each other".

By looking back to the past, she does not simply formulate a critique of the fast-paced contemporary society.

In pre-tourism times, her ancestors were also much poorer, which, in her opinion, is synonymous with greater solidarity and social cohesion. "People are doing too good now", she regrets. On many occasions, Franziska criticizes the greediness of her fellow villagers and how tourism has improved their financial situations but also dismissed the necessity for them to come together. For her, like other inhabitants of the valley, tourism is the only mean to secure a living but this does not come without sacrifices: "Tourism and the constant coming and going of tourists has probably made locals *unruhig* (restless, uneasy, anxious)". The arrival of "seasonal workers" from Portugal has complicated things too. Franziska regrets that they did not make efforts to "integrate" nor learn the language,

which makes communication almost impossible. Even though she knows that many of them have been here for the last twenty years and have learned Swiss German, she still calls them "guest-workers", like the rest of the locals do. Maybe in the hope that they will leave again.

Contrasting with the uneasiness and problems brought by tourism, she tells me about a motive often celebrated in traditional Swiss folk music called the *Bänkli vor em Hüsli* (the little bench in front of the little house): "In front of my little house, there is a small bench, where I used to play as a little boy. (…) And a neighbours' pretty little daughter was often sitting next to me. (…) And the little girl is now my wife"[5], goes one of the yodel songs. As if Franzika had been there too, once a long, long time ago or in a distant dream, she describes how people would often go to their neighbours, sit on the bench and chat for a while, "because they didn't have a TV back then". If not for romantic relationships, like in the song, the *Bänkli* stands for the possibility to tie authentic, long-lasting bonds, which, Franzika feels, has gone lost.

The discussion goes on and, as I mentally wander with her through the nostalgic depiction of a premodern Switzerland, she suddenly radically changes direction. She tells me about the need to build new cableways that enable the tourists to reach the peaks faster and will secure the leading position of her village on the very competitive marketplace of mountain tourism. "We have overslept", she says, in the words of a tourism lobbyist I have read in the local newspaper. They have to catch up with time, otherwise "tourism will disappear" and the future of the region with it. The rosy pictures called up by Franziska's nostalgic dreams have now faded away. I imagine the fastest, latest cable cars going through landscapes that locals nonetheless call their "capital". The new project is needed for the whole valley and for the future of the inhabitants' kids. And for those thinking that now is enough, tourism actors warn not to not trust appearances: "The greatest threat to your future success is current success". Franziska is convinced that the new project is better for the common good but admits not needing it personally. "I am scared by the dimensions of the project", she concludes, "but it is needed".

The numerous conversations I had with Franziska have often left me confused. Making her best to explain what disturbed her in the village and why she felt so lonely sometimes, she would usually target two tendencies that I only was able to identify retrospectively: on the one side, she was hurt by the "narrow-mindedness" and suspicious attitude of her fellow villagers towards everything "new and different"; on the other, she was puzzled by the fast pace of tourism and technology, overwhelmed with the numbers of tourists and the constant pressure to make more money and build more. Franziska was suffering from the villagers' judgmental attitude, who would perceive her as lazy and remind her of her abnormality because she didn't work[6]. She often felt left out for reasons she couldn't understand. But, when hoping for more tolerance, she would adopt a neoliberal posture, stating that this narrow-mindedness also stood in the way for the hospitality industry's success. However, standing behind tourism also meant accepting its negative effects on the village, and Franziska couldn't. She would almost naturally end up criticizing the bad behaviour of Asian "mass tourists" or immigrant "guest-workers", reproducing what she was denouncing first.

There was no alternative to social conservatism or neoliberalism and she was lost in their contradictions.

Unlike the Swiss soldiers in the 17th century, her experience of displacement was not associated with spatiality but, rather, temporality. Squeezed between memories of a past that resembled that of the nationalists' lost *Heimat* and the short-term future promoted by touristic technocrats, the space left for a real consideration of *the present* seemed very small. Too small for Franziska to build friendships at least. If, according to Benedict Anderson (1983), the perception of a simultaneous, homogeneous time is an essential feature of the "imagined community", Franziska's struggles to find a common temporal frame in which to live and to interact with her fellow villagers, tourists and guest-workers helps to understand her experience as *temporal displacement*. And she was not the only one to feel that way.

References

Anderson, Benedict. 1983 (2006). *Imagined Communities*. Verso.

Groebner, Valentin. 2017. Vorrecht: Über die Geschichte und den Presis eines Scheins, in Stapferhaus Lenzburg (ed.) *Heimatland, eine Grenzerfahrung*, 148-159.

Lems, Annika. 2016. Ambiguous longings: Nostalgia as the interplay among self, time and world. *Critique of Anthropology* 0(0): 1-19.

Zimmer, Olivier. 1998. In Search of Natural Identity: Alpine Landscape and the Reconstruction of the Swiss Nation. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 40(4), 637-665.

[1] In order to protect my main informant, I have decided to anonymize her name and not to mention the name of my fieldwork location. My doctoral thesis is part of a project funded by the Science National Swiss Foundation under the supervision of Prof. Sabine Strasser at the University of Berne. My colleague, Dr. Paul Reade, is conducting fieldwork in Mexico as part of the same project.

[2] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe being one of the first, along with Jean-Jacques Rousseau for instance.

[3] Etymologically, the words "hospitality" and "hostility" share the same roots, both deriving from the Proto-Indo-European ghos-ti-, just like the words "host", "guest", "stranger" and "enemy": https://www.etymonline.com/word/*ghos-ti-

[4] Not without conflicts. The Swiss tourism industry has faced some criticism for accepting guests from the Middle-East wearing niqabs.

[5] "Vor mim Hüsli, da steit s Bänkli, ha viel as chliine Bueb da druf gspielt (…) und a Nachbur, sis herzig Meitli hat sich viel zu mir aufs Bänkli gsetzt. Und das

Meitli isch hüt mis Fraueli": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AK4L7TtMeMs

[6] She had stopped working after having her children and never started again. In the village, most of women and men were involved either in farming or tourism. She was not.

Bench acquaintances: Finding one's place in a Buenos Aires shopping centre #Displacement

Franziska Reiffen
August, 2018

In a situation of displacement, migrants and Argentinians forge social relations and thereby emplace themselves in a Buenos Aires shopping centre.

Doing research on mobility and displacement in Buenos Aires, I got to know some of my most important interlocutors while being rather immobile myself, sitting on a bench in the shopping centre Paseo La Estación. The Paseo, a two-storey building directly opposite the most frequented train station of Buenos Aires city, offers a broad range of cheap shops run mostly by Latin American and African migrants, as well as seating for shoppers and passers-by who use the shopping centre as a shortcut to reach the bus stations at its rear. I sat down on a simple, dark grey metal bench with three seats to each side (see image above). Instead of being a point of observation that would enable me to quietly take note of what was going on in this shopping centre, the bench turned out to be a socializing hub

where I could hardly stay without getting involved. The stories of Luz, Malena and Julio [1], who got to know each other on the bench, shed light on the ways social relations emerge in a place of transit and among people struggling to find a place in the city of Buenos Aires.

Luz (42) followed her older sister Elizabeth from Peru to Argentina in 2000. Like many other migrants from Latin American and African countries she worked as a street vendor, until the birth of her son Rafael in 2007. Around this time, she started to sell mobile phones, headphones, USB sticks and other PC accessories. She still worked as a mobile vendor, constantly moving around with her baby but realized that she longed for a job that was '*más sedentario*' (more sedentary) for the sake of her baby boy. 'I was selling mobile phones, and this made me kind of afraid. Because the people who sell mobile phones … get robbed, get attacked', she stated. 'It was not for me but for Rafael. And as he was little, and because of the cold, and everything.' In addition, street selling has become more challenging in Buenos Aires since the beginning of the 2000s because of the increased police persecution of street vendors (Pita et al. 2017). This has made many former street vendors like Luz opt for renting a fixed shop. Luz took over a clothes shop, formerly rented by Elizabeth, in the Paseo, established a successful business and was able to open up three other shops in the same locality, one of which she gave back to her older sister in 2017. By 2018, Luz, Elisabeth and two other sisters who had all grown up in Lima, Peru, worked in the shopping centre as shop tenants or vendors. One of Luz' stores stood directly next to the bench.

Malena (40) had already been frequenting the shopping centre and the bench regularly for a while before Luz started to talk to her in early 2017. But Luz had noted Malena's presence before, thinking that she was a prostitute. In fact, sex workers and potential clients used to frequent the bench to establish contacts, but Malena was not one of them. Malena lived in a women's shelter in the Constitución neighbourhood one block away from the shopping centre and had to pass the time between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. when the shelter was closed. During this time, its inhabitants had to find other places to spend their time. Malena, like many others, liked to hang out in the Paseo la Estación.

When I got to know Luz and Malena in March 2018, Malena had moved to a shelter in another part of the city but still used to come to Constitución almost on a daily basis. Here, Luz and Malena shared a *mate* or a coffee with the hot water from a water dispenser in Luz' store and chatted. Luz sometimes invited Malena to spend the night in her apartment. Both of them enjoyed this, because Malena could relax better in Luz' apartment than in the women's shelter, and Luz enjoyed Malena's company. From time to time, Malena cleaned Luz' apartment and, occasionally, she helped Luz transport goods from the wholesale market. When Malena did not turn up for a reason unknown to Luz, she would mutter worriedly: 'Malena has not come yet. Where is she?' Luz cared a lot about her bench acquaintances; she told me that she always started to worry when she did not see a person for a while, and Malena in particular. She had become very used to and fond of her presence.

Malena had come to Buenos Aires from the province of Corrientes in the 1990s. She had family in Corrientes and two brothers somewhere on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, but she had broken with her family for reasons unknown even to Luz. She did not speak to anyone about how she had ended up living in a shelter. What she did speak about was how much she liked coming to this shopping centre. She had spent a while in a shelter in Microcentro, the city centre, and had been forced to hang out in the Microcentro neighbourhood while waiting for the shelter to open again at night. But she had not liked it. 'I felt like this was not *mi lugar* (my place)', she explained. And she added: '*En Microcentro, no quiero <u>estar</u>*. I don't want to <u>be</u> in Microcentro. I stay there for one hour and already want to leave.' Her feeling of being in the right or the wrong place was linked directly to the people she found herself surrounded by. 'There [in Microcentro] are more tourists, the more snobbish people go there. … People with money.' Here in the Paseo, by contrast, people were '*más humilde*' (humbler), as my interlocutors used to say. In the Paseo, Malena knew Luz and her sisters, as well as many others who used to come by regularly and chat for a while. Here, she visibly felt 'in her place'; she went in and out of Luz' shop to prepare her *mate*, took a stool from Luz' store that she always placed at the bottom of the stairs opposite the

bench, a position that enabled her to observe Luz' shop and the bench, but without being in the way of the passers-by. She greeted those she knew, chatted, laughed a lot, and sometimes she sang a song.

