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Thirty Years of Research in Fairfax, Marin County and the Problem of Community in Housing Policy¹

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A small town's history is reviewed in the context of housing needs and population change. The economic conditions of growth and of the building of community over a 100-year period is described in the context of changing concepts of housing as a dwelling versus an asset. The consequences of state housing policy on local stakeholders at a time of rapid financialization is a central factor. These include a degradation on social capital, creation of disorder and reduction of trust and community feeling.

Keywords: Housing, small town, government, real estate, contractors, permits.

Here are my views gained over the past 30 years in the Marin County, California town of Fairfax. We find a community created of the 20th century and a contrast to the vista of the 21st. Fairfax is a town whose origins began with the arrival of Italian immigrants brought to the locale to build the county's dams in the late 19th century (Sagar and Sagar 2005). Before being incorporated, the town attracted blue-collar workers and locations for cheap vacation homes for San Francisco white-collar workers in the 1920s and 30s. These one and two room shacks by the thirties were turned into affordable dwellings for laboring families. Through the WWII to the early 1950s the town grew into small neighborhoods characterized by extended families whose sons and daughters largely located their new families nearby.

Basic Data

Today, Fairfax has a population of approximately 7,610 people; this is close to the 1970 total of 7,661. According to the US Census, 94.9% are U.S. citizens, 11.1% were born outside the USA. About 83% identify as White, 4% as Asian, 4% as White Hispanic, 8.7% as Hispanic, 1% African American and 1% Pacific Islander. Median earnings for men were \$57,488 and women \$62,292 for 2021. This is an interesting reversal to the general national trend. Median household income for 2020 was \$111,290. 63.3% have a Bachelor's degree or higher. 46% are married, 44.2% define themselves as religious, 31% are Catholic, 9% are some denomination of Protestant, 1.8% Judaism, 1.4% report as believers of eastern faiths, 0.4 are Moslem. Marin County reports 30.5% Catholic, 5.14% Protestant, 1.75 % Judaism, 1.37 Mormon.

¹ I want to thank the editors for suggestions in the process of preparing this article for publication. Data collected during this study, but not included in this paper, are available on request. No Funding was received in pursuit of this study. I have no conflicts to report regarding this study or its conduct. Research was conducted as required by ethics standards of the AAA. All permissions have been acquired. NB: Faces in the pictures are blurred for legal reasons.

Nature of Community

In the 1960s and 70s, these organic communities could be described by the interactions of the women who often were the “homemakers” of crafts-employed men, electricians, plumbers, truck drivers, etc. But also came droves of hippies from the City and especially musicians who had interacted with local rock bands in San Francisco. The blend of working class families and hippie “families” created some tension, but led to a general openness and tolerance, perhaps derived from the earlier immigrant experience (Handlin 1951). During the days children would return from school, those whose mothers worked to be cared for by the “stay at home moms” and a fluid mechanism of family spread over the town. The inexpensive housing inventory created by the early development of the town, was added to in the 1960s and 70s with a small number of spec homes and a few apartment buildings designed for working class families and priced moderately. This was not uniform; rather there was a mix of women who worked in the city of San Francisco or nearby sites in a variety of jobs. Still the overall impression I derived from interviews taken over 30 years was that the general pattern was that most women who were married cared for the home and their children, though some of these also took part time jobs or had volunteer positions in local non-profits.

In the 1980s, a change in housing financing and investing reduced the construction of multi-family buildings across California (Lewis 2003), though this change is often attributed to local resistance to density via zoning and environmental concerns it was more effected by incipient trends toward financialization of housing (Farha 2017). Housing has never been sufficient in America, especially after the 20th century campaign to achieve a form of standardized housing and reduce vernacular construction with both its curiosities and dangers (Fossum 1965, Lewis 1973). By the 1990s, waves of new families began to arrive in the town whose cheap housing made it a magnet for those leaving expensive San Francisco. Why Fairfax housing was cheaper is explained by my informants in a number of ways. First is the small size of the homes built, especially when vacation cabins were turned into yearly rentals and then purchased by individuals or just married couples. The affordability of the housing stock had remained static and this is verified by reference to both the U.S. Census data from years 1930 to 1980 and County records of property sales. Why was this true of Fairfax and not the rest of Marin that experienced a wave of large housing construction after the Second World War is unclear.

Local attitudes argue that houses tended to stay in families and were often rented out to relatives or friends or to newly married sons and daughters. The fact that few homes were also enlarged or remodeled until the 1990s is also a curious fact. While Fairfax’s families seem to have been as large statistically as the rest of Marin, the addition of a room, generally of 200 to 300 square feet seems to have been more typical than major renovations to transform a 900 square foot home into a 2,000 or 4,000 square foot one as was seen in the rest of Marin from the 1970s to 2000. Again, the modest nature of the size of homes is curious and some respondents suggested that it was due to town policy, but others pointed to the cultural history of the early inhabitants who came from small villages with small houses. It is interesting in

this regard, that even today in 2024 Fairfax has a reputation for being anti-development, and to be opposed to major changes in home size and to a general change of the character of the town. This attitude is specifically embedded in the town's General Plan, written by committees of local residents. While this is changing, possibility due to a large influx of new residents in the past 20 years, there is also pressure from the state of California in new laws that require towns to grow, to increase the number and size of residential housing units and also by the effects of the financialization of housing.

Conflict of Housing Costs, Change in Jobs

Until the 1980s, most of Fairfax's residents were economically what would be called, working class, lower middle and upper lower income earners, most on hourly and timecard pay schemes, according to my respondents. Mr. Frank Egger was one of these who married in Fairfax, where he and his wife raised a family. Mr. Egger also notes the economic changes in residents in the 1990s, but also the attitude of builders and real estate agents as Fairfax was "under built", a comment often made by real estate agents. Efforts by these groups was aimed at increasing house size to accommodate a richer clientele and thus more income for them. Mr. Egger and other long-time residents responded to national and regional efforts to produce an environmentally sound landscape and city, using the town government as a means to do so. They thwarted efforts of developers by passing ordinances and local laws to prohibit large homes and homes on hillsides, to maintain low local density and provide for a safe natural mix of wild life and semi-urban impacts. This worked well until the 1990s when economic pressures focused on Fairfax as a Marin "gem" for young families moving from the city of San Francisco in search of a "1950s style urban experience".

So, the new residents can be seen as different economically and culturally from the pre-1990s population. These families appeared richer and less rooted in working traditions, they were laden with cash from new industries the Bay Area fostered and they were in search of an idyllic America of community that Fairfax seemed to provide. They tended to use either professional childcare instead of sharing or using neighbor's daughters, and house chores like gardening which had been a family enterprise, became increasingly a hired professional service. This may also reflect on a lack of time due to families having two wage earners and women having careers in a technology milieu where work and family time are no longer separated.

In studies of community and reciprocity, both Simmel (1903) and Merton (1947) placed emphasis on proximity and interaction. Thus choices on community began to change with the advent of social media, where parents of different families joined together to share clothes, toys and tasks, which mimicked the local tradition of sharing and caring for children. But the extent of this phenomenon in Fairfax seems limited based on my interviews and when questioned about frequency of exchange, most parents admitted the use of social media and sharing was more theoretical than practical given two parent careers and costs. Data on this concentrates on the use of the media and indicates that most parents are sharing experiences

and not tasks (e.g., Dawson 2018). My review of local social media site, Next Door, indicated that many parents have established some physical sharing of materials and activities with other parents.

The general split in Fairfax residents during this time was also reflected in the arguments over the need for growth and affordable housing. While it was acknowledged by most that the housing that was being built was unaffordable for most, and tended to rehab small older affordable homes (single family and multi-units, like duplexes) into larger less affordable ones, newer residents and developers pushed for simply more building without reference to actual cost. The “traditional” group favored and promoted legalizing second units and helping elderly residents rent out extra rooms in their homes. The main goal of this group was to promote affordability and not density. However, a survey of landlord and tenants found that second units and rented rooms did not necessarily result in lower rents and neighbors often complained of increased traffic, noise and trash, especially after online vacation rentals like Airbnb penetrated their business into town. Offended neighbors used the term, “rooming houses” often when referring to these rentals.

The crux of the problem is who is the builder and controls the process. In San Francisco, like many other cities, towns and counties, the process of building, from permits to plans to execution is largely under the control of the builders’ associations, investors and real estate interests (Sward 2000). Their ability to transform the landscape and produce expensive and non-utilitarian housing can only be understood by an examination of the political process, political donations and muscle.

The Power of Builders and Investors in the Political Process

The situation regarding affordable housing is a crisis. One only needs to look at the California Budget and Policy Center's September study (Anderson and Kimberlin 2017) showing that “high rents are one of the major causes of poverty in our state”. And it seems dysfunctional to build so-called commuter or transit hub housing when you do not provide new transit assets to move people from those units to work. If pollution is the target to attack as well as housing, then work done by UC Davis scientists, Lin and Prince (n.d.) shows that by raising the gas tax above \$1.37 would result in behavior change reducing pollution and it could produce sufficient funds for new public transit.

Claims that environmentalists are responsible for high rents, is undermined by the 2003 study by Paul Lewis of the Public Policy Institute of California which looked at changes in housing law that have limited the ability of local authorities in controlling housing, as in housing elements and other local influences on housing, including zoning. They found these limitations on local control had little effect on the production of affordable housing. However, people like Scott Wiener have been pushing more restrictions on local elected officials' influence on housing development supposedly to produce more housing. Graham MacDonald (2017) of the Urban Institute has shown that luxury apartments and homes of over \$1,000,000

in sales and new construction have outpaced those under \$1,000,000 since 2015, but blames the lack of new units in general for the crisis.

Supporters of Senator Wiener's position invoke supply and demand theory to explain the need for housing, but they misunderstand how it works. Cities in America do not build housing today. Some did in the past, and a few are attempting to do so again. In the 1970s I was part of a group of housing advocates who helped set up community development corporations and I sat on the board of one. We built housing and the process was daunting in the attempt to produce affordable units.

As housing spills out across the country and the "densification" movement makes the towns and cities unlivable by destroying amenities (parks, low rise housing, neighborhoods with character, etc. see Heathcote 2015) the goal of densification became clear. The citizenry saw that the propaganda from developers was just that, a means to more housing not better communities with affordable housing. While hiding behind the idea of affordable housing and energy efficient high rises with "in-filling" projects, the real effect was just to make money. The kind of construction that was produced was also questionable as in the Grenfell Tower that took 79 lives (Bubola 2022). We need to have a Localism Act in California to give back our control of our cities and towns.

In Fairfax, those promoting the idea of building more housing produced arguments charging the "no-growth" group with racism and elitism. While there was little evidence of this in interviews with town's people I conducted over 30 years in door-to-door and other sessions, it had considerable effect and especially with those genuinely concerned with these issues. It would be distorting to present Fairfax as divided between new and old residents or traditional vs "modern", it has unfolded in a more complex fashion with many in the building and trades industry divided into both "camps" as well as real estate agents, lawyers and architects. Peoples' views of development, density and diversity were expressed and molded in various contexts and influenced by personal friendships and perceived ideological positions. Often, however, those promoting development hid their personal investment or interests from their public positions.

Social Capital and Reciprocity

Forms of reciprocity acted as social glue building social credit among families and produced solidarity, though the town's politics was not without conflict. Nevertheless, the town's neighborhoods functioned to ameliorate struggle via reciprocity as Durkheim (1915) argued and we see in communities across cultural lines (e.g., Firth 1936). This is seen embedded in exchange where custom and institutions are a framework for individual behavior engendering trust and discouraging malfeasance (Granovetter 1985), limiting the transformation of conflict into aggression as seen in Melanesia among the Manu (Fortune 1935) in the intercession of Sir Ghosts in regulating kin behavior in relation to others.

Contradictory elements embody the existence of this community in the 21st century. On the one hand, there was an attraction to the sense of interrelations which typify the idea

of an American community, yet at its core a fierce desire to protect a necessary privacy and individualism (Hsu 1972).

Fairfax's coffee shops teem with old friends and families eating and drinking together, of children who grew up locally and those of new arrivals. Families, friends and business associates spend time in each other's homes and the schools provide platforms for them to work together for community ends as they are defined. And while a general feeling acknowledges that parents desire their children to locate in town or nearby, the housing shortage and exploding costs of local existing housing makes that unlikely at best. Though census data show that only 59% of Americans live in the state where they were born and fewer in the town where they grew up (US Census 2015). Yet, at the same time there is a general agreement, often unspoken, but acted on in voting and initiative, that the town should not grow, that its character is threatened by growth, but every effort at affordability is defeated by the outside forces that determine housing policy and financing.

Disinformation as a Housing Policy Tactic

The elements of community discussed briefly above, were often expressed as ideals (e.g., "we must preserve our small-town character") or laments with a political subtext as in, "housing is so expensive our children cannot afford to live here". Often there was a monetary motive, as in the public relations efforts of the building and real estate industries. Such values were generally expressed in Town meetings, local coffee houses, in local newspapers and political meetings at the local library or in homes during political campaigns. These ideas were not unique to Fairfax. Housing became the central issue over the past 30 years in town and as opposed to the bigger cities; it is not linked to homelessness. We can see these topics and the various slants they are treated to in the international press. A writer for the *Financial Times* has made a number of contributions to this problem.

An article by John Burn-Murdoch (2023b) points to one of the most significant factors in the decline of affordable housing, affordability. He also emphasizes a consequence of the current lack of affordability, young people living with their parents. However, I think this is a mistake. As someone who grew up in a farming family, our neighbors and we lived as three generations under one roof. Extended families in major cities were also common until the post-WWII period when large tracts of multi-unit housing were demolished during redevelopment and the elimination of the long existing ethnic neighborhoods of the major metropolitan areas. Immigrants have long used extended family arrangements to save for generational expenses including homes. PewResearch found that there has been an increase in multi-generational households from 1940 to 2020 (32million to 49 million) with a dip in 1970 to 26 million (<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2010/03/18/the-return-of-the-multi-generational-family-household/>), however, there has also been a very significant increase of single individuals living alone and couples without children.

For young adults, the Urban Institute found the situation was even worse with homeownership in 2022 at 37% a marked decline from 2010 (Goodman et al. 2023). It appears

the purchase of homes for rentals and (especially vacation units) by hedge funds, LLC holding groups and other investors has maintained the tight market and lack of affordability. The figures for people of colour, and especially African Americans reflects this substantial collapse to economic security that is growing for the median American family.

Another factor is the increase in dwelling size from 1900 to 2020 where the average family size has decreased. Therefore, the housing industry is building larger homes for fewer people. What we need are smaller units, single room occupancy buildings, condos of small size and efficiencies of under 500 square feet to meet the demand by young people for affordability in starter homes. Short-term, vacation rentals should be banned should also be banned as they reduce the very type of unit needed for a local workforce of young people to begin saving at affordable rates.

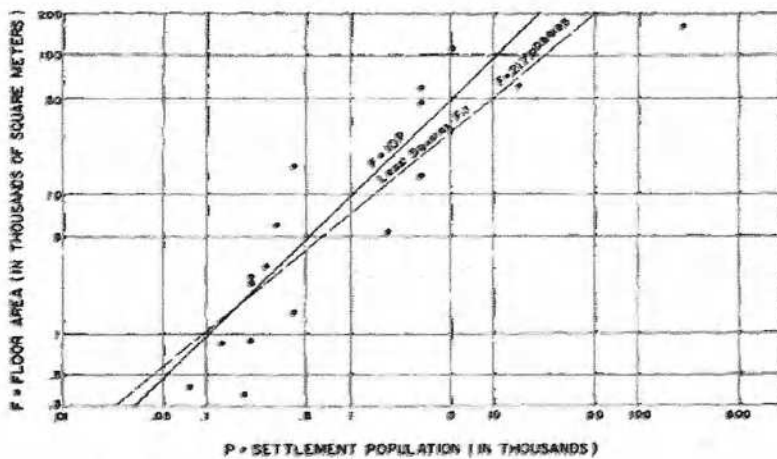


FIG. 1 [NAROLL]. Relationship between floor area and population in the largest settlements of 18 societies on a

The number of houses built by a people was a sum of the fertility (rate of population increase, decrease or stability), cost of building and degree of shelter provided versus the need for intimacy and other comfort factors. As Naroll (1962) demonstrates in his graphic representation of a study of housing density over time and cross-culture data. The larger and denser a population, the more space tends to be allocated.

In the past century considerations of housing condition, including safety and hygiene became important. Housing was considered to be substandard if it did not meet certain levels of health conditions defined differently in different industrialized nations (Fossum 1965). In the past 4 decades the idea of housing affordability became a central issue in urban economic studies and rocketed into the political scene in the past 30 years (Hulchanski 1995).

Homes have been getting bigger as families have gotten smaller and with current trends of people living alone we have a specter of the average 2,000 square foot home occupied by one person as opposed to 1920 with a 1050 square foot home with 5 people (see data below).

In 1940, data from the U.S. Census indicates about 20.2% of all homes in America were overcrowded, today that figure is 5.7%. We have succeeded in banishing the

overcrowding problem, but produced a space problem, too much space for too few people. Mr. Lake wants to reverse a sound trend to produce smaller, more efficient dwelling units for the McMansions of the 89s and 90s. This is not sustainable.

Year	Av.House Size sq ft.	floor area	housing starts	GDP per cap	Year	Av.House Size sq ft.	floor area	housing starts	GDP per cap
1920	1048	242	247,000	\$10,164	1950	983	292	1,950,000	\$16,057
1921	1011	233	449,000	\$9,743	1951	874	262	1,490,000	\$17,059
1922	811	188	716,000	\$10,141	1952	910	274	1,500,000	\$17,452
1923	742	171	817,000	\$11,284	1953	917	279	1,440,000	\$17,972
1924	777	179	893,000	\$11,409	1954	1140	341	1,550,000	\$17,560
1925	967	223	937,000	\$11,500	1955	1170	351	1,650,000	\$18,483
1926	994	229	849,000	\$12,086	1956	1230	370	1,350,000	\$18,547
1927	989	228	810,000	\$12,038	1957	1305	392	1,220,000	\$18,599
1928	1222	282	753,000	\$12,025	1958	1289	386	1,380,000	\$18,158
1929	1233	284	509,000	\$ 9,668	1959	1300	389	1,550,000	\$19,084
1930	1129	275	330,000	\$ 8,751	1960	1289	387	1,300,000	\$19,180
1931	1213	295	254,000	\$ 8,128	1961	1284	382	1,370,000	\$19,351
1932	889	216	134,000	\$ 7,035	1962	1309	396	1,490,000	\$20,220
1933	1267	308	93,000	\$6,906	1963	1450	435	1,640,000	\$20,799
1934	826	201	126,000	\$ 7,603	1964	1470	441	1,560,000	\$21,698
1935	992	241	221,000	\$ 8,223	1965	1525	461	1,510,000	\$22,820
1936	1129	275	319,000	\$9,226	1966	1570	476	1,200,000	\$24,046
1937	1135	276	336,000	\$9,639	1967	1610	491	1,320,000	\$24,438
1938	959	233	406,000	\$9,248	1968	1665	515	1,550,000	\$25,383
1939	1046	254	515,000	\$9,904	1969	1640	514	1,500,000	\$25,923
1940	1177	321	603,000	\$10,687	1970	1500	478	1,470,000	\$25,677
1941	1153	314	706,000	\$12,458	1971	1520	489	2,050,000	\$26,192
1942	2044	557	356,000	\$14,652	1972	1555	508	2,360,000	\$27,277
1943	1692	461	191,000	\$16,914	1973	1660	551	2,050,000	\$28,542
1944	837	228	142,000	\$18,046	1974	1695	571	1,340,000	\$28,134
1945	797	217	326,000	\$17,677	1975	1645	560	1,160,000	\$27,807
1946	817	223	1,020,000	\$15,467	1976	1700	588	1,540,000	\$29,023
1947	903	254	1,270,000	\$15,008	1977	1720	601	1,990,000	\$30,057
1948	800	229	1,360,000	\$15,364	1978	1775	625	2,020,000	\$31,395
1949	767	224	1,470,000	\$15,018	1979	1760	633	1,750,000	\$32,035

1980	1740	630	1,290,000	\$31,589
1981	1720	630	1,080,000	\$32,088
1982	1710	629	1,060,000	\$31,174
1983	1725	632	1,700,000	\$32,324
1984	1780	657	1,750,000	\$34,368
1985	1785	664	1,740,000	\$35,508
1986	1825	684	1810,000	\$36,423
1987	1905	716	1,620,000	\$37,348
1988	1995	756	1,490,000	\$35,566
1989	2,035	777	1,380,000	\$39,610
1990	2,080	791	1,190,000	\$39,919
1991	2075	789	1,010,000	\$39,363
1992	2095	800	1,200,000	\$40,225
1993	2095	788	1,290,000	\$40,796
1994	2100	787	1,460,000	\$41,931
1995	2095	791	1,350,000	\$42,566
1996	2120	800	1,480,000	\$43,668
1997	2150	814	1,470,000	\$45,086
1998	2190	836	1,620,000	\$46,547
1999	2223	852	1,640,000	\$48,174
2000	2266	865	1,570,000	\$49,600
2001	2324	901	1,600,000	\$49,588
2002	2320	899	1,700,000	\$49,995
2003	2330	907	1,850,000	\$50,927
2004	2349	914	1,960,000	\$52,380
2005	2434	947	2,070,000	\$53,632
2006	2469	961	1,800,000	\$54,541
2007	2521	985	1,350,000	\$54,982
2008	2519	984	905,500	\$54,309
2009	2438	949	554,000	\$52,338
2010	2392	924	586,000	\$53,218
2011	2480	969	608,800	\$53,662
2012	2505	982	780,000	\$54,451
2013	2598	1,023	924,000	\$54,859
2014	2657	1,046	1,000,000	\$55,762
2020	2300	920		

Chart 1: House size and size per person with total units built and media income, by the author.
<https://247wallst.com/special-report/2016/05/25/the-size-of-a-home-the-year-you-were-born/> and Statista

It is obvious that most nations the world over are searching for answers to the housing problem. Some examples in the press that are reported to be positive do not stand up on inspection. For example, in another article Burn-Murdoch (2023a) uses some recent studies to make rather illogical statements. He begins by twisting an old saw concerning capitalism, “All other things being equal, if the supply of a good or service increases, its price will decrease, unless that thing is housing”. As Adam Smith noted some 3 centuries ago, all other things are never equal and human self-interest is at the center of the process. The supply and demand factors are never operating in a vacuum of human perception or interest. As for all goods and services, housing also is affected by the needs of the builders, investors and landlords. These actors want the highest possible return on their investment; as a result holding off production to keep demand high is an obvious tactic. This is one reason why so many people mistake the reason for the high percentage of vacant properties in the US and the UK, though speculation by hedge funds and LLCs parallel those strategies of small owners and investors. This is not only due to government regulations or the cost of financing, but also because investors need to find a market that will return their investment at rates that

allow for them to continue in business. Keeping units from the market is one means of achieving this end.

While people desire large units and our cities and housing are largely designed for car use, the fact remains that we are not building affordable units but luxury units as shown both in recent studies in New York (Chen 2022) and San Francisco (Badger 2022, Nielsen 2022). Our building trends are not moving people to more desirable units or areas, but farther from work and city centers, increasing commute times and pollution. The problem is not NIMBYS or in builders or investors but in the lack of affordable social housing, built as quality units and amortized to provide for proper maintenance and security. But this is a worldwide trend related to the rise of the global economy from the 70s to the 2010s (Sassen 2012).

Local Effects of Lies and Distortion

Lies, rumor and propaganda function in this environment to distort conditions and confuse people as well as delegitimize leaders, institutions and organizations that might oppose development. Respected local, national and international organizations are the objects of abuse if they are perceived to resist. The Sierra Club has faced numerous threats and submitted to many dubious compromises in the face of relentless pressure from developers (see, for example, Solnit 2004). Ben Christopher's article (2024) on the new bills on housing, including that by State Sen. Catherine Blakespear, reports on another attack by the building industry on local control and protections of the environment. Under the guise of a housing crisis of their own making, builders and investors have taken aim at democratic institutions and laws protecting our natural environment like the California Coastal Commission and CEQA.

In the context of Fairfax, the use of distortion and falsehood by developers, real estate agents and builders has the effect of disarming local support for open space, low-density ordinances, zoning and permits. Real estate agents routinely told home buyers to ignore local ordinances requiring permits for things like additions, remodel of existing structures, updating plumbing and electrical. In the campaign to defeat Councilman Frank Egger, these actors blamed Egger for rising costs, permit delays, denials of permits (even when the permit requests were clearly in violation of codes or building practice or they were incomplete as filed). As a result, and in an attempt to clarify the situation, I began a study of permitting. Permit delays are often blamed for the housing crisis as are inspections, and plan authorizations (Gardiner and Nielsen 2022). The situation is not so clear and there is evidence, parallel to my report here that towns and cities are doing a careful, professional and due diligence in the time to process permits (Gardiner 2022). While there is a considerable body of building and real estate industry funded research on permits, they focus on small samples and appear to inflate and distort the situation. A national study by the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis (Famiglietti 2019) found that permits and cost of housing were not closely related. Permits do not mean housing starts, but are forward looking actions by builders or investors, often based on interest rates, available land and land and financing costs.

Dishonesty appears in a community based on a number of factors that determine its frequency of expression and form as Hsu (1972) noted in his comparison of Chinese and American cultures. Cheating on taxes or manipulating appraisal to increase or decrease value are common factors affecting housing. A national scandal over falsified appraisals resulted from a study in 2007 by New York's attorney general (Said 2007). So, while the real scandals were in tax evasion, especially in construction by various means including using undocumented labor (Hardy and Danch 2023), cheating taxes on payroll (Nation 2006) and appraisals, and the credit crisis magnified by sub-prime loans, the public was distracted by false issues like permits. Tax evasion is neither new nor limited to the USA in construction, as Luzgina (2017) has summarized.

It is not just the political consequences of propaganda that is a problem but also the poisoning of the community spirit, a campaign of division is organized and a victim focused on. This has become commonplace in 2023 in the wake of Donald Trump's presidency and the MAGA campaigns on the 2020 election, though the fabric of such behavior was seen in the Tea Party and anti-communist activities of people like Joe MaCarthy (Carleton 1987). I had seen some underhanded political acts, mudslinging in exaggeration and the use of hearsay and rumor both in San Francisco from the 1960s to the early 1990s as well as in Hayward and Castro Valley where I grew up. What was astonishing was the vitriol and pure anger that was joined to wild distortions and lies in the campaign to defeat the re-election of Mr Egger. This process of creating anger and aiming it at certain individuals as scapegoats is not new, nor making the government foreign, as in most populist movements as the "deep state" claims of right-wing Trump supporters of various types of conspiracy theories (Tuters and Willaert 2022). We see a long history, especially in the modern context of land use and ownership changes as Hobsbawm (1959) has described.

Early in the election cycle signs appeared on buildings and posts urging people to "Dump Egger Protect Property Rights", along with "Oust Egger" bumper stickers. One argument that seemed reasonable was that Mr. Egger was the longest sitting councilperson in California and his opponents argued that it was time for a change. But when asked why this was a problem, they had no specific explanation. Questions like, do not people have the right to elect whomever they want? They would only answer in vague statements like, "He has it sewn up". It has always seemed strange to me that the people behind term limits initiatives and recalls are generally Republicans. They usually hide a basic fear or antagonism of the general voting public, and their propaganda is usually laced with platitudes about the need to have "new" or "younger" people run or that the unions dominate the election of incumbents. When I complain that term limits undermine my freedom to choose who I want to represent me, the answer is often that I am biased. Yet in the context of Republican led programs to suppress the vote across the country it is hypocritical (Kamarck 2023).

Who Benefits? The Disuniting of Civic Life

In 1991 Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. wrote *The disuniting of America*. He was concerned that the civic institutions that promoted integration and the idea of the "Melting Pot" of our

national ideal were under attack and faltering. Oliver Roy (2024) has expanded this same paradigm to most of the world, arguing that there is a crisis, rather a fault zone between classes and youth and tradition where association and belief in institutions is eroding. The lack of trust and general agreement in how to govern is under attack at a time when concepts of nationalism and belonging as members of traditional social organization are evaporating. Corruption and belief in an unfair economic system are central and this pertains to our local problem with construction and local government. Before the 2007 credit crisis, bribery and corruption was so embedded in the world construction industry that the Executive Director of the World Economic Forum, Peter Matthews (2016), in a comprehensive world assessment pointed out the institutional pattern.

Even today, but as in the 1990s in Fairfax, we hear that it is near impossible to acquire building permits and planning authorization for the simplest repairs or alterations to a home let alone for new construction. The literature on this question is unclear due to, 1. The poor quality of most published materials, often ranging from promotion to opinion, and 2. The fact that application of regulation varies widely usually because of variation in law, local land availability and conditions and differences in the political processes governing implementation (Quigley and Rosenthal 2005).

As a homeowner, I was concerned about getting permits for work on my house. As a Councilperson, I canvassed surrounding communities to compare Fairfax with other towns in Marin and the Bay Area in general. The results of my survey show that the time and effort expended in acquiring a permit for any purpose does vary significantly in the Bay Area. However, Fairfax's practice, at least shown by data randomly collected from 3 of the 4 years of the highest number of claims and associated with the drive against Mr Egger (2000 to 2004), does not significantly differ from that found in the rest of the Area. If this is true, then what is the reason for the attitude we find that is contrary to fact?

Cultural Elements and Attitudes

Fairfax has a reputation as a "laid back" hippie town as well as an old resident ethnic tradition (mainly Italian) and this creates a milieu of significant tolerance. Another characteristic I found was a general attitude, especially among older resident families of being left alone, an independence of mind very different from political independents. The town was seen as more than liberal and its "green" credentials grew from the 50s to the 2000s.

Often builders would propose buildings or renovations that were in violation of zoning, yet would lobby, threaten lawsuits with their lawyers and be given exceptions, called "variances" from the zoning. While this shocked me, I found most townspeople considered it to be acceptable, a sort of "live and let live" approach. For example, one resident was told by a real estate agent that permits were not necessary when he first moved into town. This attitude by some real estate agents was verified by numerous respondents in interviews. The outcome, however, was that small houses that should not have been demolished or allowed to be turned into "McMansions".

Some Findings on Contractors, Permits and Town Staff

I surveyed homeowners in Fairfax over the past 30 years to find out if their experiences could establish some guidelines for understanding both the behavior of contractors and real estate agents, and that of town staff. The findings are as follow:

1. Many contractors refused to write contracts. This seemed to be made more frequent after Covid hit.
2. Many contractors offered substantial discounts if paid in cash.
3. Many contractors suggested that permits were unnecessary and simply slowed the job and made it more expensive, implying permits were just a means for towns to make money. Most also offered discounts if they did not have to get permits, or suggested the homeowner get the permits and pretend they were doing the work.
4. Some real estate agents suggested that permits increased assessments and property taxes, which is true, and it was best to avoid them as they seldom affected resale.
5. A majority of real estate agents referred homebuyers to specific contractors who could “get by” permit problems or non-conforming elements of a house that otherwise would have to be modified or abated.
6. A number of contractors failed to provide a valid license (some were working with another individual’s license or an expired license). When challenged and when a provided license was checked with the State of California’s Contractor’s State Licensing Board (CSLB), discrepancies were found.
7. A substantial number of contractors required or strongly suggested it best for homeowners to get permits themselves if they wanted them. This indicates that they may have legal problems with their permits or have lawsuits against them for substandard work, etc. Though a search for confirmation of such problems did not support that conclusion in many cases. Some contractors may simply want to avoid regulation or taxes.

