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Buchbesprechungen/Reviews

‘No Justice – No Rest!’: How Activist Conceptions of Justice Influence Categories of Collective Identification among Tea-Plantation Labourers in Assam

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Abstract: Activists working on behalf of tea-plantation labourers in the northeast Indian state of Assam have promoted various visions of justice. Trade unionists prefer to maintain an ‘old-style’ tea-plantation economy based on a combination of low cash wages and additional non-monetary benefits. Adivasi (indigenous) activists used to advocate ‘Scheduled Tribes’ status for Adivasis in Assam (most of whom are tea labourers) as a means to improve their livelihoods through affirmative action. In 2014, under the guidance of international NGOs, Adivasi activists turned instead to advocating statutory minimum wages for tea labourers. These transformative visions of justice not only imply different possible futures for tea labourers, but also affect their categories of collective identification, turning them from ‘tea tribes’ into ‘Adivasis’ and then into ‘subjects of labour rights’. While these collective identities are often used interchangeably, foregrounding particular aspects of them in different situations influences the constitution and transformation of leadership patterns within the interest groups that are working on behalf of Assam tea labourers.
[collective identities, India, indigeneity, justice, tea plantations]

One morning in March 2015, during my fieldwork in Assam, I woke up to a call from an Adivasi (indigenous) activist telling me that there would be a protest in one of Assam’s district capitals that day. On the spur of the moment, I rushed out and took a bus to the district capital where the protest was supposed to be taking place. Reaching the spot, I saw about a hundred people gathering. Augustin, an activist I knew from before, recognized me, and he slipped out of the crowd to approach me.[1] He was wearing a dark red Adivasi *gamchā* (cotton towel) wrapped around his head. I asked Augustin what the protest was about. ‘One sixty-nine’, he replied, referring to the statutory minimum wage at that time, which was Rs. 169.[2] The trade union had recently agreed to a wage hike that was below the statutory minimum wage, and the Adivasi activists were there to protest against this ‘illegal’ wage agreement. The protestors shouted slogans

1 All names of persons and places are pseudonyms. Interviews were conducted in Hindi and translated into English by the author.

2 The statutory minimum wage for unskilled labourers in Assam was increased to Rs. 287 in 2020. Rs. 10 are equivalent to about Euros 0.14.

loudly and synchronously: '*ACMS murdabad*!' ('Down with the trade union!') One slogan they shouted in English: 'No justice – no rest!'

What conception of justice was in the minds of the protestors when they shouted: 'No justice – no rest', and in the minds of the trade unionists when they signed the 'illegal' wage agreement? The protest described above exemplifies contesting visions of justice I encountered as I followed different activists working on behalf of Assam's tea-plantation labourers during my fieldwork in India between 2014 and 2017.[3] The trade union argued that accepting an agreement for wages below the statutory minimum wage was acceptable because non-monetary benefits made up the difference. Adivasi activists had previously mainly promoted affirmative action as a means to improve the livelihoods of Adivasi tea labourers in Assam, but they started demanding minimum wages on plantations in 2014 under the guidance of international NGOs.

While a growing number of ethnographic studies on tea-plantation economies in India (Banerjee 2017a; Besky 2014; Chatterjee 2001; Raj 2022) and beyond (Bass 2013; Ives 2017; Jegathesan 2019; Willford 2014) have been published recently, in this article I focus on how changing conceptions of justice have an impact on categories of collective identification by analysing the different ways in which Assam tea-plantation labourers are represented by different kinds of activists.[4] My argument is embedded at the intersection of the anthropology of justice, matters of collective identification, and questions of (collective) representation. While matters of justice have long been studied ethnographically by anthropologists (e.g., Benda-Beckmann 1981; Bohannan 1957; Cowan, Dembour, and Wilson 2001; Rosen 1989), until recently it was primarily in political philosophy that theories of justice were developed most elaborately (e.g., Fraser and Honneth 2003; Nussbaum 2007; Rawls 1971, 2001; Sen 2010). However, approaches in a 'new anthropology of justice' aim for a conceptualization of justice that is both ethnographically grounded and theoretically sophisticated (e.g., Anders and Zenker 2015; Brunnegger 2019; 2020; Clarke and Goodale 2009; Johnson and Karekwaivanane 2018).

In this new anthropology of justice, the leading scholar Sandra Brunnegger coined the term 'everyday justice' to emphasize the multifarious, spatiotemporally contingent, indeterminate and dynamic nature of justice as a complement to nomothetic, ahistorical and transcendental philosophical approaches to justice (Brunnegger 2019). I take Brunnegger's notion of 'everyday justice' as a starting point to elaborate further what justice does 'as an idea or a practice' (Brunnegger 2019:4), analysing how everyday con-

3 Between 2014 and 2017, I conducted thirteen months of fieldwork in Assam, Delhi, and Kolkata. I spent seven months on two plantations in Lower Assam, conducted participant observation in legal capacity training, attended NGO meetings and street protests, interviewed various trade unionists and activists working on behalf of Assam's tea plantation labourers, and analysed documents published by NGOs and the trade union as well as newspaper articles.

4 For excellent historical studies of Assam tea plantations, see e.g., Behal 2014; Varma 2017; and Sharma 2011.

ceptions of justice influence categories of identification for those involved in struggles for justice. I define justice as 'the constant and perpetual will to render to each his due' (Miller 2021). In other words, what people believe to be just or what people consider to be due to them and others has implications for their categories of identification and vice versa.

I use the term 'categories of identification' rather than 'collective identities' to highlight the processual, contingent and versatile character of identity (see Eidson et al. 2017). While a social constructivist understanding of collective identities has been widely accepted in anthropology since Fredrik Barth's edited volume *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Barth 1969; see also Brubaker and Cooper 2000), emphasizing the 'persistent association between ethnicity, place, and work' (Besky 2017a:619; see also Raj 2013) on Indian tea plantations disregards the fuzziness and flexibility of tea labourers' collective categories of identification and the socio-political implications of this.

I argue that changing visions of justice have transformed Assam tea labourers' categories of collective identification, turning them from 'tea tribes' into Adivasis, and further into subjects of labour rights. As all categories of collective identification are still actively used in Assam, the transformation should not be understood as linear and consecutive but as parallel and entangled. Tea-plantation labourers in Assam have been and still are commonly designated as 'tea tribes' or 'ex-tea tribes' (those who no longer work in the plantation, but still reside in villages adjacent to the plantations). When I interviewed labour historian Rana Behal in January 2017, he said the category of 'tea tribes' was coined in the 1920s, when managers started to generate data on these groups for manager training. Since the mid-twentieth century, the term has had limited official status; for example, the Assam government has a 'Tea Tribe Welfare Department'.

Although the term 'tribal' does not necessarily have 'pejorative connotations' in India (Karlsson and Subba 2006:4), Adivasi activists felt discriminated against because of the designation 'tea tribes' and preferred the term 'Adivasi' to describe both current and former tea labourers in Assam generally. The term 'Adivasi', glossed from Hindi, literally means 'indigenous', although the indigeneity of Adivasis is controversial in India (see Béteille 1998).[5] Adivasi is not a legal category as such (Parmar 2016), but is rather a colloquial umbrella term that subsumes diverse ethnic groups, many of whom have been categorized as Scheduled Tribes in central Indian states (Deshpande 2013). Scheduled Tribes (ST) is an administrative category used in India to designate minorities who are eligible for affirmative action as a result of historical discrimination against them. Adivasi movements in other parts of India have received broad scholarly attention (e.g., Nilsen 2012; Sanchez and Strümpell 2014; Shah 2010; Steur 2014). Studying Adivasis in Assam is particularly interesting because Adivasi groups are not recognized as Scheduled Tribes in Assam as they are in other Indian states, and Sched-

5 For a sophisticated examination of the term 'indigeneity,' see Zenker 2011.

uled Tribes in Assam do not consider themselves as being Adivasi. This complicates the common equation of Adivasis with Scheduled Tribes and related questions of collective identification.

Since the majority of Assam's tea plantation labourers are Adivasis, the terms 'tea labourers', 'Adivasis', and 'tea tribes' are often used interchangeably. Because these categories of identification seem broadly overlapping, replacing one collective designation with another appears to be only a matter of political correctness. However, I argue that the discrepancy between seemingly identical categories of identification and their specific situational adaptations in struggles for justice has consequences that lead to different leadership patterns among activists. In the following, I introduce different ideal-typical visions of justice promoted by trade unionists, Adivasi activists and international labour activists, analysing how they each influence labourers' categories of identification and how these in turn affect leadership patterns.

Trade Unionists and the 'Old-Style' Tea Plantation Economy

To establish commercial tea cultivation in Assam in the nineteenth century, labourers were recruited from central Indian states with large indigenous populations in India (Besky 2014:54–55). According to Indian census data (from 1911 and 1921), 50–60 percent of the recruited labour force consisted of Adivasis (called 'tribals' or 'aboriginals' in the census), around 30 percent were Dalits, and 10–15 percent were 'caste Hindus' (Behal 2014:255–256).[6] Since slavery was legally abolished in India in 1843, migrant labourers on tea plantations in Assam were employed as indentured labourers. The indentured labour system provided tea planters with the right to exert penalties on their labourers for any breach of contract, including attempting to leave the plantation before the contract had ended (Behal and Mohapatra 1992). The indentured labour system was gradually dismantled in the first half of the twentieth century.

After Indian Independence, working conditions on tea plantations in Assam were mainly regulated by the Plantations Labour Act (PLA). The PLA, implemented in 1951, stipulates working hours, paid and unpaid holidays, wages, and health and welfare facilities. In the tea-plantation economy, labourers live on the plantations in so-called 'labour lines'; they receive payments in cash and in kind (the dual wage structure) and are entitled to designate who will inherit their permanent position. Beyond

6 The term 'caste Hindu' is used to describe Hindus who belong to one of the four *varna*s. Dalits (formerly called 'untouchables') and Adivasis are usually not seen as caste Hindus. Adivasis are either seen as 'backward Hindus' (by assimilationist Hindu fundamentalists who want to incorporate Adivasis into the Hindu fold) or as outside the caste system and altogether distinct from Hinduism (by activist groups who want to protect Adivasi autonomy as distinct from Hinduism by reasserting a separate 'tribal identity') (Shah 2007:1814; Xaxa 2014:15–20).

housing, non-monetary benefits include health care, food rations, firewood and tea rations. Non-monetary benefits are extended to all the permanent workers' dependents.

The Assam Tea Workers' Union (Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha or ACMS), established in 1957, is the single most important trade union for tea-plantation labourers in Assam. It is affiliated to the Congress party's trade union wing, the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC). Until 2014, the ACMS negotiated wage increases for tea-plantation labourers in the Assam Valley bilaterally with the Consultative Committee of Tea Producers' Association (CCPA), a tea-planters' union. The ACMS covers all plantations in the Assam valley and has approximately 350,000 members.[7] The ACMS has more than three hundred employees, and initially leadership positions were held primarily by 'caste Hindu middle-class men from outside the labour communities' (Sharma 2011:235). Over time, however, the ACMS developed 'an "insider" union élite', meaning that the labourers themselves, or former labourers, or labourers' children could gain leadership positions (ibid.). Lower-level leadership positions on the plantation are often occupied by labourers, while higher leadership positions are usually taken by their children. ACMS leaders are mainly caste Hindus, such as Tanti, Karamkar and Gwala, some of whom are categorized as Other Backward Classes (OBC) in Assam.

When I visited the ACMS head office in Dibrugarh in 2015, I asked the general secretary, Dileshwar Tanti, why he had voted against implementing the statutory minimum wage of Rs. 169 during the last wage negotiations. His phone rang just at that moment, and while he took the call, an administrative staffer sitting next to us exclaimed: 'But the minimum wage is implemented if you take non-monetary benefits into account!' When Tanti finished his call, he added: 'I voted for Rs. 115. One sixty-nine has no basis because the industries are so different, and in the tea industry there are many other obligations that are not there in other industries.' He then explained that Rs. 115 constituted a 'fair' wage because: 'one fifteen with benefits is sufficient, and it is also within the management's capacity to pay' – that is, it would not cause the whole industry to collapse.

The ACMS's aim of maintaining the old-style tea-plantation economy by promoting wages that are 'within the industry's capacity to pay', has to be contextualized within recent economic and legal transformations in the Indian tea industry. Tea plantations are no longer legally regulated by the broad social welfare measures prescribed in the Plantations Labour Act, since the Indian government merged forty-four labour laws into four new labour codes. These ongoing changes include repealing the

7 The state of Assam has approximately 803 tea plantations, which employ altogether 686.000 labourers. Estimates are taken from Government of Assam Tea Tribes Directorate for Welfare, List of Tea Gardens at Assam: https://ttwd.assam.gov.in/frontimpotentdata/list-of-tea-garden-at-assam, accessed May 23, 2021 and Government of Assam Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Economic Survey of Assam 2017–18: https://des.assam.gov.in/information-services/economic-survey-assam, accessed May 23, 2021.

Plantations Labour Act and may dissolve the dual wage structure on plantations (Singh 2020). The Plantations Labour Act was replaced by two sections (92 and 93) in the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, adopted in 2020.[8] The regulations provided in these two short sections are less comprehensive and less legally binding compared to the Plantations Labour Act. Moreover, less than 50 percent of the tea produced in India in 2020 was produced on tea plantations; the majority was produced by small growers, who are steadily increasing and thereby changing the political economy of tea production in India (Tea Board of India 2020). Small growers raise tea on smaller plots of land of about two acres and sell fresh tea leaves to so-called Bought Leaf Factories, where the tea is processed and further sold (Das 2012). It is estimated that about five labourers work on a tea smallholding (Borah 2013:86). Yet, since most small growers are excluded from important labour laws, they do not have to make the same provisions for their labourers, and they mainly offer only temporary employment (Biggs et al. 2018). While Kaberi Borah (2013) and Sarah Besky (2017b) considered tea smallholdings a potentially promising opportunity for self-employment of tea labourers or the rural population in Assam, according to my knowledge former tea plantation labourers hardly become smallholders because they do not own sufficient land to start a smallholding, but would also never work on a smallholding because the labour conditions are much worse compared to plantation work.

Hence, the trade union tried to retain the 'old-style' plantation economy when it started being replaced by a new, less regulated political economy of Assam tea production. This is similar to E.P. Thompson's argument that 'the crowd' in eighteenth-century England was influenced by a 'moral economy' – a specific social field of thought and action in which older, paternalistic practices and normative ideas were confronted with the practices and normative ideas of a 'new political economy' (Thompson 1971). Assam trade unionists were similarly attached to the normative ideas of the old-style moral economy of tea production based on comprehensive welfare measures legally prescribed in the PLA.

The dependence of labourers on plantation welfare provisions, coupled with low cash wages, has been criticized 'as a form of bondage' (Besky 2017a:619), 'modern-day slavery' (Ray 2016), and 'fixity' (Besky 2017a:619), while the Plantations Labour Act has been criticized for improper implementation (Banerji and Robin 2019; Rowlatt and Deith 2015). However, tea plantations have also been called 'states within states' (Raman 2015:146), and tea companies have been said to 'act as a welfare state' (Raj 2013:477) due to the encompassing welfare measures of the PLA legal regime, which makes tea-plantation labour less precarious and insecure compared to informal labour outside the plantations.

In this context of economic and legal transformation in the tea-plantation economy in India, the trade union opposed certain labour rights, such as the implementation

8 The implementation of the new labour law regime is still ongoing.

of statutory minimum wages, in order to maintain an old-style plantation economy, which provided dependent but secure livelihoods to tea-plantation labourers. Adivasi activists, by contrast, based their ideas of justice for tea workers on unconditional legal entitlements.

Adivasi Activists Fighting for Affirmative Action

Adivasi groups are recognized as Scheduled Tribes in many other Indian states, and the Adivasi movement in Assam, which emerged in 1996, originally promoted such recognition there too, so that they would be eligible for affirmative action in Assam. One Adivasi magazine emphasizes: 'Adivasi organizations … point to a particular policy feature that is historically missing here in Assam, which is the granting of Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to the Adivasis … it is often the central, if not only, point of many of their campaigns' (Nawa Bihan Samaj 2013:35).

Affirmative action is an attempt 'to compensate for past discrimination and minimize existing inequalities that persist on the basis of group identity … to create the conditions for disadvantaged groups to compete equally' (Shah and Shneiderman 2013:3–4). In India, affirmative action is implemented through quotas in government jobs, higher education and political offices (ibid.). Groups that have historically been discriminated against are 'scheduled' in the Indian Constitution as Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), or Other Backward Classes (OBC). Over seven hundred ethnic groups are recognized as Scheduled Tribes in India. They constitute about 8.6 percent of the Indian population or 104 million people (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs 2021:205). It is the different federal states that recommend to the union government which ethnic groups are acknowledged as Scheduled Tribes. This means that some ethnic groups that are categorized as STs in one Indian federal state are not necessarily recognized as such in another state.