Similar to other shelter inhabitants whom I got to know in the shopping centre, Malena differentiated between people '*en situación de calle*', homeless people literally living on the street, and herself, who did not have a flat but did not live on the street. However, her situation was not far away from being on the street, she admitted. In the shelter, each inhabitant had to register and stick to certain rules of behaviour, such as not fighting with others and always leaving a notice when one would not turn up, so that another person in need could take the free sleeping place. Those who violated the rules could be thrown out: 'If they throw you out there, you are *en la calle* (on the street). And after the street, there is nothing more to come.'

La calle was not only feared by those who were close to living on it. Constitución is considered a problematic part of town, not only by the city government, the police and the journalists who regularly report on the drug dealing, prostitution and robbery in the district, but also by many inhabitants and those who do not live there but work or spend their time in the shopping centre. Within surroundings perceived to be dangerous by many, the shopping centre was a comparatively safe and quiet place to stroll around, sit and relax. This was why Julio, a man in his late sixties, had started to frequent the Paseo. Julio lived in Berazategui in southern Buenos Aires province and worked several days a week as a car-park attendant on a golf-course in La Plata on an irregular basis, i.e. without a contract or insurance. He had done this work for more than 20 years, but even before that, he had hardly ever been employed on a regular basis. When he had some spare time, he frequented Constitución, where the train from La Plata and Berazategui ended. He enjoyed being in the Paseo, where he sat on different benches, including the one in front of Luz' store, and chatted to different people who worked there and who had got used to him dropping in regularly. He brought newspapers he had collected elsewhere and that were thankfully received by Luz and Malena, who would then lean over them and discuss the

latest news.

Julio talked to Malena and Luz, as well as to complete strangers sitting on the bench as long as they inspired his confidence. Very often, his conversations with strangers were exchanges about how dangerous the city was, what crimes had been reported lately on television and the tricks thieves would apply to rob people in the street. This was certainly a topic that strangers could talk about easily because many followed the dramatic crime reports delivered on television. However, I noticed after a while that Julio was really afraid of being *en la calle*. Julio suffered from problems with one of his knees and used a walking stick that was too short for him, which made him appear more crooked than he needed to be. His crooked walking made him feel even more insecure, because he did not see everything well enough and felt that he appeared an easy and feeble victim. Apparently, he had observed how others had been robbed and had experienced being robbed himself. At the same time, he did not want to stay at home when he did not work, because he liked being outside and felt lonely. He had split up from his wife and almost never saw his youngest daughter who continued living with her mother and her mother's new partner. He was sharing an apartment with his eldest daughter, but she worked night shifts and so he never saw her either. Julio wanted to go out and to talk to people. For him, the Paseo was a place where he felt safe, could have conversations and had established relationships with people with whom he got on well.

Luz, a Peruvian migrant who had established her own business in Constitución, Malena, one of many inhabitants of the shelters for homeless people nearby, Julio and other elderly, sometimes retired people, sex workers and their clients and, of course, passers-by who wanted to take a rest from their shopping activities sat on the bench and contacted each other in mostly fleeting encounters that sometimes ended up in long-lasting relationships. Many of them, including the three examples developed above, have experienced *displacement* through (border-crossing) migration, mobile and precarious working conditions, the daily, intermittent deprivation of a place, the lurking danger of a permanent life on the street or the fearful perception of formerly familiar surroundings (Bjarnesen &

Vigh 2016: 10) that make them feel out of place.

Displacement, in this broad sense, includes mobility as well as other forms of dispossession that affect 'migrant' and 'non-migrant' city residents in contexts of neoliberal urban restructuring (Glick Schiller & Çağlar 2013, 2016).

At the same time, these persons struggle actively to create better working conditions and supportive social networks within the opportunities and constraints of their city context (ibid.). Relating to each other forms part of their struggle to recreate a social place, to *emplace* themselves. They make use of fixed materialities, such as the bench, that offer possibilities of situating and bringing people together.

For Marc Augé, a shopping centre is a socially and historically empty non-place that 'creates neither singular identity nor relations' (Augé 1995: 103), typical for supermodern urbanities. Where, if not in such a non-place and site of transit would one expect people to experience displacement? However, for Luz, Malena, Julio and many others, the Paseo is the exact opposite: a meaningful point of networking, relating, and thus emplacement. In the Paseo, they create a social environment that makes it for many, as Malena put it, a place where they like to pass time, in a city in which their presence is often contested.

Bibliography

Augé, Marc, 1995: *Non-Places. Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. London, New York: Verso.

Glick Schiller, Nina and Ayşe Çağlar, 2013: Locating migrant pathways of economic emplacement: Thinking beyond the ethnic lens. *Ethnicities* 13, 494-514.

Glick Schiller, Nina and Ayşe Çağlar, 2016: Displacement, emplacement and migrant newcomers: Rethinking urban sociabilities within multiscalar power.

Identities 23, 17-34.

Pita, María Victoria, Joaquín Santiago Gómez and Mariano Skliar, 2017: Historias mínimas. Apuntes para una etnografía del control contravencional y la gestión de ilegalismos an la Ciudad de Buenos Aires. In: María Victoria Pita and María Inés Pacecca (eds.): *Territorios de control policial. Gestión de ilegalismos en la Ciudad de Buenos Aires*. Buenos Aires: Editorial de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras UBA, 77-146.

Vigh, Henrik and Jesper Bjarnesen, 2016: Introduction: The Dialectics of Displacement and Emplacement. *Conflict and Society* 2, 9-15.

[1] All individuals' names have been changed.

On (not) being there: Affective simultaneity across place and time

Sonja Moghaddari
August, 2018

Through the notion of simultaneity I explore the emotional and affective dimension of the displacement-emplacement continuum within transnational migration and hint to the need to consider perceptions of time and space in people's lived experience.

Accompanied by the familiar ebbing and flowing chatter of a dozen women talking in three languages, I sit down next to Yasemeen[i]. Her heavy body rests in one of the second-hand armchairs that furnishes the assembly hall. The numerous plates still half filled with home-made delicacies draw a colorful pattern on the table in front of us. They evoke both the care invested in their preparation and the craving which violently erupted once the long anticipated end of Ramadan had finally arrived. It is June 2018 and we[ii], members of an international women's initiative, celebrate *Eid al fitr* in the central German town of Göttingen. Yasemeen

has withdrawn her head-scarf. Her shoulder-long hair shimmers in brown and violet tones, matching the firm brown skin of the fifty-five-year-old. She has finished eating and strikes her round belly with a fleshy hand – a belly that had carried seven children. Yasemeen is very sick, she has cancer. The year before, she had been hospitalized for two months. Recently, she told me that she needed a gall surgery. Yet another surgery.

"How are you? What happened to your surgery?" I ask in Persian. Yasemeen was born in Herat, in Afghanistan, and had spent more than half of her life on the other side of the border, in Mashhad, Iran. From there, she immigrated to Turkey, and then to Germany where she has lived for two years with her husband and two youngest children. In her characteristic mix of Iranian and Herati dialects she answers "Look how swollen my belly is again. It hurts. I saw my doctor today. *Galle* (gall) they say, right?" I am surprised "How come you know this word in German?" "You know, I try to learn all the medical expressions." She laughs. She is very grateful for the social and medical care offered by the German state, she had told me before. Her aim is to learn German well enough to be able to talk to physicians without need for translation. To get there, she is willing to make efforts: "It's not like I was very educated, I am poorly educated, and I raised seven children, my brain is broken". This discourse parallels the German immigration policy's principle which is to encourage, but also to expect integration. Thus, to Yasemeen, besides taking initiatives in the women's group, acquiring language skills is a way by which she tries to reach emplacement, what Bjarnesen and Vigh (2016, 10) define as the striving to be "positively located in a relational landscape".

For the moment, Yasemeen goes on to explain, she has postponed the surgery. My careful listening encourages her to share more bad news "Yesterday I cried all night. Sonjajân, my son in Iran is now in hospital." She had told me before that her 27-year-old son had been deported back to Afghanistan from Germany, while she and the others had received asylum. He lives alone in her former home town. His illness is probably a source of shame, because Yasemeen never made clear which disease he was affected by. She tells me that her other son, who also lives

in Mashhad, would not be able to take care of his brother because "he barely makes ends meet for his own young family. There are no jobs, especially not for Afghans" (interview May 2018).

Her son's deportation does not only bring underlying discord within the transnational family to the surface. His experience of displacement, i.e. a disruption in which "the formerly familiar seem foreign and frightening" (Bjarnesen, Vigh 2016: 10), also resonates with her own memories of feeling disconnected, alienated and excluded in Iran. "If only I had a passport I would go to Iran and look after this ill-fated (*bisarnevesht*) child" (interview May 2018). Yasemeen's discourse reflects feelings of helplessness, shame and guilt which are connected to transnational family relations and deportation (Baldassar 2015; Drotbohm 2015). Further, her serious medical condition, exasperates the incongruity with her son's state of dislocation. In sum,

> *Yasemeen begins to experience emplacement in Göttingen at the same time as she feels displaced both in the present relation with her son, and in her past relation with Iranian society.*

To illustrate Yasemeen's emotional world on this summer evening, let us remember the times of analog photography. In double exposure, two different motives are captured in one frame, whether accidentally or intentionally. Each picture simultaneously represents and evokes different emotional and affective experiences (see Edwards 2012). In Yasemeen's example, the superposed affective motives refer to different places and to different moments in time. Within the resulting photograph, we see an unintended simultaneity emerge.

A reflection about the notion of simultaneity allows us to consider the emotional and affective dimension of the displacement-emplacement continuum in the context of transnational migration. Emotion and affect are relational in nature[iii]. They are the origin and the result of our interactions with the social world and as such relevant to the study of displacement and new sociabilities.