Obviously, the most contractors and real estate agents are professionals and eschew such behavior, but a minority are producing an effect which gives the negative attitude about permits support.

It does seem that some portion of this response is due to political attitudes of anti-government beliefs as some respondents volunteered. The effect on homeowners can be economically positive if the contractors are honest despite their negative attitudes on permits.

Though the gray area is “homeowner” work, which in many cases is exempt from permits or inspections. When a homeowner declares they are doing the work themselves, several town building inspectors told me they are less likely to be fined or made to make changes.

Conclusions

This trend is not new, nor is it particular to Marin County. In an earlier essay Caldararo, (2017) reported on a study of the South of Market community in San Francisco where a

vibrant working-class community, interspersed among warehouses, small factories, workshops and a Filipino community was destroyed in less than 2 decades and replaced by luxury apartments and condos and new high-rise commercial buildings. This transformation was discussed below in my book on the Goodman Building, and both can be viewed in the fashion which Krase (2012) has delineated in both culture change and change of economic interests, neighborhood and community and class.

So, I have documented how builders, developers, real estate agents and land investors and housing speculators, all in the course of their perception of their businesses act to destroy community and make housing unaffordable. This is not to say they are evil, but only to note, as Hsu (1972) has that the character of culture promotes certain economic forms of activity. It is obvious too, that community, while a popular ideal is also considered the enemy of progress. This contradiction has had a number of effects on demography. It is also true that where one has benefits and value, as in small town lack of density, tree lined streets, small schools and vibrant community organizations that promote high social capital, you also have the opportunity to profit from these conditions. Selling the small town ideal results in increased housing prices by big city residents moving to what they believe is a positive value. Building more housing in the small town and densifying its neighborhoods, reduces the benefits of social life.

The trend of adult children living at home, having decreased from 1900 to the 1960s and then increased again, and especially during the past 20 years, has had some positive results. Aside from caring for elderly parents and grandparents, there has been a reinvigoration of extended families and this has had an important effect on local communities and economies (Arnett 2020). In Fairfax, with its large number of small homes, additions, notably of second units have helped in this process. What form this will take in the future is difficult to assess from available data, but it might change or reverse patterns of atomization that have characterized the past 50 or 60 years.

Some psychologists and technology critics have argued that smart phones, computers and other electronic devices are contributing to atomization, depriving children of social interaction and dividing family life (Haidt 2024). But these fears have attended the appearance of new technologies, suburbs and changes in jobs for parents for more than 200 years. When I have observed children using electronic devices like smart phones, I have noted that it is not fundamentally different from when children play alone, create their own stories and games and magnify these with imagination that creates a rich background for social interaction. As a person who played alone as a child, I can add that I do not think it made me anti-social or deprived me of a rich family life or playmates. The future will describe how these new maps to human consciousness will function and contribute to society. Perhaps a greater problem, and one that is seen in the wake of the Covid pandemic, is the break from the lack of free time for children prior to the disease. The idea of the “over-scheduled child” where each hour of each day is filled with activity was replaced by a lack of structure much more typical of previous periods of childhood (Rosenfeld and Wise 2001, deMause 1974).



Fig 2. Image of a child playing with an electronic device (ipad) at a family party with mostly adults present. The ability of the child to entertain themselves can be a sign of maturity (by the author).

Problems with permits and housing cost as well as other pressures on honest reporting of problems in housing are beset with many political interests and stakeholder investments. As in the cases of kickbacks and bribes found among real estate agents, loan officers, insurance agents, contractors and builders in 2005 under then California State Insurance Commissioner John Garamandi, the problems are systematic and embedded and require considerable resources to correct (Abate, 2005). The main problem, however, as noted in this study, is not local democracy or the environment.

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Disaggregated Service Modalities Beyond Formality-Informality: Through Everyday Practices around Water Kiosks in Visakhapatnam¹

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The present article situates water kiosks within the water infrastructure of post-colonial cities. Further, it examines the role, agency, and everyday practices of water kiosk operators responsible for operating the water kiosks within the heterogeneous water infrastructure in Visakhapatnam, a post-colonial Indian city. By exploring the role of the kiosk operators, this research seeks to understand how these operators, through their lived space, produce informality, thereby reconfiguring the urban waterscape. Two distinct urban water kiosks (the NTR Sujala Plant, Mustapha Colony and Atmospheric Water Generator (AWG), Ramkrishna Beach) were studied during 2020-2022 to get an ethnographic account of the everyday practices in and around the kiosks. Our research findings challenge the traditional formal-informal dichotomy by highlighting the agency exercised by kiosk operators in their daily operations. Rather than strictly categorising services like water kiosks as formal or informal, we contend that there is a breakdown of traditional distinctions, which we understand through the disaggregation of services as the activities within a single service modality may possess elements of both to varying degrees. Also, we find that informality is not inherent but produced within formal structures through the everyday practices of these operators.

Keywords: Water Kiosks, heterogenous water infrastructure, informality, disaggregation, lived space, India

Introduction

With a target of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of providing universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water by 2030, decentralised and stop-gap neoliberal solutions such as the “water kiosks” emerged with the assistance received from international funding agencies like the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. Although the government plays a key role in water governance that interacts with citizens through water provisioning, the kiosk-based water delivery system relies heavily on the operators who manage these kiosks, making them crucial actors in water governance. According to mainstream global water kiosk narratives (Meran et al. 2020, Falcone et al. 2024), water kiosks are supplementary to piped water supply as filling the supply gap. Water kiosks received substantial scholarly attention, especially in post-colonial cities (Sarkar and Chaudhary 2020, Schmidt 2020, Sarkar 2022) as a prominent low-cost intervention providing water at cheaper rates to the urban poor and to marginalised people living in the under-served areas of the city where piped water supply

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is yet to be extended. This model has significantly altered the waterscape in many cities, adding complexity to water infrastructure and access configurations (Sarkar and Chaudhary 2020, Amankwaa et al. 2022). However, the apolitical nature of the technology has the consequence of camouflaging the uneven and half-hazard outcomes, informality and the everyday negotiations for basic needs like water. Hence, adopting techno-politic solutions like water kiosks that transform urban waterscapes must be examined meticulously. In this article, we contextualise water infrastructure in post-colonial cities, explore the formality and informality debate, discuss how the everyday state and the operators' lived space produce informality, and position water kiosks within water infrastructure. We then outline the research methodology and site selection. Finally, we present our findings and conclusion.

Contextualising Water Infrastructure in Post-colonial Cities

In post-colonial cities, exclusionary mechanisms (Truelove 2019, Bakker 2012) have persistently accompanied the expansion of the water access networks, resulting in the purposeful exclusion of certain sections of society from access to water services. The historical context of inequities and the unequal distribution of water resources is elaborated in the scholarly works of Truelove (2019) and Furlong and Kooy (2017). Scholars have shed light on differential access (Truelove 2019) favouring the affluent colonial suburb population and the exclusion of the native population. These exclusionary practices have produced unequal water flows and networks for the privileged and marginalised, worsening pre-existing inequities (Smiley 2020). Further, Bakker (2003) claims that urban water systems in the Global South are highly fragmented, resembling a scattered “archipelago” rather than a homogenous network. Graham and Marvin (2001) explain the fragmented water services using the concept of “splintering urbanism”, which they believe results from globalisation, technological advancements and neoliberal policies. Several authors have highlighted that urban infrastructures are more effectively understood in specific local contexts (McFarlane 2008, Coutard and Rutherford 2015) using relational and hybridised terms rather than functional-linear concepts (Gandy 2004). Additionally, critics argue that splintering urbanism emphasises the modern infrastructure ideal, overlooking the significance of non-networked alternative water providers in developing societies. While these providers may be perceived as contributing to fragmentation, they could benefit these communities by promoting spatial equity in water access (Bousquet 2010).

Regarding the urban infrastructure configurations of southern cities, scholars like Furlong (2014) have highlighted the limitations of the theoretical framework in understanding the intricacies of these cities. Some have started to examine the urban infrastructure in these cities using post-colonial perspectives (Kooy and Bakker 2008, Truelove 2019). The various kinds of water service provisions in these urban areas have been categorised as hybrid socio-technical configurations (Coutard and Rutherford 2015). Challenging traditional notions of uniformity and centralisation in infrastructure provisioning, technological bricolage aptly captures the amalgamation of networked and non-networked infrastructures, integrating public and private ownership and planned and spontaneous structures (Lemanski 2021). Adding to diversity and heterogeneity, the water kiosks emerged as one of the delivery mechanisms of hybrid water infrastructure in some of the cities in the

Global South. However, the cities are not labelled as failures. Instead, the heterogeneity offers an opportunity to understand the diverse delivery systems that contribute to their functionality (Jaglin 2014). Consequently, scholars have approached the study of hybrid water service delivery systems by employing the concepts of formality and informality.

Formality and Informality in Water Infrastructure

The formal-informal dichotomy has been widely used across various contexts, disciplines and perspectives. This has led to the identification of less explored economic processes that are hidden (Harding and Jenkins 1989) and casual (Bromley and Gerry 1979), uncovering the ambiguities and inconsistencies in the definition, theoretical limitations and application (Portes et al. 1989). This dichotomous classification has also received criticism for its rigid separation of the two categories by oversimplifying and overlooking potential overlaps, interrelations, co-existence and complementary exchanges. Through in-depth ethnographic research, the oversimplified categorisation of formal and informal is questioned by Pardo (2012, 1996) Medina-Zárate (2018) and Kouzas (2022). In the water literature, the word “formal” typically refers to systems officially recognised by the law, often involving supply networks managed by state or private entities. Conversely, “informal” arrangements lack legal acknowledgment and encompass various modes, including Self-Help Groups (SHG), community provisions, small-scale vendors and private retail businesses. However, in the absence of a universally agreed definition of informality, frequently conflicting descriptors, such as ineffective, innovative, costly, complex, traditional, unsustainable, unlawful, a survival tactic for the underprivileged, dynamic enterprises, and so on (Ahlers et al. 2014) have emerged as accepted features of informality.

In the policy discourse, characteristics of informality are associated with the private sector rather than the inherent informality of operations (Ahlers et al. 2014), thereby gathering admiration for its positive outcomes. However, critical perspectives challenge this binary view, emphasizing the political nature of informality and its integration with state power (Roy 2009, Roy and AlSayyad 2004), while recognizing the diverse agency of actors in co-producing informality (Ahlers et al. 2014). Blurring the binary view further, the rise in neo-liberal policies has altered the state-society relations, resulting in the increased prominence of non-state actors in water provisioning, and converting the state from being a direct provider to a facilitator and regulator. “Market environmentalism”, as outlined by Bakker (2014: 474), emerged in response to the financial constraints faced by the local government in infrastructure provisioning. Market environmentalism involves a reconfiguration of governance and encourages the involvement of non-state actors in initiatives such as corporate social responsibility, participatory approaches and public-private partnerships (Bakker 2014, Sarkar and Chaudhary 2020). Further, transnational networks were formed worldwide through private sector investments and engagement of multilateral aid agencies and market-oriented policies, leading to a global water governance regime (Birkinshaw 2017). Innovative solutions like social entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility-led infrastructure provisioning are being sought to address cost recovery issues and access. This has created new institutional entities, organisational structures and hierarchical power relations (Sarkar and Chaudhary 2020). These transformations in governance have also reshaped the notion of citizenship, moving it away from the traditional

association with participation in the public sphere towards a focus on consumption in the private domain, effectively transforming citizens into customers (Walsh 1995, Pardo 2023: 51). In this section, we have covered the discourse on formality and informality through the involvement of non-state actors in the water infrastructure and governance. In the next section, we turn to how informality is produced through the everyday practices of these non-state actors.

Everyday State, Lived Space and Informality in Water Infrastructure

Diverging from the traditional Western political science view of the state as a singular and cohesive entity, post-colonial theorists and anthropologists have advanced a nuanced interpretation of the state as a flexible and multi-layered entity. Post-colonial cities have emerged as spaces where various state mechanisms facilitate access to water infrastructure, especially for individuals unable to obtain these resources through official channels (Gandy 2008). In such circumstances, citizens often engage with brokers and similar figures between the state and the citizens. These intermediaries maintain complex relationships, exploiting citizens through various tactics. Ranganathan's (2014) study on water provision to the peripheralised middle class in Bangalore exemplifies this, shedding light on the unique authority wielded by water tankers. In spite of operating outside conventional governmental structures, informal water providers possess a certain kind of everyday public authority intertwined with the state. They navigate the blurred boundaries between state and non-state realms, engaging in activities typically associated with the state, such as lobbying and service delivery. This reconceptualisation challenges the notion of informal urban water as opposed to formal systems, revealing its historical integration with formal processes of urban governance and its reliance on public authority.

The diverse and intricate nature of everyday activities and encounters offers valuable insights into the generation of "lived space" (Lefebvre 1991) and the perpetuation of economic structures. Lived space encompasses representational aspects, often manifested through the actions and habits of inhabitants. These actions involve employing diverse methods, including customary practices, formal protocols and people's engagement with interest groups in order to shape their surroundings according to their preferences (Lefebvre 1991). Daily interactions concerning water access entail various strategies from the perspective of citizens, including bargaining, negotiating, offering bribes, seeking assistance from intermediaries, participating in protests, engaging in insurgency and resorting to quiet encroachments (Bayat 2000, Holston 2009, Anand 2017). Through the gradual and incremental use of these methods in their relations with lower-level bureaucrats and politicians, citizens can secure necessities and assert citizenship (Pardo 1996, Anand 2017). These negotiations and navigations are part of everyday practices and are integral to understanding urban water access (Misra 2014, Ahlers et al. 2014, Björkman 2015, Anand 2017). Thus, understanding everyday practices enables us to connect governance mechanisms, social interactions, infrastructure design and the biophysical aspects of water supply and usage.

Situating Water Kiosks within Water Infrastructure

Water kiosks embody the notion of "the promise of infrastructure" (Anand et al. 2018, Schmidt 2020), a concept that captures their potential to address future water needs by catalysing present social action. In Sub-Saharan Africa, Amankwaa et al. (2022) and Klawitter et al. (2009)

projected the positive impact of water kiosks on poor urban communities, particularly in underserved areas on the outskirts of major metropolitan centres like Nairobi, Mombasa, Khartoum and Accra, to name a few (McGranahan et al. 2006). However, the introduction of water kiosks necessitates a critical reflection on their role in perpetuating urban inequalities, as evidenced in the Indian context by Sarkar and Chaudhary (2020). Comparing Nairobi and Delhi, Sarkar (2022) asserts that water ATMs are not a miraculous solution, being neither explicitly pro nor anti-poor, and requiring careful assessment and effective management systems, along with attention to socio-cultural context as pressed upon by Schmidt (2020). The diversity of water kiosk models reflects variations in ownership, service delivery processes and technological applications (Schmidt 2020). Factors such as production capacity, purification technologies, installation costs and pricing structures are tailored to meet the specific needs and challenges of each urban setting. However, water kiosks play a significant role in local economic empowerment by offering employment opportunities and fostering community stewardship (Sarkar and Chaudhary 2020). Often operating under a public-private partnership model, they are positioned as innovative solutions to bridge gaps in public utilities and ensure equitable access to safe and affordable water, extending their reach to underserved areas and contributing to sustainable development initiatives (Sarkar 2019).

Our exploration of the existing literature reveals the enduring presence of heterogeneity within water infrastructure, particularly in post-colonial cities. Scholars across disciplines have commonly employed the formal-informal framework to analyse this diversity within non-networked infrastructure. Among these, water kiosks have emerged as a significant focal point, receiving conceptual and empirical attention globally. They have been characterised as pop-up infrastructure (Schmidt 2020), socio-technical systems (Amankwaa et al. 2022) and temporary stop-gap neoliberal solutions (Kumar 2018, Sarkar 2019) that establish new models of governance. Studies have assessed their impact on users residing in low-income neighbourhoods (Sarkar 2019, Sarkar and Chaudhary 2020) and from the perspectives of kiosk owners. However, little consideration has been given to the intermediaries (operators) who manage these water kiosks and their everyday practices which influence the functioning and development of these kiosks. This gap in the literature provides a scope for examining the agency of the kiosk operators.

Research Methodology

Our research largely derives from the data collected through ethnographic inquiry during 2020-2022 in the Indian city of Visakhapatnam. We combined non-participant observation with semi-structured interviews and informal interviews. The aim is to place the water kiosk within the broader context of water infrastructure. As we have mentioned, while the issues discussed in the literature review are crucial, research exists on intermediaries like water tanker owners (Ranganathan 2014), there is a notable gap in exploring other intermediaries, particularly water kiosk operators' everyday practices and lived space. These intermediaries play a significant role between the government and the public, yet their experiences remain unmapped and ignored. Due to their sensitive nature, routine practices may not be documented and statistical data could be unreliable. Additionally, interviews might merely echo official accounts rather than provide genuine insights. Moreover, aspects of daily life that are mundane or deemed too obvious to

mention may only become apparent to researchers present over an extended period. Achieving nuanced insights into how water networks adapt to evolving environments necessitates a qualitative approach involving a prolonged time in the field.

Visakhapatnam, in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, is a compelling and apt site for our study, as it mirrors the heterogeneous nature of water supply in Indian cities. It is one of India's fastest-growing cities, spanning an area of 682 square kilometres, divided into 8 zones and 98 wards with a population of around 20 lakh residents. The rapid urbanisation has outpaced the provision of infrastructure, with only 54.9 percent of the households having access to the piped water supply by the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC). In spite of boasting a daily water supply of 285 million litres per day (MLD), with 74 MLD allocated to bulk consumers, there is a stark disparity between supply and demand, resulting in a staggering gap of nearly 66 MLD. The city has one of the highest proportions of residents living in informal settlements, with approximately 741 slums. Water access challenges are particularly acute in slum areas, where over two-thirds of households lack individual connections, relying instead on community tap water or alternative sources such as public tankers, stand posts, private vendors and bottled water. This has enabled non-state entities to step in and address the city's water service provision gap. While many notable alternative water sources exist, water kiosks have gained significant attention from diverse stakeholders and have got their footing in Visakhapatnam.

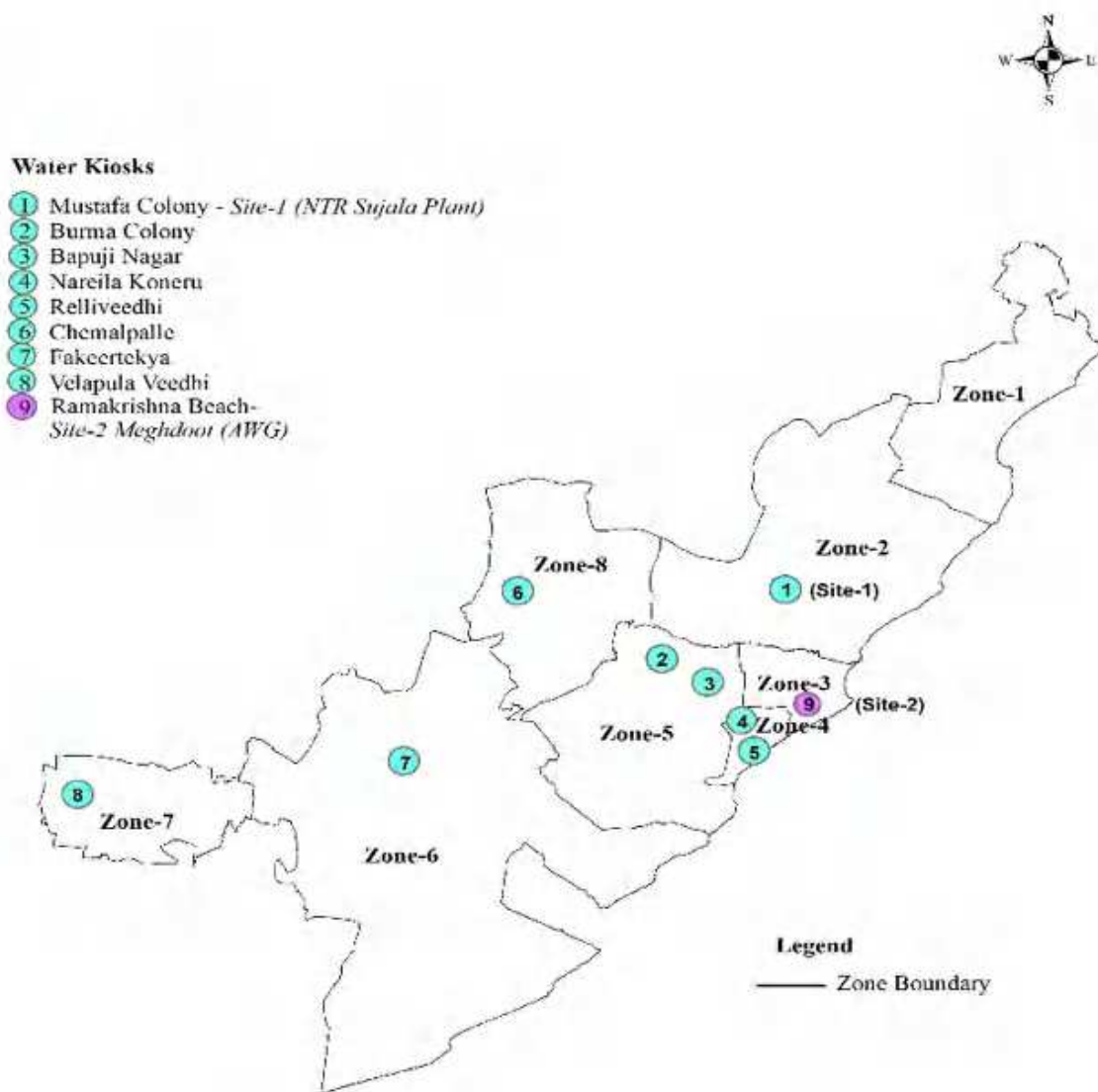
Further, Andhra Pradesh stands out as the sole state to have implemented a public scheme, *NTR Sujala Pathakam* to set up kiosks named "Sujala Plant" in underserved areas, framed as a commitment to infrastructure advancement during the 2014 elections to offer water at reduced rates. We chose one of the NTR Sujala plants as our first site. We opted for our second site, which claims to be the only site with the Atmospheric Water Generator (AWG) water kiosk globally at its inaugural. The Maithri Aquatech introduced this pioneering AWG kiosk, "Meghdoot", in Visakhapatnam. These two sites were chosen because each kiosk possesses distinctive characteristics regarding its operational aspects, assertion of ownership, installation objectives, user demographics, scale, technology, pricing, employment arrangements, location and, most importantly, unique governance structures.

Site 1- NTR Sujala Plant

The NTR Sujala Plant, though an initiative by the government, presents complexities regarding ownership. This is because multiple stakeholders and intermediaries were involved in the governance process. The responsibility for the execution of the scheme was entrusted to the GVMC and Municipal Administration and Urban Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh, by facilitating the small water enterprises operated and maintained by non-government organisations/SHGs/firms. The initial plan that did not work out was for the scheme to be financed through corporate social responsibility, leading to funding of all the kiosks by the GVMC.

The GVMC embarked on a preliminary endeavour, following deliberation with members of the legislative assembly, installing eight kiosks across eight legislative wards. They aspired to have 25 kiosks installed by the fiscal year 2014-15. Zonal GVMC officials assumed the task of meticulously identifying 3 to 4 suitable locations. These sites were characterised by a GVMC community hall, access to electricity and a dependable water supply sourced from groundwater

or municipal reservoirs. However, only 13 kiosks were installed (Safe Water Network 2015). Out of these 13 kiosks, we could only identify eight kiosks, shown in Map 1. Denizens seemed clueless about the scheme and consistently directed us to the nearby privately owned and managed water plants where the 20-litre water bubbles were sold: “*meeku konchem munduke road paina kanapadutundi aa shop*’. (The water shop is ahead on this road). The NTR Sujala Plant from Mustafa Colony, Arilova, located in the low-income neighbourhood of the northernmost Visakhapatnam, was purposively selected for our study because the other kiosks under the scheme were either closed or inactive during our visits.



Map 1: NTR Sujala Plants and AWG Kiosks in Visakhapatnam (prepared by the Author)

During the relocation of families in 1984-85 from the informal settlements to Arilova, water infrastructure was abysmal. Over the past four decades, Arilova has witnessed a shift in its water infrastructure with the expansion of piped water supply sourced from the Mudasarlova

reservoir and other supplementary water sources. Adding to its reconfiguration of the water landscape, the selected water kiosk started operating in 2014. It shares its premises with the ward office and the shelter (Photo 1). The kiosk was operated and maintained by the Mother Teresa SHG, which was formed by women from Arilova. Mr MVV Satyanarayana, the then member of the legislative assembly, appointed this SHG for its operation and management. It served two objectives: first, promote employment opportunities for women and, secondly, ensure a non-profit motive for kiosk operation. The kiosk initially obtained water from a government borewell, purified through reverse osmosis (RO) filters. Upon depletion of this water source, the kiosk operator drilled another bore at her own expense. However, as neither of these boreholes is currently operational, the kiosk relies on treated municipal water, which undergoes additional treatment through RO filters and then is provided to the citizens. Initially, the scheme priced INR 2.00 per 20 litres. However, the current price for the same quantity has increased to INR. 4.00. Initially, around 400 to 500 cans were sold daily, but the sales have declined to 20-30 cans.



Photo 1. NTR Sujala Plant, Mustafa Colony and the ward community office; sharing the same roof. (by the Author).

Site 2- Meghdoot- Atmospheric Water Generator (AWG)

The second site is an AWG kiosk named “*Meghdoot*” at Ramakrishna Beach, owned and maintained by a social enterprise, Maithri Aquatech start-up, under the “Make-in-India” initiative of the central government of India operating since 2021 (Photo 2). The kiosk also serves as a Water Knowledge Resource Centre (WKRC), established as part of the SEWAH project (Sustainable Enterprises for Water and Health), wherein one of the responsibilities of the kiosk operator is to conduct awareness sessions on water use practices in the nearby under-served communities, schools, informal settlements like Pedajalaripeta and customers. This initiative is a collaboration between the Safe Water Network and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). *Meghdoot* is the only AWG approved under Jal Jeevan Mission by the Ministry of Jal Shakti through the Dr Mashelkar Committee and supported by the GVMC. This effort by national and international stakeholders promotes innovative solutions through a multi-stakeholder approach to water access. Maithri Aquatech operates and manages this kiosk through an operator hired by a security outsourcing company based at Naval Armament Depot (NAD), Visakhapatnam. Currently, there is only one AWG kiosk in Visakhapatnam. Therefore, this was also purposively selected.



Photo 2. Meghdoot Air to water generator kiosk, YMCA, Beach Road, Visakhapatnam Picture 1 Inauguration photo and the second one Make in India policy highlight (by the Author).

Ramakrishna Beach is one of the city's most famous tourist attractions; it stretches up to four kilometres from the large port area to the south of the town, overlooking the Bay of Bengal. *Meghdoot* is installed in this location primarily to provide drinking water for tourists and passersby (INR 15/1L/per day). Located in the Central Business District, this area is characterised by its affluent and upscale status and boasts excellent connectivity to the piped water network. However, the sale is around 1000 litres daily. This sale results from tourists flowing to the area and water through monthly cards (INR 1/1L/per day) to low-income citizens (GVMC workers, auto drivers and others).

The kiosk can produce at least 1 million litres daily, meeting the quality standards of both the World Health Organisation and Indian potable water standards. The input for the water generator is atmospheric moisture mediated through an alternative technology where the air is used as a source to generate water. The machine has two air filters of 12 microns and 1 micron to remove the suspended particles in the air. AWG has no water wastage, unlike the RO or a desalination plant. Besides being eco-friendly, it is economical and cost-effective as 1 litre of water is produced using only 0.3 units of energy, costing less than Rs.2.

Unveiling Informality in Water Kiosk Operations: Insights into Disaggregated Services

Instead of having a centralised water network, Visakhapatnam demonstrates diversity through various alternative service providers, including the widespread use of water tankers, water kiosks and the reliance on 20-litres water containers. This diversity is explained by what scholars have termed a “splintered infrastructure pattern” (Graham and Marvin 2001, Kooy and Bakker 2008, Coutard 2008) and “infrastructure archipelagos” (Bakker 2003). In contrast to the various interpretations found in economic literature regarding the formal and the informal, the distinction between formal and informal systems is generally implicit and understood in water provision based on legal recognition. In water provision, similar to the dynamics observed in other economic activities, the demarcation between formal and informal systems proves interwoven (Pardo 2012), revealing a symbiotic relationship characterised by significant interdependencies between the two modalities (Jaglin 2002). Ahlers et al. (2014) suggesting that a dichotomic classification overlooks the intricacies of service provision processes. They advocate for

understanding these complexities through the concept of disaggregation, which examines how a single service delivery mechanism integrates formal and informal activities. While size, technology, capital intensity and skills play a role, legality is the primary distinguishing feature between formal and informal water provision systems (Misra 2014). However, legality presents conceptual challenges because it relies on socio-political negotiation processes, meaning that formality is contingent and lacks specific patterns (Pardo 2012). Scholars such as Anand (2011) have demonstrated that formality is a status assigned through contestation and negotiation. Despite the limitations associated with these descriptors, they provide a starting point to analyse different aspects and activities of water service provision.



Photos 3. Water Kiosk infrastructure Mustapha colony: RO candles, storage, sump and foundation stone (by the Author).

We find the disaggregation of service modalities to be a useful concept in understanding informality. Our field observations show that the water source is constantly changing in the first site. Initially, the NTR Sujala Plant accessed water from a borewell dug by the GVMC. However, the kiosk operator (Photos 3) decided to dig another borewell in anticipation of increased sales and revenue and the potential drying up of the government-dug bore. Justifying her actions, the kiosk operator, Ms Jyothi, said:

“Allow me to share the money I invested in the kiosk with you. I put in a huge amount, approximately INR 1.5 to 2 lakhs, to improve the facility and boost sales. I take special pride in the bore I dug, although it is not functioning now. I did not receive any external support. My duty as a responsible citizen is to assist those in need, and not everyone can be like me” (Interview, 13 November 2021).

The additional bore dug by Ms Jyothi was undertaken without following any formal protocol and lacked documentation available on how she obtained authorisation. This bore also dried up, forcing her to access the municipal piped water supply. Due to the intermittent nature of the municipal water supply, Ms Jyoti, like any resident in the locality, stored water in a sump. Although

this was treated water, it was treated again through RO filters before being sold with a sticker highlighting the scheme information (Photo 4). In this context, we observe that the process of sourcing water through the first borewell and later through the municipal water supply is formal, due to adherence to rules, protocols and consultation with the government, while see as informal the second instance, where Ms Jyothi acted independently without any form of consultation.



Photo 4. Sticker on NTR Sujala scheme 20 liter cans, Visakhapatnam (by the Author).