The ethnic groups (e.g., Munda, Oraon, Saora) that are designated as Adivasis and acknowledged as Scheduled Tribes in central Indian states such as Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand and Bihar are not among the twenty-nine ethnic groups that are acknowledged as Scheduled Tribes in Assam (Ministry of Tribal Affairs 2019). Adivasis constitute the majority of Assam's tea plantation labourers, who migrated as labour migrants to Assam from central India (Sharma and Kahn 2018:196), and in Assam, they are categorized as Other Backward Classes (OBC). The OBC category was introduced in 1980 with the Mandal Commission report and was implemented in the 1990s. It considers economic dimensions in addition to historical discrimination based on ethnicity or caste but does not provide the same affirmative-action provisions as the Scheduled Tribes category (Deshpande 2013:52, 53).

Most Adivasis living in Assam are either current or former tea plantation labourers or their descendants. Adivasi activists' conviction that Adivasis deserve preferential

treatment as Scheduled Tribes in Assam is based partly on their claim that they constitute India's 'original inhabitants' and partly on their status as Scheduled Tribes in other Indian federal states. For instance, one Adivasi activist commented: 'Juel Oram [a BJP politician from the Indian state of Odisha] is a tribal himself. How can he be a tribal and I am not – we have the same surname. How can I be OBC?' The argument evokes the larger idea of justice as equal treatment of equals. The main reasons cited for not recognizing Adivasis as Scheduled Tribes in Assam are that they are not indigenous to Assam and because of 'inter-tribe contestation' (Ananthanarayanan 2010; Sharma and Khan 2018:202). The Indian government objects to Adivasi claims of indigeneity, arguing that 'the entire population of the country at the time of independence from British rule and their successors are indigenous' (Parmar 2016:6), which makes 'indigeneity' obsolete. Instead, the Indian government categorizes Adivasis as 'tribes' who have been historically discriminated against and who are characterized by their 'primitive' traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large, and overall 'backwardness' (Government of India 2005).

Townsend Middleton, in his study of civil servants who verify India's Scheduled Tribes, shows that there is 'no standardized procedure for certifying "tribal" communities.' (Middleton 2013:15) He states: 'the viability of ST status derives not only from the advantages that the designation offers, but also from the pliability of the "tribal" category itself.' (ibid.:13)

Lacking standardization contributes to confusion about the relationship between indigeneity and 'backwardness' in granting ST status. Along with Adivasis, five other groups in Assam claim ST status; among them are Thai-Ahom and Koch-Rajbonshi, historically the ruling classes in Assam. Thai-Ahom and Koch-Rajbonshi justify their claim by highlighting their indigeneity to the region and by disregarding their historically privileged socio-economic status. The fact that Adivasis are only one group among others claiming ST status in Assam is seen as one major reason why they have not yet been acknowledged as ST in Assam. On the one hand, political unrest is feared if only one community among those demanding recognition is acknowledged as a Scheduled Tribe. On the other hand, it is feared that (parts of) Assam may turn into a 'tribal area'. According to the Indian constitution's Sixth Schedule, regions with a 'tribal' majority can turn into semi-autonomous 'tribal areas' with 'tribal' political institutions (Middleton 2013:14).

Since indigenous populations have often been discriminated against historically, historical discrimination and indigeneity are commonly linked (see Zenker 2021). However, indigeneity is to a certain extent decoupled from historical discrimination in Assam, and therefore it has become possible for Assam's historical aristocracy to claim ST status based on the idea that they, as the first comers to the region, are entitled to certain privileges (see Béteille 1998). If all six communities come to be recognized as Scheduled Tribes in Assam, it will be hard for Adivasis to compete with people from a historically privileged aristocratic class. Frustrated by the continuous denial of ST

status, in 2014 Adivasi activists started giving more attention to labour rights, or more precisely to the drive for a statutory minimum wage for tea-plantation labourers.

The Campaign for Statutory Minimum Wages

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines a minimum wage as 'the minimum amount of remuneration that an employer is required to pay wage earners for the work performed during a given period, which cannot be reduced by collective agreement or an individual contract.' (ILO 2017:4) Minimum wages were first fixed in New Zealand and Australia in the late nineteenth century and were defined for particular regions and fields of labour, mainly low-wage labour (Starr 1981). The first international law to promote minimum wages was implemented by the ILO's *Minimum Wage Fixing Machinery Convention* of 1928. Minimum wages in India were introduced through the Minimum Wages Act of 1948.

Adivasi activists in Assam learned about the minimum wage and the living wage in India from two international NGOs that conducted legal capacity trainings for leading Adivasi activists in July 2014, just before the second-to-last wage negotiations began.[9] Following the training, Adivasi activists started a wage campaign for tea labourers in Assam. The shift from affirmative action to labour law also means that tea-plantation issues are now considered more explicitly in the Adivasi movement. One Adivasi activist stated: 'Initially, we did not focus so much on tea gardens. We rather fought for our community's right to get the ST status. The wage campaign was the first big initiative on tea gardens.'[10]

Some weeks after the protest against the wage agreement, described at the beginning of this article, in which the trade union consented to a wage below the statutory minimum wage, I visited Mark, a prominent Adivasi activist who had led the protest that day. We met in his house on a tea plantation. Mark was the son of tea-pluckers; although his father had died some years earlier, his mother still plucked tea. Mark decided to join the Adivasi movement when he was still in school, after he saw media reports about the first large protest of the Adivasi movement in Guwahati, the capital of Assam. During the protest, civilians and police officers had beaten up protesters and had stripped a woman protester naked and harassed her. When Mark saw that 'our people are treated like animals', it became a turning point in his life, he said. Mark became agitated as he spoke, raking his fingers through his moustache. Mark explained why he thought the trade union should not have agreed to the 'illegal' wage agreement:

9 The names of the international NGOs are intentionally not mentioned to keep them anonymous. The founders and leaders of the NGOs were either foreigners or higher caste Hindus.

10 'Garden' is a euphemism for the large-scale capitalist tea plantations of Assam.

> It is stated in our constitution … that the minimum wage for tea labourers should be Rs. 169. The reason for our movement (*āndolan*) is that we should get Rs. 169 … We live in a democracy … It is our right (*adhikār*) to make demands! Our calculation is that one person (*ādmī*) needs at least Rs. 330 per day to live on (*ghar calāne ke lie*). But the lowest wage should be not below the minimum wage!

Mark illustrates in his argument how Adivasi activists applied their newly acquired knowledge about the statutory minimum wage in their movement. Mark called the wage agreement 'illegal' because he considers the minimum wage to be a constitutional right; he sees labourers as being entitled to a minimum wage because they are citizens of India endowed with certain (labour) rights. Mark, like other Adivasi activists, demands the unconditional fulfilment of Indian labour law for tea-plantation labourers in Assam, regardless of the tea industry's capacity to pay.

The wage of Rs. 330 per day that Mark is seeking was suggested by the international NGOs as a 'just wage' – a wage that would enable tea labourers to cover basic expenses like clothing and food as well as additional costs like housing, electricity, education, medical care and an old age pension. The proposed 'just wage', which activists sometimes also referred to as a 'living wage', starts from a needs-based minimum wage. Needs-based minimum wages were drawn up by the Tripartite Committee of the 15th Indian Labour Conference in 1957, which declared that minimum wages in India should be calculated to ensure 'minimum human needs' (Ministry of Labour and Employment 2008).

There is lack of agreement about whether higher cash wages in the Indian tea industry have primarily positive or negative implications. Some regard the elimination of non-monetary compensation in the Indian tea industry as 'a welcome decolonization of agriculture', while others fear consequences such as the 'breakup of both families and social and ethical lifeworlds' (Besky 2017a:628).

On February 26, 2015, the trade union, the ACMS, and the planter's union, the CCPA, came up with a decision on a wage increase that was below the statutory minimum wage and far below the requested living wage. The wage increase was nonetheless historically high. Up until 2014, tea plantation labourers' wages in Assam were increased by just a few rupees per year; after which the increases became bigger: from Rs. 94 in 2014, they jumped to Rs. 115 in 2015; to Rs. 126 in 2016; to Rs. 137 in 2017; and to Rs. 205 in 2021.

Envisioning justice in different ways has complex political and economic implications for Assam tea-plantation labourers. Rather than taking a position on the question of whether higher cash wages in the Indian tea industry will eventually have positive or negative implications on tea labourers in Assam, I want to draw attention to an aspect that has not gained much attention in the ongoing debate: how shifting visions of justice affect tea labourers' categories of identification.

Shifting Visions of Justice and Tea Labourers' Collective Identification

The shared labour migration history of tea-plantation labourers led to their labelling as 'tea tribes' in Assam, while those who migrated away to the villages surrounding the tea plantations in Assam are called 'ex-tea tribes'. This category gained limited official status when 'Tea Garden and Ex-Tea Garden Tribes' were mentioned in a 1946 memorandum of the Assam government, which defines ex-tea garden tribes as 'descendants of "immigrants who originally came for employment in tea gardens"' (Kikon 2017:320). The term 'tea tribes' appears in official administrative designations such as the Assam government's 'Directorate for Welfare of Tea and Ex-Tea Garden Tribes', or by the denotation of the first interest group for tea labourers, the 'All Assam Tea Tribes Student Association' (AATTSA). The latter group is closely linked to the trade union, ACMS. The term 'tea tribe' does not have the same legal meaning as collective ethnic community designations, such as 'Munda' and 'Oraon', which may be declared eligible for affirmative action. The notion 'tea tribes' also resembles the local notions '*bāgānia*' or '*bāgān ke log,*' which can be literally translated as 'garden people.'

While the terms 'tea tribes' and 'ex-tea tribes' are commonly used, Adivasi activists have resisted being designated as such because they feel the terms are derogatory – not because of the term 'tribe', but because of its combination with 'tea'. Adivasi activists often asked me rhetorically: 'How can a tribe be named after a commodity?' The Adivasi movement has struggled to replace the term 'tea tribe' with 'Adivasi' and to encourage tea labourers to identify as Adivasi rather than with their particular ethnic group. For example, an Adivasi activist from the Khondo community on a tea plantation in Assam commented:

> I do not know what is particular about Khondos. We do not have a Khondo society or common Khondo celebrations [as other ethnic groups have] ... But I am also not interested in preserving the Khondo culture. My sentiment goes toward being Adivasi. If everyone focuses too much on his own separate *jāti*, then there will be a divide, and our Adivasi community will become weak.[11]

The terminological shift from 'tea tribes' or from the names of their constituent ethnic groups (*jātis*) to 'Adivasis' has been an implicit objective of the Adivasi movement from its outset. The common narrative told by Adivasi activists traces the movement's inception back to 1996. In that year, about 250 Adivasis were killed by Bodo extremists in plantations and villages in Lower Assam (West Assam), and more than 200,000 people were expelled from their homes without being properly resettled (Bora 2014).

11 The term *jāti* (literally 'birth'), which is used to describe lineages or endogamous groups in India that are located in hierarchical relation to each other, indicating spiritual (im)purity, is often used interchangeably with the term 'caste' in colloquial language. In the plantation context, both terms were used to denote both Adivasis in general and smaller ethnic groups such as Munda, Oraon or Gwala, despite the fact that incorporating Adivasis into the caste system is highly contested.

The Bodos are the largest Scheduled Tribe in Assam. Bodo extremists attacked Adivasis because Adivasis do not support their claim for an independent state, Bodoland, and because the Bodos oppose Adivasis' claim to ST status due to inter-tribe contestation. Adivasi activists claim that neither the government nor any of the existing interest groups took care of Adivasi victims after the Bodo attack on Adivasis, which is why they decided to form their own movement. One of the Adivasi movement's founders, who was a teacher at that time, recalls the experience of ethnic violence towards Adivasis in 1996 and how this became a turning point in his life:

> In 1996, an ethnic attack took place in Kokrajhar [district in Lower Assam]. It was an ethnic clash between Bodo and Adivasi. When I saw it on TV, my mind was very disturbed. And without permission from my school, I went to Kokrajhar and stayed there for some days … There were thousands of people sleeping on the open roads at night. And it was very painful to see the situation. Because of that scenery, I myself questioned many things, and it was a turning point of my life. Many people say that this has been a turning point for the Adivasi society ... I resigned from school ... I was present at that meeting where AASAA [All Adivasi Students' Association of Assam, the first organization that was established by Adivasi activists on 2 July 1996] was founded. At that time, we were trying to build AASAA to unite our community so that we could fight for our rights. I completely gave up teaching and engaged in building up that organization ... We were forced to form an organization to protest all this injustice to the Adivasi community.

Former organizations working for the welfare of the 'tea tribes', such as the All Assam Tea Tribes Students' Association (AATTSA), commentated critically on the emergence of new interest groups. Ajay, an AATTSA district-level president, commented: 'Nowadays, different organizations have been formed. Before, there were only two organizations [the trade union and AATTSA]. We were working from one platform. What I want to say is that the unity or strength that was there before got weakened.' Ajay said this as an Odia caste Hindu, the group that occupies almost all leadership positions in both AATTSA and the trade union ACMS. Ajay bewails the fact that unity has been disturbed by the emergence of new interest groups. However, although all the 'tea tribes' are included as AATSAA's protégés, only certain people have been able to gain leadership positions in AATTSA and ACMS alike, namely (male) caste Hindus.

Therefore, another Adivasi activist once suggested a further reason why it was important to form an Adivasi movement in Assam. Caste Hindus like the Odia often considered Adivasis to be inferior. Adivasis formed their own movement to provide social upward mobility for their Adivasi leaders, since they would accept only Adivasis into leadership positions.

As the Adivasi movement has gained in popularity, the fuzziness of categories of identification in the emergence of new interest groups with different visions of justice has caused leadership patterns to change. This is a dynamic that is often overlooked in the public debate on Adivasi claims to be recognized as Scheduled Tribes in Assam.

First, it must be kept in mind that the term 'Adivasi' has no legal recognition in India today (Parmar 2016:6). The Indian Constituent Assembly decided to use the term 'Scheduled Tribes' instead of 'Adivasis' when they drafted the Indian Constitution, against the opinion of the Adivasi representative Jaipal Singh, arguing that the term 'Adivasi' would lack legal specificity (ibid:5–6).[12] So although the term 'Adivasi' is an umbrella term designating diverse ethnic groups, it would not be legally possible to acknowledge Adivasis as Scheduled Tribes in Assam. Of the estimated ninety-six 'tribes' who work as labourers on tea plantations in Assam, only twenty-six are listed as Scheduled Tribes elsewhere in India and could therefore be considered for possible designation as Scheduled Tribes in Assam as well (Choudhury 2015).

Second, while Adivasi activists used the terms 'tea tribes', 'tea-plantation labourers' and 'Adivasis' synonymously in the 'public transcript', they differentiated between 'real' and 'false' Adivasis in the 'hidden transcript' (Scott 1990). Only 'real' Adivasis, meaning those who have been acknowledged as Scheduled Tribes in other Indian states, were allowed to take leading positions in the Adivasi movement, even as the Adivasi movement claimed to represent all Adivasis or all tea-plantation labourers (and ex-tea labourers) in Assam. Adivasi activists were playing with the alignment of different ethnic groups under the umbrella term 'Adivasi' in different situations and for different purposes (Eidson et al. 2017:341). This public inclusion and internal exclusion of 'false' Adivasis resembles the way AATTSA and ACMS open up leadership positions to caste Hindus alone, despite claiming to speak on behalf of all tea labourers.

Nevertheless, many people wanted to join the most powerful movement. One Odia said:

> Actually, I am also confused myself about what Adivasi means. Maybe I can say that personally I am Oriya, but in order to access governmental schemes, I have to call myself Adivasi.[13] Formerly, we were 'tea tribes' and there was a Tea and Ex-Tea Tribes Board to access governmental schemes. Now the Adivasi Development Board is established … if I say that I am Oriya, then I will not be acknowledged by the government and I will get nothing. I look forward to an Oriya movement. But since no Oriya movement has started so far, I have to be an Adivasi.

The shift of allegiance from ACMS and AATTSA to the Adivasi movement, together with the fuzzy, overlapping and flexible categories of tea tribes, Adivasis, Scheduled Tribes, tea-plantation labourers, former tea plantation labourers, and so forth, creates

12 Jaipal Singh is important for Adivasi politics in postcolonial India because he fought for his convictions that Adivasis are India's 'original inhabitants', are marginalized by non-Adivasis in India and should be compensated for their historical discrimination (Guha 2008:115). He founded the Adivasi Mahasabha in 1938, which later became the Jharkhand Party, and fought for the establishment of Jharkhand as a separate Adivasi state in India (Guha 2008:267).