The idea of simultaneity is central to research which examines discourses and practices that take place within so called "transnational social fields". Nina Glick Schiller and Peggy Levitt (2004, 1003) conceptualize simultaneity as the practice of "living lives that incorporate daily activities, routines, and institutions located both in a destination country and transnationally". The notion is used to explain migrants' strategies for creating capital at different places "at the same time" (see for instance Nieswand 2013; Nowicka 2013). Yet, the concept remains not sufficiently conceptualized. Is the simultaneity that is claimed in anthropological analysis the same as that perceived by research participants?

Ancient philosophy noticed the importance of sensory perception to the understanding of simultaneity. In modern physics, it is widely acknowledged that the simultaneity of two spatially separated events is not absolute, but relative to the observer's reference frame. Following Einstein's theory of relativity, the time of an event needs to be defined as the time in which the observer sees the event (Jammer 2006, 109). A focus away from strategies and practices and instead, towards emotional and affective dimensions (Svašek 2010) offers unexpected insights into the role of time and place within migrants' lived experiences.

The relative importance of time and place in transnational lives has been subject of recent research that investigates the simultaneous articulation between displacement and emplacement. These studies highlight, on the one hand, the important role of particular places, even for people in transit (see for instance Lems 2016; Drotbohm and Winters 2018). Indeed,

> *Yasemeen's emotional and affective responses indicate her awareness of the distinct "feel" of both Göttingen and Mashhad that emerges from their respective legal, political and social conditions. On the other hand, these studies indicate the relativity of place as displacement and emplacement both may and may not involve physical mobility (Vigh and Bjarnesen 2016).*

A double exposure may capture two motives referring to different places in one photograph. Through Yasemeen's emotions and affect, it feels to her as if she is

simultaneously in Göttingen and Mashhad. Yet, her awareness about the structural impossibility of traveling lets her know that she is not.

A double exposure may also capture two motives referring to different times. Displacement and emplacement represent ever incomplete processes (Malkki 1995).

Within a present experience of displacement, people may live in a continuous state of becoming in hope of future emplacement or in the nostalgia of past feelings of embeddedness.

The following example elucidates further the temporalities connected to the experience of affective simultaneity.

Hamid, a resolute, short 69-years-old, has been living in Babol for six years, the town in the north of Iran where he grew up. I have known him when he still lived in a small German town at the coast of the North Sea. After spending more than half of his life in Germany, his return migration is connected to professional failure, sickness and divorce. Nevertheless, the walls of his living room decorate the same printed paintings as had his former home.

Although I could see, during my visit in Babol, that he feels belonging to this city, he never stopped complaining about the aggression he observes in his daily interactions: "Nobody respects the rules here!" (fieldnotes, November 2017).

Recently, when workers he had hired, were putting new tiles on the external walls that delimit his property, a municipal officer rang at the door. Someone had filed a complaint. Hamid was summoned to the townhall. "So I went, but the way you are served there is very condescending. They act as if they are doing you a favor although they are supposed to solve people's problems." After being sent from one desk to another to fetch signatures, Hamid also had to show his property to an engineer. "They made me wait two more days, then suddenly I lost my temper. I said: 'Shame on you! I am an elderly person. You send me from one office to

another. I collected twenty signatures. What for? …Tell me, what do you want from me? Money? I'll give it to you. I lived in Germany for 35 years. Never did such a thing occur to me there! You should deal with people in a factual way. If someone made a mistake he has to pay, but you should not be acting up with somebody'" (interview July 2018). The simultaneity that arises from this account is one that cuts through time: His anger expresses his estrangement with procedures in Iran. His reaction contains feelings of integration and appreciation in relation to his past life in Germany (while memories of exclusion are silenced) and momentarily become part of his present.

Affective simultaneity may challenge taken for granted understandings of space and time in anthropological research. Accounting for people's lived emotional experiences is crucial in the study of socialities emerging within an increasingly interconnected world.

Hamid's reactivation of past emplacement in Germany allowed him to turn his displacement in Iran into emplacement: "What happened then?" I asked. "Nothing, they looked down and hurried to end the procedure… They are not used for people to get angry… people here are afraid of contesting anything."

Bibliography

Baldassar, Loretta. 2015. "Guilty Feelings and the Guilt Trip: Emotions and Motivation in Migration and Transnational Caregiving." *Emotion, Space and Society* 16 (August): 81–89.

Drotbohm, Heike. 2015. "The Reversal of Migratory Family Lives: A Cape Verdean Perspective on Gender and Sociality Pre- and Post-Deportation." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 41 (4): 653–70.

Drotbohm, Heike, and Nanneke Winters. 2018. "Transnational Lives en route: African Trajectories of Displacement and Emplacement across Central America."

Working Papers of the Department of Anthropology and African Studies of the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz 175.

Edwards, Elizabeth. 2012. "Objects of Affect: Photography Beyond the Image." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (1): 221–34.

Jammer, Max. 2006. *Concepts of Simultaneity: From Antiquity to Einstein and Beyond*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Lems, Annika. 2016. "Placing Displacement: Place-Making in a World of Movement." *Ethnos* 81 (2): 315–37.

Levitt, Peggy, and Nina Glick Schiller. 2004. "Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society." *International Migration Review* 38 (3): 1002–39.

Malkki, Liisa H. 1995. "Refugees and Exile: From 'Refugee Studies' to the National Order of Things." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 495–523.

Massumi, Brian. 2015. *Politics of Affect*. Polity, Cambridge, Malden.

Nieswand, Boris. 2013. "The Burgers' Paradox: Migration and the Transnationalization of Social Inequality in Southern Ghana." *Ethnography* 15 (4): 403–25.

Nowicka, Magdalena. 2013. "Positioning Strategies of Polish Entrepreneurs in Germany: Transnationalizing Bourdieu's Notion of Capital." *International Sociology* 28 (1): 29–47.

Svašek, Maruška. 2010. "On the Move: Emotions and Human Mobility." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36 (6): 865–80.

Vigh, Henrik, and Jesper Bjarnesen. 2016. "The Dialectics of Displacement and Emplacement." *Conflict and Society* 2 (1): 9–15.

[i] All names are pseudonyms.

[ii] This "we" refers to the fact that I have participated in this group as an activist and researcher for ten months in 2017 and 2018.

[iii] In a Spinozian sense, affect refers to the "capacity of affecting and being affected" (Massumi 2015, 3f.) in a primary rather physical and sensorial way, while emotions represent the subjective expression of the experience.

Dehumanisation and Contested Spaces: Rethinking Displacement from Refugees to Homelessness

Georgina Ramsay
August, 2018

Dehumanisation is at the core of displacement: it requires that a group of people—because of race, class, migration status, or other factors—have lesser access to the resources, the places and spaces, that others find freely accessible.

Two blocks away from the small apartment in inner-city Philadelphia where I currently live is one of the many ubiquitous Starbucks cafes that occupy various corners across the city. I have never stepped into this particular Starbucks myself, but it was nonetheless instantly recognisable to me when, earlier this year, photos of it were plastered all over national and international news outlets after two black men had the police called on them by café staff, and were subsequently arrested and held in jail for several hours, for the "crime" of trespassing: they had been waiting to conduct a meeting in the Starbucks with a

business associate before paying for a beverage. Hastily recorded phone footage of the two men being handcuffed and escorted out of the Starbucks by police officers, to the admonishment of seemingly incensed white onlookers, subsequently went [viral](#).

Over the coming weeks, as I passed by walking to and from my nearby apartment, I observed first-hand how that particular Starbucks became the site of ongoing [protests](#). The Mayor of Philadelphia responded to the footage, claiming to be ["heartbroken"](#) to see the city headlining global media in a way that would seem "to exemplify what racial discrimination looks like in 2018." Despite the attempt to recast the Starbucks incident as an unfortunate and exceptional event, it is an escalation that reflects more routine policing of boundaries that are pervasive I the city. Such forms of urban boundary making might seem far removed from situations of displacement. Nonetheless, I want to consider here that similar logics of dehumanisation are at the core of how people come to experience or be represented as in- or out-of-place, and how a more expansive understanding of displacement can bring attention to these dynamics.

A Coffee in Starbucks

Last month I stepped into a different Starbucks in Philadelphia, only four blocks over from the now-infamous site of the arrest incident, with Robert. It had been his choice to go to the Starbucks to get some coffee and to talk in more depth about his life than we could on the surrounding street, which is where we usually meet and talk in between the gentle rumble of Robert asking people who pass, "Spare some change?" Making conversation somewhat loudly in the otherwise quiet café as we finished preparing our coffee, I felt the glances of other patrons glide over us in that looking-but-not-looking way that people do.

Prying glances are not new to Robert and I. A relatively young-looking white woman with an Australian accent making conversation with a black man with a Southern twang in his late-60s, I have become used to drawing attention when I sit with Robert as he panhandles on the street. I have learned to time my visits to

Robert for relatively quiet times of the day, away from when the office workers from surrounding buildings break for lunch or the end of the workday, so that my presence does not impact on his panhandling. When I sit beside Robert he is more likely to attract curious glances than spare dollar bills.

The attention we seem to elicit at the Starbucks nonetheless makes me feel uncomfortable. The viral video of the Starbucks arrest scene from earlier in the year haunts me as Robert and I find a quiet corner to sit down in and talk, knowing that the stakes of this discomfort are so much higher for Robert, than for me. I remind myself that it is only for an hour or so out of this particular day that I am discomfited, purely by association with Robert, from the usual ease through which I navigate the urban spaces of the city that are dominated by professionalism and whiteness.