We could effectively apply this concept of disaggregation by focusing on water sourcing in the NTR Sujala Plant. However, while examining our second site, *Meghdoot*, we encounter a different scenario: atmospheric moisture is sourced and utilised to generate water. Consequently, we see this disaggregation concept as constraining, particularly in understanding the sourcing of air, which represents unique difficulties and challenges. This difficulty lies in the nature of air, which is intangible and not-supplied, unlike water. This prompts us to question how we gauge formality and informality in such contexts.



Photo 5. Interview of Water Inspector, Arilova, Visakhapatnam. Photo by: Author

In addition to procurement, we observed that the water distribution process at site 1 is an informal activity. Over time, we sought to gain further insights into the sales trends and the users. However, the operator keeps no documentation of sales records over the years, thereby allowing enough opportunity for sleaze and sidling cash. During our interview with Mr Chandrasekher (Photo 5), the Water Inspector from the Arilova Water Supply Department corroborated this observation by saying:

“It seemed that the kiosk operator did not bother to inquire about the backgrounds of the consumers. Whether they were from below the poverty line, above it, or were financially well-off, it held no significance to the kiosk operator. It became evident that water was being sold to anyone willing to pay, irrespective of their eligibility status, without any verification of ration cards. This realisation struck me as deeply troubling, as it undermined the very purpose of the scheme’ (Interview, 8 June 2021).

Thus, in the distribution process, the disaggregation reveals that when untrained and unskilled operators provide service, this leads to a disconnect between the policy and the intended beneficiaries. Further, while explaining the distribution process, Ms Jyothi positions herself as a non-profit-oriented operator who offers water without discrimination. In support of this claim, she stated:

“Ari-lova experiences severe water shortages in the peak summer, leaving residents without sufficient water for everyday domestic tasks. To address this need, I offer the wastewater produced through reverse osmosis (RO) systems for sale, explicitly instructing customers to use it only for non-drinking purposes. This approach has proven beneficial, particularly amid declining sales, as selling the wastewater for INR 2 per 20 litres has provided some relief’ (Interview, 8 June 2021).

On the contrary, the distribution process in *Meghdoot* was meticulously planned, incorporating both profit motives and welfare considerations due to its nature as a social enterprise. Maithri Aquatech had a strategic pricing model where water costs INR 15 for those purchasing it with a container, INR 10 for refills, and only INR 1 for marginalised customers utilising monthly cards. This thoughtful price differentiation was planned, and the kiosk operator had no authority to alter it despite declining sales.

In conclusion, our field observations and interviews revealed that disaggregation offers a more nuanced understanding of formality and informality in the context of water kiosks. We refrain from asserting that kiosks are inherently informal or that they inherently generate informality by serving as an alternative water supply mode. Instead, we find that the activities undertaken at these kiosks often exhibit elements of both formality and informality. Additionally, it can be challenging to categorise certain activities as strictly formal or informal, as evidenced by the example of sourcing atmospheric moisture in *Meghdoot*.

Informality and Lived Space of Water Kiosk Operators

Based on legal criteria, the NTR Sujala Plant and *Meghdoot* kiosks are formal and established by the local government and an incorporated private entity, respectively. Nevertheless, despite their formal status, the kiosk operators’ daily routines and lived space give rise to informality in both establishments. However, due to variations in their operations and management, we observed stark differences in the two operators’ daily practices and lived space, resulting in distinct forms of informality. Considering the positioning of kiosk operators within the kiosk’s governance structure, it is evident that the NTR Sujala Plant installation scheme was intentionally crafted to foster co-production, aiming to engage diverse non-state actors in a decentralised and adaptable manner and facilitating power sharing and collaboration. In contrast, the second kiosk results from market environmentalism, wherein a social enterprise endeavours

to offer water through innovative technological solutions that produce water from the air. We look at different lived spaces by delving into these operators' personalities, contrasting realities, experiences, challenges and strategies.

Operators' Personality

The narrative of Ms Jyothi, the NTR Sujala Plant kiosk operator, unfolds as a compelling tale of resilience, negotiation and unyielding determination. Ms Jyothi is a 60-year-old woman with two daughters and a granddaughter whose vibrant personality leaves a lasting impression. Her demeanour exudes a sense of dynamism, portraying her as a resourceful entrepreneur and dedicated social worker. Through our interactions, we understood her as a passionate and determined person with strong leadership qualities and active involvement in political affairs. In one of the interviews, Mr Anand, Community Officer at the Ward Office of Arilova, recalling an incident where Ms Jyothi had to give up the kiosk space for the new ward secretariat office, he said:

“We all presumed that the ward secretariat office would replace the kiosk, given that the orders were issued directly by the newly elected state government and the kiosk was established under a scheme implemented by the previous administration. However, Ms Jyothi resisted this change, engaging in a battle with the local government. Despite lacking support, even from her SHG members, she took the authorities into confidence and pursued legal action, ultimately securing a stay order against the order issued by the state government. This remarkable victory is noteworthy, considering she challenged the state government and influential political figures single-handedly’ (Personal Interview, 4 June 2021).

This reflected how Ms Jyothi, who owned the space, negotiated with the state and local government to keep the kiosk running. However, juxtaposed against Ms Jyothi's unwavering spirit is the contrasting figure of Mr Diwakar, the operator of the *Meghdoot* kiosk (Photo 6). Hailing from rural Bobbili, Mr Diwakar is a 24-year graduate who migrated to Visakhapatnam for employment. Mr Diwakar seemed indifferent, scared and under-confident. He embodies a mechanical presence devoid of agency or ownership, producing a disengaged space.



Photo 6. The *Meghdoot* kiosk (by the Author).

Family Support

The image of the NTR Sujala Plant highlighted a clear hierarchy, with the water kiosk positioned as subordinate within the state bureaucracy, as affirmed by Ms Jyothi's lack of support from local authorities, ward officials and fellow SHG members. Consequently, she heavily relied on her husband for assistance, underscoring the emergence of informality in the kiosk's operations amidst the withdrawal of formal support systems. Another indication is Ms Jyothi's disclosure that her husband took on the role of managing the kiosk also staying on-site during evenings, as she candidly said:

“My husband helps me a lot so I can focus on the kiosk and my family. He takes care of the kiosk when I am busy and provides financial assistance. Unlike me, other women struggle because their husbands drink and ill-treat them. Also, I get enough returns to keep the kiosk running, but some women do not have the skills or family support I do.” (Personal Interview, November 13, 2021)

Unlike Ms Jyothi, Mr Diwakar did not have to rely on his family for the kiosk operations. But the striking aspect is his recruitment, as he replaced his cousin, who was previously the operator. He was given one month-long training to bring him into the formal process. This reflects how, directly or indirectly, both operators relied on or continue to rely on familial support in sustaining a livelihood.

Operating Hours

The NTR Sujala Plant was frequently left unattended, with irregular operating hours. We encountered this issue, as we often had to wait for the operator. Moreover, without prior communication, the kiosk remained closed on certain national holidays and Sundays, resembling a government office schedule. Initially, we were told that the kiosk operated daily from morning to night, as the operator's husband lived there, and they served customers late into the night. However, in the Meghdoot case, the operator adhered to formal schedules, underscoring the private entity's operational efficiency. Regular inspections by the GVMC and weekly inspections by the Maithri Aquatech team ensured formal operation, giving no scope for informal arrangements or upkeep of the kiosk.

Training and Sales

While Ms Jyothi demonstrates resourcefulness in various aspects, she lacks proper training in maintaining purification filters, and often relies on external assistance when problems arise. During our discussions, she expressed concerns about how excessive chlorine in municipal water affected the filter, leading to low-quality water and declining sales. In spite of repeated appeals to ward officials and the local government, she has not received additional support for the RO plant. Discussing this, she stated:

“If, from somewhere, I received financial support of INR 50,000 or even some training on how RO filters could be repaired or maintained, I would have returned

the kiosk to its former glory. I would become a billionaire overnight through my business prowess and networking. There must be at least ten small private plants that provide door-to-door service. However, I never looked at them as my competitors or found them responsible for the fall in the sales of the kiosks. I firmly believe that no one in their right mind who has a choice to consume water for a low price would be interested in paying a high price for the same quantity of water, especially when the kiosk water is popular among people and more reliable than the private water cans' (Interview, 13 November 2021).

In contrast to Ms Jyothi, Mr Diwakar is semiskilled and understands that repairing and maintaining the high-end technology in the purification of AWG requires different skills. According to him,

"The technical team from Hyderabad guides me remotely for minor issues, and I promptly address them. But, for more technical problems, I am not equipped with the required skills, so I wait for three to four days to get the problem fixed by an expert from the central office. Unfortunately, this delay also impacts sales, but Maithri Aquatech never considered this a problem' (Interview, 10 November 2021).

However, Mr Diwakar shared concerns similar to Ms Jyothi's regarding the decrease in sales. Although both kiosks faced the same problem, they attributed it to different factors: Ms Jyothi suggested that the lack of training in working with the RO filters was the problem and sought financial assistance, whereas Mr Diwakar attributed the decline to shifts in people's preferences and perceptions post-COVID, the increased workload on the operator due to multiple tasks and the location, which he shared as follows:

"After the second Covid lockdown, there has been a drop in sales and customers have become wary of consuming non-branded water, which will not be consumed by people coming out of their fancy cars who are mostly the class of people in the locality. Also, balancing sales with other responsibilities poses challenges. Managing such a kiosk effectively requires at least two individuals to address sales and awareness-building requirements' (Interview, 10 November 2021).

Further, the decline in sales is accrued to location, as Mr Diwakar highlighted,

"[...] positioned at the end of the beach, 4 km away from the bus stop with less population flow to this side, is responsible for low sales. Few would venture this far without the strategic location to access water' (Interview, 10 November 2021).

The narratives shared by Ms Jyothi and others offer profound insights into the pivotal role of intermediaries and their agency in the provision of water. These accounts illuminate the everyday practices encompassing negotiation tactics, bargaining methods, manoeuvring within bureaucratic confines, accessing familial support, operating with irregular schedules and resorting to legal recourse such as obtaining stay orders. In navigating adverse circumstances at the kiosks, operators employ diverse survival strategies, akin to what Pardo (1996) terms a

network-based system of strategies rooted in familial and social connections. These approaches may appear unconventional to external observers but stem from the inherent precariousness of informal work environments. Moreover, amidst these challenges, operators showcase resourcefulness and entrepreneurial acumen, shaping a lived environment characterised by innovative strategies to optimise underutilised public resources, such as selling wastewater, to sustain sales despite lacking formal training in filter management. Through such endeavours, Ms Jyothi consistently perpetuates informality within the formal kiosk structure.

However, Mr Diwakar's case illustrates that not all intermediaries possess the agency, ownership, or inclination to shape the kiosk environment, underscoring the variability in intermediary roles and their impact on space. Social enterprises occupy an intermediary position between profit-driven private businesses and nonprofit organisations with social or environmental missions. Striking a delicate balance between these objectives is essential for their sustainability; otherwise, the enterprise's core purpose may be compromised.

Although he harboured innovative ideas to boost sales, Mr Diwakar faced constraints in implementing them due to the risk of jeopardising his employment. The ultimate decision-making authority of the enterprise limited the operator's autonomy, contrasting starkly with models like NTR Sujala, where, owing to the nonprofit nature of the enterprise, operators enjoy complete control over operations and maintenance. The dual responsibility of driving sales while promoting welfare through distributing monthly cards and conducting awareness sessions could prove overwhelming for operators. In spite of the potential inherent in the model and the initial enthusiasm of operators, the lack of agency becomes evident as the enterprise retains ultimate control. Consequently, when sales dwindle, operators are deprived of a livelihood.

Conclusion

Kiosks are vital in water provisioning in post-colonial cities with heterogeneous water infrastructure. In this article, we contested the inherent categorisation of non-networked infrastructure as informal by demonstrating how both the kiosks that we studied are established through formal procedures, providing a unique perspective within the water kiosk literature. The first kiosk, NTR Sujala was directly sanctioned by the state government; the second kiosk, *Meghdoot*, was established under the central government Make-in India program through a multi-stakeholder collaborative effort. Through the disaggregation of service modality, we argued how, within a single service delivery mechanism like a kiosk, the activities undertaken could be formal or informal with varying degrees. We also established that this disaggregation of service is dynamic and has limitations, as explained in the case of sourcing atmospheric moisture, which cannot be gauged through formality or informality. The everyday experiences of kiosk operators have illustrated how the agency and ownership reconfigure the urban waterscapes. We have emphasised that these operators have varying levels of influence, contingent upon the governance structure in place. We have highlighted the importance of acknowledging the heterogeneity in water infrastructure in post-colonial cities and recognizing intermediaries' pivotal role in reconfiguring urban waterscapes. We have advocated a deeper

exploration into the role of intermediaries and their lived space across different socio-cultural contexts, examining their contributions to urban waterscapes. We believe that this study could be extended by investigating the interactions between these intermediaries and citizens, which can offer insights into their impact on citizenship and governance structures.

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Special Section

Essays from the IUS Monthly Seminar Series 2023-2024 on “Urban Ethnography and Theory”

Editorial Note

This Special Section of the Journal is the first of a series, which will appear in *Urbanities-Journal of Urban Ethnography*. The articles published in these Special Sections are revised versions of the papers, listed below, given by the authors at the Monthly Seminar Series on *Urban Ethnography and Theory*. They are followed by comments on the papers given at the seminar. The Series started on 12 October 2023 and will conclude on 27 June 2024 (<https://www.internationalurbansymposium.com/events/monthly-seminar-series-2023-2024/>). It has been organized by Italo Pardo and Giuliana B. Prato (University of Kent, U.K.) on behalf of the International Urban Symposium-IUS, in partnership with the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece) and City, University of London (U.K.) and endorsed by the Centre for Ethnographic Research, University of Kent, U.K. The 2-hour seminars allowed ample time for presentation and for comments and discussion. In some cases, the title of the article differs from that of the paper given at the seminar. Each article will be followed by brief comments contributed by participants in the seminar.

This first Special Section brings together three articles. Gary Armstrong and James Rosbrook-Thompson write on *The Sense of an Ending: Ageing and Coping in the Words of the Boys*, followed by comments by Subhadra Mitra Channa, Svetlana Hristova, Erin Lynch and Giuliana B. Prato. Robert Williams’s work on *Becoming Urban? Seeing Amish Legitimacy Versus Technocapitalism* is followed by comments by Jerome Krase, Erin Lynch, Giuliana B. Prato and Lakshmi Srinivas. Liora Sarfati’s essay on *From Rural Outcasts to Urban Cosmopolitans: Spiritual Healers in Seoul* is followed by comments by Subhadra Mitra Channa, Jerome Krase and Giuliana B. Prato.

SEMINAR SCHEDULE

October-December 2023

16.00-17.30 British Standard Time

Thursday 12 October – Gary Armstrong and James Rosbrook-Thompson (City, University of London, UK), *A Stroll in the Park? Tactics and Goals in the Ageing Process*.

Abstract: Scholars of Urban Planning have considered the relationship between population ageing and urban change, focusing primarily on spaces/places of ageing and related processes of marginalisation. Anthropologists have used the ethnographic method to investigate how

experiences of ageing are shaped by the socio-cultural specificities of respective cities. Following their lead, this paper seeks to document the impact of urban change in London — captured in concepts like ‘the global city’, ‘conviviality’ and ‘superdiversity’ — on experiences of ageing, illness and broader health concerns. We do so through a preliminary examination of two ethnographic sites: a mixed-occupancy housing estate and an over-50s ‘walking-football’ club. Focusing on the relationships and interdependencies that exist and develop in both sites, the paper considers how these might shape the lived realities of ageing while reflecting (to varying degrees) wider ongoing changes at economic, political and demographic levels.

Bios:

Gary Armstrong holds a Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from the University of London. Dr Armstrong is a Senior Lecturer in Criminology at City, University of London. He has four decades of academic research and teaching. Based on a fusion of Anthropological and Criminological theory, his work is typified by inquiries into sporting cultures and the epiphenomenon generated by such practices and events. Among his several books, are *Images of Control: The Rise of the Maximum Surveillance Society*; *Football Hooligans: Knowing the Score*; and *Blade Runners: Lives in Football*. He has co-edited *Entering the Field: New Perspectives in World Football*; and *Football in Africa: Conflict, Conciliation and Community*. Dr Armstrong has researched the possibilities that football plays in politics through fieldwork in post-conflict Liberia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Malta. His latest book, (with James Rosbrook-Thompson) is *Mixed Occupancy Housing in London: A Living Tapestry* (2018, Palgrave Macmillan). Dr Armstrong is a member of the International Urban Symposium-IUS.

James Rosbrook-Thompson, Ph.D., is Senior Lecturer in Criminology at City, University of London. Since 2016 he has carried out research across London on issues including “gangs”, serious youth violence, and disproportionality. These projects have resulted in a number of research reports, while the findings of James' research have also been published in peer-reviewed academic journals and in two research monographs. His most recent book (with Gary Armstrong), *Multi-Occupancy Housing in London: A Living Tapestry*, was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2018 in the Series Palgrave Studies in Urban Anthropology. Dr Rosbrook-Thompson is a member of the International Urban Symposium-IUS.

Thursday 9 November – Subhadra Mitra Channa (University of Delhi, India), *People’s Conceptualization of Government, Governance and Legitimacy: Some Reflections based on Urban Delhi*

Abstract: Governments are not necessarily viewed in exactly the same way everywhere, there being local variations based on indigenous cosmologies, history and the culture of a people. In India the government in people’s imaginary takes on the hues of nurturance and care symbolized in parental terms and consequently the expectations are derived from a moral universe of kinship rather than the formal legal-political structure that is normative in the western concepts of governance. Strict imposition of rules may be resented and chaos preferable to too much order. I bring in some reflections from the daily lives of Delhi residents to illustrate this cognitive

perception and its translation into both people's concept of legitimacy and the local state's practice of popular governance.

Bio: *Subhadra Mitra Channa*, Ph.D. is Emeritus Professor at the University of Delhi, where she taught Anthropology until retirement in 2016. Her areas of interest are marginalization and identity, gender, religion and cosmology, ecology and landscapes. She was a Charles Wallace Fellow to UK (Queen's University 2000) and a Visiting Professor to MSH, Paris (2002), Fulbright visiting lecturer to USA (2003) and a Visiting Professor in 2008-9 to USC, USA. She has written about fifty scholarly papers and is the author/editor of eight books. She was the President of the Indian Anthropological Association and currently is editor of the *Indian Anthropologist*; was Chair of the Commission on the Anthropology of Women (IUAES) and elected Vice President of IUAES. She was awarded the S.C. Roy memorial gold medal by the Asiatic Society for life time contribution to cultural anthropology. Her most recent publications include, *Gender in South Asia* (Cambridge University press); *The Inner and Outer Selves* (Oxford University press) and the edited book, *Life as a Dalit* (Sage). Prof. Channa is a member of the International Urban Symposium-IUS.

Thursday 14 December – Robert Williams (The University of Akron, USA), *Becoming Urban? Seeing Amish Legitimacy versus Technocapitalism.*

Abstract: With culture theory's traditional view that internalized individual beliefs and norms constitute culture, the notion that power and culture are fundamentally linked might seem counterintuitive. While human agency has long been acknowledged to simultaneously include 'choices of culture shared values legitimating different patterns of social practices', the concept of legitimacy nevertheless remains a rather muddled concept and, although not the only way to think about culture, requires further enquiry (Wildavsky 1987: 5; see also Pardo 2000 and Pardo & Prato 2011). The dynamics that constitute legitimacy for human agency can generate effects upon morality and trust, and therefore authority, with wide variation in 'localisms' (Pardo & Prato 2011: 11). Further, the money economy serving the military-industrial complex, combined with the specialized division of labour to support the neoliberal system of rationality, has led to increasing objectification in culture and a shallowing of individual experiences, subjective meanings, and human values. Relying upon 'ethnographic seeing' of Amish rural landscapes within an ever-urbanizing Midwest state in the USA, this paper explores questions and positions of Amish legitimacy within wider Ohio economic life. It is also an enquiry into choices that are simultaneously choices of culture-shared values legitimating different patterns of urbanization of the rural to ultimately serve techno-capitalism. In noting the longstanding phenomenon of the rural adapting to the aims of an ever-urbanising wider society, this paper explores the limitations and obstacles Ohio's Amish face from urban expansion and urbanized cultural logics that legitimate, limit, or delegitimize their sustainable off-grid approach to an agricultural subsistence lifestyle. It also explores how Ohio's Amish maintain legitimacy and solidarity in the face of an often-hostile neoliberal technoscape. Comparisons to England's early nineteenth century Luddites are also explored to expand upon the questions we ask when thinking of technology's role in Amish society and its notable effects upon traditional subsistence farming and associated

notions of sustainability, “off-grid” cultural logics, and changing notions of socioeconomic relations under observable features of urbanising acculturation.

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<https://doi.org/10.2307/196077>

Bio: *Robert Williams* is a rural/urban political ethnographer and senior lecturer at The University of Akron with interests in Cultural Studies, Philosophical Anthropology, and Science & Technology Studies. While a student at the University of Wales-Bangor, most of his ethnographic MPhil research on the privatisation of prison schooling was conducted in England's Leicestershire for the reason that North Wales had no prisons. Taking residence in Walsall, he became well familiar with the metropolitan conurbation of Birmingham. His doctoral research on Ohio's largest marginal political party in the throes of change began at the University of Birmingham in October 2009, which itself was undergoing change. Under the immediate supervision of Dr Alexander Thomas T. Smith, Robert conducted fieldwork from his base in Oberlin, Ohio, USA. However, the Sociology Department at Birmingham was shut months later. Plodding on with participant observation in the Ohio field setting, he followed Dr Smith to the University of Huddersfield in January 2011. At times unsettling, his doctoral student experiences gave Robert a Ph.D. in political sociology. His thesis was published in 2021 by Peter Lang as *Garrison State Hegemony in U.S. Politics: A Critical Ethnohistory of Corruption and Power in the World's Oldest 'Democracy'*. Currently, Robert's field of expertise lies at the crossroad of rural and urban political ethnography, with a focus on technocapitalism and the ongoing legacies of colonialism in contemporary artifacts and global landscapes His research focus includes, but is not limited to, ethnographic theory and methods; sociocultural dimensions of commodisation, infrastructure, and technoculture(s); and theories of class, race, and social justice. Broadly, Robert's research seeks to advance understanding of the contribution that notions of legitimacy make to addressing some of society's most intractable problems, particularly those felt at the urban level. Dr Williams is a member of the International Urban Symposium-IUS.

January-March 2024

16.00-17.30 British Standard Time

Thursday 11 January – Erin Lynch (Concordia University, Montreal, Canada), *Sensing the Augmented City: Locative Tours, Haunted Streetscapes and Imagined Futures*.

Abstract: Seeking to differentiate themselves from a parade of spectacular cities and enliven their streets as cultural destinations, cities around the world have begun offering augmented

reality tourism applications for mobile users. Marketed as a form of self-directed urban exploration, these apps are a type of “locative media” — a genre of site-specific platforms that use location-aware mobile technologies to enable interplay between digital content and “real” geographies. Drawing from my recently-published book *Locative Tourism Applications: A Sensory Ethnography of the Augmented City* (2023, Routledge), this paper offers a taste of how cities are using locative tourism apps to reenchant the urban by layering images, audio, video and written narratives — alongside the promise of more novel sensory experiences — over the streetscape. While these applications may seem at first glance to “script” the street, guiding the tourist through a series of digitally-augmented signposts, the journey of locative tourism is less straightforward than it might appear. Because they rely on the city, its inhabitants and tourists to animate them, locative tourism apps must take on board some of the living city’s mess, its splendour, its dynamism and resistance, and its histories and cultures, seen and unseen. Locative media’s cartographies are not only overlaid but “entangled” with locations and their existing representations, weaving a narrative of the city that is set on a shifting stage. The discussion considers the emergence of locative tourism as a particular way of sensing the city, and reflects on the value of a sensory ethnographic approach for studying locative media (in particular) and urban rhythms, sensations, and mediations (more broadly). Beyond urban tourism, I will also look to the future of locative media in the city — namely, the critical potential for locative apps to produce multi-sensory, intimate, and place-based knowledges of urban change and environmental harm.

Bio: *Erin E. Lynch*, Ph.D., is an interdisciplinary scholar and Senior Fellow at Concordia University’s Centre for Sensory Studies (Canada) who works at the intersection of space, mediation, culture, and the senses. She is the author of *Locative Tourism Applications: A Sensory Ethnography of the Augmented City* (Routledge, 2023) a multi-sited sensory ethnography that explores how city-sanctioned mobile tourism apps mediate users’ experience of urban destinations in 12 cities around the world. Erin is currently co-authoring research on the sensory design of spas and museums and the production of urban festival atmospheres. She is a member of the International Urban Symposium-IUS and from 2024 will serve as Book Reviews Editor of *Urbanities-Journal of Urban Ethnography*. Dr Lynch is a member of the International Urban Symposium-IUS.

Thursday 25 January – Liora Sarfati (Tel Aviv University, Israel), *Globalization, Urbanization, and the Cosmopolitanization of Korea’s Vernacular Religion*.

Abstract: Cosmopolitanism has often been used to discuss religions that had been institutionalized, canonized, and then transmitted globally through premodern cultural flows. In contrast, vernacular religions have maintained their local uniqueness in terms of pantheons, belief systems, practices, and ritual objects — even into the 21st century. This talk discusses the cultural and societal conditions that have enabled the vernacular traditions of Korean shamanism (*musok*) to travel globally in real and virtual worlds. Not all Korean shamans (*mudang*) work with foreigners, but the four ethnographic case studies that will be examined are cosmopolitan practitioners. They assert that spirits can communicate beyond spoken languages, that *mudang*

clients do not have to be Koreans, and that media depictions are a vehicle for making the practice available to more people in Korea and worldwide. Such international activity has become an easily achievable task in hypermodern conditions. The vernacular is flexible in meaning and usage because institutions do not supervise it and it is often an undocumented oral tradition. Mudang constantly recreate musok practices from their personal interpretation of the religious experience. Thus, when musok goes global, it is reinterpreted and transformed to fit the cultural understandings of the target audiences.

Bio: *Liora Sarfati*, Ph.D., is a Lecturer in Sociocultural Anthropology and Chair of the Department of East Asian Studies of Tel Aviv University. She has conducted extensive anthropological field research in South Korea. Her specialisms span religion, society, culture and the media in Korea, Israel and Japan. Her main research from 2005 is about Korea's vernacular religion. Since summer 2014, Dr Sarfati has also conducted research among protesters in downtown Seoul who demanded investigation of the Sewöl Ferry's sinking. Her research methods include urban ethnography, media analysis and folklore research. She has published several peer-reviewed essays. Her book *From Ritual to the World Wide Web: Mediated Representations of Korean Shamanism* is now under consideration for publication. Dr Sarfati is a member of the International Urban Symposium-IUS.

Thursday 8 February – Adriana Hurtado-Tarazona and Malena Rinaudo-Velandia,
(Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia) *Ethnographies of Urban Change*.

Abstract: Ethnographic work in urban settings has the potential to advance our understanding and theories of contemporary urban conditions. In this paper, we show how an ethnographic approach has proven useful in advancing theoretical insights into processes of urban change. By theorizing urban changes and crises as crucial moments in which the implicit becomes explicit and the ethnographical encounter as a sphere that helps urban dwellers make sense of their own conditions, we illustrate two instances of ethnographically generated theories of urban change. The first is the moment in which lower-income urban households achieve their “dream of homeownership” in peripheral social housing in two Colombian cities, after facing long-term insecurity of tenure, violence, and displacement. The second is the uncertainty and potential major changes in residential conditions that residents in a central area of Bogotá are facing during an urban renewal process. In both processes, residents make explicit their previously implicit ideas, values, preferences, and aspirations regarding housing, neighbourhoods, and the city. These insights “from the ground” become crucial to generating theoretical understandings of residential preferences and satisfaction, urban sociality and communities, and forms of citizenship in simultaneous processes of urban change (rapid peripheral urbanization and gentrification of city centres).

Bios:

Adriana Hurtado-Tarazona holds a PhD in Anthropology, an M.A. in Planning and Management of Regional Development, and an M.A. in Anthropology. Based at the Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia, she has worked as a researcher, teacher and consultant in urban, land and housing policies, urban informality, urban and metropolitan management and the impact of large-scale urban projects. Hurtado-Tarazona's current research interest is the link between housing

policies and the urban experience of social housing residents, and more generally in the contribution that anthropology can make to our understanding of urban processes in Latin American cities. Dr Hurtado-Tarazona has published on legitimacy. She is a member of the International Urban Symposium-IUS.

Malena Rinaudo-Velandia is an Anthropologist based at the University of Los Andes with research interests in Urban and Regional Planning and Interdisciplinary Studies on Development, particularly the development of social transformation projects with emphasis on inclusive urban development and sustainable urban and territorial development projects.

Thursday 7 March 2024 – Manos Spyridakis (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece), *Precarious Employment and Social Exclusion in Times of Crisis: The Case of Athens*.

Abstract: Although the precise meaning of precariousness and social exclusion is rather blurred, combined, these words refer, in general, to the creation of insecure and uncertain conditions of existence as the result of remote decisions made at the expense of ordinary people's lives' trajectories. Hence, they encompass not only non-standard employment and worse labour conditions but life itself. They are strongly connected to a status of vulnerability where people cannot schedule their future lives, and tend to be socially isolated and materially deprived. Doing short and dead-end jobs, they are forced to find recourses on social programs schemes in order to make a living. Far from being a homogeneous group, precarious people on the verge of social exclusion can be seen as "second class" citizens. Against this background, based on extensive ethnographic research in Athens, the paper focuses on the life that precarious people experience in the antisocial situation in which they live.

Bio: *Manos Spyridakis* holds a PhD in Social Anthropology (University of Sussex, UK). He is Professor of Social Anthropology at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, in the Department of Sociology. He is the author of the monographs, *Power and Harassment at Work* (Dionikos Publications, 2009), *Labor and Social Reproduction in the Shipbuilding and Repair Industry of Piraeus* (Papazisi Publications, 2010), *The Liminal Worker. An Ethnography of Work, Unemployment and Precariousness in Contemporary Greece* (Ashgate publications, 2013), *Homo Precarius* (Pedio publications, 2018). His research interests focus on issues of anthropology of work and social policy, the concept of space, qualitative social research, economic anthropology and anthropology of health. He is Vice-President of the International Urban Symposium-IUS.

April-June 2024

16.00-17.30 British Summer Time

Thursday 18 April – Iraklis Vogiatzis and Manolis Patiniotis (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece), *The Deterritorialization of Labour in the Digital Era*

Abstract: Digital labour is increasingly defining the developments in the sphere of production. The phenomena of digital nomads, delivery and transportation platform workers, micro-workers and "click-slaves" that train AI point towards structural changes in the ways people earn their

daily income around the world. The infrastructure that underlies most of these new forms of labour is the digital platform. Platforms de-territorialised labour in the sense of “freeing” it from the spatial, temporal and cultural restrictions. To achieve this, they create intricate networks of interfaces that function as gates to the shared non-space of digital labour. Digital labour is closely related to the process of outsourcing that allows capital to liquify the centres of production and relocate labour to any place or social category is cheap and readily available. At the same time, platforms treat labour outside their local legal and cultural contexts, creating islands of intense exploitation within a deregulated labour market. This new way of subordinating human productive activity to capital redefines both labour relations and the urban landscape, as the new technological monopolies erode the distinction between private and public around which urban life is organized. The examination of digital labour along with the new value chains that span the globe can provide an entry point for critically evaluating both the deep social transformations that take place in the era of platform capitalism and the new affordances made available for the emancipation of human labour from the limitations of the capitalist valorisation.