13 In 2011, Odiya people and the Oriya language were renamed 'Odia', and the federal state of Orissa was renamed 'Odisha'.

a peculiar dynamic. The trade union ACMS is concerned with tea labourers. It was established at a time when trade union movements and labour movements in India were booming and influential (Ahuja 2020). The Adivasi movement started as an ethnic or indigenous movement, which again resembles global trends (Della Porta and Diani 2006). Social movements with a focus on diverse identity categories, rather than class, started developing from the 1960s onward (Fraser and Honneth 2003). This shift from 'old' to 'new' social movements has been characterized as a shift from class-based 'materialist' claims, as in the trade union movement, to more 'ideological' issues in identity-based movements, which challenged the dominance of the conflict between capital and labour, as well as the homogenous representation of people in classes (Buechler 1995). Indigenous movements with an emphasis on the diversification of identity categories beyond class have increased globally since the 1990s (Della Porta and Diani 2006) and have united across borders in their struggle to fight discrimination against indigenous people worldwide, as manifested in institutions such as the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations, established in 1982 (Kikon 2017:319).

All the interest groups working for tea-plantation labourers co-constitute a meta-group whose leaders seek to represent the group's interests in particular frames. Pierre Bourdieu has described representation as the 'power to make a new group … by speaking on its behalf as an authorized spokesperson' (Bourdieu 1989:22–23). This 'double representation' – creating a group by speaking on its behalf – shows that representation is always a *Vertreten* ('speaking for') and a *Darstellung* ('as in art or philosophy') (Spivak 1988:275). Different kinds of representation thereby create different mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Caste Hindus have occupied most leadership positions in the trade union movement and 'tea tribe' organizations. The Adivasi movement situationally adapted the use of 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak 1988) to convince tea (and ex-tea) labourers to identify as Adivasi while granting only 'true' Adivasis access to leadership positions, and this enabled them to occupy important leadership positions for the first time in tea-plantation history.[14]

Conclusion

In this article, I have analysed different ideas about just working and living conditions for tea-plantation labourers in Assam, which were prevalent among interest groups working on labourers' behalf during my fieldwork in India between 2014 and 2017. In the shifting political economy of tea production in Assam, in which large-scale

14 Spivak defines strategic essentialism as 'a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest' (Spivak 1988:205), while Zenker refines it as 'the stance of theoretically rejecting homogenising, reductive and atemporal categories, while politically endorsing them for situated struggles' (Zenker 2016:295).

plantations are increasingly being replaced by small growers, and labour laws and obligations are being de-regulated, the trade union ACMS promoted low cash wages with additional non-monetary benefits to protect the tea-plantation industry from a total collapse. Adivasi activists, who had fought for the acknowledgement of Adivasis as Scheduled Tribes in Assam since the 1990s to make them eligible for affirmative action, have shifted their struggles for justice to the implementation of the statutory minimum wage on tea plantations in Assam, criticizing the trade unions' position as not really working for the welfare of labourers.

Rather than providing a final answer to the question of which idea of justice led to greater socio-political justice for tea labourers, I draw attention to the question of how visions of justice work on labourers' collective identities. I argue, that with the multiplication of ideas of justice – from protecting the old-style plantation economy to promoting affirmative action to fighting for the implementation of statutory minimum wages for tea labourers in Assam – it was not only the better futures the tea labourers envisaged that changed, but also their categories of collective identification. Tea labourers are either seen as 'tea tribes', 'Adivasis' or 'labour rights' subjects' in different regimes of justice. While being used as seemingly identical categories of identification, I contend that the categories were fuzzy and overlapping to a certain extent. The fuzziness allowed these categories to be used differently in different situations.

Adivasi activists promoted the replacement of the term 'tea tribes' with 'Adivasis', seemingly subsuming a large and inclusive group of people. However, in their hidden transcript, Adivasis differentiated between 'real' Adivasis and 'false' Adivasis to decide who is eligible for leadership positions in the Adivasi movement. Their situational adaptation of strategic essentialism resembles earlier strategies by the trade union movement that claimed to represent all 'tea tribes', but allowed only the caste-Hindus among them to gain leadership positions in the trade union.

The Adivasi movement diversified leadership patterns in Assam, although other diversifications (especially involving gender) are yet to come.

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Scales of Affordances: Visibility and Pandemic Encounters among Buddhists in the Javanese Highlands

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Abstract: In this contribution, I explore the encounter between a pandemic-mitigation event initiated by the local administration of Central Java, Indonesia, and a Buddhist village in the highland region of Temanggung. For the minority Buddhist community in the area, the event signified a possibility to pursue media presence. In the previous few years, the village of Surjosari had launched various projects of community and religious revitalization. On the one hand, such projects progressively included the community within the nationwide reach of Theravāda Buddhism. On the other hand, these projects were increasingly aimed at the implementation of a specific ethnopreneurial vision of highland eco-tourism, particularly endorsed by a host of local activists. The article shows how the government's *Candi Siaga* initiative offered an unprecedented opportunity to advance the residents' idea of community development, which braids together religious, ethnic and economic strands. By tracing long-term pre- and post-event developments in the village, I frame this opportunity in terms of affordance. Rather than mobilizing vocabularies of coping and responses that are intrinsic in recent virological discourses, affordances can provide an open-ended and undetermined horizon for encounters between broad processes such as a pandemic and the particular practices of a rural community. This requires us to extend the definition of the concept beyond its applicability to the restricted domain of immediate ecological perception.
[affordances, COVID-19 pandemic, Southeast Asia, Indonesia, ethnopreneurialism, Theravāda Buddhism]

Introduction: Taking Stock of Pandemic Encounters

Since the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic in 2020, Indonesia has experienced a multifarious array of responses to the challenges posed by the health crisis. While the central government has been largely aligned with the policies and countermeasures enacted elsewhere in the world (lockdowns, mass vaccination programs, travel restrictions, quarantines), different groups defined along ethnic and religious lines have offered a range of alternative or complementary discourses and practices. In the strictly medical sense, the pandemic has triggered the resurrection of traditional healing practices throughout the archipelago (Maarif 2021; Aprilio and Wilar 2021). This trend echoes similar responses on the part of indigenous communities in contexts as diverse as Kenya, Brazil, Central Asia, and Pakistan (Ali and Davis-Floyd 2022), and it often indicates simmering processes of ethnocultural revival or political friction that are already underway (Menton et al. 2021).

In the context of traditional religio-medicinal worlds in Indonesia, the major world religions[1] have been at the forefront of negotiating epistemologies and ontologies concerning virological cycles. The position of the national councils for Islamic affairs has been widely televised in a series of debates over the theological permissibility of vaccines of potentially *haram* origin.[2] But internal reconfigurations have also figured strongly. For the first time, the popular Islamic Lazismu Foundation, the charity branch of the Muhammadiyah mass organization, has extended its philanthropic charter to include aid for Christian houses of worship.[3] Indonesian Buddhist monks have turned instead to the promotion of the *Ratana Sutta*, which was widely circulated in online speeches and gatherings. The text is a classic Pāli scripture on the Buddha's sermon in the town of Vesali at a time of plague and famine. While this is a relatively well-known sermon in the Theravāda Buddhist world, it has achieved an unprecedented omnipresence on all levels of devotional life for Indonesian Buddhists.

Processes of the kind summarized above have often been considered through the categories of coping, response and mediation (Irons and Gibbon 2022; Lorea et al. 2022), vocabulary that is also commonly deployed of official policies implemented by governments and biopolitical stakeholders. However, framing pandemic encounters solely through the lexicon of counteraction obscures a set of different developments in which the health crisis presents generative qualities. This might be expressed through the possibility of new horizons for environmental activism (von Storch et al. 2021) and using COVID-19's visual data to advance established conspiracy groups (Lee 2021), as well as envisioning new economic orders in the face of precarity (Bloch 2020). Such examples suggest the underdetermined character that is constitutive of relationships of this kind between a materially and semiotically diffused phenomenon like a pandemic and a receptive perceiver, articulated in the first-person singular or plural.

In the following sections, I will trace the evolution of such relationships and the horizons they open up. I draw on fieldwork material and subsequent online research I carried out between 2015 and 2020. In this contribution I will focus on a distinct pandemic encounter in the ethnographic setting of Temanggung, in highland Central Java, where I have lived and conducted three fieldwork stints between 2015 and 2020, some of which, in the context of my doctoral research, was concerned with Buddhist material culture. Although moving from canonical ethnographic approaches – structured and unstructured interviews, preliminary surveys – in this case the temporally

1 So-called world religions (Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism) are captured in Indonesia through the Sanskrit-derived category of *agama*, as opposed to the constellation of native practices and beliefs (*kepercayaan*) and 'customs' (*adat*). To this day the *agama*s are the only permissible religious affiliations that can be declared in the state bureaucracy, although several steps have been taken in recent years towards making local religious traditions official to some degree (Aragon 2021).

2 See Pedroletti (2022).

3 See for instance Fauzia (2020)

extended interaction with the communities ended up constituting a crucial point in itself for highlighting what was to become a complex, long-term cultural trajectory in the making. It also allowed a better orientation of the post-fieldwork, online material I collected (and afforded to a great extent by pandemic circumstances), material through which I could follow the developments of the Temanggung community through a multiplicity of angles and on which this article is largely based.

The highland Temanggung district hosts a sizeable Buddhist minority,[4] scattered among several villages, historically positioned in complex relationships of continuity with Islamic and Javanese forms of ritual life and collective identity. In recent years, the community has experienced significant innovations. On the one hand, the broad influences of standard Theravāda Buddhism have transformed the devotional practices of the community in major ways, traditionally leaning towards more porous understandings of religiosity and denominationalism (Rizzo 2022). On the other hand, the religious revitalization sweeping the villages has intersected the efforts aimed at transforming the economic and aesthetic appeal of the wider area. This is especially tangible in the village of Surjosari.

For the past decade, young activists and return migrants have worked extensively to refashion this village's media presence and attractiveness. Prior to the spread of the pandemic in 2020, they had succeeded in drawing attention to Surjosari on a local scale by organizing a number of cultural gigs, concerts and religious events that thrived predominantly thanks to the activists' own personal networks. However, the government initiatives introduced as a response to the pandemic offered an unprecedented occasion for the Surjosari community to achieve visibility on a larger scale. For the villagers, this translated not only in putting the community on the map of the country's Buddhist affairs, but also in advancing its potential for a distinct vision of the leisure economy nestled between cultural tourism and eco-tourism, a potential that began to manifest itself effectively soon afterwards.

The notion of affordance proves useful in framing dynamics such as those underway among the highland Buddhist minorities. First, it can offer a different angle for reading a vast set of cultural processes. While bound to a series of initiatives directly connected to the spread of the virus, comprehending the encounters with the pandemic that have been substantiated among Surjosari Buddhists using only the language of coping and countering would make the richness of the ongoing developments in the village and the distinct configurations they allow unintelligible. In the following sections, I will briefly recap the recent discussion on the affordance concept as developed both within

4 According to 2010 statistics, Buddhists constitute 0.77% of the Indonesian population, accounting for just under two million followers. However, their distribution in the country is highly uneven, with larger pockets in western islands such as Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan and Lombok. 'Javanese' Buddhists are a minority within a minority, although no official statistical data exist on the connections between religious and ethnic identities.

and beyond anthropology. I will then turn to ethnography in order to explore a distinct possibility of temporally and phenomenally extended affordances.

Gibson's Ecology of Perception: The Various Fortunes of a Concept

The idea of affordance stems from the work of the psychologist James Gibson (1979; 1983). Describing the relationships that exist between an organism and its environment, Gibson defined as affordances that which an environment offers to a perceiving entity. These are relationships that come into being naturally and that do not require prior structured knowledge about them on the part of the perceiving subject. They are simultaneously objective features and non-deterministic potentiality, in that they depend on the specificity of the perceiver to be ultimately taken up, engaged or 'responded to'. Affordances constituted a relatively controversial notion at the time of Gibson's writings for questioning the pervasive role of representation and mental grids that was widely assumed in perception psychology (Chong and Proctor 2020). Gibson postulated instead the possibility of direct experience between a perceiver and the environment. Representation would be a matter of later concern, if at all.

The notion of affordance has come a long way from its original formulation. It has proved particularly productive in several fields, from psychology to architecture (Maier et al. 2009) and media studies (Costa 2018; Nagy and Neff 2015). In anthropology, it has mainly been received as part of Ingold's influential reflections on human–environment principles of correspondence (Ingold 2015; 2002; see also Ingold 2018 for a critical rejoinder). More recently, affordances have also been mobilized by authors working on the anthropology of ethics (Keane 2014; 2018), who have woven Gibson's Ur-concept into the ongoing conversation on the phenomenology and ontology of human interaction (Mattingly 2018; Throop 2016).

Points for discussion, and sometimes departures from the earliest organization of the concept, have been numerous. Some authors have questioned the 'objectiveness' of affordances as given properties of the world and have created distinctions between affordances as stable occurring features of the natural world and affordances as emerging in contact with a distinct perceiver (Shaw et al. 2019). However, a compelling debate for anthropologists is the extension of affordance theory beyond the immediate physical world. That is, the prospect emerged that, not only is the perceivable physical environment furnished with possibilities for action, but that situations, narratives and whole sociocultural worlds can constitute the terms for such a relationship (Keane 2014a; Guinote 2008). Ramstead (2016) coined the notion of 'cultural affordance' in order to signal this specific level of experience, drawing expectations, norms, conventions, social cooperation and linguistic or symbolic mediation to the pool of features that 'afford' upon interaction with perceiving subjects.

The discussion has then veered to whether this expanded understanding of affordances collapses the notion back to representationalism, or whether instead such strands of cultural life are also framed as embodied and perceptually grounded practices. Authors like Ingold (2016; 2018) and van Dijk and Rietveld (2020) have worked in this direction and turned to imagination as a feature complementary to the immediacy of the environmental encounter, binding perception, action and image. By doing so, they loosen the distinction that is often posited between embodied phenomena and representation (including discourse) along lines similar to the theorization of 'affects' by Donovan Schaefer (2015). Recuperating the classic Kantian definition (Rundell 2022), imagination is understood as a faculty intrinsic in human cognition that allows 'living creatively in a world that is not already created, already formed, but one that is itself crescent, always in formation, […] a world without objects' (Ingold 2018:43). As such, imagination is in continuity and/or alternation with immediate perception and embodied sensations and practices.

The evolution of the notion of affordance is significant and might offer a different entry point for understanding the manner in which a composite sociocultural formation such as a pandemic – encompassing narratives, procedures, technologies and virological circulation – is encountered in specific contexts. The set of events concerning the Buddhist community of Surjosari constitutes an ethnographic scene which addresses, on the ground, the possibility of large-scale affordances. Seemingly, the pandemic emerges here as exclusively neither an arrangement of physical, medical or procedural calls and responses, nor a discursive formation. The affordance is materialized between a sequence of material and linguistic practices that are traceable to the spectrum of pandemic manifestations, territorialized in the organization of the *Candi Siaga* event, and a responsive citizenry, a phenomenal 'we' attuned to the possibilities triggered by the call of the governmental initiative vis-à-vis the specific experience accumulated in the months and years before the virological crisis.

From Community Revival to Visibility: Transforming a 'Javanese Buddhist Village'

The village of Surjosari underwent dramatic transformations over the course of just a couple of years, that is, between my three fieldwork stints in the area in 2015, 2017 and 2019. An unassuming collection of settlements, hardly distinguishable from the other farming hamlets of the highlands, had morphed into a lush and neat locality that aspired to the status of a recognized eco-tourist destination. Since 2019, the entrance to the village has been signposted by a large wooden gate that welcomed the visitor with a salutation in classical Javanese. Less visible at first glance, the core of the village was

now surrounded by plots of land growing ginger, mushroom and other crops using the principles of permaculture.

The green landscape, which stretched uphill, included a waterfall and morphed into a thick forest. A major feature of Surjosari emphasized within these recent developments was the religious affiliation of its residents. Like the overall scenery, Buddhism was a relatively low-key sight in the village, flagged only by the discreet presence of a *vihara*.[5] Instead, by 2020, Buddhist shrines dotted the area outdoors and in. Buddhist celebrations in the village constituted a frequent form of sociality for the residents, and, increasingly for outsiders. Surjosari was in a process of reconfiguration that weaved together ethno-identitarian ideas, religious stances and a leisure economy.