> *For a person like Robert, who embodies both blackness and visible impoverishment through panhandling, occupying these particular streets in Philadelphia is a constant exercise of negotiating between visibility and invisibility, between attracting attention and preventing punition.*

Robert is one of the estimated [550, 000 people](#) in the US who, on any given night, are homeless. He first ended up living on the streets some years previously when, after first coming to Philadelphia from the South and living out of his car, the car was impounded by a particularly zealous ticket issuer. Since then, Robert has lived on the streets of Philadelphia off and on. As we sit together in the Starbucks to talk, Robert is quick to tell me that he will defend himself against people who "start" on him, but he also notes that he purposely adopts a demeanor of deference when he panhandles in the city. Not because it may soften people up to part with a spare dollar, but because it is a necessary part of avoiding police intervention. I am visibly shocked, at first, by the casual way that Robert talks about the necessity of playing this compliant role, because part of the "progressive" reputation of Philadelphia is a generally non-punitive stance toward the homeless and people who panhandle by local authorities. But Robert corrects

my understandings, and shakes his head. "It's all about how they write you up," he says. "They just write you up for being aggressive, or intimidating, or whatever, and then you are locked up in jail with a $315 dollar fine." What might appear to be somewhat minor instances of punitive action slowly compound in ways that make the city easily accessible for a privileged some, but a space of constant negotiation for others.

When Robert asks me why I am so interested in researching the experiences of homeless people, I tell him about how, when I first moved to Philadelphia a year previously from a regional city in Australia, I had been shocked by the visible acceptance of street homelessness.

I had found it impossible to reconcile that people like me could live more than comfortably within metres of people sleeping on grates to keep warm. I could not understand how the vast majority of people would casually walk past others laying on the street and pretend that they did not exist. Robert nods, and tells me that, although many in the neighborhood where he panhandles are good people, so many others just walk by, ignore him, admonish him. "Arrogance," he says. "Some people just cuss you out."

I go on to add that these kinds of tacitly accepted routines of dehumanisation are especially confounding to me at a time when homelessness is frequently being represented as the foil against providing support to refugees. Public and political rhetoric about the imperative to support people who are homeless does not correspond to how I have observed people routinely ignore homelessness on the street. "Ah," Robert says in response, seeming to draw connections between his own experiences of dislocation and those of people who flee their country: "People move, leave their country, to find freedom… but [making a sweeping gesture with his arms around him] where is that freedom?"

Refugees vs the Homeless: False Binaries and

Shared Dehumanisations

It is homeless people like Robert who have been brought into the centre of political debates, and conservative activism, about displacement in recent years in the US. In the wake of the Syrian civil war and the significant number of people fleeing it as refugees, political talk across the globe turned towards how to respond to what would become the largest number of forced migrants ever recorded. One particularly tangible response from conservative and right-wing rhetoric in the US centred on a perceived imperative to provide care for people within the country, first, rather than to refugees fleeing other countries. In the US (and elsewhere), homeless people, and especially homeless veterans, have become a foil against an argument to provide support to refugees. A number of memes expressing this binary between refugees and homeless people circulated, such as those below:
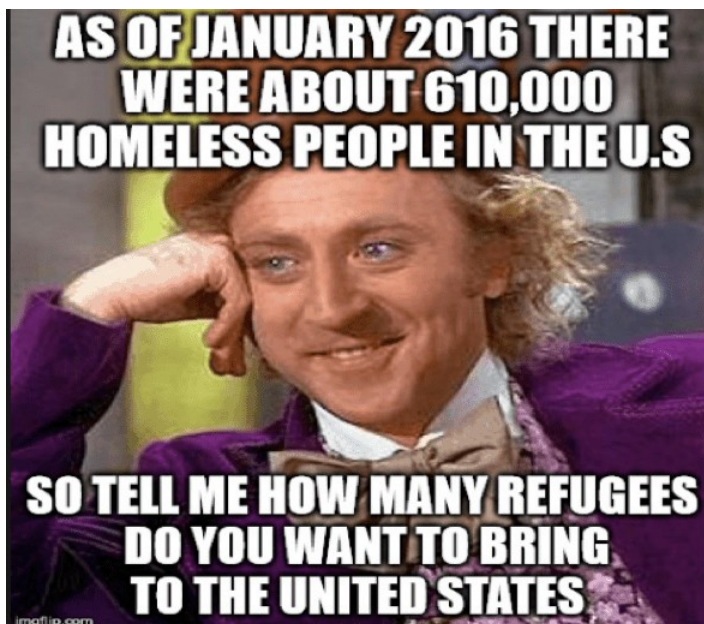
Of course, the binary between refugees and homeless people is false: a simplistic misrepresentation that pits vulnerable groups against each other in some kind of grotesque competition of needs but which, in reality, seeks to legitimise fear of the migrant other by drawing attention to the other at home.

What is so absurd about the false binary drawn between refugees and homeless people is that the comparison requires that both groups be objectified and dehumanised in the same way. Regardless of whether the rhetoric stems from a liberal or a conservative standpoint, when dominant factions in society begin to debate the worthiness of a particular category of person, those who form the group are often themselves, ironically, silenced. They cease to exist with the complexity and contradictions of human being.

In pitting refugees and homeless people against each other in such a misleading binary of competitive needs, the complexities and heterogeneity of both groups is silenced and objectified.

As an anthropologist who has worked extensively with people in refugee situations, the more time I spend in the US, surrounded by such contradictions, the more the similarities between people who become refugees and people who

are experiencing homelessness seem to be more salient than their differences. Robert, who considers both situations to be a problem of restricted freedoms, agrees. Given that both refugees and homeless people are, effectively, living to some extent without the stability of home, it made sense to me to begin taking seriously the connection between these two categories of person: not in the same way as right-wing rhetoric which would force a dual analysis through false comparison, but to instead consider these distinct situations through a shared analytical locus of displacement.

Beyond Crisis: Unexceptional Displacements

Displacement is often treated as an exceptional experience that is associated with refugees and forced migration. Recent representations of migration "crisis," in response to the record number of asylum seekers entering Europe from 2015, have further reinforced the exceptionality that is attached to displacement. The irony is that by reinforcing such national logics through analytically limited conceptualisations of displacement that conflate it with forced migration, anthropologists are unwittingly playing into the very nationalist logics that right-wing activists use to pit homeless people and refugees against each other in a constructed hierarchy of needs.

Recognising that the recent attention to displacement in anthropology has as much to do with popular narratives of crisis as it does with the empirical realities of forced migration for displaced people is important, because even the idea of crisis signals a distinct temporality of urgency and exceptionality. The term crisis implies an event: a distinct problem to be solved. Approaching a particular experience, process, or event in anthropological research through a narrative of crisis has an effect, then. It charges the object of study and demands urgent response. Primarily, it sets up a dichotomy between a supposedly stabilised normalcy and the exceptionality of the crisis event.

But can displacement itself be chronic, routine, normal, unexceptional?

Displacement, according to Robert, is about the ways that some groups of people have the freedom to access some places while others do not. Whether referring to the contested freedoms of homeless people seeking to set up for a day of panhandling on the street, the constrained freedoms of refugees seeking entry into Europe, or the freedom to wait for a business meeting to begin in a Starbucks, the logics of boundary maintenance are similar: accessing spaces that have been conventionally dominated by whiteness and class-based exclusions require deference and containment, control and compliance. The displacement of forced migration is not labelled a crisis until its effects begin to extend beyond countries in the global South and begin to impact on Europe. Similarly, homelessness is not labelled a crisis until its effects begin to extend beyond the impacted people themselves and begin to mark the reputation and image of the cities or areas in which homeless people seek shelter. Dehumanisation is at the core of displacement: it requires that a group of people have lesser access to the resources, the places and spaces, that others find freely accessible.

Ultimately, displacement means being forced to feel or be out-of-place. There is a lot to gain in anthropologists recognising how such dynamics of displacement manifest in the lives of people across different situations and contexts. The question of whose displacement is made to matter and why, as well as whose displacement becomes routinised and accepted, presents as much analytical promise as bringing attention to the dehumanisation that is at the core of displacement itself.

On being made feel out of place

Annika Lems
August, 2018

Based on the experiences of two young Eritreans who arrived in Switzerland as unaccompanied minors, this article thinks through the feeling of being made feel out of place.

In my contribution to this thematic week I want think through the experience of being-out-of-place. I aim to show why the idea of *being made feel out of place* better captures the struggles refugees in Europe face on an everyday basis than the term *displacement*. In my previous work I have pointed out that the term "displacement" has a particular intellectual baggage that tends to romanticise the sense of homelessness and boundlessness the figure of the refugee or exile embodies (Lems 2018; 2016).

In Western theory the figure of the refugee has come to be symbolic for an age of movement and deterritorialisation.

It challenges established notions of a "national order of things" (Malkki 1995) and the idea that specific people "belong" to particular places. While in anthropology this de-essentialisation of place was of crucial importance to the reformulation of a discipline wary of being complicit in the reproduction of exclusionary boundaries and practices, I have argued that the emphasis on deterritorialisation this initiated has led anthropologists to overlook the continuing importance of place in refugees' actual lived experiences. I therefore stressed the need for a more complex and nuanced view of displacement – one that values refugees' lived experiences and one that takes the *placement* in displacement more seriously.

In my current research I have come to think more deeply about refugees' everyday struggles for emplacement in a Europe that perceives itself to be in the midst of a "crisis" of displacement. The reflections are based on my conversations with a group of young refugees in the Canton of Bern in Switzerland who were categorised "unaccompanied minors". I have been following their everyday pathways in and beyond educational and institutional settings for close to two years.[1] As I was accompanying them into the refugee reception classes they attended, caught up with them in weekly meetings or joined them in their daily activities, I came to observe the hard social and emotional labour the young people invested into becoming a valued part of the towns and villages they had come to live in. This involved continuous acts of learning in order to understand the places' particularities and habits. Yet, these placemaking efforts were frequently unsettled by the defensive attitude they encountered on the side of people who felt that they should not be allowed to lay claim to this place.

While Switzerland is one of the wealthiest and safest countries in the world, anti-immigration campaigns have long been a crucial ingredient of the country's political landscape.

With the establishment of the far-right Swiss People's Party (SVP) as a mainstream political player, the figure of the asylum seeker has turned into the contemporary folk devil par excellence – a figure riddled with societal anxieties,

racial prejudice and envy. Against the backdrop of this exclusionary social landscape, the young people I worked with were not so much struggling with a sense of displacement, but with a deep and utter feeling of being-out-of-place. As the conversation snippets with two young men I will zoom in show, this sense of being-out-of-place is not due to the inherent impossibility of being-at-home refugees have to endure. They reveal that in a socio-political climate where migrant bodies are marked as problem cases in need of integration, control or expulsion, refugees are actively kept from laying claim to places – they are pushed into a feeling of being-out-of-place.