Bios:

Iraklis Vogiatzis, a former fellow of the Weizenbaum Institute, holds a PhD in Philosophy and History of Science (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens), a BSc in Digital Systems (University of Piraeus) and an MSc in History and Philosophy of Science (NKUA). In his doctoral dissertation, he examined the processes of micro-tasking systems and the algorithmic management of labour on microwork platforms. He is a research assistant at the Hellenic Open University, working on science communication and critical inquiry of algorithms, a member of the DiPLab, an interdisciplinary research group based in France that works on the labour behind AI, and a member of the organization and scientific committee of the International Network on Digital Labor (INDL) conferences in Athens (2022) and Berlin (2023).

Manolis Patiniotis is professor of History of Modern Science and Technology at the department of Sociology, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. He studied for many years the history of modern science in the European periphery and beyond. His research focused on environments that did not originally participate in the making of the Enlightenment and aimed at bridging the study of the emergence of European science with postcolonial studies. After spending a short time dealing with the so-called first crisis of modernity, he turned to the History and Philosophy of the Digital. From the perspective of History, he explores the shaping of digital ontologies through the intersection of Information Theory with the rise of discreet-state machines. From the perspective of philosophy, he inquiries into the notions of modularity and virtuality, and the new affordances they provide for social control and individual self-determination. He was a founding member of the international research network STEP (Science and Technology in the European Periphery) and a member of the Academic Committee that coordinated the creation of the Postgraduate Programme *Science Communication* at the Hellenic Open University. His webpage can be found at digiscapes.org.

Thursday 9 May – Nathalie Boucher (Organisme Respire, Montreal, Canada), *Alone, Together and in Public. Australian Beaches and Pools as Public Spaces.*

Abstract: In 1979, anthropologist Robert B. Edgerton published an ethnographic work on a beach of Los Angeles, titled “Alone Together: Social Order on an Urban Beach”. This paper answers Edgerton’s work by reflecting on the publicness of aquatic public spaces such as beaches and pools. On the one hand, aquatic public spaces are understood as places of freedom (through the bodies devoted of any status) and of hedonistic activities (through the highly sensorial experiences of water). On the other hand, the emphasis on the self and the proximity of social and sexualized bodies brings the attention of scholars on the norms, the unspoken rules and the social orders that fail to prevent riots and troubles related to religious and gender causes, thus challenging the pertinence of beaches and pools as public spaces. Much in line with research on public life in Montreal, my previous work on the social life of public spaces calls into question the idea that public spaces are/should be open to all, all the time to all activities. Here, I offer an analysis of aquatic public spaces that shed light on their capacity to host acts of sociability, foster a sense of appropriation, generate representations and allow conflicts. Cases in point are an aquatic centre, a public pool, a public natural beach and a private artificial beach in urban Australia. Fieldwork undertaken in 2016 includes observation and interviews with bathers and managers. Considering that the value of aquatic infrastructures is more pertinent than ever, the closing of aquatic facilities during the COVID pandemic resulted in a strong evaluation of those costly infrastructures and their utility for public health.

Bio: With a master's degree in anthropology (Université Laval 2005), a doctorate in urban studies (Institut national de recherche scientifique — Centre Urbanisation Culture Société 2012) and five postdoctoral fellowships in three countries, *Nathalie Boucher* has focused her attention on public places. She leverages her expertise in qualitative methodologies to train, guide, organize and collect observations, mapping, interviews of all kinds, on land and in the water, through the non-for-profit Respire, which she founded in 2016. She is an advisory member of City Space Architecture and associate member of the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Montreal and a member of the International Urban Symposium-IUS.

Thursday 23 May – Jerome Krase (Brooklyn College of The City University of New York, USA), *The Dramaturgical Community, or How to be Recognized as a Community.*

Abstract: This paper is intended to make the reader aware of an interesting and useful perspective for analysis of neighbourhood community organizational behaviour in modern urban society in which claims of authenticity and legitimacy are crucial issues. I take the position that much of the activity of neighbourhood community organizations is the cynical presentation of community via rituals or routines to obtain legitimacy in the eyes of authorities and other audiences on the urban scene. The rewards for attaining such recognition are variable. One reward is simply the positive moral value of being a community, or community leader, or having community member status, which is not a taken for granted reality today; it must be “proven”. Other rewards are contingent on accomplishing this initial task. Contingent rewards are for example, funding for local programs, input into decision-making machinery that affects

localities, and respect and admiration for filling culturally defined roles. The stakes in this community game can be personal or collective. People can play the game for personal rewards or to make gains for significant collectivities. Often the game is played for a combination of both types of reward. One way of describing the game is to use a theatrical analogy. Those desiring community status are actors and those who can bestow the status are audiences. Most often the audience is composed of governmental authorities, private foundations, the public at large and local publics. All these audiences have the power to certify the successfulness of performances by actors. The actors, most often, are local individuals and groups who have a practical or symbolic need to be defined as community. It is also possible however for those defined as “audiences” above, to become “actors” in the community theatre. For example, authority-sponsored community programs play the game of trying to convince local communities that they are either part of the community or operate in the interests of the local community.

Bio: *Jerome Krase*, Emeritus and Murray Koppelman Professor at Brooklyn College, CUNY, is an activist-scholar who researches, lectures, writes and photographs about urban life and culture globally. Among his books are *Self and Community in the City* (1982), *Ethnicity and Machine Politics* with Charles LaCerra (1992), *Race and Ethnicity in New York City* (2005) and *Ethnic Landscapes in an Urban World* (2006) coedited with Ray Hutchison, *Seeing Cities Change: Local Culture and Class* (2012), *Race, Class, and Gentrification in Brooklyn* (2016), *Diversity and Local Contexts* coedited with Zdenek Uhrek (2017) and *COVID 19 in Brooklyn* (2022) with Judith N. DeSena. He co-edits *Urbanities* and serves on the editorial boards of *Cidades*, *Visual Studies*, and the *Journal of Video Ethnography*. Professor Krase is active in the American and International Sociological Associations, Commission on Urban Anthropology, International Urban Symposium, Humanities on Line, International Visual Sociology Association, and President of the European Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

Thursday 13 June – Ipsita Pradhan (SRM University, Andha Pradesh, India), *The Spectacular Shopping Mall and the Mundane Workplace: Towards an Understanding of Layered Spaces*.

Abstract: This paper reads the spectacular shopping mall as a workplace, emphasizing its nature as a multi-layered workspace, rather than only a predictable site of consumption. In doing that, it uses the concept of “layered space” to understand the nature and processes of stratification and exclusions, that the shopping mall reproduces in the city. The work draws on ethnographic work conducted in *Mosaic* shopping mall in Hyderabad, India, between 2014-2016, relying on observations, in-depth interviews and secondary data comprising mostly of e-layouts and instructional videos. The concept of layered space is useful in understanding the characteristics of a space which is shared by people of different social strata, yet there are differences and hierarchies in the nature of their relation to that space. It is in this context, that taking account of the nature and development of *Cyberabad*, the area within Hyderabad where *Mosaic* is located, becomes pertinent. Focussing on the shopping mall, there are *layers* formed, which are fluid with varied acts of constructing physical and social boundaries, under the overarching structure of the

rules of the mall. These are manifested in the relationship that the retail shop-floor employees have a) with the customers, visible in the starkly different customer areas and employee areas within the mall, b) amongst themselves on the basis of position in the job hierarchy, caste and gender. Talking from the perspective of women's experiences as employees in the shopping mall, the paper shows the gendered nature of the layers within the mall as well as in the larger city of Hyderabad.

Bio: *Ipsita Pradhan* teaches at the Easwari School of Liberal Arts, SRM University, in Andhra Pradesh, India. She received her doctorate degree in Sociology from the University of Hyderabad, India, in 2020. Her doctoral work, *Understanding Gendered labour in a 'Global City': A Study of Women Shop-floor Employees in a Shopping Mall in Hyderabad* examines women shop-floor employees engaged in emotional and aesthetic labour in the *spectacular* spaces of the shopping mall, which looks at the shopping mall as a work place. Ipsita Pradhan's research interests lie in the intersection of Sociology of Gender, Labour and Urban Sociology. Her existing and forthcoming publications look at emotional labour at work places, production of neoliberal subjectivities and changing nature of work. Currently, she is looking at gendered labour in the platform economy. She is a member of International Urban Symposium-IUS.

Thursday 27 June – Lakshmi Srinivas (University of Massachusetts, Boston, USA), *Cinema Hall to Multiplex: An Ethnographic Reading of Loss and Change.*

Abstract: This paper examines the changing landscape of cinema in the South Indian city of Bangalore. Starting in the early 21st century, Bangalore's iconic single-screen theatres, many of which had screened films since the pre-Independence era, began to be replaced by multiplexes, a shift that took place during a period of exponential growth when the city was morphing into the IT capital of India. By 2020, hardly any single-screens in the city remained, most demolished to make way for shopping centres and malls. The erasure of each cinema hall generated an emotional farewell in local newspapers; residents wrote in with fond remembrances of past movie outings, and blogs and social media sites devoted to old cinema halls have multiplied since. This paper interrogates the expressions of loss that greeted the disappearance of cinema halls and what this shift and responses to it reveal about urban practice in a city experiencing constant flux and change.

Bio: *Lakshmi Srinivas* is Associate Professor in Asian American Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. An urban sociologist and ethnographer, she received her PhD from the University of California, Los Angeles, following training in urban planning and demography at UC Berkeley. Her monograph, *House Full: Indian Cinema and the Active Audience* based on multi-year fieldwork in the South Indian city of Bangalore was published by the University of Chicago Press (2016). She has published articles on cinemagoing, reception culture and the social world of cinema. She is a member of the International Urban Symposium-IUS.

The Sense of an Ending: Ageing and Coping in the Words of the Boys

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In this paper we explore the lived realities of ageing through the experiences of a small group of men, all in their 60s, in “superdiverse” London. The group, which gathers regularly in a local pub, engages in certain ritualised behaviours which reflect the group’s sense of propriety in an area that has changed drastically during its members’ adult lives. The changes, common to many superdiverse urban areas, are bound up with demographics and associated structural and material shifts registered in the cityscape. As we seek to show, the group has a complex and differentiated stance on urban change; some changes are embraced, others negotiated, and others resisted. Documenting the rituals and moments pertaining to the group’s illness, leisure and routine meaning-making in tandem with the transformation of their locality underlines the significance of place vis-à-vis processes of ageing.

Keywords: Ageing, conviviality, ethnography, propriety, superdiversity.

Boundaries vary with an individual’s sense of propriety; such thresholds can change with time. The identity of those who set parameters of any type, why and when, is difficult to ascertain. For some the boundaries evident in domestic milieus trump all others. Not all, however, have extensive kin systems and not all are enamoured by those that constitute “family”. The complexity experienced by those residing in densely populated housing units of a neighbourhood will often prioritise notions of conviviality and tranquillity as the most needed qualities in life be it in their home, on the landing or block or street they live on. Often reduced to the term “good relations”, this sought-after state of being was informed to a large degree by what those seeking it considered their primary public arenas. This forces the curious to consider what behaviours various spaces ideally required and how any sense of propriety was established and claimed. What follows considers such issues in relation to five men, all aged in their 60s, who met weekly in a pub to enjoy the conviviality of conversation and beer. Seeking essentially to document the impact of urban change on a group of ageing, white working-class males in the specific context of North London, the discussion utilises concepts of “the global city”, “conviviality” (Gilroy 2004) and “superdiversity” (Vertovec 2007, Rosbrook-Thompson and Armstrong 2022).

Conviviality: Space and Enthusiasm

The research draws on extended ethnographic conversations arising from deep “hanging out” (Barker et al. 2013) with five men, henceforth referred to as the Boys. The five — Jimmy, Pete, Paul, Jack and Chris — were residents of the Lashall Green neighbourhood of North London (Rosbrook-Thompson and Armstrong 2018, 2022). All five identified as white, heterosexual, nominally Christian and considered themselves “British” by virtue of their passport stating as such. All were of second- or third-generation Irish or Scottish heritage, were either two years the right side or three years the wrong side of 65 and had in four instances grown up in the area and were known to one another for some 50 years. At the time of the research, all lived within one mile of each other. The Boys were mates (they eschewed the word “friends”) and all knew what the term implied even if it could not be easily defined.

The Boys reminded themselves of this mutual status every Friday in the pub, and in the course of the previous decade holidays to the warmer climes of Southern Europe where cheaper beer and generally better food than that available locally was enjoyed.¹

Over the decades, the Boys had grown to know each other's moods and tolerance levels; they could nonetheless in their weekly pub *entente cordiale* become a little peeved with an opinion about contemporary political affairs or more frequently a football-related assertion (not all supported the same team). As mates, they got over this, did not to carry a grudge and when controversy appeared were wise enough to move on to the more pressing issue as to who was due to buy the next round of beer. Beer consumption (no more than six pints in the space of three hours) helped the frequent sense of the bemused and the absurd which defined their weekly meet.² Their often-lively Friday evening narratives were dotted with questions which addressed issues that left them incredulous, the narrative often ending with the words "Hello"? or "Are you Sure?" and "That's bollocks". When a response was articulated which agreed with their point of view, the responder received a resounding "Thank You" for his sensible complicity.

Onlookers in the shape of other pub regulars sort of "knew" the Boys and were both fascinated and enchanted by their seeming inability to pause any conversation for more than a few seconds. Christening the location the Boys usually gathered in as both "Bullshit Corner" and "Last of the Summer Wine", the Boys were aware of such stigmas and could not care less. They were more than happy to include others in their conversation and could draw on 40 regulars who might drop in on their gathering to add to the merriment or recount a momentary moan or feature of the absurd. The Boys spent what they perceived as "good monies" in the place (each Friday cost a minimum of £25 each) and in return wanted well-kept beer of a maximum 4% "session" strength, a warm welcome from the proprietor, attentive bar staff and to be unaffected by any errant behaviours from other pub-goers. The ideal evening ended with everyone equal in buying rounds of beer.

The pub was nominally "Irish". Some 25 years before, all pubs in the locality fitted this description by virtue of every pub landlord originating from Ireland. Most had gone, the remaining licenced premise were now *managed* not by "Guvnors" (as such landlords were termed in local parlance) but by individuals often no older than 30 years of age, who did not live above the premise like the Guvnors once did, and hence had little buy-in to the neighbourhood. As late as 1995. the neighbourhood was host to 30 plus pubs in a one-mile radius. Some 20 years later that number was halved and what we can best term the "traditional pub" numbered just two. The neighbourhood thus lost places where conviviality and information exchange were integral to entering. Such pubs were at various times places of refuge, comfort, social networking and places for seeking employment opportunities.

¹ One of the Boys' daughters was *au fait* with online purchasing. She did the holiday bookings – the Boys paid her in cash. Their request was sunshine, decent hotel (not top of the range) and a resort that hosted at least a dozen bars but not one notorious for attracting youthful revellers.

² The recurring themes were the proclamations of the local council and the irritation that was ever-present when trying to get answer from organisations that had replaced human interaction with a voice-phone asking the caller to answer its pre-programmed questions.

The pub the Boys met in every Friday, The Donna, was the last of its kind. The premise was inclusive, and its clientele changed with the hours of day and days of week. The midday to late afternoon period saw mostly retired local men drink slowly while watching the televised horse-racing. The venue in such hours was in a sense a social service for the lonely and the retired (mostly male) providing easy company and the chance for winners and losers to reflect on both good and bad fortune. Other punters entered from the many surrounding small enterprises for a cheap lunch of traditional English/Irish fayre. The clientele changed around 5.00pm, when workers (usually under the age of 40 and 50/50 male-female) from a nearby fashion house HQ and white-collar industries entered and remained until mid-evening. Local working-class and middle-class residents would enter around 8.00pm and remain until closing time, combining their conversations with watching a live football match on one of the pub's 15 TV screens in its four rooms. The TVs also attracted groups of French and Spanish people who worked in London but wanted to watch their hometown teams via satellite broadcasts. The pub also attracted scores of tourists per week, and a regular contingent from Brazil who worked in London and brought their compatriots when visiting them. Many tourists were delighted by the pub's famed beer and the dozens of items of sporting paraphernalia that adorned its walls and ceilings. The Donna was a convivial place.

Conviction and Co-habiting

Two of the Boys had retired — one by choice, another on account of ill-health. The two who worked full time utilised overtime opportunities to trade for time-off in lieu which freed up time for vacations. The Boys averaged an annual holiday in a Mediterranean resort and one annual trip to a UK holiday camp. The latter, known as “weekenders”, were themed around music and extended drinking hours. The out-of-season dates saw such camps packed with the over-55s, empty-nesters re-living, to a degree, the music of their youth and reminding themselves that they could still move, most certainly could still drink and, for those inclined, could still attract women. Such occasions were life-affirming. The trips abroad were sometimes delicate affairs. The realisation that no single place and the accommodation therein could please everyone in the group meant that some of their party would have a gripe about something. The one comfort was that the beer was cheap, and the bars rarely closed before 4.00am. After a week of such indulgence, returning to the familiarity of the neighbourhood was both comforting and sobering.

The Boys were long connected to the neighbourhood by family, work and friendship. Factors of time, information and identity (Wallman 1984) were integral to the Boys' sense of well-being. They had a stake in the place. They knew people and enjoyed the fact that on any day of the week a walk would be interrupted by up to half a dozen short conversations, a sociability that made the local both “human” and likeable. All could in earlier times enter a number of bars in the neighbourhood alone, but certain in the knowledge that such premises would contain people they knew. The longevity of the Boys' residence meant they knew — generally — how things locally “worked”; which medical doctor to see (“he's the best of the three in there”), which garage car-mechanic to trust, which fruit and veg market stallholder

to buy from, which kebab shop to eat from post-pub and which mini-cab firm were reliable and honest in their charging. Such knowledge was comforting, and sharing such insights added to their sense of community. Being in the know was also a marker of masculine credibility.

Ambitious never to be “mugged off” and “topped up”, i.e. overcharged or having to suffer poor and insulting service, none wanted to be made to look gullible; to be a victim of such practices implied an absence of foresight and an inability to stand up for yourself. Four were not shy in what they termed “saying what needed saying”. Jimmy was the least assertive of the Boys and probably the kindest. The Boys, as local parlance might state, had “lived a bit”. Two had been arrested in their youth for barroom fights. They were fined for their efforts and thus held a criminal record. Two had seen the inside of a prison in their early twenties. One three-month custodial sentence was a consequence of football-related disorder, the other the outcome of defying the orders of a despised higher rank when in the uniform of the British army; military detention ensued for 60 days.³ Both the latter had overcome any career-defining potential such living arrangements might have afforded. The circumstances of their respective incarcerations were embellished over the decades when the talk turned to celebrations of youthful carnival and the Boys’ frequent laments about the futility and uselessness of the contemporary criminal justice system, opinions informed by the various tabloid and middle-brow newspapers they read daily.

The Boys had worked and earned since leaving school at the age of 16. They had thus worked for 40 years or more in local occupations, none of which required a post-16 education. All had worked — laboured, essentially — in communal industries such as railway track maintenance, postal delivery, council caretaker turned cab driver, plasterer and decorator, military personnel turned delivery driver. Such work necessitated a tolerance of workmates and an accommodation of the human foibles that such company brought, in what were all essentially customer-facing occupations. All had lived in local authority-owned premises in the various three-storey estates of the neighbourhood and understood densely-populated circumstances. All had a sense of ownership of the neighbourhood by virtue of being outside of the domestic home for hours of a day in journeys that saw them going to and from work, drinking in local pubs and, at times, shopping in local stores. One of the five — Paul — explained his philosophy on life:

“Nothing fancy. Do right by your kids, pay your bills, be polite to people [...] light ale every now and then and hope the rest looks after itself.”

That was perhaps too much to hope for. What Paul called “the rest” was the unknown which was a combination of local changes, global forces and personal health. Such factors had always constituted the unknown, but ageing added a new dimension.

³ The military prison stories fascinated listeners. The one-time prisoner added to the mystery by his refusal to accept being released early from his punishment just to prove a point to the Commanding Officer that the intended humiliation had not succeeded.

Doing Right by Your Own

By their thirties three had become fathers and thus joined the extended social network that parenting brought. The two that did not become fathers had extended family enough to keep them involved in the sense of “family” and its obligations around the ceremonies of baptism, weddings and funerals. For two of the parents the necessity of bigger living quarters by virtue of children saw them temporarily leave the neighbourhood on local authority property exchanges wherein they traded up by moving out — one to a neighbouring borough and one to a local authority property five miles away. Both were to drift back to the neighbourhood of their birth upon divorcing. Both were to return temporarily to the parental home, when aged in their 40s. One later moved out to another council property, the other to remain in his one-time childhood home by virtue of the death of his father shortly after he returned. Of the other three, two had taken over the tenancy of the local authority flat when their parents died, the other began cohabiting late in life in a local authority flat owned by a local woman; meanwhile, one rented out his own local authority flat — to sell the property would be considered ludicrous; relationships could go wrong.

The Boys had in all instances “done alright”. Those who fathered children believed they had brought up children the “right way”. In two instances, the Boys’ marriages had ended in divorce, but both were still in touch with their ex-wives. Two had cohabited but not married. All had a roof over their heads and money in the bank on top of their personal or work pensions. All but one of their children had moved out and lived between 20 and 200 miles from their place of birth, unable to ever obtain social housing and unable to ever earn an income that could attract a mortgage to pay for private housing in the area. Only one of their four children lived locally. He was able to by virtue of being “given” a local authority flat on account of a drug problem.

The needs of kinship, when combined with earning to pay bills and ensuring their kin had a roof over their heads, were all -encompassing considerations between the age of 25 and 50. These realities meant that the Boys had little time for the formal forums of tenants’ association meetings, neighbourhood watch, and forums with local councillors and police officers. For the Boys, the neighbourhood just “was”; any crisis required a response best achieved by “knowing someone who knew someone”. In effect, living was managed by — usually male — resource networks, such people were assumed to be in the know; such people could “say things”. The occasions for “saying something”; that is, challenging that considered that “out of order” changed with the life cycle.

As young men they were, in their parlance, “out and about”. They played in local amateur football teams and drank weekly in up to a dozen local pubs. To add to their networks and make life interesting, two of the Boys attended all home and away games of the local professional football team wherein friendships were long-established with fellow fans — local, national and indeed global.⁴ Two others had a wider local friendship network by virtue

⁴ Their longevity in the ranks of the supporters made them well-known “faces” in their co-fraternity and provided them with a network of further mates that was initially national but over the previous decade included new mates from Ireland, Belgium and Scandinavia.

of playing to a good standard in the weekly inter-pub darts competitions. The two had made wider connections via their employment on building sites and the railway. The Boys had all worked with people drawn from across Britain and later with “foreigners” as a consequence of the global flows of migrants. None of the Boys were “Little Englanders”. It was not possible to hold such a mentality and enjoy life where they lived. In their world, they were “faces” in the area. But faces only to the working-class demographic. There were other social classes and waves of day-trippers who had no knowledge of who lived in the neighbourhood and indeed were not curious about such people.

The Boys’ lived reality of the neighbourhood was ever-changing. In the 1950s, migrants from Cyprus and Portugal joined the pre-existing Irish and Caribbean. The former went into restaurants and property ownership and rental, the latter joined the ranks of the NHS and worked in local hospitals as catering staff and cleaners. In the late 1970s, new migrants arrived from the Sylhet region of Bangladesh to work in “Indian” restaurants and a variety of entrepreneurial business enterprises. In the 1990s, came further migrants carrying refugee status from war-torn East Africa (Somalia, Eritrea and later Sudan). Later again, arrived Lusophone Africans from Guinea Bissau. Accompanying such peoples were the white middle classes drawn to the neighbourhood for its proximity to hospital and university employment and, in the 1980s, its relatively cheap townhouse properties being sold from the one-time local authority property portfolio. This gentrification brought a very articulate middle class to the area who were to live cheek by jowl with the working classes. Occasions for shared conviviality were very rare. That said, there was no evident arena for class conflict either. The proximity to Lasham Green of three mainline rail termini meant also that up to half a million passengers a day were disgorged into the neighbourhood. The area’s famed street-market and night-time economy brought in up to 100,000 visitors each weekend at times. The neighbourhood saw all walks of life and in many ways was an exemplar of conviviality.

Post-1990 saw waves of migrants to the UK from the former Eastern Bloc upon the expansion of the European Union. An estimated one million people of Polish origin arrived and changed the face of London. Diligent workers in construction, service and hospitality, they were also cheaper labour and thus much sought after by firms and business. This caused tensions with other workers but ultimately did not bring social unrest. These migrants, in fact, reminded the boys of the Irish of the 1950s and in some instances thus their fathers. Tony’s father, once de-mobbed from military service, did not return to his Northern Ireland village of origin but headed to London and sought work in post-war reconstruction, the correlate was recognised:

“The East Europeans was a tough one for me. Twenty years ago, I was on £120 a day painting a decorating. I had work seven days a week in Central London in banks and hotels. Then they came over and they charge £80 a day and the jobs went to them [...] (I’m) fucked if I’m working for that money. I get the same today as I did 15 years ago, it’s never going to get any better. I have to travel to Essex for that money. That takes me 50 minutes every morning just to start work. I know they’re good people, hard-working and not scrounging off the dole and

family men bringing up their kids and all that, but I couldn't get close to 'em cos in a sense they'd halved my wages."

Negotiating Difference

Things changed. What had disappeared in the neighbourhood in the eyes of the Boys was "people like them". For the past three decades, men similar to them had "taken the plunge" and sold their local authority home bought in the early 1980s Buy-to-Let bonanza that typified Thatcherite housing policy (Rosbrook-Thompson and Armstrong 2018). Having bought cheap, they sold their properties sometimes for three times the price they paid and relocated to the assumed arcadia of usually new-built private housing between eight and 30 miles north. At its most innocent, the move was inspired by the prospect of a front and back garden and less dense living conditions which equated to tranquillity and implicitly a "quiet life". At its most honest (and to a degree deluded) the move was to get away from "the Bangladeshis" and "the Somalians" who had settled in the area since the late 1970s and mid 1990s respectively. It was a move to escape having to negotiate with *difference*, most notably with those who did not look or speak like them. In most instances there was no flashpoint which made the departure desirable or inevitable; the departed just did not want to deal with the differences, be it in language or cultural practices. Racial politics were articulated but, in most instances, boiled down to a rage against the (Labour controlled) Council whom they believed bent over backwards to help newcomers to the detriment of local white people. It was the children of such newcomers, they argued, that were dragging down the standards of local state school. It was the teenage boys of such migrants, they claimed, who were the largest threat to their personal safety. They insisted they were not racist in such calculations.

What was missing in the life of the Boys today was in some instances the intensely personal and in others the comfortingly familiar. The latter was people who had moved out or died. It was also places; shops had changed hands, lots of pubs had closed. Other licensed premises appeared in their place, but they were not venues for the Boys. Appealing to the under 40s, such premises served beer in bottles and played music that was "too loud". The door security decided who did or did not enter. The neighbourhood was increasingly about craft beer and "exotic" beers imported from ever greater distances. The ambience of such premises was younger than that the Boys sought, the bar managers younger than the Boys children. The Boys sought cheap beer which was well-kept and The Donna supplied this with beer from seven nations alongside wine from six nations. By contrast, the Boys' choice of breakfast had been lost in the neighbourhood. The former plethora of "greasy spoon" cafés had closed and from 2010 their replacements were increasingly about coffee (with many varieties of milk), croissants and variants of porridge. This meant that the Boys had to travel one mile up the road for their preferred tinned tomatoes, fried eggs, chips, mugs of tea and toasted, sliced white bread. They were not being consciously driven out; rather, their world was shrinking.

Conviviality: Taste and Distinction

The Boys' concerns, they would admit, were once primarily about proximity, notably "them next door". This expression covered those sharing the landing, those living in the block and latterly those that constituted the wider neighbourhood. Decades previously, the concerns might have merited a consensus; recent decades changed perspectives. As Tony explained:

"We once used to sit around talking about people allowing their dog to shit on the grass and people mending their cars on the estate and garage doors not opening properly. Now there's people just got here as refugees from Afghanistan and Sudan and they've been in civil wars and massacres and worse and what have-you [...] You think they care about the stuff that pissed us off?"

At the same time the familiar moans of those left behind are to the Boys tiresome — because they are never-ending and not resolvable. As Alan explained:

"All some of 'em want to talk about is how it's all going downhill and getting worse and things ain't what they used to be [...] (of) course they aren't, life moves on and there's enough people to get on with round here. What do they want? There were always wrong'uns in the neighbourhood and bad families and hard men who liked to bully innocent people."

Nostalgia pooled with various senses of disappointment to provide for a combination for unhappiness and at times resentment. It did not however result in electoral changes. The neighbourhood always returned Labour candidates. The far-right vote was always negligible. The 2016 Brexit vote however split the Boys. Paul wore a union flag lapel badge for the duration of the electoral hustings; he wanted out of the EU. His reason was not focussed but more the protest of an individual confused by what he saw around him. The blame was "all fuckin' politicians" (i.e. those of the two main UK parties). The vote was his protest against "everything". Tony and Chris wanted to remain. They had foreign relatives and had plans to retire to the sunny climes of Southern Europe. Jack needed freedom of movement because of entrepreneurial activities (he made monthly excursions to a hypermarket on the French North Sea coast to pack a small van full of alcohol and cigarettes which he bought cheap and sold at a profit in the neighbourhood. Jimmy voted leave but regretted doing so on learning of the new bureaucratic requirements that travel to many European places would bring as a consequence. His hatred of negotiating the complexities of online systems was famed in the Boys' conversations.

Appreciating Superdiversity

The three Ds of (personal) decline, (medical) doctors and death (of loved ones and neighbours) had visited the Boys to varying degrees. This had brought them into contact with people they had not considered neighbours or indeed facilitators in any way of their lives. One of the Boys was the primary carer of an octogenarian father who, while mentally competent, was wheelchair-bound. One was primary carer to a mother (also in her eighties) with dementia. Another was the dedicated grandparent to a grandchild born to his daughter

who lived as a single mum and who could not have worked were it not for the time and love the grandfather gave to her child. Another had two children married and had safe tenancy in a local authority house and had the added worry as to how debilitating his Parkinson's disease would become. The final one had a partner who had lived in the neighbourhood all her life and knew nothing of anywhere else and was undergoing a variety of medical tests for a mystery wasting ailment.