Connecting the threads that thematized the rapid changes underway in Surjosari was a host of local activists, who were predominantly organized around a youth association (*Pemuda Buddhis*) set up by thirty-year-old Subagyo.[6] A Buddhist Studies graduate working in the digital print industry, this man had moved to the village only two years before, upon marrying a woman from the area, whom he had met at college. The activist group was inaugurated in 2016, with a ceremony overseen by a Theravādin monk and intended originally to socialize the younger residents on a Buddhist platform. In fact, a major supposition underlying the association was that the village's demographics and rural Buddhism were both in a state of decay. Revitalizing social-religious commitment starting from the youngest residents would redress this course in the long run.

The membership of the association and the themes along which the village restructured itself showed deep ties with broader trends, which embedded Surjosari into processes that stretched well beyond the apparent remoteness of the highlands. The founder of the group, Subagyo, like some of the other 'senior' members, were highly mobile individuals or return migrants from the island's major cities who had brought back with them distinct experiences and sensibilities regarding religion and economic development, as well as a range of images about rural life. Ideas about 'authentic' Javanese folklore and lifestyle had surged with increased strength in the years following the decentralization program of post-Suharto Indonesia. A wide set of discourses and official programs revalorized ethnocultural features as a desirable expression of individual and collective identity (see, for instance, Bogaerts 2017). In such narratives, religion was often conflated in the pool of cultural markers. The life trajectories of two of the most dedicated 'activists', Subagyo and Wahyu, were exemplary of the process by which these macro-trends seeped into the village.

Despite his recent identification as a farmer, Subagyo had grown up in urban environments throughout his life thus far. He was educated in a private Christian school

5 In the Buddhist context of Java, a *vihara* denotes a Buddhist temple, normally affiliated with a registered association, as distinct from a *klenteng* (Chinese-syncretic worship venue) and a *cetya* (prayer house).

6 The names of my research participants have all been anonymised.

first and in the capital's Buddhist college later. Before marrying, he also lived in Yogyakarta, a major cultural hub on the south coast of Java, where he got acquainted with Javanese spiritualist groups and began stockpiling his substantial library on Javanese arts and mysticism. The care he dedicated to Javanese culture was also visible in his day-to-day activities. Over the course of my stays in Temanggung, Subagyo donned Javanese traditional attire more and more often, and he increasingly spoke in Javanese rather than standard Indonesian on all levels of communication, from daily conversations to social media posts.

Unlike Subagyo, Wahyu was born and raised in the Temanggung regency, in a family of tobacco farmers. However, he spent much of his adult life migrating back and forth between the village and the island's main cities. He contributed to the activities of *Pemuda Buddhis* with a distinctive blend of managerial and religious 'know-how' that came from his specific biography. In 2018, Wahyu graduated in economics in the city of Semarang, while his chief interest revolved around the coffee industry, a booming domestic market in both Java and Indonesia at large. While the passion for coffee was shared with Subagyo and some of the other activists, Wahyu was the person who was most engaged in the business himself, and he had a rich network of personal contacts across the region. One of the reasons why he decided to return to the village permanently was the prospect of developing a modern coffee enterprise in the area. According to Wahyu, it was an especially favourable conjunction, especially since 2016, when the government recognized the *Temanggung robusta* variety of the bean with Geographical Indication certifications and related standards.

However, Wahyu was also a practising Buddhist. Although he had been born and raised in a practising family, he often pointed to his university years in the city of Semarang as particularly intense from a religious perspective. Unlike the kind of Buddhism he had experienced as a child, in Semarang he grew closer to Theravādin forms of meditation and chanting, which he brought to the village on those occasions in which he led the worship session by the village *vihara*.[7] In 2018, he also became a *samanera* (a temporary monk).

The biographies of local activists like Subagyo and Wahyu suggest some of the concrete channels through which broad ideas of revamped ethnic culture, as well as economic and religious innovation, become diffused through a village like Surjosari. The vision of developing the village into a sustainable and culturally intriguing leisure destination was undoubtedly the result of the specific convergence of the activists' backgrounds and mobilities. At the same time, it was correlated with large-scale processes which instantiated a form of 'ethnopreneurialism' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009) drawing together environmentalism, metropolitan tastes and religious self-awareness, the latter a salient feature of the 'turn to religion' of post-Suharto Indonesia (Hefner 2011).

7 It is common in Indonesia to have temple worship led by lay practitioners instead of ordained monks, especially in areas farther away from major urban centres.

Ecology, Sociality and the *dhamma*

Since its foundation, the *Pemuda Buddhis* activists invested great efforts in revitalizing the highlands' Buddhist sociality in general, particularly through the organization of communal events and the restoration of Javanese agricultural rituals. However, in Surjosari the revival took on nuances that were more explicitly oriented towards a touristy vision of village development, filtered through the ubiquitous theme of *potensi wisata* (touristic potential) that characterised several conversations among the activists. The vision promoted by the activists and most residents recalled closely the widespread (and vehemently debated) notion of the 'eco-tourist community' signalled by Hayami (2006) in the comparable highland settings of northern Thailand and Myanmar, where this form of cultural leisure economy has been in existence for some time.

The thorough refurbishing of Surjosari's image involved several facets, from aesthetic enrichment to more conspicuous infrastructural and agricultural upgrades. The relative success with which both activists and residents were able to refashion the village in just a few years was also made possible by an array of different funds which the villagers were quick to tap into. Part of the budget came from government applications, such as a fund allocated within the *Keluarga Sehat* ('healthy family') program, a wide scheme aimed at assessing and intervening in public health within the household. Simultaneously, the regional government between 2016 and 2018 allocated a budget entry for the upgrade of the system of public water supply to those administrations that filed such a request. In Surjosari, the fund was utilised mainly to restore the canal system of the three different waterways that make up its supply, but it was also partly employed in the re-establishment of community rice barns.

The implementation of a modern and sustainable coffee industry in the highlands attracted an additional stream of funds. The intercropping of distinct varieties of coffee and tobacco in the Temanggung area was discussed in several conferences and workshops, and it was actively supported by the regional administrations as an effective way to counteract land erosion. However, the very start of a 'coffee project' in the framework of sustainability principles and community development was realized on the outskirts of the village thanks to a fund donated by Buddhayana, the ecumenical Buddhist association.[8] The allocation of the fund was decided upon at a meeting that Wahyu managed to organize in Surjosari. On that occasion, the activists and the Buddhayana representatives declared that the creation of a community-run plantation was a positive form of investment in light of the project of socializing the Buddhists of the district, as well as for launching an enterprise that, while open to interfaith participation, would be traceable to the normally marginal presence of the local Buddhist community.

8 This association was founded in the 1950s by the charismatic monk Ashin Jinarakkhita, and it has been a crucial platform for channelling the modernist revival of Buddhism in Indonesia (see Chia 2020; Yulianti 2022).

The question raised during the meeting with Buddhayana – that of the community's visibility – was central to Surjosari's revitalization project. Over the following years, as the revamping and amelioration of the village morphed more explicitly in an ecotourist direction, many activists and residents articulated the subject of visibility as pertaining to two distinct but interwoven issues. On the one hand, visibility signified the exposure needed to launch a leisure destination in the broader region and in Java at large. On the other hand, for activists like Subagyo and Wahyu, visibility was also understood as raising the right awareness in the rural Buddhist community in respect to itself, thus counteracting the trend of religious disengagement.

In fact, a frequent argument in decay narratives of village Buddhism was the reality of the scattered nature of Buddhist villages and, sometimes, of individual Buddhist households, amplified by the physical geography of the region. This condition isolated further segments of the community and, according to some, facilitated conversion into publicly more visible religions, such as Islam and (to a lesser extent) Christianity. Conversely, enhancing communal engagement via events, rituals and projects would create a more cohesive and self-confident religious community. From 2018, *Pemuda Buddhis* activists began to organize events and small concerts and restored Javanese rituals, often centred around Surjosari, also with the aim of improving the perception of the vitality of the community towards itself. The issue of visibility, and the material and spiritual prospects it yielded, eventually took off by 2020.

The *Candi Siaga* Event: A Pandemic Affordance

The diffusion of the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia triggered an array of different mitigation responses. In addition to the implementation of official biomedical policies country-wide, regional and provincial administrations launched local programs intended to counteract the social and economic effects of the pandemic. In May 2020, the governor of Central Java, Ganjar Pranowo, introduced one such provincial scheme, called *Jogo Tonggo*, or 'taking care of each other' among neighbours. The program channelled funds from the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform and aimed at introducing the conventional changes required for countering the pandemic within local neighbourhoods,[9] such as the distribution of hand sanitisers. The program also financed the distribution of food staples, and primary commodities and subsidized any form of creative endeavour connected to local responses to the sanitary conditions.

Numerous initiatives were pioneered as part of the *Jogo Tonggo* program throughout the province. In the Temanggung region, it funnelled projects through established institutions (i.e., *Jogo Santri*, *Jogo Pasar*, 'care' for Islamic education and for the market-

9 The *rukun tetangga* or *rukun warga* ('RT/RW') administrative unit in Indonesia.

place respectively). It also involved more amusing ventures. Al Khadziq, Temanggung's regent, sent out many of the region's officers dressed up as Javanese *wayang* puppet characters, and supported by crews of local artists, to some of the area's markets and public venues in order to remind or instruct residents about the health protocols that were being implemented nationwide to contain the virus.

An additional and localized manifestation of the *Jogo Tonggo* program in Temanggung was *Candi Siaga*. The main goal of this initiative was to award a prize to the village that was best equipped to confront the situation of social and sanitary distress. It involved a committee appointed by the regional police headquarters which toured a selection of 250 villages, designated by the regency's sub-districts. The evaluation was made against the criteria of health security, socio-economic resilience, food security, sustainability and innovation, and it was meant to provide motivation and recognition simultaneously to the winning village as an example of good administration for the entire regency.

The *Candi Siaga* competition took place in mid-September 2020. Surjosari was the only village representing its sub-district in the Eastern Highlands of Temanggung. The visit of the committee to the village broadly followed what appeared to be a standardized pattern. The officials were routinely welcomed by the residents with a banquet and a few stalls showcasing or selling items representing the village, normally food produce or handmade souvenirs. After a few courtesy greetings with the village and/or the sub-district authorities, the event was routinely formalized with a few official speeches and a tour of the village sections that were deemed relevant to the themes of the initiative.

However, the committee's visit to Surjosari also stood out for a number of reasons. The commission was greeted by about thirty residents entirely clothed in traditional Javanese dress, namely white blouses and brown-patterned *batik* gowns for the women and striped or floral vests for the men, with a *sarong* and a tight fabric headwear (*blangkon*). Throughout the visit, the residents put up a few stalls exhibiting the goods that were perceived to be most representative of the village: packaged ground coffee, green coffee beans, and statuettes embodying Buddha Sakyamuni[10] in gold and white-clay iconographies, manufactured by a local artisan. Consistently with the recent changes and introductions implemented in the previous few years, Surjosari seemed to present itself as a village combining a straightforward Buddhist affiliation, strong local agronomics, a sense of care for the environment and, importantly, an expressive manifestation of Javanese ethnic identity.

The main part of the visit consisted of the village tour, in which the delegation was guided by the village head, together with Subagyo and his father-in-law Martono, both of whom often acted as unofficial community organizers. The authorities were shown the renovated public water taps and the large jugs with water that the residents had set

10 The historical Buddha and the main iconographic representation in contemporary Indonesian Buddhism together with *bodhisattva* Kwan Im, the latter found predominantly in non-Theravādin environments..

up in front of their yards, which, after the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, were supplied with soap bars for public use. Martono also pointed to the community kitchen (*dapur umum*), which had been organized in the village, and to a section of the district recently designated as a quarantine quarter.

During the speech, the members of the committee addressed the overall scope of the program, namely the compliance with national sanitary policies and the criteria underlying the *Candi Siaga* initiative. They complimented the residents for the pleasant atmosphere that emanated through the village's verdant scenery and the sense of 'compactness' (*kekompakan*), addressing the communal effort of the villagers and the perception of religious-identitarian uniformity. Both were presented as desirable qualities for resisting a draining situation such as a pandemic outbreak.

Encountering Visibility: Social Media, Tourism and the Weisak Ceremony

On 5th October, the Temanggung police headquarters released a document with the village scores in the *Candi Siaga* competition and naming the winner. Surjosari came first in the ranking with a score of 556, ahead of a village in the subdistrict of Selopampang, which scored 544. The police branch awarded the winning village a framed certificate and a small monetary donation. The prizegiving ceremony was organized at the Temanggung headquarters, while the award was collected by a representative of the departmental office of Surjosari's sub-district, and smaller, gilded prizes were handed over to the villages ranked second and third.

The achievement was shared and advertised enthusiastically in the social media accounts of some of the residents of Surjosari, particularly its foremost activists Subagyo and Wahyu. Subagyo, in particular put together a video clip in which he showcased the newly awarded village and uploaded it on to YouTube, on a channel dedicated entirely to the village that had been created shortly before. Like his posts on Instagram and Facebook, these posts tended to gather likes and comments from his extended network of acquaintances, other Buddhists and, occasionally, residents of the province praising the natural sights and aesthetics of Surjosari.

The *Candi Siaga* events and the prize-giving ceremony were also widely shared by the official accounts of both the Temanggung police headquarters and the Temanggung City administration. Besides reporting on the event, in the days following the ceremony, the social media pages of Temanggung City began sharing photos of Surjosari originally posted by Subagyo. Although the posts were initially associated with the *Candi Siaga* initiative, they increasingly hinged on general depictions of Surjosari's lush landscapes, its waterfall and pristine rural feel. Shots of Surjosari in institutional Facebook and Instagram posts began to appear in the regular feeds of the profiles,

Figure 1 Awarding the winner of the *Candi Siaga* mitigation initiative. *Courtesy of Kab. Temanggung Media Center*

which routinely reposted pictures about the regency's attractions. Weeks after, pictures of Surjosari were shared from private profiles other than the village's activists, and accumulated likes, comments and re-shares from various quarters of the province.

The village's social media presence was further amplified as it hit popular travel and cultural websites such as Brisik.id. Consistently with the tone of the institutional media pages, the portrayals of Surjosari tended to focus on its leisure potential, encouraging visits to the area 'for picnics' and occasionally depicting the village as a 'Buddhist oasis'. Shortly afterwards, in a column on Buddhist celebrations in the country, Surjosari was showcased in the mainstream media outlet *Kompas*, with photographic portrayals of its Buddhist statues in the verdant setting of its front yards.

The mediatic presence of the village was quickly translated into actual tours by visitors from the regency and beyond. Despite the dip in the tourist economy generally in 2020 due to the pandemic restrictions still in place, Surjosari recorded an unprecedented increase in the number of visitors making their way through the steep highlands, inaugurating a new pattern of tourist circulation which, until that point, was limited to the Buddhist residents of the immediate surroundings or Subagyo's network in Java's Buddhist associations.

Along with the attention received in the framework of its tourist prospectus and sustainability, Surjosari also earned an unprecedented centrality within the region's Buddhist affairs. According to Subagyo, requests from Buddhist groups and individuals to perform religious practices and meditation in the village increased substantially after the *Candi Siaga* event, although he declined many such requests because of the pandemic protocols. Apart from the overall atmosphere, which was enhanced by the placement of outdoor altars (a rarity in Muslim-majority Java), for the Buddhist community of the region and the nearby cities, a major attraction seemed to be the possibility of meditating by Surjosari's waterfall and lush hillside. The general upgrades undertaken in recent years in the village included revamping the path up to the waterfall. The track was now equipped with handrails and a large half-shaded wooden platform over the pool intended for individual and group meditation, evoking a distinct eco-spiritual landscape and imaginary (Badone 2016; Salazar and Graburn 2016).

A couple of months later, Surjosari was eventually chosen by the regional committee for Buddhist affairs as the location for the regional *Waisak* ceremony, a major Buddhist event attended by thousands of practitioners. The most important Buddhist holiday in the country, in recent years Waisak was decentralized to regional events of greater or lesser sizes on the side of the official ceremony held at the Borobudur complex. The regionalization of Waisak was frequently explained on the grounds of the logistic and financial difficulties many less well-off practitioners found in getting to the Borobudur monument. According to others, however, the scattered character of the Waisak celebrations originated in inter-denominational conflicts among the country's Buddhist organizations, including institutional friction among the associations sitting on the national board for Buddhist affairs.

Although Surjosari had already hosted a few small-scale events in the several months prior to the pandemic, the organization of a Waisak ceremony was by far the largest enterprise involving the village and its residents. The two-day event was organized by the *Keluarga Buddhis Theravada Indonesia* organization ('Indonesian Theravāda Buddhist Family'), an umbrella organization bringing together the country's lay and monastic Theravāda associations. The organization brought to the village seventeen monks from various monasteries in Java, together with hundreds of lay practitioners from cities such as Semarang, Yogyakarta and Surabaya. According to Surjosari's young activists, the event gathered up to three thousand people in what was the first regional Waisak in two years.