In what follows I will focus on a brief conversation that occurred during one of the weekly gatherings with the unaccompanied refugee youth in Bern in March 2016. That afternoon, only two people showed up – Samuel and Filmon, two Eritrean young men who were aged seventeen at the time. Both of them had left Eritrea when they were fifteen years old in order to escape the compulsory military service they would have been drafted into by the end of secondary education. Both of them had spent many months on the move, escaping violent attacks by gunmen or imprisonment in Libya, sleeping rough in deserts or parks, and surviving the passage to Italy crammed into the underbellies of leaky wooden boats.

Like many of the Eritrean young people I met, Samuel and Filmon had taken the decision to leave the country without the consent of their parents. And like many other young refugees, they did not describe the forces propelling them to migrate solely as a reaction to the oppressive political situation in Eritrea. Rather, they had been drawn towards this decision because of the radical transformation of self and personhood they believed a migration to Europe would offer.

If "displacement" is to capture the experiences of these two young men it thus needs to be thought of as an active process that involves elements of choice and circumstance as well as force.

That afternoon in early spring 2016, when we caught up in Bern, Samuel had

been in Switzerland for six months, while Filmon had been there for one and a half years. They were very talkative that day, eager to share and discuss their thoughts. Samuel kicked off the debate by stating that if he were to receive a negative decision on his asylum application, it would not bother him. He would simply pack his bag and go somewhere else. He said that this would not be much of an effort for him as the Swiss had made him feel like he should be somewhere else anyways. "Look, I can stay here, and I am happy to work and learn and do everything they [the Swiss] want me to do", Samuel said. "But do they really want me here?" He fortified this statement by telling us that he would never bring his parents here, even if the authorities allowed him to do so. Upon hearing this, Filmon shook his head. "You're crazy, man", he exclaimed. I asked Samuel why he would not bring his parents to Switzerland. "How can I explain this to you?" he asked, struggling for words. "Look, when I am in Eritrea I am rich, right?" By describing himself as "rich" Samuel, who came from a farmer family in the Eritrean highlands, did not refer to his economic background. Rather, he was talking about the feeling of being surrounded by meaningful others, of having the sense that one's social existence was reciprocated by the people he lived amongst. Samuel explained that when he was in Eritrea he was a "rich" person because people there knew him, he belonged to a family and other people cared about him. "You see? And here in Switzerland I am poor because nobody wants me to be here." Samuel said that he did not want his mother to be treated like a "poor" person and that this was why he believed she would be better off remaining in Eritrea than coming to Switzerland.

Samuel's story and the question whether people in Switzerland really want them to become a part of society initiated a long discussion between him and Filmon about the small, everyday things that made them feel out of place. "It's true, they don't want us here, right?" Filmon asked me. I returned the question by asking him what made him feel this way. Filmon explained that he gathered it from the way people treated him in public spaces, like train stations, parks or shops. He said that people often stared at him and made him feel bad. I could relate to the unsettling feeling of the stare. While often not recognised by Swiss people

themselves as it has become so normalised that it has become part and parcel of everyday interactions, the act of staring as a means of social control and singling out otherness is a frequently discussed theme amongst foreigners living in Switzerland. So much so, that newspapers picked up on the theme not long ago, labelling it as the "Swiss stare".[2]

Filmon had many stories about the ways people made him feel like he should not be there without saying a word, simply by staring at him.

"You know how often I enter a shop and the shopkeeper stands right behind me the entire time, making sure I don't steal something", Filmon said. Samuel nodded his head in agreement. He told us that the same thing happened to him in his local supermarket on a daily basis: One of the shopkeepers there kept following him through the entire shop every time he went to buy something. It was the closest and cheapest shop to the shared accommodation where he was living with other unaccompanied refugee youth, so they went there almost every day. Samuel said that although the shopkeeper knew them by now, she did not leave them alone. She kept on following Samuel and his friends – always at a distance, never directing a word at them – from the minute they entered the shop to the moment they left again.

That afternoon, Samuel and Filmon told many more stories about the small, intangible things that made them feel like they did not have a right to belong to this place.

They included experiences on public transport, when people refused to take a seat next to them, interactions with bus drivers who refused to stop when it was "only" refugee kids waiting at the village bus station next to the home for unaccompanied minors, or with teachers who kept telling them that they were so far behind Swiss students' abilities that they should not get their hopes up of finding an apprenticeship. While these stories did not necessarily show openly racist behaviour, they revealed the small, everyday actions through which the

young people were actively being kept from laying a claim to the place.

In attempting to understand the links between these vernacular moments of exclusion and genealogies of migrant marginalisation in Switzerland, I find Ann Laura Stoler's current work very helpful. In a keynote speech held in the context of a conference on Switzerland's entanglement in colonial projects in April 2018, she used the term "interior frontiers" to describe the formation and defence of everyday affective thresholds of belonging that attempt to delineate who is "in" and who is to be kept "out" of particular places (Stoler 2018). Like the moments that made Filmon and Samuel feel like they were not wanted in Switzerland, interior frontiers often do not show in openly racist expressions. Rather, the feeling of being-out-of-place is commonly produced through small, seemingly unimportant actions and interactions in everyday life through which barricades between self and other, familiar and alien are set up and defended. As Stoler points out, these barricades do not come into being in a straightforward way or on the spur of a moment. Rather, they are often based on long genealogies of racialised scripts. Increasingly these scripts do not use openly racist ideas, but justify acts of exclusion through liberal ideas such as the "integration" of migrants and refugees that turn out to be moral crusades against their perceived cultural otherness.

The small, everyday actions and interactions such as their encounters with shopkeepers continuously reminded Filmon and Samuel of the many barricades they had to tear down in order to become an accepted member of Swiss society. Filmon commented that all these incidents showed him that "the Swiss don't really want people like us". He said that they ("the Swiss") did not care about what had happened to them or where they were from. All they cared about was that they did not want people like them to come to their country. Yet, although this feeling of being-out-of-place was very powerful, the young people did not passively succumb to the everyday techniques of exclusion they were subject to. They developed their own strategies to divert, challenge or simply live with them.

Some of the strategies they deployed were as silent and intangible as the

barricades that attempted to lock them out of place. Filmon, for example, refused to openly act against the exclusionary behaviour he encountered. Instead, he invested all his energy in learning and perfectionising the social and linguistic codes that would enable him to speak and act like his Swiss peers. This involved mimicking their expressions, learning when to be quiet in order not to stick out and internalising unwritten rules about how to or not to move about in public spaces. While in our weekly gatherings he spoke very openly about his struggles with the feeling of being-out-of-place, he made sure that he never revealed it to anyone outside this protected circle of friends. For Filmon the only way of combatting this feeling was by not accepting the underlying idea of non-belonging. By learning the secret codes people used to justify his exclusion, he hoped to be able to stun them into a defeat, thereby provoking a collapse of the interior frontiers.

Samuel's strategy was less subtle. He said that having experienced the dehumanising behaviour of Libyan gunmen who had held him and a group of Eritreans ransom and treated them like slaves, he had sworn to himself that he would never again silently accept the mistreatment by anyone. In this vein, he explained that the last time he went back to the supermarket where the shopkeeper kept shadowing him, he had his own trick in store. When he was waiting in the cue at the cash desk, after she had been following him around the entire shop as usual, he waved at her, telling her to come closer. He prompted her to have a "proper look" in all his pockets to make sure he had not stolen anything. Samuel's witty strategy to unmask the shopkeeper's racist behaviour in front of the startled other clients made Filmon and me laugh. And he already had the next manoeuvre in store. The next time, Samuel announced, *he* would be the one to look for her when he entered the shop. Rather than waiting for her to start shadowing him and unnerving him with her stare, he would actively seek her out. He would politely invite her to accompany him around the shop, all the while commenting on each piece he was adding to his basket.

References

Lems, Annika. 2018. *Being-Here: Placemaking in a World of Movement*. New York, London: Berghahn.

_. 2016. "Placing Displacement: Place-making in a World of Movement." *Ethnos* 81 (2):315-337.

Malkki, Liisa. 1995. "Refugees and Exile: From "Refugee Studies" to the National Order of Things." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1):495-523.

Stoler, Ann Laura. 2018. "Interior Frontiers: Dangerous Concepts in our Times", keynote speech held at the conference *Von der Kolonialisierung zur Globalisierung: Weshalb wir Schweizer Geschichte neu denken sollten*, University of Bern, April 19, 2018.

[1] My research is part of a larger project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation entitled "Transnational Biographies of Education: Young Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers and their Navigation through Shifting Social Realities in Switzerland and Turkey" led by Sabine Strasser from the University of Bern and Kathrin Oester from the University of Teacher Education (PH) Bern. I was responsible for the research in Switzerland, while my colleague Eda Elif Tibet conducted research in Turkey.

[2] "Expats stören sich an starrenden Schweizern", in *20 Minuten* online, December 8, 2016. Retrieved online: http://www.20min.ch/schweiz/news/story/Expats-stoeren-sich-an-starrenden-Schweizern-31515992

Featured image by Oliver Cole on Unsplash

When 'roofless' migrants make their place. Contradictive perceptions of belonging in São Paulo's squats

Heike Drotbohm
August, 2018

In Brazilian squats, a 'local population struggles for their 'right to the city' and a

'migrant' population tries to establish and improve their lives (temporarily) in multiple places simultaneously. These different processes and experiences of displacement and emplacement correspond, intertwine and, eventually, can also contradict each other.

Everybody listened while Isabel[1] talked seemingly endlessly, nobody interrupted her. Isabel was obviously in a bad mood. A Brazilian woman in her 60s, who had fought against the fascist military regime half a century earlier, she knew how to draw the attention of the group sitting around her, mainly young men and a few women – migrants and refugees from different African, Asian and some Latin American countries who had reached the city of São Paulo within the last year. They were all inhabitants of this squat in the ancient city center and had, thereby, automatically become part of the *Frente de Luta por Moradia (FLM)*, one of several social movements that had emerged as a response to the privatization of public space. This and other comparable social movements have been making use of the absence of the state in the policy field of urban living since the early 1990s; they appropriate buildings that have been vacated by the housing market and, subsequently, resignify national law, in which the social meaning of property is confirmed as a protected social right (Earle 2017).