Anxieties were a daily matter for the Boys. The issue for them was how an individual managed such anxieties. This meant compartmentalising those worries into what they could do something about and that which they could not. The primary anxiety was personal health and the care of loved ones. The appointments and medical schedules that their conditions required pre-occupied the Boys tasked with caring. All the Boys had seen hospital beds in the past decade, and all had conditions that they and their doctors were “keeping an eye on”. Four of the Boys had suffered medical conditions in their 50s which, while they recovered, lingered a decade later. In such times, introspection becomes the priority over the locale. The same people had brought new perspectives. Paul's mother (aged in her early 80s) had dementia. Unable to afford the nursing home fees, Paul had to be primary carer in his mother's local authority flat. Politically, Paul articulated his contempt for both the Tory and Labour parties for in his opinion abandoning “normal British people”. His concerns about the neglect of “your own” saw him involved in the day-to-day care of his mother assisted by professional staff of the local health authority when he was out at work. This brought thanks and a degree of accommodation around what he termed “ethnic circumstances”. As Paul explained:

“The Health Visitor Rani calls in on my Mum twice a day. She's Bangladeshi and lovely. She lives locally and has got kids in the school. Anyway, cos of her religion she can't touch bacon and mum loves bacon. We agreed a solution. I cook it and leave it in the fridge. Rani comes in and micro-waves it. She don't 'touch it' see? Result!”

Some developed a proximity to the foreign-born because what they brought was literally life-enhancing and at times enchanting. As Jack explained:

“I sort of compromised my feelings (on migrant workers). My brother got MS (multiple sclerosis) and once a week he has these injections delivered which he does himself. The bloke who delivers is Kris — he's Polish. Over the years he's the only driver who's never been late and never missed a drop off. The time he saves on his round he cashes in to sit and have a cup of tea with my brother. I go in there sometimes and the pair of them are playing a computer game [...] they're like best mates. He looks forward all week to Kris coming. You can't dislike people like that.”

Similarity and Difference

The fusion of integrity and religion sat with national stereotypes and notions of the criminogenic. When Chris made his weekly shop at the superstore, he and his loaded

bags were brought home by the reassurance of a migrant cab driver. Chris had his own logic at large:

“When I want a cab home or from the supermarket, I always ring the cab firm and ask for Habib [...] he’s Moroccan and a devout Muslim and wouldn’t steal from a man.”

Nic sometimes took a cab the 1.5 miles home from the pub on account of being “a bit pissed” and having knee-joint problems that restricted his mobility. While frequently proclaiming his dislike for Muslims whom he assured everyone who would listen “were not like us”, he was more scathing of people whom he admitted he had no idea what faith — if any — they lived by: “Those Albanian bastards think we’re all pissed, and invent the (cab) fare and try to cheat you. Part of getting home involves a fuckin’ argument over a quid outside your front door.”

Jimmy rarely opined on ethnicity or religion and indeed believed in toleration. Two cancerous growths had been removed from his neck and shoulder by the NHS. In both instances the care had been provided *in toto* by migrants. Appreciative of all they had done for him, Jimmy believed he had a “connection” of sorts, albeit his attempt at kindness was gaffe-prone:

“The cancer specialist — or is it ‘consultant’? Anyway, he was from Jordan. We got talking about golf. He said he played off an 11. He also likes (mentions the local professional football team) and, when he could, he went to matches with his kid. Just a normal geezer [...] I asked him to come and have a round at my golf club which he said he might do [...] then I fucked up and invited him to come out for a drink when it (Jimmy’s treatment) was all over. He’s Muslim — he don’t drink!”

In his late 60s, Tony had no time for anyone who moaned — about anything. His take on life was uncomplicated by nuances; he celebrated the basics of what the locality offered and what he had witnessed both 50 years previously in and around the local Greek Orthodox church:

“Once a year the Greeks all meet up and carry a statue around the outside of their church singing hymns. You can watch it as it passes the pub. It’s nice, they all get dressed up and they have a bit of a ‘do’ after. They have these big parties where all the grub and booze are free—that’s their culture — dressing well, generosity, showing you can feed people.”

His sense of resentment was not about change *per se* or even ethnicity. His intolerance was directed at those who were “not doing their bit”; that is, contributing to shared citizenship and the assumed economic obligations. As he explained:

“It’s not about all migrants. Those who come from Eastern Europe and South America, they find a place to live and find work and bring their kids up properly. It’s the Africans and Bangladeshis who are the problem. They get the council

flats, have got big families which the social (security) pays for and can't control their kids who go round robbing people.”

The migrant presence was complicated by the social class and ambitions of those from the same continent. Adjacent to Tony's council flat kitchen window was a small, tarmacked basketball court. Those using it were renters of flats that made the owners a small fortune in rental income. The renters were wealthy students of the three nearby universities drawn to the UK University system and requiring a place to live in proximity to their place of study:

“There's six young Asian lads, I think they're Indian, who rent one of the maisonettes on my estate. Them and their mates use the playground for basketball and five-a-side football every night when it's light. They're training to be doctors and one's going to be a Vet — I asked them — and they're polite and good as gold [...] far better to have them than that fucking lot (white youths) who used to sit in there till midnight smoking weed and spitting all the time.”

Some people in the Boys' world remained distant and some were avoided. The former were those considered difficult to converse with by virtue of origins, culture and language. But significantly those theoretically and culturally close to home could be distant by virtue of political history. Jimmy explained how he located himself amid such diversity:

“I don't have contact with Muslims. I'm not avoiding them. I just don't mix in their circles. The kebab shop blokes are Muslims and I talk to them but they're what they call Modern Muslims, a bit like us. Their women don't walk 10 yards behind them in the street, head to toe in black.”

In this consideration, clothing and cultural practices combined with a language barrier extended by a different faith made conviviality challenging. At the same time, Jimmy was occasionally uncomfortable — to the point of avoidance — around people who dressed and spoke similarly to him and nominally shared the same religion. Colonial history and nationalist sporting enthusiasm played a crucial role in this discomfort:

“When we're in the The Donna and there's an Ireland game on the telly you get a bit of an anti-English vibe from the Irish boys. Not them in there every week, but those who pack it out for the Gaelic matches and Ireland internationals in rugby and football. Some of them start singing Irish songs and you don't know what's the 'real' meaning of the songs. I avoid the place at them times and drink somewhere else.”

The Grass is Always Greener?

The Boys did not seek homogeneity or a monoculture. They rolled with the cultural experiences on their doorstep and, enjoying the complexity of the locality, were happy to talk with anyone to pass the time of day. The Boys also realised their sense of powerlessness to resist the changes they lived amidst and, while manifesting a degree of nostalgia, they were rarely sentimental; they were of an age to accommodate change. They had access in the

neighbourhood to simple pleasures and for the two of them still in work had an income they considered no other place would provide them with at this stage of their lives. All agreed they had the best free medical care the world could offer, via their local GPs and the two nearby hospitals. Three of the Boys were due life-changing inheritances by virtue of their parents buying their one-time local authority-owned properties in the area. When the surviving parent dies, they could (if motivated) sell the place at a market rate to an assumed foreign-born buyer leaving them with hundreds of thousands in the bank. They considered they would, in time, leave Lashall Green of their own volition and move to places that they had visited briefly and since loved from a distance. Generally, they believed there were kinder places, places characterised by the absence of some people and evidencing a smaller number of opportunities which made life that bit simpler.

For Jimmy, a combination of low-priced housing and a retail situation not evident in the London neighbourhood for the past 40 years was a pull: “It’s (the Isle of Wight) lovely. We’ve been going there for years. First went when I was 10. You can buy a seafront two bedroomed gaff for £200,000 and even the newsagent is white”. Paul’s ambitions were domestic and pastoral and were idealised in a semi-rural location he visited occasionally 200 miles northeast of London. Price was an issue, as was conviviality: “You can get a small place for £150,000, just enough for me. Couple of pubs in the high street and spend your time sitting by the river fishing all day. They’re nice people who don’t bother no one”. At the same time, some of the Boys knew that such a legacy-inspired departure carried potential downsides. Leaving was difficult when others were dependent on them to a degree and when making new mates was recognised as not easy. As Chris explained:

“I’d leave here tomorrow [...] but making new friends at my age — Where do I go where can I know someone to have a drink with? I haven’t got four mates like this lot anywhere else so I can’t go anywhere. Plus, I’ve got the little lad (grandson) to think about.”

For Tony, some places that were great to visit should not be longed for. To relocate could ruin the conviviality that annual trips established and brought involvement in matters best avoided. In his reasoning:

“We could go and live in Ireland with ‘her’ (wife’s) lot (relatives). But that takes the fun out of visiting. It’s great to go there twice a year and have the craic with them but if you moved there, you get dragged in to all that family stuff.”

White people could also be strange and lacking in appeal. Jack could speak with some authority on such matters which required love having to be balanced with the cost of living and cultural estrangement:

“I lived up north for a while with a ‘bird’ (girlfriend) I was seeing. It’s alright things being cheaper and slower and all that, but they can drive you fuckin’ mad with their stupid accents. A lot of them are thick as well...”

Conclusion: The Glass Half Empty

Four times a year over the past decade, the Boys would dress smart and, having attended a funeral service, drink in a pub to celebrate the life of individuals they once knew. Showing up was important; it respected both the deceased and the mourning family. On such occasions the ending was accompanied by the customary free bar and funeral fayre of a “spread” (buffet), courtesy of the deceased’s family. Such gatherings made for memories and renewed the necessity to live in the here and now. The personalities and practices of conviviality that meant so much at one time provided for the Boys’ memory-bank of laughter. They joked over whose monies they would be drinking on when the first of them passed away. They knew that whoever went first, and no matter the amount of money and custom their death brought for the pub landlord, no one was getting a lock-in (after-hours drinking). This was because the new posh neighbours around the pub premises would have the police banging on the pub door and the landlord would be facing the threat of the revocation of his license for his bow to the celebration of a life of a local. Implicitly, it was also a celebration of the shared humanity the neighbourhood housed, sustaining waves of humanity and the accompanying conviviality, diversity and complexity — just as it had done for the past 200 years.

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Comments on the Paper Given at the Seminar

(in alphabetical order)

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Question. James Rosbrook-Thompson and Gary Armstrong use the concept of poverty; what are the criteria for this definition of “poverty”.

Comment. It seems that people of South Asian and non-Anglo-Saxons are more likely to live in larger joint families, which is viewed by the dominant white community as “over-crowding”

and looked down upon as an undesirable trait. On the other hand, the white Anglo-Saxons who live in nuclear families tend to get lonely in old age and also dependent on their neighbours. This seems a paradox. James suggested “whites” tend to depend on those of better class, like students and higher educated people from these ethnic groups.

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The two halves of the paper, presented respectively by James Rosbrook-Thompson and Gary Armstrong, brought to discussion the very acute topic of an ageing society, affecting Europe and the developed world. They offered an authentic “thick narrative” of various aspects of old-age precarity, be it where people live (how successful is the “home-owning democracy” in the search of basic security and safety in the UK?) or how old people spend their “leisure time” (defying death or speeding up the process?). In the Bulgarian language leisure time is also called “free time”, and in the case of old-age people, there is an excess of “freedom”, an excess of time, that actually marks the state of precarity (living in complete weightlessness, lacking of social gravity). Nobody cares what old people do, how they feel, how they live as social beings. The topic of the many faces of social precariousness can always awake some comparative reflection. Just an example: Bulgaria is known as the poorest country in the EU, but over 90% of Bulgarians had their own houses by the end of Socialism in 1989. Was that a “home-owning democracy”? I do not believe so. Rather, it was an instrument of authoritarian state regulation in order to keep citizens loyal to the regime, for it was that “state” that decided who and in what order could get housing. So, it seems, there are many different stories behind seemingly similar social facts. May be, this deserves to be discussed further.

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Comment: What struck me as a commonality across the two parts of the presentation was the emphasis on precarity across both fields – at once bodily, economic and social (in terms of shifting social networks/relations). This seems to be reflective of London’s status as a paradigmatic neoliberal city.

Question: Allowing that the research on the estates took place before the Covid-19 pandemic, how do you think the informal networks of exchange in both sites (the housing estate and the walking football club) shifted during/because of the pandemic? It seems as though these kinds of informal relations might have been disrupted by pandemic realities / formal regulations, but could also have been adapted in interesting ways.

Additional comments: I am intrigued by the Latour-inspired approach to following the ball (as object) in walking football. For me, what is most interesting about the ball in this context is the reconstruction of the bodily relationship to (and interaction with) the ball – and how that shifting

relationship carries with it not only the altered capacities of the player, but also cultural baggage regarding how one is *supposed* to play with a football (and what — if any — tension this creates in playing or learning to play).

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This paper focuses on a demographic change that has become a major concern across the world; specifically, population aging and the socio-economic consequences, and related policy making, engendered by this demographic shift.

The two parts of the paper have several common elements that could be integrated more explicitly to strengthen the overall argument. In different ways, the two parts bring out the potential social isolation and loneliness of the older ages and the problems associated to pensioners' lower income, leading to feelings (and for some, a daily reality) of precariousness. Armstrong and Rosbrook-Thompson point out how different ethnic groups cope with this condition in a “superdiverse” London — notably, in some ethnic groups people can rely on the support of their extended family — and with demographic mobility and urban changes. In all cases, however, informality seems to be a key strategy in coping with poverty and precariousness; in particular, the use of informal exchanges and informal networks. The role of informality brings to mind Pardo's analysis of mutual help in central Naples (*Managing Existence in Naples*, 1996, Cambridge University Press), where the so-called *popolino* often “manage existence” through personal/resource networks — including kin, neighbours, “useful” contacts — and, thus, get access to public services that should be provided by the welfare system, but are virtually inaccessible.

The ethnography discussed in this paper could stimulate further analysis on two areas of contemporary welfare policies. In the first part of the paper, it would be interesting to see how different social groups make use of state benefits that may help pensioners to “stay independent”, such as the attendance or carer's allowance, and whether they make use of informal “live-in care” options. The second part of the paper raises questions on new health programmes, such as the so-called social prescribing, whereby doctors are encouraged to refer their patients to community leisure activities. One wonders whether this is a way for a declining welfare system to make individuals responsible for their own health and, thus, turn citizens' right to healthcare into citizens' duty to be healthy.

Becoming Urban? Seeing Amish Legitimacy Versus Technocapitalism

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Relying upon “ethnographic seeing” of Amish rural landscapes within an ever-urbanising Midwest state in the USA, this article explores questions and positions of Amish legitimacy within wider Ohio economic life. It is also an enquiry into choices that are simultaneously choices of culture-shared values legitimating different patterns of urbanisation of the rural ultimately to serve technocapitalism. In noting the longstanding phenomenon of the rural adapting to the aims of an ever-urbanising wider society, this article explores the limitations and obstacles Ohio’s Amish face from urban expansion and urbanized cultural logics that legitimate, limit or delegitimize their central aim for an off-grid approach to a sustainable agricultural subsistence lifestyle. It also explores how Ohio’s Amish maintain legitimacy and solidarity in the face of an often-hostile neoliberal technoscape. Comparisons to England’s early nineteenth century Luddites are also explored to expand upon the questions ethnographers and philosophical anthropologists ask when interrogating the theoretical assumptions about the nature and legitimacy of technocapitalism’s role and relations in Amish society, including its notable effects upon traditional subsistence farming and associated notions of sustainability, “off-grid” cultural logics and changing notions of socioeconomic relations under observable features of urbanising acculturation.

Keywords: Amish, cultural logics, “ethnographic seeing”, legitimacy, produce auctions.

Introduction

Using an established decade-old produce auction in Pennsylvania as a model, Holmes County Amish founded a wholesale produce auction in 1995 at Mount Hope in Ohio. Three years earlier, an entrepreneur built a produce auction in Geauga County serving the Middlefield Amish community (Blaine et al 1997). During the ensuing two decades, twelve more wholesale produce auctions were established in Ohio. In 2011 more than \$10 million in produce sales was transacted at Mount Hope. Although academic attention is rising on this Amish American social phenomenon, anthropological and sociological attention has been less than robust (Bergeford 2011, Johnson 2014, Jorgensen 2012, Ohio University and Rural Action 2010, Shonkwiler 2014, Tubene and Hanson 2002). This article seeks to explore questions and positions of Amish legitimacy within wider Ohio economic life with a descriptive critical focus and ethnographic investigation on urbanising acculturation of two 21st century wholesale produce auctions.

Based on ethnographic research conducted intermittently from 2004 until recently, this article seeks to shift the analytical focus from legitimacy as a descriptive normative category to legitimacy as a generative social practice. What do Old Order Anabaptists, or OOA, consider to be legitimate? This implies that twin modalities of legitimacy necessitate exploration — economic and social, as well as the relevance of these contexts for legitimacy. Something or someone has legitimate attributes in the eyes of social agents. As generational change in OOA societies unfold to reflect growing acculturation to the hegemony of dominating Anglo-western cultural logics, features of cultural hybridity and changing notions of legitimacy for wholesale produce auctions are recognizable.

Methodology

Informed by my initial participant role in 2003 as a buyer, and by 2005 a grower/seller, seasonal participant observation was employed over the past two decades as “a methodology for human studies” to explore unfolding urbanising acculturation of these wholesale produce auctions

(Jorgensen 1989). One of the founders of this ethnographic methodology suggests that fruitful analysis lies in the reflexive process of clarification of meanings and values informing “the immediate social and cultural contexts in which human life unfolds” (Jorgensen 2020: 11). A critical sociological mindset concerning Old Order Anabaptist (OOA) communities as a cultural subset was generated by my previous British postgraduate training in cultural studies. By reading and comparing reflexive logs and revisiting existing literature, analysis of data became a dialectical process of amassing and sorting data to uncover common themes. Further, subsequent collaboration with the settings’ principal interlocutors around these themes encouraged my eventual aim to clarify forms of cultural hybridity in urbanising acculturation of wholesale produce auctions, some of which are embedded within technocultural artifacts outside of individual awareness and therefore beyond conscious human agency.

Without entering current debates over relations between contemporary assumptions on identity, religion and work, this article seeks to reanimate a classical approach to cultural studies as it explores questions and positions of Amish legitimacy within wider Ohio economic life. From anthropology to history to sociology, the classical theoretical project of cultural studies draws upon a toolkit of interdisciplinary techniques to interrogate the connection between culture and power in contemporary sociocultural milieus and how capitalism manages resistance. In conceptualising urbanising acculturation of OOA produce auctions as a complex sociocultural activity of production, critical analysis is sought in this article by heeding Judith Butler’s call “to situate culture in terms of a systematic understanding of social and economic modes of production” (1998: 34). Reconsideration of Butler’s interest in the context(s) of culture, bounded by general and systematic processes and mutually conditioning structures, seeks to salvage heuristics that continue to illuminate usefully how the fluidity of meaning and symbolism is constrained by technoculture and other cultural dimensions.

The post-modern turn in cultural studies, however, seems instead to have centred on a cultural “circuit” project of consumption practices “as resistance” to the capitalist system of production (Gay et al. 1997: 120). These studies often focus on popular culture and members’ efforts to resist actively neoliberal society through symbolic politics. Hence, the role of classical cultural studies research in highlighting ways in which capitalism works through cultural logics to maintain unequal power structures is under-emphasized in contemporary literature. Further, Johnson noted that wholesale produce auctions have “yet to be critically analysed in existing academic literature” (2014: 2).

As generational change in OOA societies unfold to reflect growing acculturation to dominant cultural logics, Jameson reminds us that technology offers a privileged shorthand for a whole collection of networks of power and control that coexist with the third stage of capital (Shaw 2008: 24). This ethnographic investigation into urbanising acculturation of OOA produce auctions contributes to cultural studies and urban studies by “ethnographic seeing” and analysing under-researched OOA acculturation, cultural hybridity and changing notion of legitimacy through their relations with Anglo-western power and some of its urbanising forms (Krase 2012). Shaw (2008: 21) explains that “people accept the

established reality” and that rather than people changing the system, they change themselves to conform to the reality. This changing diversity of cultural logics among the varied segments of OOA has produced recognizable features of cultural hybridity and urbanising acculturation of wholesale produce auctions.

Cultural Logics and Hybridity

That “choices are simultaneously choices of culture-shared values legitimating different patterns of social practices” are long acknowledged, the concept of cultural logics nevertheless remains a rather muddled concept and therefore requires further explanation (Wildavsky 1987: 5). This article regards urbanising acculturation of OOA wholesale produce auctions as human social action, often collective and interactive, framed by cultural and structural forces that shape, at times coercively, how participants (re)produce culture. In doing so, Fischer (2001: 8) explained that “individuals exercise creativity, but only within certain cultural constraints that are intimately related to the larger processes (often conceived of as ‘structures’, yet themselves inherently dynamic)”.

Drawing upon multiple languages and even linguistic sub-varieties with their accompanying unique cultural logics, members of OOA groups socially construct presentations of self in everyday life. Some of these presentations of self in everyday life are a combination of various cultural pieces cobbled together to facilitate meaning through shared understanding within a given sociocultural milieu. Nonetheless, this notion of cultural hybridity often relies upon a view of cultural codes and conduct as previously pure or non-hybrid. Yet, these too generally represent the outcome of earlier rounds of cultural hybridity (Kollmorgen 1943).

The present research into urbanising acculturation of OOA produce auctions contributes to cultural studies by documenting and analysing under-researched OOA acculturation and their relations with Anglo-western power. Some of the questions driving exploration of this social phenomenon in this article ask how wholesale produce auctions are historically situated in Ohio. What are the purposes and sociocultural influences driving its production? To what extent do cultural dynamics of capitalist commoditisation in urbanising acculturation of OOA wholesale produce auctions function “to echo the logic of capitalism” (Gitlin 1997: 32)?

OOA social agents often cobble presentations of self from a position of marginality while drawing from a metaphorical bag of cultural codes, discourses and symbols to construct coherent discourses. In their efforts to communicate in everyday life, urbanising acculturation of OOA wholesale produce auctions are increasingly echoing commoditisation-centred goals. Further, the rationalisation of corporative cultural logics impacts upon shared meanings and practices in urbanising acculturation of OOA wholesale produce auctions. An understanding of the unfolding sociocultural contexts over time apprehends how “the initially enforced conditions are likely to have become if not the new social norms [...] at least the new social perspective, its everyday common sense” (Williams 1983: 187).

Setting and Topography

Ohio country emerged within the last ten thousand years as a region in the continent of North America after retreating glaciers made it not only habitable to humans but also exceptionally fertile for agriculture. According to Kern and Wilson, “Ohio’s fertile land and bountiful wildlife attracted its first inhabitants thousands of years ago, and they were the primary factor in drawing its earliest U.S. settlers” (2014: 18).

Fast forward 200 years brings this article to the 21st century scene of two OOA wholesale produce auctions located just thirty miles apart in latitude one in Richland County’s Blooming Grove Township and the other in Medina County’s Homer Township. Together they straddle “Ohio’s current ‘continental divide’ — a line that runs across the northern third of the state and marks the boundary between waters that ultimately flow to the Atlantic via Lake Erie and those that end up in the Gulf of Mexico — is a product of glacial action” (Kern and Wilson 2014: 11). These OOA produce auctions are flanked to the north by Ohio’s northeast conurbation of Cleveland less than an hour drive and to the south by Ohio’s central conurbation of Columbus less than an hour and half drive.

When the founding of County Line Produce Auction three miles south of Homerville Produce Auction put Homerville out of business, County Line nonetheless continues a trend of produce auctions straddling Ohio’s “continental divide”. With a sub-tropical climate during the growing season, Blooming Grove Township get 43 inches of rainfall a year, while this decreases in northern Ohio to 38 inches the closer one gets to Lake Erie. Half of this precipitation in Ohio comes during the growing season (Your Weather Service 2021).

Blooming Grove Township

Mennonites are the largest and most complex form of the Anabaptist religion with at least fifty varieties around three main types. These types — old order, conservative, and assimilated — exist along a continuum from ultra-conservative, world-rejecting segregationists to more liberal, world accepting, integrationists (Jorgensen 2012, Scott 1998). Old Order Mennonites (OOM), like the OOA, largely live apart and separate from the larger secular society in mostly rural areas. Their economic activities tend to be largely agricultural but generally involve limited industries along with a few trades and other business enterprises (Kollmorgen 1943). Their standards of dress and community conduct are Biblically informed to resist self-aggrandizement. In addition to speaking American English, OOM speak an informal German dialect as a first language and sometimes a formal German dialect for religious services (Kraybill 2010).

Historically, OOA communities have endured xenophobia. Nurtured during Europe’s Protestant Reformation and attendant wars, OOA thinking about pacifism and the legitimacy of militarism coincided with these social upheavals. In North America, Pennsylvania’s early non-Mennonite European migrant population grew increasingly hostile towards OOA segments befriending indigenous peoples. When their German missionaries were exonerated at trial, Indigenous American converts in Ohio country to the Moravian Brethren’s Christian style of

pacifism nevertheless suffered genocide at Gnadenhutzen, just thirty miles south of the largest concentration of Amish segments in Ohio today. Remarking on this rising xenophobia in adjacent Pennsylvania, Parillo noted that “[b]y 1750 the influx of German immigrants had become so great that Benjamin Franklin became quite disturbed” (1994: 145). Fearing their pacifism and objection to war in all its forms, Franklin particularly opposed the Mennonites, asking:

“Why [should] the Pennsylvanians [...] allow the Palatine Germans to swarm into our settlements, and by herding together to establish their Language and Manners to the exclusion of ours? Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a colony of Aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them?” [Quoted in Smith 1970: 394].

In the 20th century, Ohio increasingly became a favoured destination for oppressed non-indigenous OOA groups. Most of Blooming Grove’s OOM members grew up three miles from Kutztown, Pennsylvania and attended government institutions of compulsory education. After their migration to Ohio during the 1980s, they built schools for their children so they would not have to endure the negative experiences they had encountered during their childhoods filled with compulsory state schooling in Pennsylvania. The complexity of various segments amongst the Shiloh OOM eventually became apparent when I went about my communities in 2004 looking for an OOM school to enrol my daughter. Such a request from a non-Mennonite was a first for them. He was sent to another segment’s school, then to another, and so forth until eventually a “car Mennonite” school was suggested. His daughter did not enrol but he was surprised by the number of various segments, each with their own school.

“English” buyers and sellers distinguished OOM from non-Old Order Mennonites by calling them “car Mennonites”. OOM in Shiloh were easy to differentiate from Amish because Amish grew beards after marriage whereas OOM continued to go beardless. Other OOM segments, such as Stauffer Mennonites in Bainbridge, Ohio, also grow beards and would be difficult to distinguish from Amish.

Except for the replacement of rubber tractor tyres with steel wheels, Shiloh OOM conduct farming with the latest machinery. [Joose] was gob-smacked, for example, I drove [Joose] and his 16-year-old son past an Amish farmer ploughing his field with a single plough drawn by two horses — “[Son], look at this” I said as both fixed our eyes on the sight and stared silently, then slowly shook our heads as I continued driving.

In the 1999 founding of the Blooming Grove Produce Auction, shares were open to “English” initially, then later reserved to Mennonites only. The formation of an auction cooperative is very compatible with Mennonite social values and organisation. Mennonite culture, unlike general Anglo-American culture, encourages cooperation but not individualism (Kraybill and Desportes 2001). Mennonite interdependence provides an observed advantage over the individualism of the larger non-OOA society in organising cooperative endeavours. These structural mechanisms OOM members have devised for the governance of their various institutions seem effective at deescalating interpersonal conflicts. By eschewing a corporate model and developing a cooperative one instead, they also seem able to preclude anyone from

racketeering at the expense of stakeholders. Nonetheless, personable non-OOA auctioneer Bill Baker from Clyde, Ohio was voted out of his position after ten years by an OOA faction within the association, who then promoted one of their own into Baker's vacated seat. Questions arise about authority, its foundations, characteristics and legitimacy.

At Blooming Grove and Homerville, separate tables are established for selling items in small quantities or single lots. On the warehouse floor is a second section for mid-quantities, and a third for bulk quantities. This is supplemented by a seasonal harvest-time double bay section for wagons of bulk produce, either horse or truck-drawn, and an additional auctioneer oversees this. It was difficult for me, as a medium-sized buyer, to run between all four sections to get the best deals. For some non-OOA attendees, the produce auction was a spectacle on the level of a county fair. Regular in their attendance, some attendees never bought or sold anything.

My growing friendship with competent interlocutors, such as [Joose] of the Blooming Grove Mennonite community and [Levi] of the Homerville Amish community, led to their valuable contributions as key informants. Prior to the 2004 planting season, I hired [Joose] and his teen-aged son to help me dismantle one of the steel-framed greenhouses that Endres Roses in New Philadelphia, formerly the largest rose producer in Ohio, were giving away as they were going out of business allegedly due to competition from Mexico. The long drives from Shiloh to New Philadelphia and back again, after a supper of turkey and mashed potatoes at the Dutch restaurant on Ohio Route 30, gave us plenty of time to become close friends. Not only was a relationship of reciprocal interlocutors achieved, but this friendship was also extended into the growing season when I became a wholesale customer for [Joose]'s bell peppers, sweet corn, and later pumpkins. [Joose]'s entrepreneurial awareness was exceptionally keen, allowing him to read the cultural landscape to spy disequilibrium and discover opportunities for trade within it. When I retired from retail farm marketing in 2011, [Joose]'s brother and nephew successfully replaced his vacant spot at Oberlin's Saturday Farmers Market.

Homer Township/Congress Township

The Amish separated from the Mennonites several centuries ago and are often more formally known as Amish Mennonites. Differences between them are complicated greatly by an extraordinary propensity for further divisions resulting in tremendous variation, if not great differences, within each segment. There are four general types of Amish, as well as further variations within each type. For example, former President Bush, Jr. allegedly garnered many votes from Ohio's Amish community for the 2004 elections at a time when Democrats were clueless to the tactic (see Kraybill and Kopko 2007). During my most recent fieldtrip to Holmes County in 2020, I counted thirteen distinct segments of Amish. Most of them reject many modern technologies, although the Amish Mennonites and Beachy Amish use electricity and machines, including tractors and automobiles, while still separating from the larger society and maintaining distinctive dress and customs (Kraybill et al. 2012).

Homerville Amish — a Swartzentruber segment that is shunned by other Swartzentrubers in Ohio — are very different from Blooming Grove's OOM and their

computerized greenhouses, tractors, tractor-drawn farm implements, and electricity. Swartzentrubers do without. The most onerous practice of Swartzentruber Amish, however, is shunning. It should be noted that economic incentives are limiting the deployment of shunning by increasing acts of forgiveness (or cover-ups) of digressions, at least in some cases of Homerville Amish. Fathers are reluctant to let a son-in-law inherit his farm because his own son went astray temporarily after the age of 16. Considerable collusion seeks to cover-up rare incidences of drunken bugging driving, attendance at Tonya Tucker concerts, renting a secular driver's living room for a couple of hours of video pornography on his TV, dealing in illicit drugs, and even buying sex with non-Amish females struggling with rural drug addiction.

While this segment of Swartzentruber Amish did not operate engine driven machines, they sometimes hired such machinery operated by others. Bergeford (2011) described them as white males, 30-49 years of age, who farm as a primary occupation. Almost all of them have less than 12 years of schooling and do not belong to any other farm association; and almost none of them obtain information from the internet. A little more than half report annual farm sales in the range of \$10 to \$50 thousand and a combination of organic and traditional farming practices, but mostly without seeking any organic certification — whether Oregon Tilth or USDA.