According to many interlocutors, the Waisak 2021 ceremony in Surjosari was one of the largest organized outside of the institutional ritual at Borobudur, with the greatest number of participants. As in previous years, the Waisak was inaugurated with the release of a few captive birds, overseen by the monks, and attended on this occasion by the Temanggung regent Al Khadziq. However, the celebration stood out for the rich set of rituals, performances and side events that accompanied the main ceremony, held on a site that functioned as a village square.

Figure 2 The waterfall scene at Surjosari, as shared on social media. *Courtesy of A. Purwanto*

The official procession that wound through the village was coloured by a showcase of Javanese cultural and religious features. The *Pemuda Buddhis* youth organizers showed up dressed uniformly in Javanese traditional attire, and a few pieces of Javanese fabrics and headwear were reserved for those of the guests who wished to follow suit. A towering Javanese-style heap of food offerings was paraded after the Buddha statue, while a local crew performing traditional arts was invited to march with the procession. On those two evenings, moreover, an ensemble from Yogyakarta performed *wayang* theatre at length, and several performances of Javanese masked and horse dances took place in the village pavilion.

The organization of Waisak 2021 in Surjosari marked the village's popular recognition as a community defined along Buddhist religious lines in an environment that was widely perceived as enjoyable from the perspective of leisure tourism and was increasingly shared and hash-tagged in social media. Importantly, however, through the vital role of its youth organization, the community of Surjosari clearly portrayed the particular *telos* of a Theravāda Buddhism that had been ethnicized through a distinct idea of Javanese culture that revived filaments of rural religious life as much as it reformulated prevailing notions of 'Javaneseness'. Ultimately the *Candi Siaga* program and the Waisak event consecrated the transition of Surjosari from a decaying mountain settlement into a vibrant resort area, distinguished by an active agrarian and ethnoreligious entrepreneurialism.

On Large-Scale Affordances

The pandemic-mitigation event of *Candi Siaga* represented, if unwittingly, a turning point in the fortunes of the Javanese-Buddhist village of Surjosari. It triggered a cascade of processes and (social-)mediatic reverberations that helped raise the profile of the village to an unprecedented degree. That is, the event afforded a principle of region-wide visibility that resonated with the idea of an eco-tourist community envisaged and partially implemented by the residents over the preceding few years. The visibility afforded by the pandemic response also constituted the bundle of events upstream that allowed Surjosari to be shifted to the forefront of large-scale Theravāda Buddhist rituality.

The set of pandemic-related calls and responses elaborated within the Temanggung regency fits broadly into the original formulation of affordances by Gibson and its reading by authors such as Keane (2018) and Ingold (2002). It might be deemed an 'objective' affordance, in that it is comprised of protocols, virological vocabularies, sanitary procedures, objects and images. But it is also one that, like all affordances, does not ensue a deterministic outcome. Indeed, it was not the intention of the organizing committee to link up to concerns of visibility or ethnopreneurial matters, and this would not necessarily be the case if the winner of the competition came from a village other than Surjosari, with a different background and different aspirations. Similarly, it was not a conscious effort by the Javanese-Buddhist community of the village to capitalize on pandemic-mitigation initiatives and thus advance a premeditated agenda. It was a relationship that came into being from the encounter between an emerging feature of the world and an attuned subject, made receptive, that is, by the configuration of its specific history and corporeal habituations. The Surjosari villagers constituted in the encounter a collective recipient, a 'first person plural' (Walsh 2020; cf. Mattingly 2014:33–58), which emerged from the sedimentation of repeated, small-scale interactions through which members 'become beholden' (2020: 44) in a phenomenal We.

However, the example of the *Candi Siaga* mitigation event and the chain of phenomena that unfolded clearly exceeds the formulation of affordances conceived by Gibson and other authors who engaged with it in a strictly environmental sense. The pandemic as an affordance had a nebulous character in that it was dispersed into a number of physical and sociological components; certainly, it cannot be reduced to virological circulation alone. Were that so, the Surjosari community (and, arguably, much of the world population) could hardly be said to have ever encountered or been affected by it. Yet, the pandemic was perceived as a menace and was acted upon by the community through distinct responses, just as the governmental event was routinely presented within the frame of the virological condition. In this respect, a pandemic might afford in a manner much like Dijk and Rietveld's 'large-scale affordances' (2020:4), that is, that micro-level affordances have the capacity to be coordinated simultaneously and experienced jointly by a partaker in the relation. While Dijk and Rietveld's example (the design of an architectural project) remains confined to the procedures of a relatively circumscribed project, the possibilities it opens up are far-reaching.

Once we recognize that a pandemic akin to COVID-19 resides in the pathogen as much as in the ubiquity of hand-sanitisers, travel restrictions, social distancing and the popularization of medical terminologies and government policies of various kinds – including an event like *Candi Siaga* in Temanggung – its qualities as an affordant become more apparent and far-reaching. The seeming discrepancy between the original rooting of affordances in immediate perceptions and the possibility illustrated by the ethnographic quarter of Surjosari subsists only in so far as we understand individual strands such as policies, discourses, imaginaries and – above all – the very idea of 'large-scale affordances' in exclusively representational terms. As pointed out by Dijk and Rietveld, large-scale affordances do imply an extensive temporality in order to unfold phenomenally. The process tying these types of relations together is imaginative.

Far from an unruly catchall device (cf. Stankiewicz 2016), imagination appears here as a situated and contextual faculty. It is the cognitive and pre-reflexive ability to achieve continuity among different scales of affordances. Rather than a delusional mental exercise, it sits at the very core of basic human consciousness (Rundell 2022). This resonates with Ingold thematizing imagination as a crescent capacity (2018:43) that braids continuously embodied perceptions with creative motion forwards. It also recalls the idea of 'anticipation' in the constitution of reality by perceiving subjects (Crapanzano 2004:19). The experience of environmental inputs and the engagement of cognitive formations occupy a comparable status in the unfolding of affordances and of the imagination that ties them together and propels them into the future (Sneath et al. 2009:12).

Reading affordances as multi-scalar means framing them as coming into being through micro-encounters, as well as via bundles of varying magnitudes brought together by the imaginative first person and occasionally ritualized in events such as *Candi Siaga*. It allows us to entertain the possibility of recognizing continuity and correspondences amidst the ever-emerging and intermittently realized set of affordances between relations and relata. A multi-scalar approach also permits us to conceive and speak of the pandemic as a unitary phenomenon, albeit aggregational and only loosely interconnected, in the ways in which it is encountered by perceivers and proceeds further into cultural practices. The *Candi Siaga* initiative in highland Java is an example of the pandemic affording in the fashion of a dispersed yet contiguous set of events involving a diverse taxonomy of components. The affordance thus precipitated, in the guise of mediatic visibility and tangible advancements in touristic and religious terms, suggests a temporally extensive yet experientially anchored processual stream.

Thinking with affordances may offer an alternative tool for apprehending the generative qualities of a broad social-cultural phenomenon, while not losing sight of the practical ways in which it is encountered. This might be particularly salient in the thriving landscape of pandemic discussions and commentaries, as well as, arguably, in connection with the widening spectrum of rapidly circulating and heavily mediatized phenomena being induced by environmental distress and other cultural aggregates.

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The Wheel of Production Must Turn: The Striving for Normality as a Commitment to Reality in Post-2011 Egypt

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Abstract: In Egypt, calls to restore normality emerged almost immediately after the 2011 uprising started. In the following years, they gained increasing appeal, paving the way to an authoritarian restoration. The revolution of January 25 ended with the victory of a party that promised stability and a strong military ruler, in large part because those promises echoed many people's anxieties and hopes about the future and resonated with their day-to-day practices of handling urgent everyday concerns. This success did not just rest on ideological agreements over political ideals, but also on what we describe as *commitments to a reality* that those involved would consider not to need explanation or legitimation – that is, as normal. Normality, we argue, is best understood as an inherently ambiguous, 'essentially contested' concept that unites three distinct dimensions: (1) *what is*, that is, an ordinary recurring reality that may or may not be normative; (2) *what is and ought to be*, that is, what is naturalized and pursued as normative and necessary; and (3) *what ought to be but is not*, that is, an expectation of what ought to be unproblematic and self-evident, yet is not within reach in the here and now. This productive ambiguity of normality allows for major transformations to take place in the name of the restoration and maintenance of a self-evident reality.

[Egypt, normality, stability, reality, revolution, authoritarianism, utopia, political anthropology]

Introduction[1]

30 June 2013 was an intensely awaited day. Appeals to join demonstrations had been running since the spring. An initiative named 'Rebellion' (*tamarrud*) was gathering sig-

1 Ideas towards this article were developed and discussed at panels at the WOCMES in Ankara, 2014, the EASA conference in Tallinn, 2015, the AAA meeting in Denver, 2015, the DGSKA conference in Constance, 2019, and in public lectures and conferences held at the University Mohammed VI in Rabat, the University of Oran II, and the University of Bern in 2015, the University of Copenhagen, Aarhus University, and ICS, University of Lisbon in 2016, the University of Hamburg and the University of Zurich in 2017, the Frobenius Institute, Frankfurt in 2018, Sophia University in Tokyo and the University College London in 2019, and EHESS in Paris in 2021. Special thanks go to the participants in our

natures against President Mohammed Morsi. The leaflet listed the following reasons, addressing the president in Egyptian Arabic:

> Because security didn't come back to the streets… We don't want you
> Because the poor still have no place to be… We don't want you
> Because we're still begging from foreigners… We don't want you
> Because the martyrs didn't get their rights… We don't want you
> Because there's no dignity for me and for my country… We don't want you
> Because the economy has collapsed and relies on begging… We don't want you
> Because of your dependency on the Americans… We don't want you.

Signature gatherers were ubiquitous across the country, sometimes waiting for cars to stop at crossroads, and even asking foreigners to sign. The leaflet calls for the restoration of order and security and for the economy to be saved, combined with the revolutionary demands of the 2011 uprising (bread, freedom, dignity, social justice, and the rights of martyrs) and nationalist appeals equating dignity with national pride and independence. Bringing together an eclectic mixture of demands as if they were one shared cause, the leaflet reflects the uneasy alliance against the Muslim Brothers between supporters of more radical change and those who were longing for a return to stability under the umbrella of a strong state. While the first often argued that, if a tyrant would replace Morsi, the people would remove him, as they removed Mubarak, the latter were supportive of a takeover of the state by the army. 'A military man needs to take charge' (*rāgel 'askarī lāzim yemsik*) was a view heard frequently in Cairo during that period. Power cuts, economic difficulties and the increase in petty delinquency on the streets fed their grief against the government. A strong feeling of political polarization led many to expect bloodshed.

The event gathered huge numbers of participants. Days before, the loudspeakers in the metro stations started to play patriotic songs. Aymon Kreil's future wife joined the demonstrations. Walking with two friends who were opposed to Mubarak, they lost their group and found themselves in the middle of supporters of the former president. Using the wrong slogans around the wrong people almost led to a clash. In his neighbourhood, Aymon noticed the enthusiasm of former NDP (the National Democratic Party, the former ruling party) members he knew for the change to come. The following day, when the armed forces issued their 48-hour ultimatum to President Morsi to resign, manifestations of joy filled the city centre. People were chanting, waving

research for their ideas, time and engagement, and to Paola Abenante with whom we developed much of the theoretical groundwork for this article. We also thank Asmaa Essakouti, Yasmine Berriane, Annelies Moors, Mukhtar Saad Shehata and members of the research unit Age and Generation at the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient for their support and ideas, and the anonymous reviewers of the journal for their precious insights. Research for this article was funded in part by the Bijzonder Onderzoeksfonds of Ghent University, the European Research Council, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Germany), the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, and the Swiss National Science Foundation.

Egyptian flags and pointing green lasers into the sky, in the fashion of demonstrations at that time. Soon the slogan 'The army, the people and the police are one hand' dominated, and it became clear whose agenda would gain the upper hand: that to restore order and stability.

In this article, we pursue two questions. One is ethnographic, asking how attempts by many to continue living ordinary lives during a revolution can be linked with the widespread popular support for a counterrevolution and the establishment of a new authoritarian state. The second is theoretical, asking what kind of normality was appealed to and achieved by the continuation of ordinary life and by calls for a return to stability.

To answer these two questions, we examine the work undertaken by many Egyptians during the period following the 2011 uprising to craft a political and social reality that they would consider not to need explanation or legitimation and therefore would describe as normal. The normality they sought was expressed in terms such as 'stability' (*istiqrār*), 'ordinary/normal life' (*ḥayā ʿādiyya/ṭabīʿiyya*) and the idea that 'the wheel of production needs to turn' (*ʿagalet al-intāg lāzim tedūr*), a metaphor referring to the wheels of a machine working and hinting at the economy's need for stability. These terms reflect practices of living a predictably ordinary life, as well as strivings for an unproblematic good life yet to be realized. In exploring these calls and practices, we point at the key productive tensions they share: how the liminal rupture of the revolution gave rise to an urgent need to maintain and restore ordinary routines (in the section 'Rupture and ordinariness'), how some people we encountered sought to restore an idealized here and now (in the section 'Yes to stability'), and how political normalization violently imposed itself as an inevitable reality, thereby making some Egyptians long for a normal life abroad (in the section 'Dealing with reality'). Towards the end of the article we engage with theoretical and comparative research by arguing for a theoretical understanding of normality that, rather than reducing it to any one aspect, recognises the ambiguity between three different dimensions: the existing (that which is, even if it is not normative); the normative and naturalized (that which is and ought to be); and the desirable (what is not but ought to be). This makes normality a productive term that participates in the shaping of social realities. In conclusion, we address the ways in which the successful establishment of political stability can result in transformations.

In doing so, we bring into dialogue different instances of distancing towards revolutionary events: the effort to maintain a daily routine in times of trouble, the appeal of political normalization, and the wish to find living conditions that ought to be self-evident yet are unavailable. Despite their differences, these positionings share two important features. First, their aims are commonly articulated in similar terms as being normal (*ʿādī / ṭabīʿī*). Second, they are grounded in an explicit commitment to reality that is not perceived as a matter of ideology but relies on an understanding of a given state of the world as recurring and unproblematic.

An important methodological decision deriving from our approach is not to focus on explicitly ideological commitments and conflicts. While the revolution and counterrevolution in Egypt can be and have been studied in terms of a struggle over the values

and interests that should organize state and society, we highlight a different dimension: the powerful appeal of recurrence and order, the promise of a life without 'headache' (*waga' dimāgh*) in which people and things are in their expected places, even if these might not always be the right or best places. The reality involved in such an appeal is contestable and has been fiercely contested by supporters of radical change. Commitments to a self-evident non-ideological reality are embedded in power relations and are utopian in their own way. However, their utopia is articulated as based upon an existing setting that only needs to be restored to its right form, often being accompanied by a denial of the legitimacy of politics as a means of questioning the social order and commonly held expectations.

Normality is also gendered. Our focus in this article is based mainly on contexts that in Egypt are associated with male roles (even while in fact they are often occupied and claimed by women as well): interaction in streets and alleyways, political action and public performance, and breadwinner roles (Ghannam 2013; Naguib 2015). This is not to say that they are the only or the most relevant contexts – on the contrary, homes and families in particular are central sites of a normal life (see, e.g., Elliot 2021; Winegar 2012) – nor that women have no say in the public space. Indeed, the maintenance of the divide between female-marked domesticity and male-marked contexts of public interaction is an example of a reality that is both a normative expectation and a claim that the divide reflects a self-evident reality by those who find it unproblematic.

We develop our argument through ethnographic research we conducted in Egypt during the turmoil of 2011–2013 and the ensuing period of stabilization. Aymon worked throughout the decade in an old neighbourhood of central Cairo that, during the revolutionary period, was known as a stronghold of Mubarak and army loyalists. Samuli Schielke followed the trajectories of men (and fewer women) from a rural region who by means of migration, education and business sought to realize a materially and morally good and stable family life. The groundwork of our conceptual approach was laid in collaboration with Paola Abenante (2014; Abenante et al. 2015). Our fieldwork shares an immersive approach, rarely relying on interviews, and mainly working through long-term knowledge of social milieus, families and individuals. Our fieldwork also shares the overwhelming experience of major political events that affected the lives of the researchers and their interlocutors alike, even while their positions towards those events were often different. At times, some of them supported extreme violence as a solution to problems. The experience of trying to listen to them while feeling at odds with some of their positions was an important motivation in beginning our inquiry.