Isabel, one of the movement's leading figures, had arranged a meeting on this particular day to express her deep frustration about the migrants' lack of integration into the movement's social and cultural activities. Isabel talked for more than 30 minutes, admonishing the inhabitants regarding the importance of participating in the active, political struggle against the neoliberal effects of segregation, gentrification and economic precarization.

> *Here, at this place, it does not matter where you come from. We are all the same, we are all poor, we're all displaced. You understand: We are all displaced! We all fight the same fight. This is not your home! Living in this building means being part of a political struggle. You cannot expect to live here and do nothing. The moment that we stop struggling, we will receive nothing. And you have to go back sleeping in the street. (translated from Portuguese).*

"*Deslocamento*" (displacement), one of the key words in Isabel's statements, is a powerful term in contemporary Brazil. Firstly, it is used by the political left to sensitize about the multiple different types of losses that people experience when their belonging to a specific place is forcibly taken away. This can occur, for instance, through the dispossessive forces of, urban regeneration projects, agrarian land reforms or man-made environmental disasters caused by mega-dam constructions and mining operations. When Isabel questions the meaning of home ("this is not your home"), she challenges the social value of property *per se*. For political activists like her, living in an occupied building needs to be understood as a particular means to an end, a political act which strives towards the collectivizing of basic needs, such as access to housing. Secondly, the notion of displacement can also refer to a policy-oriented, often humanitarian category of 'displaced persons,' which intends to capture the specific experience of being involuntarily on the move, especially among those who had to leave their familiar social conditions in and through a context of war, violence and emergency. Hence, *deslocamento*, in this context, carries both connotations: It can denote unifying sameness, but also a politically laden category of difference.

While the other persons present listened patiently, I felt irritated. I was wondering about the different experiences of *deslocamento* that apparently merged in this large room. My gaze fell on Dosnel, a self-assured Haitian man in his late 30s, who sat silently next to Isabel, looking his hands in his lap. Last week he had shown me his room on the 11th floor; he lived there together with his wife Guerline and their baby. "We came from all over: Africa, Haiti, India, even China. Several other families also came from Haiti," he said in a mixture of French and Kriolu, while we were climbing up the dusty, dimly lit stairs to their small, lovingly and precisely furnished room, which consisted mainly of a large bed, a chest, a small wardrobe and a tiny kitchenette, comprising an electric stove and a fridge. The garland of plastic flowers that surrounded the small flat screen on the green-painted plywood wall undeniably completed the look of a homely home, an intimate place of belonging that reflected its inhabitants esthetic sense of care.

Dosnel and Guerline were obviously proud of this little private space they had created after a long trajectory following the devastating earthquake that had destroyed large parts of their country in January 2010. While we waited for the little electric stove to heat up some rice and beans, the two showed me pictures of the house they had lost in Jacmel, a small town on the country's southern coast, which had been hit particularly heavily. When they left for the Dominican Republic, where some of their friends had already been staying for several years, the two had to leave behind a son and a daughter, both teenagers, with Guerline's parents. This is where they had heard about the humanitarian offer provided by the Brazilian government through their UN mission, MINUSTAH. As a response to the devastating earthquake, Brazil had created an exceptional 'humanitarian visa' that granted a certain number of Brazilian visas to Haitian nationals per year (Moulin & Thomaz 2016). "We knew we could come to Brazil, that they would receive us here, but the way was still long," Dosnel explained. After flying from Santo Domingo to Ecuador's capital Quito, they took an overland bus to Iñapari, stayed for several weeks in Brasiléia, a small town in the northern state of Acre, where they had to wait another three weeks before they were taken by bus to the city of São Paulo. Here, they stayed the maximum of three months at the *casa to migrante*, a shelter provided by the Catholic *missão paz* (peace mission).

The two praised the support they had received from the Catholic mission: "We really felt well protected. This city is a dangerous place, but in the *casa* [the mission] everybody took good care of us. If you don't know the city and you don't know any Brazilian, this is what you need," Dosnel explained. Guerline also continued to reflect on the temporary nature of their stay at the *missão*:

> *At the beginning they told us that we would get permission to stay for some weeks, and that we then have to leave and search for another place. I liked it there, at the casa. But we were not supposed to stay. At the same time, everybody was building in Haiti. We heard that they were rebuilding the city with their hands. My parents had moved to another house. We also wanted to contribute. We wanted to work ["We needed a job," Dosnel agreed] and make some money and send it to Haiti to help with the reconstruction. That's why we*

needed our own place, one where we could stay.

Guerline's statement reveals a crucial paradox that not only shelters but humanitarian organizations share generally: On the one hand, they offer a space of arrival and inclusion where one can settle down. Most recent arrivals, especially at the very beginning of their stay, translate the controlled and securitized character of shelters into feelings of protection against the perceived dangers of a city life on the move. Some inhabitants of shelters, however, complain about this monitoring, which is symbolized through strict house rules and a daily routine which allows entry and free circulation only during certain hours. On the other hand, this spatial fixing and regulating by institutional logics is contradicted by the constant reminder that their stay will certainly remain temporally limited. Most public shelters work with a maximum duration of stay, which will only tentatively be communicated at the moment of entry. The esthetics of collective dormitories and dining halls, which undermine any feeling of individual privacy and agency, underline the provisionary nature of a person's stay. Finding one's place under institutionalized conditions of displacement remains a challenge.

Comparable to many transmigrants whose lives span across borders and who simultaneously feel attached to more than one place, Dosnel and Guerline searched for a way to establish their lives in São Paulo, which would allow them to also remain present in Haiti, where their family expected their active contribution to this process of reconstruction. Together with Nanneke Winters, I have argued for focusing on emerging trajectories of 'transitory emplacement' to understand the multiple encounters between a dynamic migrant population and local actors, and the locally specific implications of these encounters to understand how migrants get information and emotional support by linking up with local communities and keeping in touch with family and friends abroad ([Drotbohm & Winters 2018](#)).

At his workplace at a food factory, Dosnel got in touch with another migrant who

lived in one of São Paulo's squats which belonged to the *Frente de Luta por Moradia (FLM)* – a social movement targeting the interests of those who struggle for decent living. Continuing to describe their trajectory, Dosnel and Guerline talked about the strict rules that were applied by their *mouvman* (the movement), especially regarding the acceptance of new inhabitants. "They don't accept just anybody who is simply looking for a good place to stay. In this city, so many people live on the streets. That's why they have to choose." Living in an occupied building is cheap compared to a regular apartment. The two of them pay only 200 Rs (approximately US$ 60), which allows them to send the largest part of their income back to Haiti. While Dosnel described the procedure of admission: The form they had to fill in, the assembly in front of which they had to present themselves and the house rules they had to learn, Guerline showed me the movement's membership card, which is used for documenting her participation at the *atos* – political acts which demonstrate the movement's active membership, such as a demonstration or *uma invasão*, the invasion and occupation of an empty building, which often entails confrontation with police violence. Dosnel continued his explanation:

> *This occupation is very well organized; everybody knows what he or she has to do. We have a committee for cleaning, one for organizing the library, and we have a doorman [gadyen] who keeps thieves or other criminals outside.*

> *Heike: "What about your participation in the political struggle?"*

> *Yes, this is also very important. They contact us via WhatsApp. When I am at work, I receive a message, and I will see whether I can go. It depends. A demonstration is possible, they usually take place on Sundays. If I don't work on Sundays, I go. But we are many. Not everybody has to participate.*

Dosnel apparently interpreted the request to engage more actively in the *luta* (the political struggle) as a formal requirement for living in the squat. According to him, these relatively strict rules needed to be accepted in any type of collective housing which would provide physical protection, social integration and

eventually the access to some kind of upward or middle-class social mobility. I found this statement paradoxical, as the lives of the more-and-more self-segregating middle classes is what the Brazilian activists actually struggle against.

My mind returns to the meeting and to Isabel's voice when she talked about the ultimate social state in contemporary urban Brazil, in which millions are being dispossessed of the spaces they have formerly called their homes and have to live in *favelas* or on the open streets. While my eyes turn to the window and wander over the seemingly endless sea of surrounding buildings, I listen to Isabel's clear positioning in the collective anti-capitalist struggle and the movement's aims, which would certainly strengthen the interests of the urban poor, the inhabitants of *favelas*, other types of irregular housing and mobile populations coming from other countries and continents.

Different processes and experiences of displacement and emplacement correspond, intertwine and, eventually, can also contradict each other in these squats in which several groups live, interact and strive towards a more decent way of living. On the one hand, we have a 'local' population struggling for their right to the city and, on the other hand, a 'migrant' population trying to establish their lives (temporarily) and strive towards a middle-class position in multiple places simultaneously. While they all manage to construct new sociabilities and forms of social belonging (Glick Schiller & Çağlar 2016), these processes of emplacement are apparently filled with controversial expectations and ideas when they refer to a physical place, signified through an address or a doorman, or to a transnational family life extending beyond borders, or to a social movement in which a common political agenda is shared. In the end, all these marginalized actors position themselves in relation to power asymmetries in which the reliability of place and social belonging cannot be considered self-evident.

References:

Drotbohm, Heike & Nanneke Winters 2018: Transnational Lives en Route: African Trajectories of Displacement and Emplacement across Central America. *Working Papers of the Department of Anthropology and African Studies of the Johannes Gutenberg University* Mainz, 175.

Earle, Lucy 2017: *Transgressive Citizenship and the Struggle for Social Justice: The Right to the City in São Paulo*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Glick Schiller, Nina & Ayse Çağlar 2016: Displacement, emplacement and migrant newcomers: rethinking urban sociabilities within multiscalar power. *Identities*, 23:1, 17-34, DOI: 10.1080/1070289X.2015.1016520

Moulin, Carolina & Diana Thomaz 2016: The tactical politics of 'humanitarian' immigration: negotiating stasis, enacting mobility. *Citizenship Studies*, 20:5, 595-609.

[1] All names are pseudonyms.

#EASA2018: Motion against apartheid academia in the West Bank

Allegra
August, 2018

Matan Kaminer is a PhD candidate at the University of Michigan and a member of the Israeli Anthropological Association and of Academia for Equality, an Israeli group for the democratisation of academic life. His research is about labour migration from Thailand to Israel for agricultural work, at the intersection of settler coloniality and neoliberalism. He explains why the motion that has been submitted to the EASA member forum is an important step of solidarity for Palestinian and Israeli academics

Allegra: Where are these institutions located in the Occupied Palestinian Territories?