Information is acquired mostly from newsletters, newspapers and magazines, as well as regular communication among themselves; and they are aware of and reportedly sometimes use university extension services. The OSU extension agricultural farm in Wooster is very close to the Homerville/County Line Amish. Farming matters of the greatest importance to them include crop nutrition, insect and disease management, soil fertility, and food safety. I observed that Shiloh OOM use the Ohio State University Extension's services but cannot confirm the Amish doing the same.

Homerville Produce Auction was family-owned and operated by Fred Owen, a Welsh American, and his daughter who eventually became auctioneer. It was established before 1999 and thrived until 2013, when a competitor wholesale produce auction named County Line was established three miles south with easier access and modern infrastructure. Homerville Produce Auction is now defunct.

[Levi] of the Homerville Amish community lived outside Homer County in Lorain County's neighbouring Huntington Township. He sold his 38-and-half-acres farm to Eli and Annie Swartzentruber in 2019. His property taxes after deductions averaged \$2,000 yearly. Shonkwiler (2014: 79-80) reported that high property taxes in Pennsylvania were a push factor for some Stauffer Mennonites to migrate to Ohio.

Learning how to engage with Amish outside of telephone and digital technologies was a bit arduous for me. This aim was further complicated when I learnt that Amish do not make friends with non-Amish. Instead, they build acquaintances around work and business aims. Once, I stopped by [Levi]'s farm to inquire about potential roofing services. His wife said he was out while several children's heads began intermittently peering out various windows. It was easier to meet [Levi] during his spotty attendance at the produce auction.

During a labour shortage in Ohio for roofers, I was unable to track down [Levi] to hire his available roofing services. The eventual accumulation of knowledge in Amish-styled communications helped my brother-in-law Mike, co-owner of Reader Roofing and Air Conditioning in Cleveland, to seek out successfully and hire an Amish subcontracting crew who are transported to various jobs in a hired van. This Amish micro-enterprise crew was available for hire because other roofing companies during Ohio's roofer labour shortage did not know how to reach out to Amish roofers whereas roofers among the Mennonite community were long ago hired and unavailable. Amish micro-enterprises remain at a comparable disadvantage to OOM micro-enterprises due to Amish limitations on communications.

Legitimacy and Acculturation

The concept of legitimacy is interwoven with authority, socioeconomic conditions, and with issues of truthfulness and morality. This article began by overviewing the main historical trends for OOA wholesale produce auctions. Following that, some developments in the wider non-OOA society and their impact on OOA culture were queried. Legitimacy seems to be a human-made attribute to the extent that this attribute is confirmed and legitimated by social beings. The making of legitimacy through ethnographic seeing often appears as a process of collective self-confirmation with the intention of making OOA lives meaningful. This constitutes legitimacy-making as do debates over authority and power. Next, OOA wholesale produce auctions are considered in light of these social and cultural trends. Throughout, an attempt is made to demonstrate the historical relationship between the OOA wholesale produce auctions and non-OOA social and economic forces. In an interweaving of cultural and socioeconomic trends of society, the aim of this article is to show how these relationships are manifested in the market behaviours of two specific wholesale produce auctions.

Whose Entrepreneurialism?

This section mentions the demise of the Homerville Produce Auction in Medina County's Homer Township in the face of competition from the 2012 establishment of County Line Produce Auction just three miles south in Wayne County's Congress Township. I am left with the thought that he observed a trade war with a quick and devastating effect for the Welsh American family-owned Homerville Produce Auction (Homerville Ohio 2021). Quickly, the Swartzentruber Amish took their produce to County Line for increased profits due to higher volumes in sales coupled with higher per unit prices. Avoiding the irascible temperament of Fred Owen was also an incentive to switch produce auctions.

The founding of County Line Produce Auction also left an impact on Blooming Grove Produce Auction, just 30 miles west. As participant observer, I once was the successful bidder for a pallet holding a bin of hundreds of yellow summer squash fruits for a total sale of one dollar. The demand for yellow summer squash that week had been saturated by over-supply. Yet, I regret he did not call out ten or twenty dollars before the auctioneer declared "sold". Imagine the labour hours involved in handpicking hundreds of squash fruits and the despair of the labourer(s) to receive later a mere dollar at auction. The concept of "price taking" in

economics applies here where an OOA grower lacked sufficient market power to influence prices and simply had to take the highest bid even if that bid was no more than a dollar.

OOA as Passive Luddites?

A tendency within the academy, especially Science and Technology Studies, is to romanticize OOA agricultural practices, which seeks also at times to revere OOA farmers as passive Luddites. Robins and Webster, for example, argue that technology has a distinct role in isolating people or bringing them together because technology inevitably can change patterns in society and that “Luddism is more relevant than ever” as “a concept we cannot do without” (1999: 58). Further, publicity around “the second Luddite conference in April 1996 in Barnesville, Ohio” served to fuel international romanticisation of OOA communities as “a model” of resistance to the garrison state’s cybernetic imagination (Robins and Webster 1999: 62). Nevertheless, is this perception warranted?

With the rise of the industrial revolution, the requirements of new technology for warfare became very expensive. Feudal protection agencies found it difficult to grow enough food to feed all the people that needed to be fed to accommodate the demands of this new technology. Quickly the Netherlands, followed by England and other European countries, moved to a commodity-based commercial economy where the rulers could tax goods to fund their armies and navies. This move towards mercantilism meant peasants were uprooted and pushed off their land. Suddenly, land was more valuable for mining or for factories than it was for growing food (see Love 1986).

Rooted in the conflicts of the Protestant Reformation, OOA resistance to the Catholic Church was broadened to include the mercantilist technologies and Protestant hierarchy of rising garrison states (Nolt 2015). During the 16th and 17th centuries, OOA communities fled persecution in Germany, Switzerland, and later Russia. Their arrival in North America in the 18th century also brought xenophobic reactions from previous waves of non-OOA migrants.

It is important to the acquisition of a critical eye on the plight of OOA communities generally to review Luddism and Luddites. Contrary to claims made by a mere voting 3% in England that Luddites were “frenzied bigots” — a myth successfully perpetuated by the captains of commercialized civil society, industry, and mass media — “Luddites were not” (Robins and Webster 1999: 47). In 1889 Huddersfield native Albert Tarn explained:

“Sir John Ramsden, owns nearly all the land on which the town is built, and by his legal right, can keep people from building on any portions which are lying vacant, . . . which [is] Artificial Monopoly” (Quoted in Brooke 2010).

In short, Luddism is better understood as a reactionary protest by a disenfranchised majority denied access to law-making bodies perpetuating inequality. The subsequent machinations of a voting 3% to maintain hegemony over the remaining 97% of the English population saw the disenfranchised suffer their laws without the ability to vote against them until 1867. Luddite ideas against monopolies held by propertied elites fuelled four years of earlier Luddite liberation actions in Huddersfield and the surrounding villages of West Yorkshire. By 1815, Luddites were militarily quashed by the British garrison state.

“What the Luddites opposed was not technological and industrial innovation” explain Robins and Webster (1999: 62), but the “logic of techno-mobilisation” that arose to sustain the expanding capital needs of the British garrison state and empire. It is significant to note when contemporary academics and history teachers discuss British Empire prior to 1867, they are talking about the machinations of a mere voting 3%. Accordingly, two decades ago Robins and Webster invited us to reconsider “the early nineteenth-century Luddites precisely in terms of the attempt to sustain barriers to exploitation, in defence of social values”, and opposition to the unjust “technological and industrial articulation of the capital relation” to serve the garrison state (1999: 57).

We might extend Luddite motivations to the passive aims of Ohio’s OOA communities. “For example”, averred Smith et al., “even though non-agricultural entrepreneurial activity no longer means automatic excommunication from the church, Amish leaders do not want entrepreneurs to become too “successful” [...] to minimize the consolidation of power” (1997: 240). Examples of “price taking” help fuel generational change as young adults do not duplicate the produce production of their parents but instead switch to growing hot house flowers or, increasingly, go into the construction trades as working-class micro-enterprise entrepreneurs. In short, legitimation and authentication are ongoing processes. As Olshan and Kraybill noted nearly three decades ago,

“the Amish have become entangled with the larger society [...] [their] occupational shift toward microenterprises has directly tied them into the economic structure of the outside world” (1994: 14).

Wither Sustainability?

One “common perception” that has undergone little change is the non-OOA buying public’s notion that generally OOA farmers grow crops organically (Brock and Barham 2015: 234). As Jorgensen noted in his participant observation of OOM in Missouri, their “small scale agriculture, is an ecologically friendly, varied and sustainable means of” contributing “high quality, healthful foodstuffs to the local economy” (2012: 1). Apart from locally produced food, I found insufficient evidence to establish validity for this belief in Ohio and remains skeptical about this notion. Although a cooperative of Amish organic growers exists in Holmes County, members were reluctant to sell their organic produce at the Mount Hope produce auction (Mt. Hope Ohio 2021) “saturated with conventional produce” (Mariola and McConnell 2013: 147). Only one OOM farmer in southeast Huron County, who supplied organic milk to Organic Valley, was identified as an organic grower. This individual did not bring organic produce to the Blooming Grove auction.

Generally, the non-OOA customer brings her or his own symbolism of a healthy homestead to the wholesale produce auctions. When an individual OOA grower is questioned, however, on his use of chemical pesticides and fungicides, the response is usually vague:

“we try not to use them. But this is true of every non-organic farmer, whether OOA or ‘English’, who tries to expend the least number of chemical pesticides or

fungicides necessary to control pests and disease simply to keep their costs low.”

From my participant observations, “organic” means “bugs”, to which non-OOA consumers seem generally adverse. Those who farm without chemicals are at a comparative disadvantage when selling their produce versus other Amish and Mennonites who use chemical-based methods of farming. Most consumers do not like the smaller size, blemishes, and insect damage of spray-free produce, also known as “number two” produce. Lachance (2004) noted that produce quality and packaging acceptable to the following resellers: independent groceries, roadside produce stands, garden centres, restaurants, and individuals is essential to the success of a wholesale produce auction. Further, Ernst noted that “[s]uccess of auctions near Mennonite and Amish communities is often tied to community commitment to selling high quality produce at volume through the auction” (2020: 2).

In short, the produce auctions in Holmes County, Medina/Wayne Counties, and Richland County mainly sell produce grown with chemicals to control weeds, disease, and pests, and are based upon agriculture that does not support the aims of sustainability as I understand them. My findings concur with Mariola and McConnell that “[c]ontrary to popular perception, the large majority of Amish are not full-time farmers, and those who do farm typically use conventional, chemical-intensive methods” (2013: 144). In addition to product freshness, the primary reason most wholesale consumers bought at the wholesale produce auctions in Ohio was price — OOA “number one” produce sells for much less at their produce auctions than elsewhere. Facilitating this aim is that Homerville’s prices for each week of each month were found on their website and County Line continues to do the same.

The goal of most Blooming Grove Mennonite farmers was to attract contracts by large sellers who either do not have time for the produce auction or do not want to be outbid and left empty-handed. [Joose] landed such a contract for his Paladin variety of bell peppers from Heinen’s — a supermarket chain in the Cleveland area, much to the chagrin of his many buyers at the auction because he subsequently withdrew his number 1s’ from the produce auction, leaving only number 2’s.

The Paladin variety of bell pepper was the only root rot resistant variety available in the first decade of the 21st century. Root rot resistance permitted the growing of bell peppers in black plastic mulched rows irrigated with drip lines. The black colour warmed the soil in late Spring and the polyethylene plastic film dissuaded pests from damaging the plants and kept weeds from vying with the bell peppers for soil nutrients. In order to dig the row’s furrows for each side of the plastic mulch, [Joose] relied upon his welding torch to build a tractor-pulled plastic mulch laying contraption coupled with a disc on each side that graded the furrowed soil level again after the plastic mulch was unrolled. [Joose] tended to the unrolling of the black plastic mulch while [Joose]’s oldest son drove the tractor. It is important to note that the chemical herbicide glyphosate was applied to the field that would become the bell pepper patch to kill the weeds before tilling it. Tilling without killing the weeds first with glyphosate would result in weeds eventually popping up through the holes made later for the transplanting of the bell pepper plants and choking them.

[Levi] borrowed a “neighbour’s” black plastic mulch laying machine, sold in a catalogue produced by a Holmes County Amish business. [Levi] relayed in conversation that he hitched his two horses to pull it instead of a diesel-powered tractor. Notably, his vegetable patch displayed signs of tilling rather than spraying glyphosate for weed control between the rows. Cabbage, lettuce, and onions were observed growing in his rows of black plastic by the end of June.

Although [Levi] echoed [Joose] in alleging that it is practically impossible to prevent extensive worm damage to sweet corn ears without the use of pesticides, I was able to grow a small spray-free patch with much success. Thirty miles north of both wholesale produce auctions, he grew a small patch of spray-free corn in Pittsfield Township by planting *Incredible*, a hybrid variety of yellow sweet corn with exceptional disease resistance. After young ears emerged, he covered the ears with nylon “socks” or “footies” purchased in bulk. Moths were unable to penetrate the nylon socks to lay their eggs, resulting in spray-free sweetcorn without worms.

This pest practice was too labour intensive for large farms, but I could fetch a higher price for his spray-free sweet corn at the Saturday morning Oberlin Farmers Market where consumers ignored competitive chain store prices to buy and support local growers of higher quality fresh fruits and produce. So, it is possible to prevent worm damage to sweet corn if one knows a few tricks. There is also BT sweet corn, which is genetically engineered to release worm-eating bacteria that are harmless to human ingestion. This is what Richard Herr currently grows as I no longer rent his corn patch (Richard claims growing sweet corn, which he sells from a stand at the bottom of his driveway, is much less work than mowing an 8-acre lawn weekly).

Discussion

For today’s OOA families in Ohio, veiled costs come in the form of economic strain. Cultural studies theorists would say the economic order and attendant technology reflect the inequality of society with upper class dominance, which is apt when we consider OOA wholesale produce auctions as a pragmatic adaptation to the influence of corporate capitalism. Culture is not an unfathomable product of the creative human mind to form a series of social relations and traditional beliefs without grounding in natural reality. Rather, human action and the evolution of human society have an inherently material and pragmatic underpinning. Human action is always limited and, in some ways, shaped by the ecology of a society’s physical environment. In short, the wider non-OOA economic order drives acculturation, cultural hybridity and changing forms of legitimacy for OOA communities.

Conclusion

With culture theory’s traditional view that internalized individual beliefs and norms constitute culture, the notion that power and culture are fundamentally linked might seem counterintuitive. Nonetheless, Ohio remains a fascinating example of transformation under the U.S. garrison state and “the totality of the structural footprint [...] upon the cultural logics and agency of individual Americans” (Williams 2021: x). Commoditisation practices and

Anglo-western forms of the newest technology, especially digital, are transforming many OOA and OOM segments by unforeseen and unintended consequences on community members' interactions and changes in sociocultural life.

Whilst human agency has long been acknowledged to include simultaneously “choices of culture-shared values legitimating different patterns of social practices”, the concept of legitimacy nevertheless remains a rather muddled concept and, although not the only way to think about culture, requires further enquiry (Wildavsky 1987: 5; see also Pardo 2000). The dynamics that constitute legitimacy for human agency can generate effects upon morality and trust, and therefore authority, with wide variation in “localisms” (Pardo and Prato 2011: 11). Further, the global oil-based money economy serving the USA's global military-industrial complex, combined with the specialized division of labour to support the neoliberal system of rationality, has led to increasing objectification in global neoliberal culture(s) and a shallowing of individual experiences, subjective meanings, and human values.

This article in its brevity cannot fully pursue the wide breadth of understandings it suggests. Left unexplored, for example, is the push-factor generated tension between OOA agency and the need to fund health care throughout this exploration of urbanising acculturation of OOA wholesale produce auctions (Brock 2016). However, it serves as a reminder that adaptations and relationships occur over time and that the shape of any particular event at any given time is a product of these relationships. Many OOA studies fail to go beyond investigation of the present and its structural-functional relationships. Subsequently, these time-flat studies are incomplete in their historical and cultural appraisals.

Every enterprise and its society have a past. The ethnohistorical approach used in this article was helpful in discovering certain patterns that may not be obtainable from the employment of quantitative methods alone. Cultural and historical appraisals may prove more fruitful. Examples of corporate factory farming practices in the context of OOA wholesale produce auctions promotes a call for more ethnographic and historical work on Ohio's changing OOA economies, especially given the large and growing body of literature on economic anthropology from other regions of North America. Locating the experience of Ohio's OOA in the wider context of fifty-plus Anabaptist produce auctions nationally would help illuminate wider rural development trends resulting from urbanising pressures.

While [Levi] grew little more than a family kitchen garden to concentrate on avoiding the exchange of an hour's labour for wages through micro-enterprise subcontracting, [Joose] remains wary about the future of family farming in the face of cultural and economic changes taking place in Ohio. Yet, the Blooming Grove wholesale produce market has proven itself resilient. Despite precarity, new types of enterprise continue to emerge, such as hot house flower production. It is a form of entrepreneurialism in which OOA members need to read the cultural landscape with awareness to discover opportunities for trade and work within it. OOA communities often have no choice but to adapt to encroaching urbanism(s) “in a world where they regularly encounter their non-Amish neighbors” (Ems 2014: 44). Cultural hybridity and changing notions of legitimacy inevitably result from doing that.

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Comments on the Paper Given at the Seminar

(in alphabetical order)

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Robert Williams' study of the Amish, and other similar groups in America's near-Midwestern state of Ohio was a fascinating example of how different social life looks up close as compared to real and imagined views of minority religious groups. Of course, all generalizations are stereotypes, but some are more distorted than others, and some are also dangerous. Through close attention to the social and economic life of different families and congregations, it becomes possible to see how qualitatively different they are in their interactions with each other and outsiders as well. In doing so, the work points out the potentially glaring limitations of large-scale quantitative research that assumes the validity and reliability of samples. For example, here it was demonstrated that religious groups identified by the same or similar denominations can be very different from each other. In this case it became possible to see how even "Old Order" Amish, Mennonites, and related groups can be contemporized. Relatedly, Williams's study revealed how the adaptation to and adoption of more and less modern technologies significantly changes social and interrelated economic life. The result (permutations if you wish) is the production of a wide variety of individual, family, and group responses that defy simple generalizations. Works like these also make it possible for social scientists to understand not only the power, but also the limitations of grander theories and methods.

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While I completely acknowledge the author's point that (for reasons of length) addressing questions of gender is outside the scope of this paper, I do think this element of Amish legitimacy and cultural hybridity might be an interesting topic for future exploration. My understanding is that there are gendered dimensions to Old Order Mennonite food production and preparation, and I am curious as to how the markets in question reflect this (if at all). How might this factor into the appeal of "authentic" or legitimate Old Order Mennonite forms of food production/preparation? Does that gendered dimension add a particular character to Mennonite or Amish women's performance of entrepreneurship? I was intrigued by the author's reflection that conducting interviews with a female researcher opened up new areas of inquiry (especially given the cultural context of the field) and would be interested to hear more on this topic.

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I found interesting the overall analytical focus on legitimacy and would encourage Williams to bring out more clearly the socially constructed dynamics of legitimacy in relation to specific aspects of his ethnography. In particular, I would like to see more explicitly linked the analysis of legitimacy as a generative social practice to the different generational and cultural approaches to urbanization, to the technological change and the adaptation to the new market dynamics of "technocapitalism" and to the cultural shift that the emerging individual entrepreneurialism among the Amish community might trigger.

I would like to know more on the challenges of doing field research in a (relatively?) "closed" community. Also, what difficulties/obstacles (if any) did he encounter, as a male anthropologist, in interacting with (and interviewing) Amish women? Interestingly, in replying to the questions raised around this gender issue, Williams mentioned that the presence of a female assistant facilitated interaction with women.

The historical comparison with nineteenth-century Luddism is intriguing. However, here Luddism is described as a reaction of a powerless disenfranchised majority to the inequalities perpetuated by capitalist monopolies and their policy-making allies; so, this was more than an opposition to technological innovation. I wonder to what extent the same logic applies to contemporary Amish's take on technological capitalism. It would be relevant to have more information on the Amish's position in contemporary North-American society. Do they exercise the right to vote? Are they denied any civil or political rights? What economic and/or political power do they have, or are able to exercise? Perhaps, the elements of comparison should be made clearer, bearing also in mind the different generational and cultural approaches to technological changes and market (techno)capitalism among contemporary Amish.

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I was very interested to hear about rural Ohio communities' negotiation of change brought about by technology and urbanization. I had no idea about the diversity within the Amish population and would have liked to hear more about the details of the relationship between legitimacy and establishing boundaries with the "English" and related insider-outsider dynamics. The interactions between the Amish and towns and institutions, for example, the town's view of Amish metal-wheeled carts on the roads, Amish's "workarounds" and negotiations of vaccinations and hospitals and so on are fascinating. Perhaps the article will have more such details?

From Rural Outcasts to Urban Cosmopolitans: Spiritual Healers in Seoul

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Given the prominence and continued presence of spiritual healers in Korean society, it is imperative to examine their social status and cultural significance. This article explores the question: Are Korean shamans sophisticated cosmopolitan individuals or persons steeped in archaic superstition, holding beliefs that are irrelevant to the 21st century? First, it delves into the vernacular nature of musok and how this characteristic has facilitated the urbanization and globalization of the practice well into hypermodern contemporary society. Second, it reflects on the impact of these structural shifts on the marginalization of manshin. Next, it discusses the features of *cosmopolitanism* and its relevance to manshin, considering factors such as foreign language abilities, international travel and liminality, often seen as integral components of cosmopolitanism. Although cosmopolitanism of the masculine sort may not align with the experiences of most female practitioners of Korea's vernacular religion, I argue that its characteristics can help elucidate why manshin have successfully adapted to accelerated globalization. I conclude that the cosmopolitan nature of contemporary manshin is deeply rooted in the traditional belief system and practice of musok.

Keywords: Korea, shamanism, cosmopolitans, vernacular religion, globalization.

“Shamanism is one big mambo-jumbo”, “Shamans are people that use naïve believers for their financial gain” and “Shamanism does not fit a rational state of mind”. Such bold assertions have been common responses to my research topic presentation over the past twenty years. Korean shamans who practice possession-trance (*manshin*) have been mostly marginalized female members of Korean society and have also faced religious criticism since the arrival of Christianity on the Korean peninsula in the 18th and 19th centuries (Oak 2010).¹

Many in Korea and abroad view spiritual healers as opportunistic gain seekers, dishonest individuals, or simply mentally disturbed. However, in twenty years of numerous observations, interviews, and personal discussions on their beliefs and practices, I have found that the manshin I know are sincere in their intentions to heal, help people in complex personal conditions and appease the spirits of ancestors and the forces of nature.

Manshin translates to “10,000 spirits”, suggesting that the practitioner venerates and can be possessed by a myriad of supernatural entities, including nature gods, ancestors and famous historical figures. Another term for Korean shamans is *mudang*, signifying mediators between the human and supernatural realms, embodying the entities they commune with. The scholarly term for the broader phenomenon of spiritual healing and divination in Korean culture is *musok*, literally translating to “the practice of mediation”. Within this overarching term are other practitioners, called *sesŭp-mu*, who perform similar ritual performances without possession and are not believed to embody supernatural entities.

The phenomenological perception of manshin's patients and clients that I have encountered in rituals and daily life in Korea has mostly been favourable towards the services provided by these spiritual healers. Nevertheless, this observation is qualitative and based on long-term exploration involving a limited number of research interlocutors. It cannot be construed as an assertion on the scientific efficacy of Korean shamanism.

¹ I use the term South Korea or Korea to refer to the Republic of South Korea. I transliterate Korean words using the McCune-Reischauer system. However, I use shi to allow proper pronunciation.

Given the prominence and continued presence of spiritual healers in Korean society, it is imperative to examine their social status and cultural significance. This article explores the question: Are Korean shamans sophisticated cosmopolitan individuals or persons steeped in archaic superstition, holding beliefs that are irrelevant to the 21st century?

My exploration of this question unfolds as follows. First, I delve into the vernacular nature of musok and how this characteristic has facilitated the urbanization and globalization of the practice well into hypermodern contemporary society. Second, I reflect on the impact of these structural shifts on the marginalization of manshin. Next, I discuss the features of *cosmopolitanism* and its relevance to manshin, considering factors such as foreign language abilities and international travel, often seen as integral components of cosmopolitanism. The case of cosmopolitan manshin challenges the conventional definition of cosmopolitanism as primarily associated with intellectual men of the bourgeois sector (Thompson and Tambyah 1999: 221). While this term often “encodes a polyvalent, dialectical tension between masculinized meanings of travel and feminized meanings of dwelling” (ibid.: 238), manshin fit significant aspects of this concept, even without physically leaving Korea.

Although cosmopolitanism of the masculine sort may not align with the experiences of most female practitioners of Korea’s vernacular religion, I argue that its characteristics can help elucidate why manshin have successfully adapted to accelerated globalization. One reason lies in the open-minded attitude required from a practitioner who navigates between the human world and supernatural cosmologies. I analyse the manshin’s transition between these realms as structurally akin to intercultural experiences. Their daily traversal between different worlds creates the liminal condition of manshin, which has historically led to their marginalization in pre-modern and early-modern times, but has also facilitated their rapid incorporation of international travel and outreach to a global clientele. Thus, I conclude that the cosmopolitan nature of contemporary manshin is deeply rooted in the traditional belief system and practice of musok.

Vernacular Religion, Urbanization and the Globalization of *Musok*

Musok (Korean shamanism) is a vernacular religion transmitted orally, featuring diverse pantheons and individualized ritual styles that stem from traditional regional variations but are adapted in each case to fit the client’s needs, their personal deities and the pantheon of the manshin’s that will be addressed during the possession trances. In contrast, Cosmopolitanism has often been used to discuss religions that have been institutionalized, canonized and then transmitted globally through premodern cultural flows. In the West, this mostly applies to Christianity and its migration from the Mediterranean to much of the world. In East Asia, Buddhism brought its belief system along with its arts, texts, and practices from India to China and then to Korea and Japan (Baker 1994).

Vernacular religions in Korea and elsewhere have maintained their local uniqueness in terms of pantheons, belief systems, practices and ritual objects — even into the 21st century. Similar to other cases where hypermodernity and the internet have become integral to vernacular traditional expressiveness, here too “folklore is empowered by its diversity” (Blank 2009: 7). As lived religions are unofficial local traditions (Primiano 1995), we must be cautious

when examining the cultural and societal conditions that have enabled the vernacular traditions of musok to travel globally in real and virtual worlds. An important part of the contemporary mudang's aspirations is to become part of the Korean government system of heritage preservation, which entails broad coverage by local and international media, as well as public staged performances of shamanic rituals (known as *kut* in Korean). This system typically evaluates the relative authenticity of *kut* in relation to previously documented ones.

Evaluating contemporary rituals by comparing them with historic *kut* poses several challenges. In the past, the absence of filming devices produced mainly transcriptions of ritual songs, with little attention given to other performative aspects. When comparing contemporary rituals to historical ones, the transmission of tradition is perceived as an intergenerational imitation, overlooking the agency and creativity of the manshin in adapting traditional texts to specific contexts and altering ritual form and meaning according to their personal preferences. Furthermore, events that precede and follow the actual ritual, such as altar construction, were not extensively studied in early modernity.

However, in contemporary South Korea, many public *kut* rituals are sponsored under the Cultural Heritage Protection Act. This entails that a scholar writes a detailed recommendation for the specific manshin group to be designated as the preservers of the sponsored ritual. Such a recommendation is granted only when the ritual is deemed to possess significant historical, artistic, or academic value based on analytic categories formulated by scholars, rather than by performers and patrons who would emphasize the efficacy based on religious belief.

Designating *kut* ritual as an Important Intangible Cultural Heritage encapsulates a paradox as the desire to preserve rituals to connect the present with pre-modern Korean culture necessitates detaching the performance from its religious intent. Nevertheless, the designated practitioners continue to conduct their religious rituals in less public settings. Once designated within the program, the manshin typically becomes more renowned and attracts new clientele for her private spiritual healing and counselling services. This is but one of the complexities brought about by urbanization and modernization.

An accepted estimate for contemporary Korean Shamans exceeds 300,000, as indicated by the number of registered practitioners in one of their largest professional organizations, the Kyungsin Federation (Chyung 2017). The practitioners discussed in this article are often referred to as Northern-style shamans, charismatic shamans, or in Korean *shin-naerim mudang* (god descendent shamans). They regularly practice possession trance while conducting rituals that encompass learned traditions of material arts, song and dance. These rituals typically involve well-known possessing entities and are often performed in lengthy events held in the foothills outside cities due to the noisy nature of the rituals, which cannot be accommodated in densely populated areas.

To comprehend the complexity of vernacular religious practices undergoing urbanization processes, it is crucial to take into serious consideration the perspectives of musok practitioners. These reflections often revolve around ritual efficacy, a concept that may not necessarily align with the common scholarly distinctions regarding traditions, heritage preservation and the artistic value of the rituals.

Through such inductive research, we can observe how individual religious creativity has enabled vernacular concepts and practices to spread throughout the Korean peninsula and beyond its borders. Recent changes in Korea, such as the hypermodern environment of the global spiritual market, have led to the emergence of cosmopolitan Korean shamans, who cater to foreign clientele and adapt their rituals to meet new aspirations.

In the 21st century, several Europeans and Americans have been initiated as mudang. This exemplifies the globalization of musok practices, with several well-known manshin traveling around the world performing at folklore festivals, museums and universities. One such prominent figure was Kim Kūm-hwa, who passed away several years ago and was probably the most extensively traveled manshin in the 1990s and early 2000s, after being designated as an intangible national heritage holder in 1985. Despite not speaking foreign languages, Kim displayed a keen interest in other cultures and people raised within different value systems. During her international performances, she interacted with the local audiences through an interpreter and eagerly participated in documentary film productions, embodying the concept of an open-minded world traveler, a cosmopolitan.

Andrea Kalff is the first among several non-Koreans initiated as manshin by Kim Kūm-hwa (Photo 1). As a European apprentice and initiate, Andrea has been serving European clients, some of whom were also initiated. Kim, her spiritual mother, visited her multiple times in Germany and Hawaii, where Andrea resided. During these visits, Kim and her team conducted lengthy rituals for Andrea's clients. At other times, Andrea and her Western clients travelled to Korea for pilgrimage and extensive rituals.



Photo 1. Andrea Kalff Guided by Shaman Kim Kum-hwa During Her Initiation Naerim Gut Ritual in 2006. This picture was used in the movie "Andrea Sky-and Manshin-Ten Thousand Spirit" and is published with authorization from Andrea Kalff.

Among the manshin practicing outside Korea there are also Korean migrants to Europe, Asia and the Americas who were initiated before moving abroad and continue their practice in their new locations. One notable Korean shaman working in Germany is Park Hiah (Pak Hŭi-a), also initiated by Kim Kŭm-hwa. Park's webpage, *Global Shamanic Healing Arts*, provides information in English and German about her performances and workshops in Europe. Notably, there is no information in Korean since she has resided in Europe for over two decades and targets an international audience. Park incorporates Western elements, such as modern dance, in her performances. Her online self-introduction resonates with New Age terminology and practices like yoga and Buddhist meditation, as she asserts,

“My humble aim as a woman and a shaman is to move culture forward by the exercise of spiritual intelligence and the creative process. I believe that art and spiritual endeavors that are founded on ecstatic experience can contribute to our understanding of life.... The shaman helps participants to connect with their own sense of freedom, so we can be able to generate sufficient energy to overcome our obstructions. Fear is transformed into plentiful universal love, and suddenly, life is about more than suffering; it is also about experiencing rapture” (Park 2024).