Rupture and Ordinariness

At the height of the Arab uprisings in 2011, change was the word of the day in Egypt. It expressed the idea, however vague, of a radical transition, of discarding the old and

corrupt and replacing it with something new and better. Many invested their dreams in this change to come. The specific dreams of change people had and the ills they hoped to replace were diverse and often mutually exclusive. Depending on which political trend supporters of the revolution sympathized with, that dream could involve aims such as democracy, social justice, more gender equality, less gender equality, a better functioning capitalist economy, the overcoming of capitalism, quicker and easier marriage, the protection of the environment, Arab solidarity, more observance of Islamic virtues and identity, a more secular society, and revenge for the martyrs of the revolution. However, whatever the issues at the top of one's agenda, they were more often than not accompanied by the expectation that a new, better normality would be the desired outcome of the change.

Opposing the call for change, a return to the status quo[2] before the revolution was also a common demand at the time. Supporters of the Mubarak's rule gathered around the slogan 'yes to stability' (*naʿam li-l-istiqrār*). The sense of liminality, the feeling that all ordinary rules were suspended, which Walter Armbrust (2019) so well documents for this period, also inspired the desire to restore normality at all costs. In the course of the revolutionary period, this desire found increasingly antagonistic and radical expressions, culminating in the summer 2013 when supporters of the military supported the mass killing of the supporters of the Muslim Brothers and Mohammad Morsi.

The experience and effects of participation in the events of the Egyptian revolution and its aftermath have been studied extensively (e.g. El Chazli 2020; Ryzova 2020; Armbrust 2019; Ayata and Harders 2018). However, the repeated defeat of those who hoped to let revolution rule from the streets draws attention to the social dynamics that opposed the revolutionary utopia of the rule of the *mīdān* ('public square'; also 'battlefield') epitomised by Tahrir Square in Cairo. In late 2011, while a revolutionary minority occupied Tahrir square again and demanded an immediate end to military rule, the Muslim Brotherhood went ahead winning the parliamentary elections. In 2013 and 2014, the new military-led rule defeated street protests by supporters of the deposed President Morsi with extreme violence before crushing all organized opposition movements in the aftermath (see Abaza 2017).

Disrupting the ordinary order of life was a declared goal in the occupation of squares and other revolutionary actions. To many others, however, these revolutionary hopes appeared as a threat, a disruption of processes they expected to recur forever. As a result, the revolution appeared to them as a danger to the ordinariness in which life was anchored.

A striking feature of those days was indeed the fact that often only a few blocks away from dramatic events, life appeared to continue its normal course, with people shopping and sitting in cafés, and with public transportation functioning. Ordinary life was severely interrupted only briefly, most dramatically perhaps in Cairo in the

2 *Status quo* in the sense of 'facts on the ground' that may not be considered legitimate or ideal, and yet appear resistant to change (Bryant 2019).

summer of 2013, when the main streets and squares became unsafe due to clashes and curfews, and a frightening silence came over the otherwise busy and noisy city (Malmström 2014). Yet, even during this violent time of rupture, side alleys often still provided an appearance of near normality.

During the uprising that led to Mubarak's removal, the barricades and checkpoints that inhabitants had installed in Cairo and other major cities from January 28 on were not intended to resist the police or the army, but to prevent trouble from entering their neighbourhoods. The 'security vacuum' (*al-infilāt al-amnī*) more than politics was the overt concern of those who picketed all night long to ensure the safety of the streets. Rumours of looting travelled across the city, with no real means of verification, since the Internet and mobile networks had been cut. Accordingly, inhabitants of all political shades participated in the surveillance (Klaus 2012; Lachenal 2012).

As for 2013, when the military seized power with the support of a large-scale popular mobilization, and supporters of deposed President Morsi in turn organized wide-scale resistance that was violently suppressed, there were many fewer checkpoints being run by the local inhabitants than there had been in 2011. The army discouraged Cairenes from erecting any, and instead a heavy police and military presence enforced a curfew. However, in narrow alleys, such as that in Cairo in which Aymon was living, life went on even at night. The coffee shop, for instance, continued to work until late, an oasis of light and noise in a stark contrast to the deserted main street just around the corner. Many people were following the news on state television, with broadcasts full of reports about military operations against supporters of the Muslim Brothers labelled as violent terrorists. Some customers carried sticks, in case things got out of hand. Even though the inhabitants did not erect barricades to secure their neighbourhoods as they had done two years before, the simple fact of not observing the curfew without even considering it a transgression shows how those living in the alleyways drew a border between events on the national stage and the space of daily routines and interactions they were inhabiting. This sense of non-involvement in major events concurred with a general effort to refrain from any discussion about politics in the alleyways in order to avoid conflicts, even though the majority was supporting the military takeover and although it was impossible to prevent such conversations from erupting from time to time.

Thus, it appears that many people, when they were not directly involved in the conflict, worked to maintain or restore a degree of normality in a situation where violence threatened the fabric of their ordinary routines. Researchers who have studied other violent situations share this observation (e.g. Das 2007; Allen 2008; Kelly 2008). In their accounts, as well as our own ethnographic experience, situations of experienced rupture and uncertainty tend to be paralleled – and countered – by a more or less explicit effort to maintain the continuity of daily routines.

Yes to Stability

Walter Armbrust (2019) argues that the 2011 uprising opened up a period of liminality which in turn inspired an appeal to stop the confusion it produced. He emphasises the figures of tricksters such as the TV anchor Tawfiq Okasha, who became a successful spokesperson for certain anti-revolutionary currents from 2011 to 2013.[3] Armbrust also includes Egypt's current president Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in his roster of tricksters. In addition to the trickster qualities Armbrust identified, however, we argue that el-Sisi's success was more importantly based on his ability to embody normality as a political project. His rise was preceded by the call (which we first heard in 2012 and 2013) that 'a military man needs to take over'. This call was made from the background of the long-term role of the military in politics since the revolution of the Free Officers in 1952: military men had ruled the country for almost sixty years, and therefore they were the best promise for a return to normality.

For his supporters, el-Sisi as a military man embodied the promise and possibility of stability (*istiqrār*), thereby drawing upon an important heritage of the Mubarak era. In the heyday of the Mubarak's rule, political stability went hand in hand with strong economic growth and a clientelistic redistribution of the fruits of growth to those who were on good terms with the ruling networks. In vernacular use in Egypt, stability is both political and personal: it evokes a predictable, controlled state of affairs, as well as a man's ability to provide for his family and be settled in his home (Makram-Ebeid 2012). For many Egyptians, this was an accomplishment they sought to restore.

Our fieldwork was full of encounters in which the people we met explicitly argued for an orderly return to a controlled state of affairs. Those who made such arguments were not necessarily avid supporters of the government; rather, they sought to maintain and restore routines and relations which they mastered and which they relied on in their lives. Already on 30 January 2011, in the midst of the revolutionary turmoil, some regular customers of the coffee shops which Aymon used to frequent were vocally demanding an end to the demonstrations out of a concern for security and the country's economic well-being. Cars displaying placards with the pro-Mubarak slogan 'Yes to stability' peppered the streets.

One day later, on 31 January, Aymon was sitting in a coffee shop with a group of young men following six days of clashes between the police and the demonstrators. In the coffee shop, the contrast with the atmosphere on Tahrir Square was striking. The main talk that day in the group was about the time they had spent guarding their neighbourhood in the 'popular committee' (*lagna sha'biyya*) to which each one belonged. Popular committees were informally organized checkpoints with the aim of protecting neighbourhoods from being looted after the police had withdrawn from the

3 Armbrust relies on Paul Radin's (1956) classic description of the trickster, an ambiguous figure on the margins of human society, both creative and destructive, laughable and cunning, at the mercy of his impulses and reasserting society's values through his capacity to subvert all order.

streets on 28 January. The men were teasing each other, making jokes about bad checkpoints where 'people were gathering in the [inner] courtyard' instead of controlling the passers-by in the street. They contrasted it with the heroic stories by a bulky young man with tattoos carrying a pack of cable ties. 'In our place, they stand their ground, even if there is some gun fight, even if they should fall', he added. He stridently denounced the dangers of chaos. One of his main concerns were the many weapons circulating after the recent attacks on police stations. He added a quote he attributed to earlier Islamic authorities: 'Better 60 years of an unjust ruler (*ṣulṭān ẓālim*) than one day of discord (*fitna*).'[4] The prevailing opinion among those seated there was that people needed to stay at home from this day on and avoid the demonstrations.

A year later, in March 2012, Samuli and Mukhtar Shehata (working together on a documentary film project) interviewed al-Ḥāgg Muḥammad, a senior fisherman working on Lake Burullus near the Mediterranean coast. Addressing the widespread squatting and seizure of property that the 2011–2012 absence of government controls enabled, he argued:

> Lake Burullus has been destroyed during the revolution. It's all trespassing now. Anybody can, if they like, steal and dry up a part of the lake. The police don't come by on patrols. They have all stopped working. And the kids have become shameless, and people do what they want.

However, he did not claim to be against the revolution – in fact, few people in Egypt did after Mubarak stepped down on 11 February 2011 (see also Cantini 2021). Al-Ḥāgg Muḥammad recognized the revolution as a reality that undoubtedly existed, but now it should be resolved to an orderly conclusion, which he anticipated to be the presidential elections that would occur two months later:

> The revolution isn't over yet. The revolution is only over when a new president seizes power – for better or for worse. If things go well and everybody gets what is their right again, and the state returns to what it was, then the revolution's over. But it's not over yet.

From the point of view of al-Ḥāgg Muḥammad, a restoration of the power of institutions was a necessary condition for a secure existence. Political elections are a common means to generate an ordered normality after an upheaval. In this case, however, the elections did not yet bring about such order or normality: that was left to the years after 2013, with the gradual consolidation of a new military-led political regime.

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4 The sentence mixes up a quote some attribute to Egypt's Islamic conqueror 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ and some to the 8th century *hadith*-collector Mālik ibn Anas: ('Better a tyrannical and unjust ruler (*sulṭān* or *ḥākim*, depending on the versions) and no persisting discord') with a quote from the famous 13th-century Islamic scholar Ibn Taymiyya ('60 years of a tyrannical leader (*imām*) are better than a night and day without one').

Since 2013, al-Ḥāgg Muḥammad has been an ardent supporter of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, whom he considers a leader worthy of comparison with Gamal Abdel Nasser. Equally important as his words are his actions. During the revolution, they mirrored those before and after – working on his boat, handling the affairs of the local fishermen's association, supporting his family, and arranging his children's marriages. As the interview with him took place immediately before the wedding of one of his children began, Mukhtar and Samuli were present not only as researchers but also as invited wedding guests, whose socially assigned task was to witness the enactment and reproduction of normal and normative ways of living. For al-Ḥāgg Muḥammad, the practice of living an ordinary and orderly, safe life devoid of surprises and well-connected by ties of kinship and patronage was not merely a way of surviving uncertain times: it was in itself the *model for* (Geertz 1973) the counter-revolutionary utopia of a good life. As a low-ranking policeman explained to Aymon during a friendly conversation at a coffee shop, 'everybody needs to stick to his place' (*kull wāḥid lāzim yelzem bi-makānuh*).

The Egyptian writer and blogger Belal Alaa (2018) argues that being sceptical of change but accepting it as a fact once it happens is a characteristic feature of a conservative 'ethics of survival' wherein inequalities and injustices are seen as the features of an inevitable 'normal/natural condition' (*waḍʿ ṭabīʿī*). The only reasonable and responsible thing to do with them is to manoeuvre them to one's advantage. Alaa's analysis is a critique, a polemic even, against a social mainstream that would not adopt the idealistic aims of the revolution and other utopian projects. His comments echo the common criticism at the time of the revolution of those who did not engage in politics, labelled as 'the Couch Party' (*ḥizb al-kanaba*) because of their supposed habit of merely watching major events on television in their living rooms.

Belal Alaa's critical analysis is helpful for appreciating the work of normalization in the context of this crisis and how it is located at the juncture of an institutional project and the desire to restore ordinary living conditions. However, what we call a commitment to reality and what he calls an 'ethics of survival' (Alaa 2018) does involve a utopian dimension, even while claiming to be anti-utopian. Not all utopias are non-places or projected futures: there are powerful, conservative utopias that promise an idealized yet familiar here and now. Such utopias are paradoxical because they refer to a good life that supposedly already exists while simultaneously evoking a past to be restored or an ideal yet to be achieved – even while it may remain unachieved.

Dealing With Reality

In his book on football during the revolutionary period, Carl Rommel (2021) shows anti-politics to be an important feature of Egypt's recent history (see also Roussillon 1996; Ben Néfissa 2011), based on the binary between 'the nation' as a principle of

unity and consensus, and 'politics' as a principle of disarray and selfish pursuits. This binary is an example of what Luc Boltanski (2009) calls a 'semantic consensus': a shared framework of reality that channels criticism and guides the striving of a great number of people towards conformity. It forcibly excludes elements in the world which do not fit into the reality it shapes. The territorial nation state is an especially powerful standardization device. Boltanski adds that such realities are accompanied by marginal, unofficial discourses and practices that range from resistance to cynicism and opportunism (Rommel provides many such examples). However, even those who are not content with existing conditions must reckon with them as inevitable because that is the reality imposed upon them and, as such, is self-evident (Wedeen 1999; Hibou 2011).

When faced with a radical questioning of existing power relations, as it happened in 2011, Egyptian rulers and institutions worked to mobilize the explicit support and agreement of many of their subjects by evoking the appeal of ever-competent military rule and a well-ordered life of anti-politics. However, their power is equally dependent on a sense of fear, futility and inevitability among those who do not support or agree with it. Following Veena Das, violence is not overcome when a violent event ends; instead, it may become indistinguishable from the social life after the event (Das 2007:219). While visible, political violence on the streets progressively declined in Egypt after 2013, it remains present as an invisible yet constant fear of forced disappearances, random arrests, unfair trials, torture and killings (Amnesty International 2022:152-157). Its invisibility makes this violence a powerful companion and an ally of ordinary normality.

In spring 2014, Samuli returned to Egypt after an absence of almost a year. The infrastructural problems of the supply of electricity and water that were cited as one reason to depose Morsi in the previous summer had not yet been solved, and police stations had been transformed into fortresses after a bombing campaign by jihadist militants. Yet, as he walked the streets of Alexandria he felt little of any of this. People he knew who had been highly politicized in previous years were now focussed on living their lives, looking for jobs and getting married. Cultural life was thriving, too. Some supporters of the deposed president were still trying to convince him that their ultimate victory was nearer than it might seem. Others, however, were in the process of settling with the revolution being over. They did so less out of conviction than out of an acknowledgement that the new status quo may last for a long while.

In a conversation in October 2014, Ẓāhir, a white-collar employee who was born in the same village as al-Ḥāgg Muḥammad and who now lived in Alexandria, described to Samuli the sense of pressure that had compelled him to pursue migration to North America as his long-term goal – a goal that might be within his means due to his training and experience in the private sector:

> I cannot imagine staying here. I feel constantly under pressure from all sides: pressure to fulfil conventional obligations, pressure of work, a fear that I can be arrested by the police at a checkpoint and put into prison just like that, without participating

> in a demonstration or anything. At my work, I find myself having to convince workers not to strike, although I would rather see myself on their side.

Ẓāhir considers himself a leftist, participated actively in the events of 2011 to 2013, and rejects the current rulers of the country. Like many others who shared his view, he settled for waiting in the hope of another revolutionary opportunity in the future. Yet until then, he had to continue living. By 2014, he had come to the conclusion that, for the time being, his two options were either compliance or exit. Because compliance came at a high emotional cost and, at the same time, provided no relief from the fear that one could still be randomly picked up at a checkpoint and disappear, he was looking for an exit through emigration. Either way, he had stopped acting as a revolutionary and had begun acting as a functional part of the unremarkable flow of ordinary life that was and remains the primary accomplishment and source of legitimacy of the current rulers. He located his own idea of a good here and now outside Egypt in a shift that Samuli has observed across social milieus in his fieldwork: more Egyptians than before 2011 think of migration as a permanent relocation to a life of comfort and safety abroad, rather than as a way to earn the financial means to return home to an idealized life in stability.

Elements of an Anthropological Understanding of Normality

The political crisis which shook Egypt in the early 2010s ended with the victory of a party that promised stability and a strong military ruler, for an important part because that promise echoed with many people's anxieties and hopes about the future and resonated with their day-to-day practices of handling urgent everyday concerns. This success is less a matter of ideological agreement on political ideals. In fact, it can coincide with strong ideological disagreement and discontent. The promise of stability under a military leader successfully addressed what we call commitments to reality. That reality, however, has a utopian aspect when the here and now is presented as something that supposedly already exists and is simultaneously evoked as an ideal to be achieved or restored – yet it may remain unachieved in the here and now. This paradox is identical with what both vernacular and academic languages call normality.