Matan: Since a few years, Israel has set up institutions in occupied Palestinian

territories in the West bank. The biggest one is Ariel University. These institutions are reserved to Israelis and do not accept Palestinian students. They have been established in violation of international law as well as academic ethics. Ariel is located in the biggest settlement in the West Bank near the town of Salfit, between Ramallah and Nablus. Ariel is a very important part of what anthropologist Jeff Halper calls "the Israeli matrix of control", established on Palestinian land and blocking Palestinian territorial contiguity.

Allegra: Can you tell us a bit more about the new law that has been voted by the Knesset last February?

Matan: In February this year the Israeli parliament or Knesset legislated to annex these institutions into the Israeli Council for Higher Education. Previously they were under the jurisdiction of the Israeli military government of the West Bank. This is part of a process many people are calling a creeping annexation in which Israeli law is gradually imposed on the occupied territories in a discriminatory way which undermines Palestinian sovereignty and the future possibility of an independent Palestinian state.

Allegra: How did the Israeli Sociological Association and the Israeli Anthropological Association react to this new legislation?

Matan: In March the co-president of the Israeli sociological association, Yagil Levy and Gili Drori, proclaimed their opposition to this illegal move and committed to non-cooperation of their society with these institutions. Soon after, the President of the Israeli Anthropological Association, Nir Avieli, also proclaimed our association's opposition to the government move. In June, the IAA voted by a large majority of its membership to reiterate our opposition to this annexation and to commit to non cooperation with these institutions in the West Bank.

Allegra: Why is it important to support the motion by voting at the EASA members' Forum tomorrow?

Matan: When we were trying to get the IAA resolution passed, potential supporters voiced two concerns: one, that this was not going to get heard, that colleagues around the world would not be interested in our declarative move and two: that we would be subject to attacks from the government. I should mention that a few years ago a Boycott Law was enacted, which makes it possible for anyone who considers himself or herself affected by a boycott of the settlements to sue for millions of dollars without needing to prove any damage. We do not call our step of non-cooperation a boycott, but people are still worried about this. It would be very heartening for our colleagues in Israel to receive the support of European anthropologists. I cannot speak for colleagues in Palestine, but perhaps for them as well, to hear from European colleagues that they support our step in principle and are willing to offer solidarity and aid in case we get attacked for it.

Read the motion here: https://easaonline.org/downloads/motions/Motion0818.pdf

Read the Statement of the Israeli Anthropological Association here: https://easaonline.org/downloads/motions/Aveliletter0918.pdf

Queueing for wine – Queueing for nothing #EASA2016/2018

Liina Mustonen
August, 2018

Reflections on the EASA Conference at the University of Milano-Bicocca, 20-23 July, 2016: "[Anthropological legacies and human futures"](#)

It was the last day of the 14ᵗʰ biannual conference of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA). On that very last conference day, before leaving the conference space, the Milano-Bicocca university, I queued for wine at the front of the Pluto Press reception with other anthropologists. Until the final moment of the conference, in the wine queue, I continued to ponder about the message of the conference visuals – the conference poster in particular. A black and white photograph with shades of light colors depicted young black men lining up in a queue inside a massive concrete building. The black men were portrayed as if they were waiting for something. The space depicted in the photograph reminded me of the Central Station in Milan where I have changed trains

countless times on my way to Florence, but I could not tell for sure.

I wondered whether the conference poster, portraying black bodies, tried to do the work of institutional polishing (Ahmed 2015) and transform the otherwise white space inhabited by anthropologists into a more diverse space. Did it try to compensate for the whiteness of the wine queue?

Yet, perhaps my attempt to guess the physical location of the queue and the queue's purpose is less important. Perhaps the poster just tried to transmit the message that the photograph could have been taken "anywhere", or that the black men could be waiting for anything. Or, perhaps they waited for nothing.

The broad conference title of the 14th EASA biennale, "Anthropological legacies and human futures", did not help the viewer to make sense of the poster's representation. Anthropologists have left traces in many places and if we apply our current temporality, humans everywhere are supposed to have a "future" – hopeful or gloomy, always judged from the standpoint of the observer. Future in their mind, humans queue for many things, they wait for tickets at railway station counters, in banks for money transfers, in summer sales for reduced bargains and in bars for wine. Whether it is the black men on the EASA conference poster or the anthropologists at the EASA conference, human beings make calculations before they decide to use their time queueing. What do I gain? Is it worth waiting?

While I speculated about the purpose of the conference poster's queue, my queuing at the "Anthropological legacies and human futures conference" had a destination – Italian Wine. One of the conference's afternoon activities, the Young Scholars' Forum was running late, which, I assumed, was the reason why the afternoon wine was served late and a queue was forming at the front of the conference's pop-up bar. Unlike my queuing at the conference, it is unlikely that the black men's queuing in the EASA conference poster was incentivized by wine. The perception, that makes the production of the conference visuals possible, does not establish an association that would relate the poster's queue to wine.

This perception is shaped by histories of reading the "other" and those histories are shaped by racism (Ahmed 2004, 31). Was it not in apartheid South Africa where black men and people of color produced wine (and still do) for the consumption of white men? And as I was told many times during my visit to the vineries of the university town Stellenbosch in Western Cape, the majority of South Africa's black men *still* (sic) do not share the white men's wine culture.

Since my first academic conference in Turkey's Mediterranean town of Mersin in 2013, a port city where thousands of Syrian refugees sought shelter from war – or queued for a human future, I have been pondering about the practice of wine-drinking among us scholars. At EASA in Milan events with 'wine' received a special mention in the conference program: 'wine served.' As many times in other spaces before, I was fascinated by the gravitational force of that mention. In my PhD research in Egypt, I registered a similar mention bestowing exclusivity on high society events. A vineyard in the proximity of Cairo sold wine to a select group of people using an imagery of Egypt's golden past while creating walls around its premises that those who lacked the financial, cultural, and social capital would not cross. In the conference space, I asked myself what wine sipping while gazing at the EASA visuals says about us scholars, anthropologists or aspiring anthropologists. Whom do our practices include and whom do they exclude? Do we reflect on our own activities? Do we sometimes ask what kind of barriers they create?

Unlike the black men's aimless queue depicted on the EASA poster, the young scholars wine queue was in a constant movement – those who had arrived early did not have to wait long to enjoy free wine. Moreover, fairness was guaranteed for the anthropologists. Their queue functioned according to the principle of "first come first served". Later that day I learned that the black men's queue did not function according to the same principle as the anthropologists' queue. We had to leave the conference wine for those who had patiently waited longer than us and run to Milano Centrale, the station I imagined was depicted in the conference poster, to catch our train to Switzerland. We navigated our way through the railway station to the new glass doors that separate the platforms from the rest of

the railway station. We passed through a check point, the new barriers preventing those strangers who do not possess a valid ticket from causing terror at the platforms, and made it on time to our train.

The train to Basel was unusually crowded for a Saturday evening. It was packed with vacationer families as one could tell from the sleeping bags, camping mats, bicycles, lunchboxes and the many children who undertook the train journey with their parents. Nothing would beat the moment when the lunch boxes could be unpacked while watching the summerly landscapes pass by.

Amidst the holiday crowd, we could not but be curious about two young boys, much younger than the black men in the EASA poster, moving nervously back and forth in the train carriage. We wondered whether they had not found their seats and where their parents where. Eventually they found their place next to some other young boys and the journey began; for the vacationers, conference participants and the two small boys.

The journey to the last Italian city before the border with Switzerland takes about two hours. It is always there where the power of the sovereign state exercises its right to decide who is allowed to enter the beautiful mountain country. This was the moment when "the first come first served" principle of the EASA conference's wine queue ceased to apply and the destiny of the EASA's conference poster's 'black men's queue' was laid bare. A destiny that is defined by principles of white racist Europe that seeks to expel all those bodies that it defines as *a problem*. As so many times before when I have travelled this route, it was in the Italian city Domodossola where the men dressed in blue uniforms entered the train and the doors were locked. There is no way out of the train beyond that point until the men (and sometimes women) in uniforms have searched the train.

Scattered throughout the train, the police were after the skin color of the men from the EASA poster. While no-one asked me for my documents, the two boys who just a few moments earlier had showed their tickets to the controller, were removed from their seats. Even though they tried hard to appear invisible when

encountering the representatives of the Swiss state, behave like other passengers and enjoy the journey without the lunchboxes of the other children, what mattered was their skin color. The unwelcomed passengers, including a crying baby in a woman's lap, were summoned to one intersection of the train carriages. The black men's queue of the EASA poster began to form in the middle of the train corridor.

The operation was completed before we arrived in the Swiss winter athletes' paradise, the city of Brig, so that the exit from the train could follow smoothly. We and the queue of black men got off the train and the families with lunchboxes continued their journey. Or as Sara Ahmed (2000, 52) has put it earlier, the freely moving and acting white subjects could continue their journey after "expelling those other beings", the strangers.

The silence in the train demonstrated how "legality" surpasses moral concerns: We like the rest of the travelers did not do anything to stop the operation that was based on racial profiling.

Our minds are familiar with the images of the practice that unfolded in the train, even though we might never have encountered it in person. Newspapers print images from the shores of Italy, or the 'French ghettos', what was the name again? "The jungle". The EASA poster and a photo exhibition decorating my own host institution's walls at the time of writing this essay reproduce these images for us scholars to view. We have become familiarized with such images.

In a desperate attempt to document the sadness or as a pretentious act to fool myself that I was doing "something", I indiscernibly tried to film the convoy – the black men of the EASA poster with their families, escorted by the police until one of the police officers forced me to erase the pictures and my films and shouted that "next time you have to pay 2000 Swiss francs". This is what we anthropologists are used to, we ask permission from the people we photograph and then we worry about issues related to copyright. I believe these regulations hold for the EASA poster decorating the corridors of the Milano Bicocca

University as well.

The black men were returned to their place in the EASA poster – to their place in the queue. That queue is normally out of my sight – if I do not specifically search for it. And so again I did not have to do anything for it to disappear from my sight. I wondered whether the black men would again appear in the next EASA conference poster and contemplated about writing something on "the preservation of whiteness and wine culture".