Park also identifies herself as “a global shaman”, illustrating how the recontextualizing of musok within a cross-cultural spiritual framework has made this vernacular practice more accessible through internet platforms. Despite this, it is important to note that in the manshin's narrative, the choice of this spiritual vocation is explained as a demand from spirits and gods; rather than a conscious identity project pursued through middle-class consumerism, as in Thompson and Tambyah's exploration of expatriate men's cosmopolitanism (1999: 238).

Manshin recount how, at some point in their lives, spirits appeared in dreams, causing them to fall ill with *shinbyŏng* (spirit-inflicted sickness). They only recovered after accepting their role as eternal venerators of those entities (see Sarfati 2020). Thus, the application of the term *cosmopolitanism* to musok practitioners does not rely on the interlocutors' self-definition; rather, it is utilized as an analytical tool that proves useful in understanding the thriving of such spiritual practices in a hyper-technologized contemporary urban society.

Manshin, whether they have experienced geographic relocation or remained within Korea can be considered cosmopolitans, even when they explain that their geographical and spiritual travels and intercultural encounters were imposed on them by a supernatural calling to which they could not object. Moreover, unlike the expatriate men interviewed by Thompson and Tambyah (1999: 239) who were “trying to be cosmopolitan”, the manshin that I encounter become such because of the nature of their creed.

The emergence of non-Koreans being initiated as manshin is part of this process. The manshin who initiate foreigners claim that the spirits have demanded them to do it. This innovation has attracted attention within communities of practitioners. While the practice of *musok* was legitimized as an important national heritage by the South Korean government, practitioners continue to be initiated through individualized apprenticeship, allowing each

manshin to choose whom to initiate and how to conduct the apprenticeship. However, scholars who oversee the designation process never consider non-Korean manshin for national recognition.

Thus, the local government system only influences certain aspects of the lived musok tradition, while the vernacular nature of the practice, free of official constraints, continues to prevail. When clients consult with manshin about sickness involving unexpected behaviours like fleeing to the mountains, bodily pains and self-seclusion, they sometimes learn that these are signs of a shamanic calling, with the spirits urging them to become possessed at will and initiated. Since these spirits are predominantly Korean, it may not be straightforward to transport this practice to a non-Korean context.

The common practice of traveling to Korea with clients for lengthy rituals that international initiates do not master has recently been replaced by simultaneous online rituals. With the increased usage of digital communication and the global pandemic of 2020-2 that prevented easy international travel, screen-mediated rituals have often substituted on-site visits to musok shrines in Korea for both local and international venerators.

Non-Korea musok practitioners indicate that tradition is ever-changing. Foreign practitioners are interested in the efficacious aspects of the tradition rather than its traditional value, making the practice more global than national. They are less concerned with the “original form” of the ritual, which is of interest to Korean scholars and heritage designation officials. Rituals and performances lacking historical antecedents have often been labelled *invented tradition*, *folklorism*, or *fakelore* (Sarfati 2021: 27).

This is also how most Western manshin are perceived by many Koreans, including scholars, shamans and clients. These labels suggest that some traditions are genuine and properly performed, while others are considered fake or contemporary inventions that have little value. While terms such as *authentic shamanic rituals* have been used by many musok scholars, they must be approached with caution. For Andrea Kalff and other non-Korean manshin, their designation by the famous and acknowledged Korean manshin attests to the manner in which Korean senior practitioners viewed their spiritual capabilities.

In light of the developments outlined in the musok tradition, we may pose the question: Does mudang participation in the global spiritual market imply that they are no longer regarded as social outcasts in Korea?

Are Manshin Still Social Outcasts?

The enduring history of manshin being social outcasts has been attributed to the central role of other belief systems, including Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity, which have dominated Korea’s culture. Buddhists have not directly criticized manshin for their work and have permitted them to worship Sanshin (the mountain god) in small shrines within Buddhist monasteries. However, the male-dominated Buddhist establishment has regarded it as a female practice coexisting with the more sophisticated Buddhist doctrine. Confucian perspectives, which valued female subordination, were biased against manshin, who freely expressed their

ideas while possessed and did not hesitate to vocally criticize male clients. During the Chosŏn era (1392-1910), when Confucianism became the dominant doctrine of the elites, persecutions were directed at musok practitioners, as they appeared very disruptive in their spontaneity, lack of concrete ritual rules and female dominance in powerful positions. Several major attempts to eradicate musok resulted in the prohibition of practice within the cities (Walraven 1998: 56-7), the burning and destruction of many shrines and the prosecution of manshin (Howard 1998: 13 note 6). These efforts continued with the introduction of the Christian faith in the 18th and 19th centuries, as the polytheistic nature of musok was deemed unacceptable.

Furthermore, in the early 20th century, the Japanese colonizers' efforts to modernize Korea and assimilate Koreans into Japanese culture were accompanied by a derogatory discourse about local traditions such as musok (Kim 2013, Hwang 2012). In response, postcolonial discourse in Korea has portrayed musok as symbolizing the "true spirit" of Korea, a view also adopted by the Minjung Movement which sought to democratize Korea in the 1980s. "Traditional peasant dress, farmers' dances and shamanic rituals have been appropriated into the minjung movement as signifiers of cultural identity[...] an identity threatened with extinction by the corrosive action of modern capitalism" (Robinson 1993: 184).

The gradual change in attitude toward musok has accelerated with the rapid cultural changes characterizing the hypermodern urban conditions of 21st-century Seoul. Manshin have increasingly reclaimed personal agency in constructing their public image through activity in the digital sphere (Sarfati 2021: chapter 4). Their self-promotion has been evident in mainstream media such as television and film, as well as in individualized platforms such as social networks, YouTube channels and Instagram.

One significant indicator of the change in the social status of manshin in Korea is their increased usage of the title *mudang* instead of *manshin* or *posal*. Since the 1970s, scholars who wished to respect their spiritual-healer interlocutors have chosen to use the term *manshin*, instead of the more commonly used *mudang*. Laurel Kendall explained this in her seminal book from 1985 as follows, "Since the term [*mudang*] is not only imprecise but also derogatory, I refer to *mudang* only when citing sources.... I prefer the more polite and localized title *manshin* (pronounced man-shin), the term I used to address the shamans I know" (Kendall 1985: xi). In my initial ethnography, I followed suit and used *manshin* or sometimes *posal* to address my interlocutors. *Posal* (in Sanskrit- bodhisattva) is derived from Buddhist terminology, referring to a person who has undergone a process of spiritual awakening and chosen to continue helping people ease their sufferings instead of retiring into nirvana. Many manshin use this title as their suffix, demonstrating how they perceive their psychotherapeutic social role as professional spiritual mediators.

However, in recent years I have observed that many manshin are adopting the term *mudang* for themselves and even addressing their peers in performance teams with it. This reflects profound changes in social and cultural perceptions of them. Being a *mudang* is no longer considered a disreputable profession, a shift also depicted in popular television dramas, like the successful *Café Minamdang* (2022, directed by Ko Chae-hyŏn). In this series,

distributed globally by Netflix, a handsome young detective operates an office where he divines the future and solves crimes. His clients believe him to be a *mudang*, yet this does not deter them from admiring him, falling in love with him and behaving like fans of a celebrity. This increased social acceptance can be viewed as the mainstreaming of *musok* culture and *mudang* rituals. Moreover, the practitioners who have become media-savvy have utilized various platforms to gain fame and influence. They no longer consider themselves victims of the system, nor do their clients view them with pity.

Thus, the answer to the question posed above, “Are *manshin* still social outcasts?” is not a simple yes or no. We observe a gradual acceptance of *manshin* as cultural assets and artists, evidenced by government acknowledgment, financial sponsorship and increased representation in mainstream media. However, if we asked whether they wished their offspring to become *manshin*, most Koreans would likely answer no. This preference does not stem from the demanding lifestyle of *manshin*, as professionals in various fields also work many hours with limited leisure time. Rather, *manshin* are still perceived as deviant members of society, despite no longer being banned from living in cities and towns as they once were. The process of reducing the stigma surrounding these spiritual healers remains incomplete, but appreciation for their capabilities has risen compared to the disdain and derogatory discourse they faced in pre-modern Korea.

The marginalization of *manshin* in Korean society did not necessarily equate to ignorance, especially compared to other members of their communities in pre-modern Korea. As typically illiterate rural women, *manshin* had to develop exceptionally strong memories to learn and recite the long and complex *muga* texts sung and recited during *kut* rituals. Mastery of these texts was expected after an apprenticeship of oral traditions. This skill has been appreciated, particularly following compressed modernization and urbanization, as a crucial means of preserving vernacular myths and cosmologies, which were later written down. Additionally, the *manshin* were expected to perform dances, play musical instruments and craft altar decorations, outfits of supernatural entities embodied during the possession feats and offerings. This interdisciplinary artistry made *manshin* more sophisticated and adept in intellectually demanding tasks than many other women of their time and economic status.

Nevertheless, these pre-modern practitioners can hardly be described as cosmopolitan in the conventional sense of world knowledge and travel. The pre-modern *manshin* rarely ventured far from their homes, were typically unable to speak, read, or write Chinese, the cosmopolitan language of their area and likely remained uninformed about world events and news. Their cosmopolitanism lay in their understanding that their daily lives constituted only a small part of the universe, which included extensive realms of the supernatural. While *manshin* may not have been worldly travellers, they have long perceived the world as far more intricate than their immediate local sphere. They may have not conversed with people from other cultures, but they believed they communicated with various kinds of entities, understanding their language. Whether this constitutes cosmopolitanism is a matter of definition. Does

cosmopolitanism necessitate interaction with humans from other cultures? Must a cosmopolitan be fluent in a foreign human language?

Cosmopolitanism and the Question of Foreign Language Mastery

One of the most remarkable aspects Andrea Kalff's initiation process in 2006 was that she was not required to learn Korean. For Kim Kūm-hwa, the spiritual healing abilities she detected in Andrea were sufficient to consider her a manshin. Andrea recounts her journey into Korean shamanism, recalling how she was invited to speak privately with Kim after attending a folk music festival in Germany where the Korean team performed. Initially knowing little about Korean culture and attending primarily to support a friend performing Mongolian throat singing, Andrea was taken aback when Kim, through an interpreter, informed her that she was severely ill and needed to be initiated into shamanism. Andrea found the encounter strange and disregarded it. However, a few months later, she received devastating news from her family physician: she had a severe cancer diagnosis. After much deliberation and a surgery, she made the decision to travel to Korea and became the first European to be initiated as a Korean shaman.

Equally remarkable is Andrea's unwavering trust in Kim and her apprentices throughout their years of collaboration, despite relying on mediated translations for communication. She reflected on this challenge in a Facebook wall on August 26, 2023,

“In lands unknown, where words are strange, I journeyed far, a world to change. A foreign realm, a distant shore, where language barriers stood before. I battled of heavy illness, a relentless fight, seeking a cure, a glimmer of light. With weary steps, I left behind - the life I knew, the ties that bind. No words to bridge the cultural gap. No familiar phrases in my verbal map - yet trust became my guiding light - a beacon through both day and night. In lands where tongues danced unfamiliar, I let my heart be the steadfast pillar. Belief in self, in destiny's plan, I stepped forth as an intrepid clan. Courage surged from deep within. A fire fueled by the spirit's din - for like a mudang, I followed the call - a sacred whisper that enthralled [me]. In the shadows of uncertainty, I embraced my role with fervent glee - a mudang, soulful and strong & singing the ancient healing song.”

Andrea's narrative also reflects on her experiences as a new initiate in Korea, where many people sought her blessings and divinations despite the language barrier requiring a German interpreter. In Korea, manshin who have recently been healed by the spirits are regarded as having the closest connection to supernatural healing powers. Andrea's story serves as an example of a healing narrative: after her initiation, her cancer went into remission, she bore two more daughters and has since healed many clients. In a subsequent Facebook post, she navigates the complexities of being a European, non-Korean in ethnicity and language abilities and the need to trust her hosts' good intentions,

“Though I stumbled over syllables new - my intentions pure, my heart rang true. With rituals woven from threads of trust, I connected souls, bridging the gust.

Through eyes that spoke, and touch that healed. The language of souls, we both revealed, In a foreign land, I found my place, Guided by trust, love's gentle grace. Healing winds carried hope across the sky, as I dared to spread my wings and fly. From distant homelands, I took a chance - Trusting in fate's intricate dance. So let the winds of courage lift, as in foreign lands, spirits sift. For a mudang's heart knows no confines, when trust and belief intertwine. In sickness and health, I found my way, In foreign soil, where I chose to stay for a while. With trust as my compass, a heart full of grace, I healed and blossomed.”

For Andrea, the core of her commitment to becoming a mudang lay in her desire to heal herself from cancer. After successfully overcoming her illness, she remained committed to becoming a mudang, a commitment she has upheld for almost twenty years now, even after Kim's passing. Kim never required her to recite the lengthy mythical texts performed during rituals. Instead, they annually convened to conduct extensive rituals for Andrea's clients, either in Kim's shrine in Korea or Andrea's home shrine. These rituals necessitated extensive international travel, language interpretation and funding. The ritual tradition, encompassing artistic performances with music, song, dance and the use of various artifacts, proved portable when practiced at Andrea's shrine in a Bavarian German village. Kim took pride in Andrea's accomplishments, featuring her prominently in several documentaries, including the renowned 2014 film *Mansin: Ten Thousand Spirits* (directed by Pak Ch'an-gyŏng).

The language barrier also affects Korean mudang who cater to foreign clientele. As Korea urbanized and globalized, foreign residents of Seoul began seeking the help of manshin. For many in the Korean diaspora, including descendants of migrants and adoptees raised without a cultural connection to Korea, Korean is a second or foreign language. Nonetheless, many have begun exploring their cultural roots and developed an interest in musok. Consequently, manshin working with them have encountered also new entities, such as the ancestors of clients of foreign origins.

In the summer of 2022, I discussed this phenomenon with Yi Hae-gyŏng, a senior initiate of Kim Kŭm-hwa still practicing in Korea. She works with foreign clients and travels abroad for performances at festivals, conferences and museums. During my visit to her country shrine in the mountain range north of Ch'unch'ŏn for a three-day ritual, a group of photographers and scholars arrived on the first evening to participate in the nighttime ascent to the stone shrine above the house. The opening rite was performed there, and the team stayed over for the first part of the morning performance. Among the group was an American whose grandfather was a famous Korean scholar and politician. He asked many detailed questions about the essence of the event, facilitated thorough interpretation from me and one of the apprentices proficient in English. My experience with Korean participants in kut rituals suggests that they rarely pose such detailed questions about possession, the involved entities and ritual efficacy.

Yi was unfazed by these questions, having been interviewed numerous times in both Korean and foreign media and collaborating with several filmmakers and photographers,

including featuring as the main protagonist in one of the most details ethnographic films about musok, *Sai-esõ* (2006, directed by Yi Ch'ang-jae). I asked her about her approach to foreign ancestors who might manifest during rituals with foreign participants present. She explained that she can communicate with spirits who do not speak Korean. While drafting a chart of gods and spirits, including those of Korean and Japanese origins and Jesus Christ, she remarked,

“Language is no barrier to communicating with ancestors and gods. I understand their message and tell it to the audience. I do not need to say things in words for the spirits to understand, nor do they need to speak in my language.... It is the same as when a Christian worshipper prays in his language to Jesus, and Jesus can hear and understand even though he never spoke that particular language while he was alive.”

Thus Korean manshin who do not speak foreign languages can interact with foreign supernatural entities and expand their pantheon globally.

Could Spiritual Travel Within Supernatural Cosmology Be Considered Cosmopolitanism?

For manshin, their interactions with people constitute only a small portion of their daily communications. They are much busier engaging with emotional and practical matters with the spirits and the gods of nature. While this type of communication may not necessarily entail knowledge of the planet's actual geography and its diverse cultures, as we would expect from modern cosmopolitans, it still offers a broad perspective on human existence, communication modes and beings beyond local knowledge.

The way manshin explain their cosmology and navigation within it resembles international travel. Each realm of existence, such as the world of the dead, comes with expected behaviours and speech. When seeking to placate an angry spirit, specific words and material offerings are required. Structurally, this parallels negotiating with foreign cultures, which requires a cosmopolitan capacity, described by Ulf Hannerz as characterized by an organization of diversity rather than a replication of uniformity (1990: 237). While for Hannerz this trait is typically associated with modernity, for the manshin it is a fundamental aspect of the cosmos. While rural Koreans in pre-modernity were confined to a limited geography and a mostly uniform culture and language, manshin conducted spiritual travels to other realms. They were not what Hannerz calls locals, who lived “purely within the structure of the locality” (ibid.).

Therefore, I contend that Korean shamanic culture contains a core that aligns with the definition of “cosmopolitanism as a perspective, a state of mind, or- to take a more processual view- a mode of managing meaning” (ibid: 238). If cosmopolitans are “those who move about the world” (ibid.), and the world encompasses both the physical and spiritual realms, then manshin are inherently cosmopolitans. This is especially true because the cosmology of musok is not a fixed, unified set of ideas. Instead, each individual's pantheon is customized and shaped by their spiritual travels and negotiations with the supernatural.

If a manshin venerates a certain guardian spirit, her daily practices differ significantly from a colleague who venerates a different guardian spirit. The vernacular nature of musok fosters diverse cosmologies and practices, unlike most monotheistic religions. Monotheistic

practices can traverse geographical distances while maintaining adherence to their original tenets, but manshin explore the spiritual world with an open-minded approach, encountering and negotiating with new entities in each ritual. Hannerz explains that not everyone who travels in the world is cosmopolitan. For the monotheistic missionary, maintaining the original faith and practice vigorously while encountering new religions is the primary goal and a source of personal agency. My observation here is that the monotheistic missionary is not necessarily cosmopolitan, whereas the manshin can be. This is not a value judgment, as being a cosmopolitan is not necessarily a virtue; instead, it might suggest that a pre-modern Korean spiritual healer who lived within her local community is closer to cosmopolitanism than a European catholic missionary of the same period who crossed an ocean.

Changing one's venerated pantheon is common for manshin, as they travel to the supernatural realm, encountering various entities, and incorporating them into their altars, prayers and rituals. This characteristic does not pose a theological dilemma because the musok pantheon is characterized by parallelism, where the venerated entities do not necessarily adhere to a clear hierarchy of significance (Kwōn 2023). In light of the intricate and close interactions that manshin have with other realms of existence, their work can be viewed as cosmopolitan in the sense explained by Hannerz,

“The perspective of the cosmopolitan must entail relationships to a plurality of cultures understood as distinctive entities.... Furthermore, cosmopolitanism in the strict sense includes a stance toward diversity itself, toward the coexistence of cultures in the individual experience. A more genuine cosmopolitanism is first of all an orientation, a willingness to engage with the other. It is an openness toward divergent cultural experiences, as a search for contrasts rather than uniformity” (1990: 239).

If we set aside the unanswered question about the existence of the spiritual realm and its inhabitants and closely examine how manshin discuss and relate to it phenomenologically, then their lives exhibit cosmopolitan characteristics. They embody “the cosmopolitan ideals of nomadic mobility and cultural adaptability” (Thompson and Tambyah 1999: 214). Manshin's openness to exploring and engaging with diversity is evident in their material culture, which increasingly includes imported goods (Kendall 2008). Moreover, musok performance teams have embraced gender fluidity, despite the general disapproval of cross-gender behaviours in Korea's traditionalist society (Sarfati 2020). While reflecting on musok's inherent cosmopolitanism, I will now analyse another aspect of the *cosmopolitan* concept, the individual's liminal status.

The Liminal Position of Manshin

Liminality is one of the features of cosmopolitanism. Individuals who can adeptly negotiate between multiple cultures and lifestyles often find themselves in a state of being “betwixt and between”, experiencing a profound shift in behaviour and perception during intercultural transitions. Many of the manshin I interviewed described feeling a sense of displacement. They

often recounted strange dreams and visions since their childhood, realizing early on that they were somehow different from those around them. For many, the first time they felt understood and at home was when they began working with a musuk performance team.

The cosmopolitan's awareness that certain accepted "truths" vary significantly across cultures creates a sense of distance, akin to the experiences of manshin encountering ineffable spiritual incidences. Liminality also characterizes the lives of migrants, particularly within the spiritual dimensions of Korean diasporic communities. Migrants frequently harbour strong nostalgia and yearning for their native land and its traditions (Prato 2016). This sentiment may lead Korean diaspora members to seek out Korean spirituality in their new environments. Conversely, locals in their new residences may perceive them as potential innovators in spiritual practices, fostering mutually beneficial relationships that can shape new value systems (Prato 2009).

Korea's diaspora communities, estimated to encompass over 10% of the global ethnic Korean population, have emerged due to modernization in the late 19th century and increased international mobility in the 20th century (MOFA 2021). Many have sought better education opportunities and engaged in international commerce. The three largest Korean diasporas are located in the United States, China and Japan (Abelmann and Lie 1997, Lee and Kim 2020, Ryang 1997). Smaller communities have been documented in Brazil, Russia and Europe. Among these migrants are manshin and their services are sought after by fellow migrants. Consequently, Korean manshin reside and work in diasporic communities, where cosmopolitanism is an integral aspect of daily life and identity, embodying a dual liminal state as migrants and spiritual mediators.

One Korean-American manshin, known online as *Mudang Jenn*, serves a diverse clientele that includes many non-Koreans. She performs shamanic songs and myths during rituals, having acquired mastery of shamanic crafts through traditional apprenticeship held in the United States. Her spiritual mother is an elderly Korean manshin residing in New York, and together they frequently journey to Korea to conduct rituals on sacred mountains and procure goods from specialty shamanic stores for their work in the United States. Fluent in Korean and well-versed in Korean customs, Jenn's liminal status is evident, as she navigates between Korean and American identities.

In the summer of 2022, I visited a Korean scholar of shamanism along with Jenn during my research in Seoul. Throughout our visit, discussions revolved around the phenomenon of non-Koreans being initiated into musok. While Jenn's initiation was deemed acceptable by the Korean scholar, American and European initiates were perceived as lower in the hierarchy of heritage maintenance. Korean practitioners trained in traditional methods were regarded as the most authentic manshin, while diasporic and non-Korean practitioners were viewed with varying degrees of skepticism and described at best as "fusion manshin", or "global shamans".

This emphasis on authenticity is significant in the daily practices and ritual choices of Korean manshin in Korea but is often absent among diasporic and foreign practitioners. Excluded from the governmental effort to preserve the tradition as heritage, non-Korean

manshin exercise greater interpretative freedom, adapting the esoteric practice to align with their religious inclinations, cultural interpretations and practical needs of their clients. These considerations are emphasized by another Facebook post by Andrea Kalff from August 24, 2023,

“In the realm of the spirit, I am a guardian of ancient wisdom and a weaver of souls. Like the wind that moves through the trees, I move between worlds, carrying the hopes and dreams of those who seek solace. In the tapestry of life, I am a mudang, a shaman of the heart, dedicating my existence to nurturing others and beseeching blessings upon them. My path is one of selfless devotion, where the echo of my prayers resonates through the universe, even as my bones grow weary and my body tired. Yet, recognition is not what I seek, for I understand the silent dance of giving and receiving that underlies all existence. I stand at the crossroads of human pain and divine healing, channeling the energies that mend the broken and uplift the weary.”

Andrea is aware that some of her Korean counterparts may not comprehend how she practices musok without the language and cultural understanding of Korea. However, her clients in Europe and the United States often perceive her as a mystic figure in their lives. In 2021, she collaborated with Austrian psychiatrists to explore whether shamanic healing could benefit individuals with persistent mental issues resistant to biomedical and psychiatric treatments. Together with psychiatrist Iris Zachenhofer they co-authored a book in 2022 detailing their experiences. This interdisciplinary approach bridging bio-medicine and spiritual healing is groundbreaking and has not been undertaken in Korea. Korean manshin primarily collaborate with ethnographers and folklorists and are less inclined toward experimentation with medical professionals. This demonstrates the innovative potential inherent in the cross-cultural exchange of esoteric knowledge, and the multiple liminality of Non-Korean mudang.

Conclusion

Spiritual healers within Korean shamanic traditions are individuals of sophistication, capable of communicating with a diverse array of human clients and supernatural entities. Their belief system necessitates the exploration of unfamiliar experiences in spiritual realms, where they are expected to engage in behaviours uncommon in the daily lives of most Koreans. This open-minded approach imbues them with a certain cosmopolitanism. Over the past 50 years, international travel has become commonplace for renowned manshin, who are often invited to perform in world festivals and academic gatherings. Their artistry has elevated them to esteemed preservers of heritage. Others have found success serving foreign clients both in Korea and abroad. These developments signify the cosmopolitanization of musok.

In the last two decades, Korean shamanic diagnosis and esoteric practices have embraced non-Koreans as part of the global spiritual market. Some European manshin blend shamanic practices from various sources into a unique amalgamation. Screen-mediated rituals are increasingly utilized within Korea and between Korea and other locations where manshin

practice. However, this shift in ritual settings does not necessarily indicate an epistemic transformation. The non-Korean practitioners interviewed for this ethnography upheld the established cosmological understanding of musok and felt deeply connected to the Korean shamanic tradition. They crafted a hybrid form of musok, incorporating a portable version of the ritual involving shorter consultation meetings along with longer traditional rituals conducted either in Korea or with Korean manshin who travel to Europe and the United States for this purpose. This adaptation represents a vital aspect of this living tradition, demonstrating its relevance to urban populations in 21st-century Korea and beyond. While not all mudang are cosmopolitans, an increasing number have embraced cosmopolitanism.

The cosmopolitanization of musok commenced with spatial mobility within the Korean peninsula. The migration from rural to urban areas during rapid urbanization in the 20th century expanded ritual opportunities and the vernacular nature of this tradition facilitated swift adaptation to new environments and contexts. This facilitated active engagement in processes of globalization, wherein the vernacular evolved into the cosmopolitan.

Ideological cosmopolitanization of musok entailed syncretism with New Age concepts, made feasible by the parallelistic polytheism inherent in this tradition. Manshin are sophisticated members of society, adept at navigating diverse ideologies, beliefs, languages and concepts. They often exhibit greater acceptance of diversity than many hypermodern Koreans. Furthermore, their engagement in urban settings facilitates easier integration into a society where individualism is on the rise and spirituality remains a sought-after commodity and experience.

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Comments on the Paper Given at the Seminar
(in alphabetical order)

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It was great to hear Liora Sarfati's talk. I have two questions. Would the acceptance of Korean Shamanism by those situated in South East Asia, like in Japan, China and other places like Cambodia etc. be also considered as global cosmopolitanism? In other words, is cosmopolitanism only seen as Euro-America centred? What are the elements of Korean religion other than shamanism?

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Liora Sarfati challenged several premises in the social sciences and humanities in her presentation. The first was "Cosmopolitanism", nested by scholars in notions of modernization and urbanization whereby "scientific" attitudes lead to the abandonment of local folk beliefs and practices, or as put by Sarfati -- vernacular religion. My own vernacular excursions concern urban landscapes; including religious structures and practices. Her research informs my own in that vernacular landscapes are mobile, adapting to new locales. However, "Do they mean the same in the new place?"

Her implied and explicit comparisons to "established" religions reminded me of Roman Catholicism's enculturation practices. The discussion of Korean Shamans at home and abroad brought to mind Santeria, Voodoo, shrines, saints, mystics, relics and fundamental Christian "hands on" faith healing links to spiritual worlds. In Catholicism, priests are necessary. Protestants challenge this but clergy are given special status. Christians have a notion of "calling" while Shamans are selected by the spirits. As to their power, scientific scepticism suggests placebo effects for "cures". W.I. Thomas' theorem suggests "If men define things are real.". Other connections made by "hypermodern" cosmopolitans ("Cosmopolitan Spiritualists"?) regarding cures are naturalism and folk medicines and treatments. This reminds of my mentor Feliks Gross' remarks about Plains Indian medicine men who viewed their practices as more functional than philosophical.

In regard to my comments on Korean shamans in horror movies allowed Professor Sarfati to raise gender issues. Most Korean Shamans are male but in movies men are more likely to play the part, as a capitalistic response to the monetary potential of the "craft". Obviously, a clearer definition of "cosmopolitanism" is needed beyond mere openness to diversity. It is assumed that modernization and urbanization eliminated Folk Society, but it can and has survived. I expect Shamanism will adapt to Artificial Intelligence as it has to the Virtual World, but will it affect spirits' authenticity?

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Sarfati's presentation on contemporary Korean shamanism and its cosmopolitanism raises thought-provoking, and comparative, reflections on the flexibility and potential broad appeal of vernacular religion and spiritual healing in contemporary society, including in the supposedly secularised Western urban settings.

I wonder whether the cosmopolitanism and global appeal of Korean shamanism might be analysed in relation to the renewed approach to health as total well-being (physical, spiritual and psychological), and the growing interest, even among the established medical profession, in folk medicine/remedies as complementary to bio-medicine.

I found it interesting that most contemporary *manshin* are women, and also that there are no clear guidelines on who can be a shaman (both in terms of gender and of national or ethnic origins). It would be useful to know whether this lack of guidelines is new.

An additional consideration. I am familiar with Sarfati's work on shamanism and I have often noted some similarities between the spiritual healing of Korean *manshin* and *musok* and some spiritual healing practices found in Catholicism — where a plethora of saints and other sacred entities supplements the religion's monotheism. In particular, I note the significant role of specific individuals in communicating with spiritual beings, or entities — a role that is often not recognized, nor approved by the official religious institutions, who regard such practices as folklore and superstition. I think, for example, of Italo Pardo's analysis of the role of "mundane liminality as a point of entry to the supramundane domains" in Naples (e.g., his *Managing Existence in Naples*, 1996, CUP); especially, of individuals who, by virtue of their "social liminality", are believed to have "special powers" and thus act as mediators with the supernatural on behalf of the living, crossing, as Pardo says, "different domains of existence". It would be interesting to explore such comparative aspects between Korean shamanism and other vernacular ("unofficial") religious practices, and how they might become more or less institutionalized, or become appealing beyond their specific cultural milieu.

BOOK REVIEWS

Barua, M. 2023. *Lively Cities: Reconfiguring Urban Ecology*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

In *Lively Cities*, Maan Barua explores how Delhi and London, two global cities, not only share common colonial/postcolonial historical and contemporary relationships, but are also enlivened by “other-than-humans” like, respectively, rhesus macaques and cattle, and parakeets. Taking a point of departure from contemporary social and political theories that have shaped urban studies — posthumanism, critical political economy, postcolonial theory — Barua develops an eclectic conceptual framework, the “urban in minor key”, to make sense of a diverse range of archival and ethnographic materials that deal with how the lives of humans and other-than-humans intersect in, and indeed (re)make, cities.