Normality, in the sense of *what is or ought to be the recurring reality in the here and now and is or ought to be in no need of explanation or legitimation*, has emerged repeatedly throughout our ethnographic narrative. It became evident in the demand for a return to security and economic prosperity that motivated demonstrators on 30 June 2013; in the coffeehouse in the alley that stayed open in 2013 as if nothing dramatic was happening; in the policeman's and the fisherman's evocations of a properly working state with people in their proper places; and in the former revolutionary's grudging

compliance, as well as his hope for a life elsewhere where he would not be cornered by pressure and fear.

We propose to consider these evocations and practices of normality as elements of an 'essentially contested' (Starrett 2010:628) concept that does not exist apart from the conflicting commitments to reality in which it participates. While it is possible to define normality analytically in unambiguous terms (some of which we discuss below), any clear-cut definition of the term results in the loss of the ambiguity that makes references to 'normal' and 'normality' and calls for 'normalization' productive in the first place.

While the ambiguity cannot be resolved in practice, it can be analysed and understood in a way that allows us to grasp the work that evocations and practices of normality do. Our fieldwork experience in learning to understand what our Arabic-speaking interlocutors meant when they called something *ʿādī* (normal, ordinary) or *ṭabīʿī* (normal, natural) is a helpful starting point towards such an understanding.

The Arabic word *ṭabīʿī* means natural, normal and self-evident. It evokes obvious facts such as in *ṭabʿan*, 'of course, naturally', and unproblematic ways of living, such as in the news headline 'Normal life has returned' (*ʿādat al-ḥayā al-ṭabīʿiyya*).[5] The 'normalization' (*taṭbīʿ*) of relations with Israel is rejected by most in Egypt. Occupying a similar semantic range, the word *ʿādī* means customary, common, recurring, ordinary and normal. As a reply to thanks or in response to a question, *ʿādī* means that something is alright and there is no need for further justification. One of Samuli's interlocutors, a migrant service worker, switched from Arabic to English to explain his preference for Dubai: 'Life here is uncomplicated (*basīṭa*), unlike in Egypt. Here life is normal.'[6]

Yet, things can also be *ʿādī* in a troubling way, such as the Israeli occupation of Palestine, as Lori Allen's (2008) Palestinian interlocutors described this period to her: a state of exception one learns to endure and tolerate. In 2007 Tawfiq, a key interlocutor in Samuli's fieldwork, was working as a health inspector in a state-subsidized bakery, where every day he wrote in the inspection book 'condition: normal' (*al-ḥāla ʿādiyya*). Tawfiq pointed out that this is neither good nor bad. It simply is what it is (Schielke 2015:171). His comment was grounded in an underlying discontent, a desire for a meaningful, dramatic turn that would make things less *ʿādī*.

In contrast, the interlocutors of Alice Elliot (2021), Moroccan women waiting to travel to Europe where their migrant husbands had lived for years, even decades, experienced the circumstances of their ordinary lives as not *ʿādī* at all. Feeling that they were living unfulfilled lives, neither properly married nor unmarried, they put all their hopes in joining their husbands abroad. Migration was their unrealized dream of a

5 See, for instance, *al-Ahram* 30.1.2011, p. 15; *al-Ahram*, 1.2.2011, p. 5 and 8; *al-Ahram*, 6.2.2011, p. 9 and 11; *al-Gumhuriyya* 6.2.2011, p. 1, 2 and 9; *al-Gumhuriyya* 8.2.2011, p. 15; *al-Gumhuriyya* 9.2.2011, p.2; *al-Gumhuriyya* 14.2.2011, p.1.

6 He spoke the last sentence in English.

normal life. Architects and house-builders whose building projects Dalila Ghodbane (2021) studied in Cairo frequently spoke of *al-mafrūḍ,* 'required', or 'how it ought to be' to address the disconnection between 'what is meant to be good for the city and its people and what ends up materializing' (Ghodbane 2021:186). Our own interlocutors too, when describing their ideas of a good life, often evoked *ḥayā ṭabīʿiyya* (normal/natural life), *ḥayā ʿādiyya* (normal/ordinary life), or *ḥayāt banī ādamīn* (a life worthy of humans) as something that is *al-mafrūḍ* but not realized in the here and now.

The use of these and other terms thrives on different configurations of the tension between 'the "is" and the "ought"' (Kelly 2008:353-354), which is inherent in the idea of normality. This echoes theoretical proposals by other anthropologists.

Writing on the aftermath of violence in India, Veena Das (2007) argues that people who survived experiences of extreme violence did not seek to transcend their experience by speaking the truth, nor were they able to resort to conventional normative ideals once their very grammar of a good life (such as what is family or kin, or how one can live with them) had been unsettled. Instead, the violence they experienced became an indistinguishable part of their social lives after the event in what Das calls the 'descent into the ordinary' – a cautious process of minor repairs that allowed for the reconstitution of everyday lives. Her approach resonates with the time when inhabitants of the alley where Aymon lived kept the coffee shop open and avoided talking about politics during the summer of 2013, and also Ẓāhir's choice for compliance in 2014, when revolution was no longer an option. We argue that this is the first of three dimensions of normality: that of *an ordinary recurring reality that may be actively performed and produced* (as if everything was all right) *or pragmatically adapted to* (even while it is not all right at all). Such ordinary normality foregrounds 'what is' as feasible and necessary even when it is opposed to 'what ought to be', as was argued by the tattooed man who preferred tyranny to anarchy. One may make oneself comfortable in it while finding it non-normative. The price of such adaptation, as Daniel M. Knight (2019) argues in his ethnography of the economic crisis in Greece, is the emptying of hope for a normative improvement, which makes it an unsatisfactory definition of normality if taken on its own.

In their critique of anthropologies of Islam that foreground the non-normative dimension of everyday life and the ordinary, Nadia Fadil and Mayanthi Fernando (2015) insist that normality is inseparable from normative discourse. They also challenge the distinction between aims and actuality, promoting instead a focus on projects of striving to fulfil a norm which, by being pursued, effectively constitute and structure everyday life. This second dimension of *normality as the naturalization of norms and relations of power as self-evident through the combined effect of normative discourses and everyday practice* resonates with some of our fieldwork experience. The policeman's ideal of everybody having to keep to their own place and al-Ḥāgg Muḥammad's expectation of the return of the state unite a normative and naturalizing discourse on what ought to be with the work of making it be. Also, the sense of ordinary life provided by the maintenance of daily routines in the alley during the curfew in

2013 had a normative, naturalizing aspect. And yet the equation of normality with the naturalization of norms in discourse and practice cannot provide a satisfactory account if taken on its own (Abenante 2014). Its limits are evident in Ẓāhir's grudging participation in political normalization in 2014, and in the frustration of architects and builders about the unbridgeable gap between ordinary reality and *al-mafrūḍ* (required), how things ought to be. While the coffee house remained open for the inhabitants of the alley, only a short distance away exceptional and extreme acts of violence were taking place. And while the institutions of the state that al-Ḥāgg Muḥammad longed for eventually did return, Lake Burullus did not return to the orderly state he once took for granted.

Writing about Northern Cyprus, Rebecca Bryant distinguishes between two senses of normality that she encountered: the status quo, which meant the unsolved but persistent division of the island; and normalization (*normalleşme* in Turkish) as what '*should* happen after The Solution'. Normalization was both normative and highly unlikely in a 'situation that *should* change yet *cannot*' (Bryant 2019). Writing on Sarajevo, Stef Jansen describes an unsatisfactory status quo against which people evoked 'normal lives' located in a pre-war past. Rather than the feasible object of a striving for the future, 'normal lives' were the object of a 'yearning', a longing that is further out of reach than hope (Jansen 2015). This third dimension of *normality as a desired but not* (*not yet, or no longer*) *realized unproblematic good life* is pronounced in Egyptian social media sites dedicated to the 'good old days' (*al-zamān al-gamīl*) with their conservative anti-political utopia of a golden past (Elsherif 2023). It also resonates with many occasions in our fieldwork where a normal life appears out of reach in spite of its seeming necessity: for example, in Ẓāhir's urge to find a path of permanent emigration which he, by the time of writing this in 2023, has not yet found; and in al-Hajj Muhammad's idealization of a here and now that he knows from his youth but of which increasingly little remains, such as a traditional fishery that is becoming increasingly insufficient for a man to perform the role of a patriarchal provider, and the charismatic leadership of Nasser whom el-Sisi has successfully imitated on occasions, but whose policies of redistribution the latter has not revived.

We propose that, to understand claims and strivings for normality and their underlying commitments to reality, such as those that enabled the success of the counterrevolutionary trends in Egypt, it is helpful to think of them in terms of a mutually constitutive coexistence of three dimensions. They are involved in different degrees when people work on having an orderly and predictable life, function as members of their family and society, call for a return of law and order, make themselves comfortable in the status quo, seek to transcend the status quo, long for an unrealized life in comfort and safety, and want to kill those who threaten their sense of an orderly ordinary life. They are: (1) *what is*, that is, an ordinary recurring reality that may or may not be normative; (2) *what is and ought to be*, that is, what is naturalized and pursued as normative and necessary; and (3) *what ought to be but is not*, that is, an expectation of what ought to be unproblematic and self-evident, yet is not within reach in the here and now.

While for analytical purposes it is useful to be aware of these different dimensions, as an essentially contested concept with a social and political life, normality thrives on ambiguity. It allows the here and now to be evoked in different capacities at different times, and sometimes at the same time: as something to accommodate, restore, and transcend. It allows to restore order and put an end to a revolution while citing revolutionary aims and employing revolutionary affects as in June 2013. But this does not mean that things remain the same: claims and strivings for normality also allow for major transformations to take place in the name of order, stability and 'the wheel of production' that became proverbial in Egypt in 2011.

Epistemologically the unstable relation between the three dimensions of normality hints at a fundamental difficulty in knowing what the reality we need to adapt to or to strive for actually is. The uncertainty about what is and what ought to be is particularly tangible during crises. Whereas anthropology's goal, according to Marc Augé (1987), is to retrieve a sense of the unusual in the taken-for-granted, we have observed among many people in Egypt the contrary move of trying to restore a taken-for-granted reality against the odds of unsettling circumstances. Taking people seriously in the spirit of the 'ontological turn' means, in this context, acknowledging both that the reality they refer to is uncertain, contested and rarely conclusive, as David Graeber (2015) has argued, and also that many seek to comply with it, despite its undecidedness. We as anthropologists may be politically and epistemologically at odds with some such strivings, and yet we need to engage with them, seeking to understand how they make sense to those who hold them, as well as critically inquiring into their underpinnings and consequences.

The Wheel of Production: Order and Transformation

People who expressed scepticism regarding the upheaval in 2011 often complained about its danger to the economy. Their demand was that 'the wheel of production needs to turn'. The metaphor of a wheel in a machine that turns and remains on the same spot evokes recurrence and circularity in combination with forward movement. This is a prime case of the simultaneously here-and-now and future-bound orientation of commitments to reality that are articulated in terms of normality.

It appears that Egypt's current rulers have successfully delivered their main promise of political stability, at least provisionally. In our fieldwork encounters, those who oppose the current president have accused him of injustice, violence and of bad economic policies, but not of causing chaos. Although Egypt's economy remains in crisis, the wheel of production is indeed turning. It has not brought better economic conditions to most Egyptians: Egypt's real GDP per capita has in fact declined since 2012 because moderate economic growth has been counteracted by devaluations of the Egyptian pound, new taxes and fees, and the scrapping of subsidies (*Our World in Data* 2022). Yet, a con-

struction boom of roads, bridges and new cities is transforming rural and urban spaces, with substantial involvement by the military establishment. Recent years have witnessed a tangible drive towards more centralized control over politics, society and housing (El Raggal, 2020). The same president who promised to restore normality has also promised to change Egypt beyond recognition through spectacular development projects.

In Egypt since the 1970s, population expansion and incomes generated through urban careers and international migration have resulted in the transformation of rural areas into a rural-urban conglomerate in which the ideals of a good life fluctuate between rootedness in a village community and the status and comfort of urban living (Giangrande and De Bonis 2018). Inhabitants of rural areas have described to Samuli this experience as both an improvement – of living conditions and the prospects of social mobility – and a loss, of communal ties, traditional livelihoods and an intact environment. Some of the disruptive effects, such as the decline of traditional fishery in Lake Burullus, have already occurred. Others can be projected with some certainty. The northern Nile Delta region of Egypt will likely become uninhabitable before the end of the twenty-first century, due to sea levels rising because of climate change. Millions of people will be displaced (Link, Kominek and Scheffran 2013). Yet today, houses are built, and roads constructed on lands that soon risk submersion, and institutions of the state and family units alike are actively crafting a better version of the here and now at these very same places.

This is a fundamental social paradox of the utopia of the here and now. A future-oriented search for a normal life at a safe distance from unsettling moments of contingency is occurring today under conditions of a constant process of unsettling: globalization, mobility and the growth-based economy. More than that, these unsettling processes have become hallmarks of stable normality and the effective means to pursue a normal life. The striving for normality is a commitment to a self-evident reality, and yet that reality is also uncertain and changing, partly as a consequence of attempts to restore normality.

This is a global condition. Much of what we have learned from our Egyptian interlocutors reminds us of the waves of denial and hostility to change that continue to arise in the wake of other recent crises of our time, such as climate change, pandemics and the sharpening of inequalities. In a world increasingly moved by identitarian movements and authoritarian regimes that promise a return to an ideal here-and-now that will make 'us' 'great again,' it is important to understand conservative strivings for normality without hurrying either to denounce them as morally wrong (as may happen when we write about our immediate political opponents), or to romanticize them as radical counter-positions to a neoliberal hegemony or colonial ontology (as may happen when we write about people who are distant enough that we can view them through the lens of alterity). We suggest that such strivings may be understood within the productive tension of uncertainty and utopian desire on the one hand, and pragmatic anti-idealism on the other hand, which come together in the commitment to a normal reality.

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Phenomenological Anthropology
Philosophical Concepts for Ethnographic Use

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Abstract: As a philosophical discipline, phenomenology is interested in *how* and *as what* things appear *to* a subject from the first-person perspective. Phenomenological analyses can be applied to objects, others, the self, feelings and much more. Yet, how do they appear? Within experience! While this is also accepted in anthropology, I show how we can benefit from some of the theoretical concepts that phenomenology has developed, including *intentionality*, *being-in-the-world*, *embodiment*, *empathy*, *responsivity* and *atmosphere*, to explore specific experiences more thoroughly. To demonstrate this, I introduce the foundations of these concepts: of-ness (Husserl), in-ness (Heidegger), embodied-ness (Merleau-Ponty), with-ness (Stein), responsive-ness (Waldenfels) and between-ness phenomenology (Schmitz). Then I discuss how these ideas have been mobilized in anthropology before applying them to a single ethnographic scene about the weather in Namibia. This allows a phenomenological anthropology to be developed positing that *as what* a thing appears for the subject depends on *how* it appears. This *how* encompasses transcendental structures of experience and the social contexts that shape what people live through, including the normative views they face when acting in the public sphere. By tracing entanglements between first-person perspectives and social, material and normative structures, phenomenological anthropology can make visible what otherwise remains obscured. In concluding, I carve out the unique critical potential that emerges from such an analysis and show the potential it offers for imagining a possible otherwise, two salient components of my version of a future phenomenological anthropology.
[phenomenological anthropology, experience, mind-word relationship, critical theory]

I. Introduction

As a philosophical discipline, phenomenology is first and foremost interested in the relationship between the subject and the world. It explores the various modes in which subjects relate to objects as well as *how* and *as what* such objects appear from a first-person perspective. In analysing these processes, phenomenology is *not* interested in the particular experiences I, Michael, have while writing this text, but in the *structures of experience* that make my writing and my experience of it possible. These structures include, among other things, that I am an *embodied* agent and can relate to the world only through my body. It furthermore includes the *atmosphere* in which I write, which shapes how I feel when writing and possibly how I proceed. But why should we, as anthropologists, become aware of this? Consider the following example.

Before writing this paragraph, I poured water over my tea leaves. While filling the kettle with tap water, I thought about the difference it would make if this was bottled water. Would it be the same to me? Then, sipping my tea, I remembered that in the Catholic Church the water was holy for the priest and frightening to the baptized child, who cried at being made to feel wet. And how, when helping my nephew with a chemistry experiment, we learned that salt dissolves in water by getting 'in between' the water molecules.

But how and in what circumstances can water become a substance to quench thirst, be holy, frighten with wetness, or be a bunch of molecules for me? Through my experiences. To describe the processes that underlie my experience, phenomenologists have developed a wealth of concepts ranging from Edmund Husserl's *intentional* perception of water to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *embodied* experience of water and to the *atmosphere* constituted in the network of relationships surrounding water of Hermann Schmitz. They shed light on specific aspects of how things appear *as something*, as water in this case. In brief, the 'as' is what phenomenology is about.