Two years have passed and EASA15 is approaching. Drawing on the apparent inequality that is reflected in the disparity between scholars lining up for wine and the queue represented on the poster (and materialized on the train to Basel), we wonder how next week's EASA conference ["Staying, Moving, Settling"](#) will live up to one of the most cherished self-characterizations of anthropology – the engagement with the diversity of human life? How do we locate these two queues in next week's conference?

> *EASA goers of 2018: Do we continue to visualize others non-movement while discussing our own mobility over wine?*

Ahmed, Sara. 2000. *Strange Encounters: embodied others in post-coloniality*. London: Routledge.

Ahmed, Sara. 2004. "Collective Feelings. Or, The Impressions Left by Others." *Theory, Culture and Society* 21 (2):25-42.

Ahmed, Sara. 2015. *Living a Feminist Life*. Durham and London: Duke University

Religion in the Age of Development: Encounters in Asia

Nursyazwani Jamaludin
August, 2018

Religious actors have become increasingly involved in development. Likewise, development actors like the World Bank have also become interested in religion

(especially the religion of the communities they work with). Curiously, the juxtaposition of religious and development organizations suggest that the two are not always so different: the World Bank's faith in economics and laissez-faire theology makes it look a lot like religious organizations, and the neoliberal methods of mega-churches or mega-mosques are reminiscent of development organizations. And yet, it is often taken for granted that religion and development are two distinct fields, each with its own type of actors, worldviews, and practices. Similarly, development studies and religious studies have largely remained two separate areas of study in the academic world. Unsurprisingly, blind spots abound.

The "Religion in the Age of Development" Conference on 7-8 June 2018 – the capstone event of the Luce Foundation funded "Religion and NGOs in Asia" project at the National University of Singapore – was organized to explore the myriad of encounters between religion and development: not only how do development and religious organizations interact, but how religious techniques diffuse into development organizations and vice versa, and why we tend to think of religion and development as separable in the first place. In this report, rather than essentialize either "religion" or "development," we synthesize the thirteen conference presentations into two broad types of encounters: (1) how encounters mutually constitute religion and development as opposites; and (2) how encounters mutually transform the practices of religion and development.
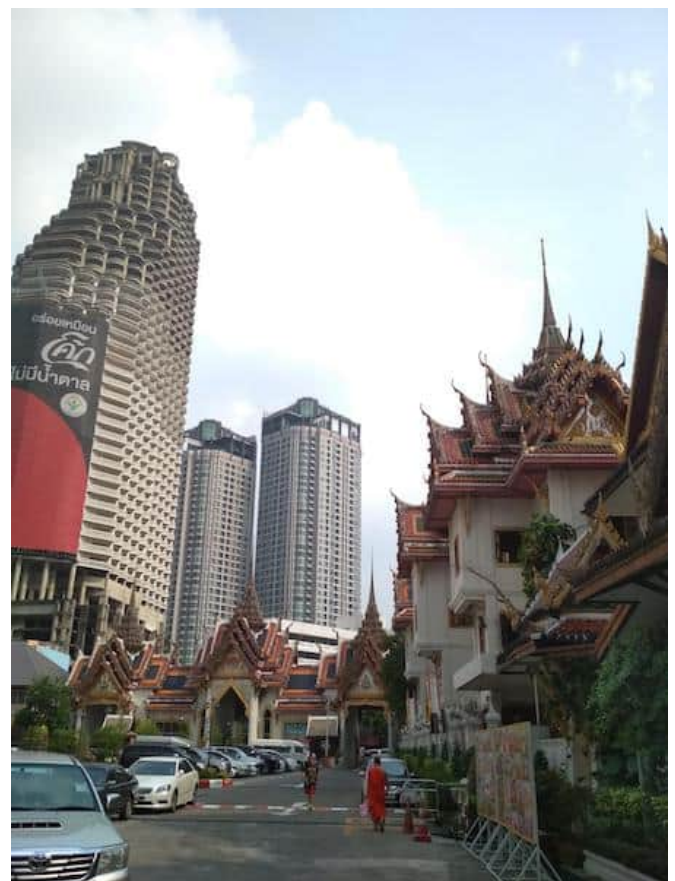
Constitutive encounters: the politics of what "religion" and "development" mean

What even counts as "religion" or "development" is shifting depending on cultural, political and historical contexts. Yet, religion and development are often positioned as opposites: sometimes, religion is cast as traditional and nostalgic as opposed to development as modern and scientific. Other times, through Sarah Kelman's juxtaposition of Malaysian development plans with Islamic permaculture, development is cast as materialistic and worldly in contrast to religion's portrayal as spiritual and otherworldly. In yet other instances, as Lorraine Aragon shows in the example of growing intellectual property law pushed by the Indonesian state, development entails a neoliberal and individualistic understanding of ownership whereas Islam focuses on ownership by the collective and transcendental. The shifting binaries of religion and development thus make them, in the words of Michael Feener and Philip Fountain (in their keynote), a "moving target".

Pinning down what "religion" and "development" mean is difficult because it is not something that can be decided once and for all time by the editors of the Oxford English Dictionary. Imams, missionaries, the post-colonial state, World Bankers (and dictionary editors too) each are, and have been, in constant negotiation over what these terms mean depending on where they sit.

> *Each of the above dichotomies of religion and development are thus political contests across time and space. This politics is hardly symmetrical: generally, in "the age of development," religious organizations have more work to do to adapt to secular, modern and neoliberal notions of "development."*

We perceive at least three types of politics. The first is rational-strategic politics. For example, David Tittensor illustrates how the Islamic Turkish organization, the Gülen Movement, actively pursues a secular appearance to escape surveillance by nation-states who are suspicious of Islamization; likewise, Malini Bhattarchajee

shows how *Youth for Seva* also takes on a veil of secularization and downplays its Hindu roots, attracting Indian Muslim volunteers who wish to escape Islamic practices. In both cases, the "secular" appearance is a rational and instrumental strategy used by religious organizations.

The second type of politics, subversive politics, constitutes as "religion" in a way that subverts hierarchies within development thinking. For example, Giuseppe Bolotta illustrates how Catholic schools with a secular mandate subversively undermine the social hierarchy within the Thai developmental state through murals portraying ethnic minority children sitting on Jesus' lap. For those who see themselves as oppressed by the developmental state, this version of Catholicism is hardly traditional or nostalgic, but liberating and progressive. Shifting to global politics, Robin Bush shows how the internationalization of Muhammadiyah's humanitarian arm subverts the stereotype of Indonesia as a recipient of international aid (and the global hierarchy between developed and developing countries) through aiding refugees within Jakarta and Southeast Asia. Although Muhammadiyah's Islam is often portrayed as conservative, it is also seen as a progressive force for Indonesians in the global developmentalist order.

The third type of politics is discursive politics. It entails how the very discourse of "religion" and "development" privileges one group over the other. For example, Filippo Osella's paper traces how the meaning of "native" philanthropic practices such as *zakat* and *sadaqa* changed to benefit different groups: from being a sacrificial and devotional act of mercy; to becoming a tool to discipline the poor under British colonialism; to an act by good citizens to provide public goods for the nascent post-colonial nation-state; to becoming Corporate Social Responsibility in service of neoliberal markets.

Transformative encounters: development gods and rationalized missions

The encounters between religion and development, however, have not necessarily resulted in them becoming neatly diametrically opposed. For example, as Fahlesa

Munabari explains, while the Islamic Defender's Front (FPI) is known for advocating the ban on Lady Gaga in Indonesia, understanding it as a politico-religious organization renders its humanitarian motivation and development projects invisible – neither development or religion are incompatible. As Jonathan Benthall suggests in the case of Islamic Orphanages, neither is the encounter between religion and development a simple fusion of the two. Rather, encounters often transform the very heart of what either religious or development organizations do.

We find it helpful to think of two types of transformative encounters. The first is the religionization of development organizations, or, the use of religious technologies in the service of development. For example, Fountain describes how development monks got coopted by the Thai state after the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, using religious affects towards the state's developmentalist goals. Likewise, Feener explains how *zakat* is often used not just as a justification for giving to developmental projects, but affectively mobilizes Islamic communities to

do so. Notably, not only has development been infused with religious meaning, but the meanings of "Buddhist" or "Islamic" have also been transformed.

The second transformative encounter is the developmentalization of religious organizations, that is, the use of developmentalist technologies in service of religion. Feener gives the example of the NGO-ification of Islamic organizations in Aceh after their encounter with the humanitarian and development industry following the tsunami. Similarly, Julia Huang describes how the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation takes medical science as "magical proof" of Buddhism. Likewise, Catherine Scheer discusses how missionaries have carved out a space in the development world as linguistic experts. What it means to practice science, being a linguistic expert, or being an NGO is hardly secular with these actors. Similarly although these developmentalized practices are purportedly in the service of religious ends, they also become developmentalist ends in themselves.

Conclusion: Messy Encounters

To sum up, this conference represents how the conversation has shifted from static conceptualizations of "religion" and "development" to more dynamic conceptualizations, being continually constituted and transformed. In practice, just as all these encounters are both constitutive and transformative, all transformative encounters involve entanglements of religionization and developmentalization. These encounters rarely play out neatly. For example, Peter Redfield suggests that developmentalist pursuits of egalitarianism treat life as both sacred (priceless) and profane (fungible, or priced) in the name of "effective altruism." This is particularly evident from the diverse and heterogenous experiences of both religion and development in Asia, as presented in the conference. Asia is thus fertile ground for tracing, reflecting and parsing out the messy bi- and multi-directionality of their encounters.

So where to from here? One step forward might be to compare Religion in the Age of Development with its counterpart – Development in the Age of Religion: how has development thinking snuck its way into theology, or subverted

religious orders?

If the appeal towards universalist notions of development was a response to the frustration of irresolvable religious conflict, can religion also be a response to frustrations in development? Although "Development" can itself be constituted as a kind of theology (as Feener and Fountain note), it is not any kind of religion: its enchantment seems to rely on a purported disenchantment and disinterestedness. Perhaps, the resurgent interest in religious experiences of humanitarianism might be partly a response to disenchantment with the iron cage of development and the profane improvement of bare life?

[Featured image](#) by [Brian Jeffery Beggerly](#) (flickr, [CC BY 2.0](#)).