In the introductory chapter, Barua sets off this ambitious and enviable task, what he calls formulating “a different grammar of the urban” (p. 3). Crucial in this formulation is an integrated way to thinking about cities and the urban — what is referred to as “urbanicity”. In this way, *Lively Cities* is a work of urban theory, particularly, of urban ontology; it is diagnostic in the sense that it furthers conceptual and methodological ways of considering how “other-than-humans” are a vital part of the infrastructures and metabolic flows that make up urbanicity, and this opens up new political possibilities. Another key intervention further underlines this text, what Barua calls “the urban in minor key”, a metaphor derived from music and linguistics (pp. 14–15). The “major key”, Barua

suggests, signifies the urban as a planned and rational category, and also speaks to the orthodoxies of social and political theory. In contrast, the urban in minor key (or political economy, for instance), refers to the “cramped” and “crowded” nature of urban studies itself (p. 16). The notion of liveliness, in turn, suggests a “wider ontology” of the urban, which focuses on registers of city-making, micropolitics, and the molecular (pp. 20–21).

Alongside the introduction and conclusion, *Lively Cities* is divided into six chapters, all of which draw on a rich and diverse source of materials, from ethnographic observations and archival research to scholarly discussions and media accounts and reports.

The first two chapters are devoted to the rhesus macaque and/in Delhi. Chapter 1, titled “A Minor Ecology of Infrastructure”, asks what it means to “ecologize infrastructure” by looking at the relationships between Delhi’s inhabitants, its rhesus macaques, and basic infrastructural services (or staples) like electricity and water (pp. 26–27). Chapter 2, “The Politics of Commensality”, further explores this lively ethnographic field by “rethink[ing] how the lived city is experienced and inhabited in excess of anthropocentric sensibilities”, as well as “how the state aims to govern other-than-human life” (p. 69). Both chapters consist of evocative ethnographic descriptions of macaques’ everyday lives as they traverse Delhi’s arboreal terrain of powerlines and built structures, as well as how a host of human interventions emerge around them — from devotees of Hanuman and street vendors who engage in pious and

economic relations with the macaques, to civic bureaucrats and precarious workers, like *katiyabaaz* (electricity grafters) and *langur* (Colobine monkeys) wranglers who work in a liminal economy between legal and illicit. These chapters also deploy a host of theoretical lenses like “meshwork” and “commensality”, which respectively refer to the infra-political and social relations between human and other-than-humans.

In Chapters 3 and 4, Barua turns his attention to the theme of “ferality” which characterises public and (bio)political reactions to parakeets in London. As with the first two chapters, these chapters also weave together ethnographic and archival materials, which trace the colonial and postcolonial trans-territorial flow of parakeets — termed “other-than-human migrants” (p. 149) — between South Asia and the United Kingdom. By looking at how parakeets are termed “feral”, these chapters also underscore the underlying racial logics and anxieties over migration, particularly through notions like “biotic nativism” and cosmopolitanism (p. 115). Chapter 3, “Lively Capital and Recombinant Urbanisms”, looks at how parakeets’ “reproductive and metabolic work” is vital in the reproduction of lively capital through transnational flows and breeding (p. 119). The chapter also explores how parakeets affect the nature of London’s parks and gardens, where the birds’ affective actions constitute a sort of “recombinant urbanism” that emerges through new patterns of dwelling and local ecological changes among avifauna (pp. 138–142). Chapter 4, titled “The Micropolitics of Fertility”, explores the themes of hospitality, biopolitics and world making, further underscoring the

racializing discourses around migration and ferality, where parakeets effectively “migrantise” cities like London in a postcolonial vein (p. 190).

In Chapters 5 and 6 we return to Delhi once again, this time looking at cattle as an agrarian and urban question (p. 194). In Chapter 5, “Pastoral Formations”, Barua troubles the conclusions drawn by planetary urbanism, particularly between rigid boundaries between the urban and the agrarian, by building on the idea of a “pastoral ethos of the city”, especially as bovine animals’ habitation and mobilities also shape urban spaces, while also reassessing questions of capital (p. 195). This chapter then uses the notion of “patchwork” to “understand how the pastoral is immanent to the urban” (p. 227), thus opening up new questions regarding urban inhabitation, dwelling, and more than human collectives. Chapter 6, titled “Surplus Ecologies”, follows Delhi’s urban dairies through the lens of “molecular economies”, which are expressed as iterations of the ecological economy, escaping capital, and relations between bodies (p. 239). Barua then looks at how metabolic activities of cattle — such as waste — become conduits in a “minor circuit of value that exceeds the purpose of capitalist accumulation (p. 260). This chapter then critiques the “apolitical ecology of exposure” around plastic pollution, which emerges as “new ecologies of bodily harm” (p. 266).

The book’s conclusions reiterate some of the crucial points of departure that the text marks from contemporary theories of the urban. In doing so, Barua underscores how these previous theories of the urban operate in a “major key”. By contrast, Barua argues that

engendering theories in a “minor key”, as well as developing a “wider ontology of the urban”, is crucial for attending to the molecular and micropolitical relationships between humans and other-than-humans. “What is needed”, he writes, “is an acceptance of other-than-human life as a vital element of urbanicity rather than effacing it or subjecting it to punitive action” (p. 287).

In my view, *Lively Cities* is an ambitious, provocative and productive response to the strands of social theory that inform contemporary urban studies, like critical political economy, posthumanism, and postcolonial theory. Indeed, I believe this book speaks to particular dilemmas or impasses that I have encountered in my own research on Mumbai’s urban infrastructures, where I identified precisely the limits that Barua effectively critiques and builds on. Barua’s evocative ethnographic descriptions of other-than-humans, as well as his lively reading of archival materials and scientific literature, is also an impressive contribution to the field of urban studies—indeed, one could effectively adopt this approach to think and write about how cities like Mumbai, Istanbul and New York, for instance, are shaped by “feral” species like street dogs, cats, and rats, respectively.

That said, despite my admiration for how Barua deftly weaves together diverse theoretical strands and traditions to develop a minor grammar of the urban, *Lively Cities* is a very demanding text. In part, a particular challenge this book poses is the sheer number of terms that Barua fashions, most of which I could not accommodate in this review (onto-cartographies, ethology, ecumene, striation, divergence, comparison,

etc.). I can also imagine that readers without working proficiencies in some, if not all, of the theoretical fields cited in the text would not gain quite as much as those who possess more familiarity with these debates. On a different note, while I also appreciated the nuanced discussions and insights Barua brings to bear on contentious issues in contemporary India, particularly how Hindu religiosity around monkeys and cattle are mobilised in acts of violence against Muslims and Dalits, I was not quite convinced by Barua’s assertion that this book developed political possibilities. The problematisation of caste, for instance, left more to be desired, especially when it came to interrogating the continuum between the urban and agrarian questions, as well as when dealing with politically-charged questions of waste. In raising these questions, however, I am motivated more by a sense of curiosity than critique: In what ways can a minor grammar of the urban look at anti-caste politics — and, to an extent, indigeneity and Adivasi cosmopolitics — as a sort of liveliness that already configures an engagement a host of other-than-humans in a micropolitical and metabolic vein? These questions aside, I have no doubt that *Lively Cities* would be an invaluable and impressive resource for scholars engaged in researching cities and the urban, especially those with a keen interest in following more-than-human flows, rhythms, and politics.

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Bratchford, G. and Zuev, D. (eds). 2023. *Vision & Verticality: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Interest in and the application of visual approaches for the study of a multitude of subjects in the social sciences has been growing more rapidly in recent years. When I started my association with social scientists of the visual kind in the 1997 (Krase 1997), Visual Sociology, was placed well beyond the pale of normal professional practice and practitioners had to justify the use of images as sociological data. However, it was grudgingly acceptable to use images to “illustrate” research findings gathered from other forms of “normal” research practices such as survey and demographic studies.

Over the years, Gary Blatchford and Dennis Zuev have evolved from young and energetic pioneers in the field of visual studies to being mature leaders and innovators in developing their own as well as searching for unique approaches of others. They have successfully presented these valuable contributions to scholarly multidisciplinary audiences in a variety of textual and visual formats. *Vision & Verticality* is a recent entry in the Palgrave MacMillan Social Visualities Series which they coedit, and which has received high praise by leaders in the field such as Douglas Harper. As noted by the editors, this volume emerged from an edited issue of the journal *Visual Studies* “Aerial Visibilities: Towards a Visual Sociology of the Sky” (2020). It must also be noted here that *Visual Studies* is the leading journal in visual sociology and is produced by the International Visual Sociology Association in which the editors have had long and fruitful scholarly relations.

This Palgrave MacMillan book series is affiliated with the International Sociological Association’s Research Committee 57 which examines the role and function of images, objects and/or performances within society and/or in particular cultures or communities.

In this book, the editors have as their goal bring the practice of vertical and aerial analysis into sociological discourse through a broad range of interdisciplinary perspectives such as cultural theory and urban geography. They have accomplished this by carefully selecting and editing contributions from astronauts, artists, architects, sociologists, urbanists, visual culture theorists, geographers, anthropologists and others in the humanities. By employing socio-visual thinking, *Vision and Verticality* attempts to convince social scientists closer to a sociology of or through images towards a sociology *with* images well beyond the beyond the *au courant* practice of using drones for aerial research. The book contains a wide variety of topics such as urban spaces, travel, leisure, politics, and environmental challenges. While it is impossible to do justice to each of the seventeen chapters in this brief review, I believe listing a few titles here might suffice to get a sense of the eclectic range. These were the most challenging for me: “Of Carnal Gravity: A Three-Voice Conversation”; “The Algorithmic Apparatus of Neocolonialism”, and “Elemental Monsters”. These sound more conventional but are equally engaging when seen from above: “Viewing from Where? Satellite Imaging and the Politics of Space Technology”; “Mapping Cultural Landscapes, Vertically”, and “Revitalization and Touristification”.

While I found the book to be excellent in its coverage of many fields, I was surprised that the work of one of my favourite scholars, Jean Baudrillard, could not find a worthy place in the otherwise excellent volume. Many of the contributions were well outside my normal practice but a few such as "Mapping Cultural Landscapes, Vertically," were especially pertinent and will be referenced in my future work. In other reviews of Gary Bratchford and Dennis Zuev's *Vision & Verticality: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, I have seen the use of words that are unusual for social such as "dizzying", "brilliant", "eclectic", "enthraling", "soaring", and "groundbreaking". To these I would add my more pragmatic praise as "useful" and enlightening.

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Caldararo, N. 2019. *An Ethnography of the Goodman Building: The Longest Rent Strike*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Best read with the aroma of petunia competing for the senses with the riffs of Jefferson Airplane, this paean to San Francisco (SF) and the 1970s counter-culture

is a lovingly told Proustian bailing out all things remembered. Essentially a story of an idealistic world of, in the author's words, "an organic self-determination in co-living", the book is a biography of the Goodman Building of Downtown SF, alongside the created community within and its ever-evolving environment. Described by his university (San Francisco State) as a "veteran anthropologist", Caldararo entered the building in the early 1970s, invited by the tenants to be their *de facto* anthropologist-in-residence to assist in and record their rent strike. He stayed for a decade wherein he lived, laughed, learned and loved with the plethora of co-residents who passed through this fascinating structure. The book reflects an extended anthropological field study produced through participant observation, the copious field notes of which were given to some research respondents for verification. Some co-habitants also provide accounts of their time and place in the building.

The Goodman Building was constructed in 1869 to accommodate the swell of people attracted to San Francisco by the California Gold Rush. The voyages of the European powers brought waves of migrants who, combined with waves of internal migrants similarly seeking the good life, trampled on the rights of the pre-existing Native Americans. Sailors, migrants from South and East Asia, and working-class immigrants chasing the Gold Rush lived alongside one another in the city's South of Market neighbourhood, and the Goodman Building provided for the various newly arrived. Purchased by the Goodman family at the turn of the 20th century, the building continued to be a place for newcomers to San

Francisco, offering single room occupancy for workers attracted to the ever-growing city. Post-World War 2, it housed former GIs and was favoured by artists attempting to celebrate the “live-work movement”. By the time of Caldararo’s research, the building consisted of four storeys and 30 rooms hosting an uneasy combination of artists, Buddhist practitioners and Neo-Dadaists, and non-artists. One resident cracked safes, some were crackpots. Monies were embezzled. Childcare was an issue for some. The “check to check urban singles” and various waifs attracted to the perceived nirvana of SF were not as idealistic as some of the hippies wanted them to be.

Beyond the Goodman Building’s eclectic inhabitants, the specific focus of much of the text is on the decade-long rent strike. The 70 or so tenants in what one resident described as an “urban space probe” evidenced no end of tensions which the rent strike brought to the fore. One significant point of tension was about residential status; there were members and residents. In what was a community of activists celebrating a form of cooperative living and voluntary association, the idealism (and the strike action) revealed acts of collusion, treachery and inappropriateness. The Hippie movement was integral to the thinking and, with it, a gender imbalance and ethnic absences. The contradictory and the ideal are presented, as are the ideal and the real. It is a sketch of the flavour of the time. The text is a time-piece wherein thick description presents other attempted ways of being, notably the in-house “university” classes the residents provided in anthropology, drama and political science.

The place also attracted curious locals and visitors from across the USA.

The Goodman Group emerged in an attempt to make sense of the place and implemented the Monday Night Meeting (MNM). Here, tenants tried to agree how to live and how to resist the Municipal government’s plans to evict them and turn the building into something corporate (so as to fit in with the wider neighbourhood). Communal living cannot be conducted on a do-as-you-please ethos. Such living needed structures, and these were implemented by the positions of President, Vice-president and a Board. Not all had the revolutionary consciousness sought by the hippie counter-culture movement; some were considered counter-revolutionary and some men exploited women. The intellectuals vied for co-existence with those who did not pay rent on time. The MNM chapter explains how a weekly congress acted as both a legislature for shared living and a theatre of personalities wherein resolutions were attempted and emotions managed - not always successfully. The MNM attempted to provide some order to the experimental chaos. The intractable and timeless issues of communal living — dirty dishes in the sink, neglected communal areas, garbage being someone else’s problem, fraught regulation of those who enter, and those who sign up to the project but do not pull their weight in delivering it — are all presented to remind us that Sartre had a point when explaining that Hell is other people.

The book is also implicitly about city (San Francisco) governance. It reflects on variously: ways of being, migratory flows, living with scarcity, understanding affordability, accepting transformation, how

temporary living arrangements can be and how homelessness and the un-housed live. Essentially it is a study of economic survival tactics, transitory platforms and the negotiated identities that built environments can offer. It is also about how people organise their living space. The book informs the curious as to the tension between old and new tenants, the foundations and fissures of a created community and the production of the Other.

The way of being pursued perhaps best described as “direct democracy” required in some the fetishization of consensus. Did this pursuit permit too much voice to personal concerns over efficient building management? The strike ended in 1982 and eviction the following year without violence. For a while, the strike led by the Goodman Project personnel attracted celebrities and activists of various causes; notably, those interested in art, architecture and people. Others were no doubt fascinated by the experiment in ways of sharing and acting. Who visited? In the words of one former resident, “lawyers and community organisers, real and faux-celebrities, shipping tycoons and citizens” (p. 202). Privacy was not guaranteed. Arguments were audible as was sexual congress. The author, however, could find beauty in all of this, lauding: “...the wisps of movement and scents of past experiences created dimension of dreams within a sleepy reality...” (p. 190). This reality was sold to a property developer in 1982, and so the “slum clearance” pursued by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency was accomplished by pricing out those described as “working people” whose presence held back the corporate image of the district. Some 30 % of

the Goodman tenants bought into the renovated block. Disputes ensued amongst various housing groups as to who should be prioritised in allocation.

Who would purchase and read this vast tome? Chapter 1 is a brilliant literature review for anyone interested in urban anthropology. But for this reader the text is far too long. The 345 pages could be reduced by a third. The 30-page appendices are not needed. A glossary is, however, and chapter sub-headings would help enormously. Some chapters consist of just 2 and 3 pages, while others number over 50. A reader is left pondering a few issues. Is atomisation of the people a conscious political project? At the more anthropological level, a reader would have liked to know not only who *was* in the building at the time but who the main protagonist and actors *were*; i.e. where did they arrive to the Goodman from, and was theirs a youthful idealism safe in the knowledge that elsewhere in the US their inheritance was guaranteed and the family home big enough to take them in if all else failed? We are left to consider whether the pursuit of community living relies on a charismatic leader or rule-oriented entities for its success. What had the experiment in living that the Goodman Building hosted produced? Towards the end of the book, the author provides an answer: “We had engaged the world and brought a measure of holistic ordering into a corner of mechanised waste and chaos. And along the way, reintroduced a dialectical tension between the poles of vision and matter; takes a step toward deconstructing the divide put up by Descartes and company and done it on the home planet, not outer space” (p. 284). Right. Or maybe

Mary Douglas (1991) put it simpler when stating that a home is not just a house or a shelter but people and experiences. The author ends the book stating a “community was lost”. It no doubt was, but that asks us to consider whether all constructs of community have a lifespan and why that is so.

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Karner, T. X. 2023. *Making a Scene! How Visionary Individuals Created an International Photography Scene in Houston, Texas*. Amsterdam: Schilt Publishing.

Making a Scene! is a well written and carefully researched multimodal ethnography of how a collection of dedicated, talented, and art savvy individuals were able to create an internationally recognized art world centred around photography in what some might think was an unlikely place. In her selectively illustrated book, Tracy Xavia Karner weaves together the many varied efforts from more and less well-known local artists through philanthropists to describe how, they individually and collectively, managed to create a Southern USA Mecca of international photography.

During the course of her almost a decade long study, Karner conducted 46 in-depth interviews which provided most of the rich core of materials for the book. The main characters in the detailed story begin with Houston’s Museum of Fine Arts Director

Bill Agee’s early dream of a photography department, and from which a vibrant and engaged photography scene emerged and developed. Anne Tucker, also at the *Museum of Fine Arts* in Houston, and local photographers who created *Houston Center for Photography* were also central to the effort. Wendy Watriss, Fred Baldwin, and Petra Benteler, who inaugurated the first international photography festival in the United States — *FotoFest* — were key players in the successful effort.

The narrative form of Karner’s writing style also was a pleasant surprise as the inviting text was very easy and enjoyable to read. The following is example:

“The Gus and Lyndall Wortham Curator of Photography, Anne Wilkes Tucker, sat alone in her office surrounded by boxes waiting to be filled. How to sort a life into boxes? Could cardboard hold years of ideas, friendships, and memories? Somehow, she had to fit 39 years of her life into these containers. Some things would go to the museum archives, but much more would be leaving with her. Anne had spent more than half her life leading the Photography Department at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and though somewhat wistful, she decided now was the time to close that chapter in her life. [...] The clear June evening sky bestowed a golden hue to the trees outside Anne’s office window, and most everyone else had already gone home for the day. Anne loved being in the museum at night and taking advantage of her access, after all the visitors had gone, to go up to the third floor. To be alone in the John A. and Audrey Jones Beck Collection, Anne says,

‘was one of my favorite privileges of working at the museum’.” (p. 16)

During the course of my reading, I was quite amused as I came across a reference to the “Texas Medici”. The exalted title was given to John and Dominique de Menil. The De Menils were members of the European elite and refugees from France during the Second World War. Over the decades since their coming to Houston, which in the 1950s was described as a “cultural desert”, the De Menils became major benefactors of Houston’s arts, media, and other cultural institutions. It should be noted in this regard that Houston’s internationally recognized music scene had existed long before its celebrated pictorial art scene.

Karner frames her scenic approach early in the text, noting that “Everyone wants to find their scene. It’s the social space where you feel comfortable, meet, like-minded, souls, and participate in activities that are important and meaningful to you.” (p. 10) and “Scenes our place based. They claim a location where interested people can find and join in the shared activities. Houston, and entrepreneurial city, is receptive to innovative ideas that showcase the city. It is also a place that pulls people from all over, and this was especially true during the economic boomtime of the 1970s, when this story begins.” (p. 11). “Scenes” can be fruitful rubrics for urban ethnographers like me. I seldom use the term even though it was coined by my New York University doctoral dissertation advisor Alan Blum in his book *The Imaginative Structure of the City* (Blum 2003). Blum’s idea about cultural attractions for urban development was later elaborated upon by Daniel Aaron Silver and Terry

Nichols Clark in “Theory of Scenes” (Silver and Clark 2016: 29–69). For them, art scenes are one of their most meaningful categories for “Cool cosmopolitanism” which “[...] should appeal more to higher educated, upscale audiences and migrants, DINKs and singles, 20–40-year-olds.” (ibid: 38).

Making a Scene! is an unusually fascinating study by a well-known qualitative researcher and visual sociologist. Having known Tracy Xavier Karner and her excellent work over several decades, I expected an entirely different book, but was pleased to discover in its reading that “visual” sociology goes well beyond the usual collection and analysis of visual data. Having photographed in Houston, with special attention to the gentrification of its historical African American sections such as Freedmen’s Town on two occasions (2002 and 2019), I had hoped for the inclusion of more images of its fascinatingly varied urban spaces. Despite, my minor disappointment, Karner’s detailed exposition is an excellent multimodal ethnographic model, that includes archival as well as interviews and observational research, for the close-up study of a wide range of urban arts phenomena.

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Pardo, I. and Prato, G. B. (eds.). 2023. *The Legitimacy of Healthcare and Public Health: Anthropological Perspectives*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

“We are all in the same boat”, the often-repeated reassurance was perhaps one of the biggest lies perpetuated during the Covid pandemic that originated towards the end of 2019 and continued in milder and different forms well into 2023.

The pandemic did not create inequalities in the access to healthcare; rather, it exposed the already existing rigid hierarchies that exist globally and across countries. This leads to the point that health is not only a biological aspect, nor is healthcare simply a system that can be accessed when sought after. The understanding of health and the existence of healthcare are created in a social context and contribute to weaving the social fabric of which they are a part. This social context becomes important to study if we are to understand the nature of healthcare vis-à-vis the multitude of health ailments that we face today. Pardo and Prato’s edited volume brings together essays that portray the complex nature of the social in the understanding of healthcare and the issue of health more broadly. Reflecting that complexity, this edited work highlights two fundamental, inter-related social aspects of healthcare — governance and violence — within the over-arching theme of legitimacy. It is a timely intervention that shows why social anthropologists must study health.

There are fifteen essays in the book, including the introductory chapter which lays out the blurred nature of legitimacy. Where does the legitimate end and the

illegitimate start? Do rules always define what is right and what is wrong? The chapters in the book do not try to answer these questions, but rather reflect on a wide range of issues from across the world to show that a multitude of possibilities exist. At the same time, the book shows that perhaps there is not much of a difference across geographically distant countries when it comes to healthcare! Who has access to healthcare? What determines this? What do world leaders do to showcase their efficiency and where do they lag behind?

The essays by Prato, Pardo, Mitra Channa, Koenig and Diarra, Arnold, and Rogers foreground this complexity through their studies in the U.K., Italy, Mali, and the U.S.A. Prato, in her comparative study of the public healthcare systems in the U.K. and Italy, brings out how privatization of a basic necessity such as healthcare can create hierarchies in a supposedly State-funded service, while Pardo’s study emphasises how privatization coupled with corruption can cripple healthcare systems, making the citizens suffer. Koenig and Diarra echo the same dynamics in their study of healthcare in Manantali, Mali, while both Arnold’s and Rogers’ essays offer critical lenses to understand how the same healthcare system can have different effects on patients of diverse socio-economic backgrounds, thereby furthering an already hierarchical society.

Kaalyap Jurich’s and Mitra Channa’s works on Turkey and India respectively question the elected representatives and their actions in the face of the pandemic. While Kaalyap Jurich’s work lays bare how the State can construct “legal” and “acceptable”

treatment through the authority it holds, Mitra Channa's work talks about how the workings of charismatic leadership can relegate the exigencies of the pandemic to the background.

The chapters by Olson, Sarfati and Varelaki go beyond the issues of privatization and leaderships' antics to point at the epistemological question of what is medicine or who can prescribe medicine, and how does alternative medicine gain legitimacy, if at all? These chapters on Mexico, South Korea, Israel and Greece — also complemented by Prato's study on the U.K. — bring anthropological nuance to the complex existence, practice and acceptance of medical pluralism in contemporary societies. Just as the above works question the notion of a singular system of medicine, Spyridakis' work on disabled people's access to jobs in Greece interrogates the perceptions that people and laws have towards disability. The assumption that only "able-bodied" individuals are productive and any sort of physical disability mars people's efficiency and capability creates exclusion on the basis of assumptions. Thus, any kind of affirmative action for inclusivity is seen through the lens of favour or pity rather than as a matter of legitimate right.

The following chapters by Mollica on Lebanon and Armstrong and Rosbrook-Thompson's on the U.K. analyse the legitimacy of public health in contexts which are routinely affected by violence. The question of legitimacy becomes significant because there is a difference between the macro picture as constructed by those in power and on-the-ground realities of social locations as experienced by people in the

local contexts. Thus, the authors' bottom-up approach to understanding these complexities deconstructs the pervasive legal narratives.

The book finally comes a full circle with Nugent's concluding essay on the question of healing. Nugent focusses on Peru in the context of terrorist resurgence to address the above issue. However, his essay nudges us to look through the imminent issues in societies and come to understand how people's everyday lives go on in the face of diseases, pandemics, joblessness and terrorism. But is there a clear starting and an ending point of the pain and the sorrow? Nugent's essay shows otherwise.

The book brings out intersectionality lucidly through the collection of essays — most evidently in its analyses of class, race, region, migrant status. All the chapters are inter-connected organically which also explains why the editors have not narrowed down the essays by putting them into sub-themes. However, one does find analysis of gendered realities of access to healthcare unaccounted for. Nevertheless, the work remains an important contribution for the anthropological study of healthcare and legitimacy as well as for the detailed sections on research methodology which can be useful for students pursuing social sciences at an advanced level.

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FILM AND VIDEO REVIEWS

Soccer Fans: Life, Passion, and Death in the Soccer Country. **Gastaldo Édison.** 66 min, 2019.

What does it mean to be a soccer fan in Brazil? This question permeates the research directed by anthropologist and documentarian Édison Gastaldo in “Soccer Fans: Life, Passion, and Death in the Soccer Country”, released in 2019. For this project, 112 soccer club supporters from 13 Brazilian states were interviewed between 2014 and 2019. The documentary is divided into six chapters — Roots, Rivalry, My Club Today, Violence, Arenas, and Organized Fandom — interspersed with narratives from the interviewed individuals about unforgettable goals. Assumptions that are key to understanding Brazilian social thought revolve around the idea of supporting a soccer club. In Gastaldo’s words, “We have gathered stories of lives connected by the passion for a soccer club. Stories of shame and glory, of fights and hugs. Stories of soccer, stories of Brazil”.

According to the anthropologist Roberto DaMatta (1982), the football universe represents a drama of social life in Brazil. For anthropologists, this represents a privileged way of situating a set of socially significant problems in society, where different social, cultural, and political aspects manifest and are debated. Through accounts, “Soccer fans” shows us how a soccer match almost entirely involves the cities in the country, even the largest urban centers, which experience transformations in public security and traffic for supporters’ access to stadiums

The word “Torcedor” carries a peculiarity in Brazil: it comes from the verb

“torcer” [to twist], and in Brazil, its meaning has been expanded to include soccer fans. The term originated from women who used to twist handkerchiefs while watching matches in the early 20th century. It didn't take long for “torcedoras”, used in its grammatical feminine gender form, to start appearing in sports chronicles of that time. Unfortunately, it was only a few decades before this conception was erased from the semantics of supporting.

Although “Soccer Fans” does not directly address this problem, he seeks to bring gender balance among the interviewed individuals, a rare issue regarding giving voice to Brazilian women when it comes to football. It is important to note that the practice of this sport was prohibited for women in this country for almost forty years, from 1941 to 1979, resulting in the invisibility of a large part of the female references linked to football. These reflections are felt even today when our interpretations of the football universe are considered irrelevant or even classified as peripheral. This is due to a prevailing notion that was constructed in Brazil over the last century, suggesting male dominance in the subject of football, which attributed authority in the production of knowledge about football to men.

While soccer fans are understood through a collective, it also expresses individualities. In this game of projecting the self into a public dimension, the stories narrated in the documentary express the subjectivities of individuals: how they became supporters; the affections and feelings expressed for the club and its rivals; relationships with the stadium, team, and organized supporters. Club identity is shaped

through the positive or negative influences of family, in Brazil often focused on paternal preferences; the first contact with a match; the rivalries created between clubs; the symbols assimilated by supporters; and shared emotions ranging from a sense of belonging and sociability to aggressiveness. These are valuable insights for researchers in the fields of urban studies and sports.

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The Rise of the Human 3. **Williams Eduardo**. 121 min, 2023.

The Rise of the Human 3 by Eduardo Williams is a film whose constructive procedure is based on a production that selects people in different parts of the world who speak different languages (Chinese, English, and Spanish, among others) and makes them travel to live together for a certain time in different countries such as Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Peru (countries that we don't see as normally connected). These non-professional actors, without knowing each other deeply or understanding each other's languages talk about their lives, work, dreams, and desires. The resulting ethnographic and geographical narrative generates a polyphony composed of diverse subjectivities that traverse floating times in different locations.

The film aims to be an aesthetic creation with an artistic and expressive function. Viewers in general, anthropologists, and urban planners in particular can find usefulness in video as a source of pleasure and discover, the possibility of video in its capacity to explore diverse geographies virtually, distant places

in the world, and singular ways of inhabiting it. In this sense, it is a film that relates to urban studies because, from its construction, it proposes a vivid sense of location for the viewers. As the actors travel through different places (cities and natural spaces linked to the urban drama), the urban traces that people make can be appreciated, and, in this way, a historical document that functions as an archive of these spaces is inscribed. It is an unusual cinema of transits, based on cultural exchanges, languages, and sensibilities.

This film premiered in 2023 during the Mar del Plata International Film Festival in Argentina and continues to circulate in film festivals. It is a 121-minute experimental film that, although it is fiction, has a strong documentary imprint. This audiovisual project is made with a virtual reality camera that records the surrounding space as if it were a 360-degree "absolute eye". This device is made up of a helmet that films the entirety, at first, without a filter. Then, the director, among a very wide range of possibilities of the visual field, cuts out that part of the spatial image that he is interested in showing. Sometimes, he uses the recordings of more than one camera, distorting the image in such a way that we have a panoramic view of sublime landscapes or a glitch in the images (those digital errors, which show the device, but without being disturbing). The topic of the journey and the tower of Babel merge as an exploration into the unknown that produces unusual forms and altered visions.

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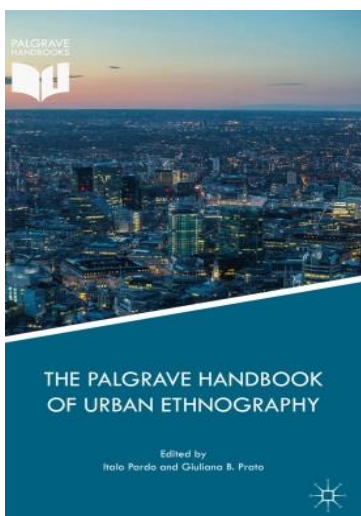
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Italo Pardo and Giuliana B. Prato (Eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Urban Ethnography*

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