When analysing this as-structure, phenomenologists typically claim that there is no dichotomy between sensorial perception and categorical thought, but that perceptual experience itself is already cognitive (in that the knowledge we have about, say, water influences the ways we 'see' it). On the other hand, categories can be formed by abstraction from experience. For example, water is only experienced as 'holy' if one has acquired a certain knowledge about it in contexts of religious teaching and learning. The other way around, many abstract concepts can only be properly 'understood' if one has an appropriate experience of them. For example, the concept of hunger is grasped in a different – and more existential – way if one has not eaten in a while and has suffered a period of great hunger. In other words, the 'as' of experience is shaped by factors ranging from elementary bodily states to higher-order cognitive information (Gallagher and Zahavi 2021:8).

My *first aim* with this text is to introduce the *concepts* phenomenologists have developed to explore this as-structure and thus the relationship between the subject and the world. I do this to show how these concepts can become useful for anthropologists when interpreting *specific ethnographic situations*. One might now object that many of these concepts, including *epoché*, *Einfühlung* and *being-in-the-world,* match ideas developed or already adopted by anthropologists, such as *reflexivity, empathy* and *emplacement*. In my view, however, anthropology can still profit from engaging with the originals. This allows us to develop further a language with which to describe, theorize and compare experience. Furthermore, re-reading the originals also leads us to discover new aspects and concepts that have not been recognized in the anthropological literature. The *second aim* of this text is to address the fact that experiences leave traces in our bodies and in our consciousness. Tracing these inscriptions and making them visible become the basis for a *critical phenomenological anthropology*.

But this use of phenomenological concepts in anthropology is not a one-way street. The use of these concepts in a wide range of ethnographic situations can lead to the

kind of wondering that is an important driver of scientific debates. This is because these concepts will come back differently from their encounter with anthropology and 'the field' (Bubandt and Wentzer 2022). Through this, ethnography becomes a means to destabilize, broaden and diversify phenomenological concepts and thus to develop them further. Ideally, this collaboration could be mutually illuminating for both disciplines (Bubandt and Wentzer 2022; Mattingly 2019; Pedersen 2020; Schnegg and Breyer 2022).

Let us start with some history to get a feel for where this journey might lead.

Phenomenology Entering Anthropology

Phenomenology developed in Germany at the turn of the 20th century through the works of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Edith Stein, Max Scheler and others.[1] It emerged when, as Edmund Husserl observed, the sciences had successfully established the understanding that there was an objectified 'reality' that only they could describe adequately. In this world of science, heat, for example, was now defined as energy crossing the boundary of a thermodynamic system. Defining heat in this way, scientists disconnected the phenomenon from heat sensations and anything a subject could feel: that is, they disconnected the phenomenon from the Lebenswelt (lifeworld), as Husserl says (Fuchs 2018: xiv; Husserl 1976c). Because scientists were successful in controlling phenomena like heat in this way, they became increasingly convinced that they could describe the world objectively, while all others only had 'feelings' and 'beliefs'.

Husserl, who is credited with beginning the phenomenological train of thought, replied that a scientist, like anyone else, has a particular attitude towards a phenomenon in the moment of studying it (Husserl 1976c). In making this claim, he was not opposing science (he held a Ph.D. in mathematics) but rather arguing that it operates within the same limits that circumscribe all other knowing. According to Husserl, natural scientists, for example, assume that the world exists 'outside' and 'independently' of us, which is a common 'belief' of the modern era that is not challenged but adopted. In his view, the sciences are also biased and should acknowledge this to improve through becoming more self-reflective.

The critical and self-reflective thinking these writings stimulated entered anthropology through Franz Boas.[2] Boas was influenced by the German historic tradition and claimed that there was a stark difference between what he coined the 'cosmographer' (like himself, referencing Humboldt's idea of the 'cosmos') and 'physicists/naturalists/scientists' (Boas 1887). In his view, a 'cosmographer' is motivated by 'personal feelings'

1 Comparable thinking also developed in American pragmatism.

2 I focus on the US-American tradition because the phenomenological anthropology I discuss largely emerged there. I am very much indebted to Byron Good for sharing his knowledge with me and for correcting some of my initial readings of this history. Developments in France, Britain and Germany were different. A more complete, albeit somewhat divergent analysis is provided by Ingold (Ingold 2000:157).

and is subjectively 'affected' by the world, wanting to discover the 'truth of every phenomenon'. This distinguishes her from the naturalists who subordinate phenomena to laws (ibid.:139). Referencing Goethe and Humboldt, in searching for 'totality in the individuality' (ibid.:140) Boas roots anthropology in the study of the particular, while deeply acknowledging the subjective relationship between the knower and the known. This thinking shaped the generations of American anthropologists that followed, including Hallowell, Sapir, Whorf, Mead and Benedict.

In the sixties, Clifford Geertz furthered this line of thinking by introducing a more explicit focus on experience (Throop 2003). Strongly opposing Lévi-Strauss' structuralism and the emerging cognitivism – the 'cerebral savage', as he tellingly called it (Geertz 1967) – Geertz was among the first to use the term 'phenomenology' when calling for a 'scientific phenomenology of culture' that allows 'describing and analysing the meaningful structure of experience (here, the experience of persons) as it is apprehended by representative members of a particular society at a particular point in time' (Geertz 1973:364).[3] This included exploring how distinct perspectives (i.e., religious, scientific, etc.) frame experience. With this, Geertz continued a salient interest of American anthropology, which was to show how language and categories shape the experiences of time, space, etc. Geertz also drew methodologically on phenomenology by analysing culture as public symbols borrowed from the hermeneutical tradition in phenomenology, especially that attributed to Ricoeur (Breyer 2013; Geertz 1974).

Next to Geertz, Victor Turner made significant use of this early continental philosophy. Although he is rarely considered a phenomenologist, his theory of experience, and especially his distinction between *Erleben* and *Erlebnis*, built on Wilhelm Dilthey (Bräunlein 2012; Turner and Bruner 1986). Whereas Geertz, in the tradition of Boasian cultural anthropology, had argued that 'perspectives' (religious, scientific, etc.) shape what we can experience, Turner turned the arrow around. In his view, the categories these perspectives entail are themselves the result of reflections (*Erlebnis*) of what we have lived through (*erlebt*) unconsciously in the first place (Schnegg 2022; Throop 2003; Turner and Bruner 1986).

The motivation for exploring subjective experiences grew with the 'crisis of representation', which further fuelled distrust in both objectivism and culture as collective representations. The study of subjective experience seemed a promising way to overcome both problems (Katz and Csordas 2003:277).

However, while studying first-person experiences is necessary for doing phenomenological anthropology, the potential of this approach goes further. Phenomenology offers a wealth of concepts that have not been fully explored. The potential for anthropology was first realized by a group of scholars at Harvard under the mentorship of

3 Other prominent early engagements include Hallowell's work on the self. Hallowell talks about his study as a phenomenological analysis of self-awareness, albeit 'for want of a better term but without implying too many theoretical implications' (Hallowell 1955:79). Other early engagements include the works of Bidney (1973) and Kultgen (1975).

Arthur Kleinman and Byron Good and by Michael D. Jackson (then at the University of Indiana, Bloomington). The Harvard group had detailed knowledge of continental philosophy, partly through working with Geertz. Their pioneering works on illness and disease (Kleinman 1988; Kleinman and Kleinman 1991) and on medical rationality and experience (Good 1994) apply phenomenological thinking effectively to theorize the relationship between the subjective experience of being ill and the objectified description of having a disease. While these authors had been laying the foundations since the 1990s, the full potential of putting phenomenological concepts to ethnographic use is only now being realized by pioneering anthropologists like Csordas, Desjarlais, Ingold, Jackson, Mattingly, Throop and Zigon.

Many anthropologists apply phenomenological thinking to understanding how our interlocutors experience the world in which they dwell. However, with the crisis of representation, and partly even before that (as my reference to Boas and the affected 'cosmographer' indicate), it became more and more evident that there was another relationship to be explored phenomenologically (Bidney 1973).[4] This was to reflect on how we as anthropologists experience 'the field' we write about. In his seminal works, Jackson began to demonstrate how the notion of 'lived experience' can become a concept with which to theorize the relationship between how we know others and how they know themselves and us (Jackson 1989, 1996). While most of my text is explicitly about the former relationship, anthropology cannot escape the latter; phenomenology provides a framework for analysing both experiences under one umbrella. That is, we do not have to make different assumptions about how we as anthropologists and our interlocutors experience. In my view, this is a significant advantage for theorizing the relationship between both the knowers and the known.

To learn about phenomenological anthropology, several texts exist. The first and canonical overview was written by Desjarlais and Throop, who identify four phenomenological schools (Desjarlais and Throop 2011). Pedersen discusses this classification, as well as showing how the ontological turn provides an extension of it (Pedersen 2020). Leistle (2022a) places special emphasis on the philosophical foundations (Leistle 2022a). Similarly, Zigon and Throop focus on the intersection between philosophy and anthropology and the most recent developments (Zigon and Throop 2021). Finally, Hahn offers a German introduction, showing how phenomenology has become a source of innovative developments in anthropology (Hahn 2023:353). Others have reviewed specific research fields, including morality, embodiment, the self, the relationship between phenomenology and psychoanalysis, and science (Brandel and Motta

4 Heidegger made this point long ago, when he argued that it is unlikely that the 'psychological' 'sociological' or 'lay' understanding of humans that anthropologists adopt is a suitable basis for describing people outside the Western context. Applying such a Eurocentric model will not bring scientific advancement (*Fortschritt*, literally, a step forward) but rather repetition (*Wiederholung*)! Coincidently, Heidegger's development of this argument was inspired by a discussion with Cassirer in 1923, a hundred years ago in Hamburg (Heidegger 2006:51).

2021; Cargonja 2013; Csordas 1994, 2012; Good 2012; Jackson 1996; Jackson and Piette 2015; Mattingly et al. 2018; Ram and Houston 2015).

What do I still have to add? Phenomenology is a theory of experience. To explore its use for anthropology, I introduce its concepts in more detail than existing texts. But these concepts are not sufficient for anthropology, as I will argue. *What* things appear *as* in a situation is a combination of *how* they appear and the social context. Tracing these entanglements between structures of experience (the *how* question) and the context allows us to make visible processes that would otherwise remain obscured. To demonstrate this and to develop the unique critical potential that lies therein is the main intention of this article.

II. Mind-World Relationships

I used the word 'phenomenon' several times. But how does one define a phenomenon? It helps to consider how the relationship between mind and world was construed when phenomenologists started asking these questions. René Descartes famously distinguished between the material world (*res extensa*) and the mind (*res cogitans*). In this view, which later became known as the representational model of cognition, the world exists twice: once out there in reality, and once as a representation in the mind. When we see, think, or feel something, our consciousness is triggered by our senses to retrieve a representation we have stored. Thus, what we perceive in that moment is not the world but the representation we have of it. But how does the representation get there? According to Descartes, representations are built mostly by capturing information through our senses, like pouring water into a container through a funnel (our senses).

This conceptualization of the mind–world relationship began to change with Immanuel Kant, who introduced the term 'phenomenon' (*Erscheinung*) into the debate. For Kant, the epistemological focus became the phenomenon; that is, what appears, not what is 'out there'. Things became more relational. Kant argued that phenomena are co-constituted through a combination of given *a priori* forms of perception (*Formen der Anschauungen*) of time and space, concepts (*Begriffe*) and universal categories of pure reason (*Kategorien der reinen Vernunft*) and the sensual impressions of the thing-in-itself (*Ding an sich*).

Husserl picked up on this idea when he famously said that we must get *zurück zu den Sachen selbst!*, 'back to the things themselves' thereby moving from Descartes' representations, which are encapsulated in the mind, to the world! While he agreed with Kant that phenomena are shaped by both the mind and the world, he went beyond Kant in two important ways. First, he rejected the idea of a thing-in-itself and argued that even if such a 'real world' exists it does not matter as such. We should rather ask how it is accessible due to the abilities of our conscious engagement with it. For Husserl, mind and world are *relationally intertwined* in constituting what appears phenome-

nally. Consequently, Husserl described what phenomenologists study as '*Nicht Wirklichkeit, sondern erscheinende Wirklichkeit*', 'not reality, but appearing as reality' (my translation) (Husserl 1976d:100).[5] Second, Husserl developed detailed understandings of *how phenomena appear.* In so doing, he overcomes Kant's rather static categories. Pushing philosophy to explore the relationality between mind and world is the main innovation of his analysis, and the concepts I discuss below are largely a result of these kinds of analyses.

Phenomenology and Social Constructivism

Although this might sound like social constructivism, there is a significant difference. Social constructivism is a theoretical framework that suggests that individuals' understandings of the world are shaped through interactions within their social environment. It posits that knowledge is not objectively given, but constructed through experience, interpretation and agreement. Social constructivism emphasizes the role of language, culture and communication in shaping individual beliefs, values and understanding, and stresses the importance of context and perspective in creating knowledge. In a radical constructivist account, nothing at all is naturally pre-given or self-evident, but everything – including our subjective perspective of the world and our sense of self – is a product of social practices, negotiations and conventions. In brief, social constructivists emphasize the priority of language over experience. Phenomenologists, conversely, would typically claim that there is an irreducible mine-ness of experience, a first-person perspective on the world, others and ourselves, which is not precisely a construct of social practices, but feeds into them.

In a nutshell, then, the direction of the question differs: while constructivists ask how socially constructed discourses shape experience and the self, phenomenologists take the self as a starting point and want to learn how an embodied first-person perspective contributes to the shared constructions we have. But what are the basic characteristics of such experiences?

The Basic Principle of Experience

Phenomenologists make a basic distinction concerning experience. In their view, we are mostly so immersed in thinking and doing that we hardly recognize what we are up to. We just think; we just do. Husserl refers to this as pre-phenomenal (*präphänomenal* (Husserl 1966b:484). This kind of habitual thinking and doing is our usual routine, but phenomenology recognizes two ways of escaping it, which Husserl describes as an

5 Whereas Husserl thus argued that all there is, is reality as it appears, some of his followers (i.e., Adolf Reinach, Max Scheler and Moritz Geiger) have proposed a 'realist phenomenology' that tries to get to the things in and of themselves.

active and reflective 'turning towards' (*reflektive Zuwendung*) the experience (Husserl 1966b:484).

The first way to 'turn towards' an experience is often unbidden. Sometimes we are disturbed or torn out of the groove. Imagine a glass on the edge of a table. The three-year-old sitting next to it moves her arm and, at this very moment, you experience the scene differently, almost as if it is frozen: the glass is full, it might be hot, the arm has some length and can reach some places, and so forth. These perceptions, which were in the background while we were in the groove of sitting, talking, playing at the table, are now foregrounded in a moment of rupture and worry. In this moment, we turn our consciousness to the experience itself! Reflections also arise when language comes in to categorize experiences that were previously unreflected, such as when we say, 'Watch out, the glass!' The second way to get to the *reflektive Zuwendung*, the 'turning towards,' is a phenomenological method, the *epoché,* which I discuss in the methodological section below.

With this, I define phenomena as things as they appear in experience. This experience is structured and contains an interplay between a habitual doing, coping and thinking, and those moments in which we turn our consciousness to the experience itself.

What are Phenomena in Ethnography?

Basically, anything that appears can be a phenomenon. In anthropology, topics that have been studied phenomenologically include the environment, time, illness, spirits, the body, emotions, values and much more. But what is special about the approach, and how does it differ from other ways of studying these topics?

In exploring this, let us consider the experience of time. We all know about an 'objective' time that we count in days, hours and minutes. The intervals between days, hours and minutes are the same; time moves at a given speed. By contrast, there is a subjective experience of time in which an hour can feel awfully long, for example, when waiting for a train, or very short, as when trying to finish an exam. The experience is embedded in a complex set of circumstances, including aspirations, feelings and an atmosphere that contributes to the subjective experience of time as running fast or slow.

The questions phenomenological anthropologists ask typically start with 'How does it feel to be X' where X might be 'bored', 'not at home', 'in love', 'ashamed' or 'right.' Or the questions address how material or social phenomena are experienced by asking, for example, 'How do you experience X', where X could be 'the coronavirus', 'the changing weather', 'your family life' and so forth. If a research question is compatible with these, a phenomenological approach might be a productive entry point. But how would one do this methodologically?

III. Methodological Approaches

To give an idea of how phenomenological anthropology can be done, I now briefly discuss three methodological approaches from philosophy – *epoché, free imaginative variation* and *Gelassenheit* – before showing how to access experiences others have through phenomenological interviews.

Epoché, or Suspension of Judgment

The basic idea of the *epoché* (from Greek *ἐποχή,* 'suspension of judgment') is that our everyday perceptions as well as scientific knowledge are laden with more or less implicit presuppositions concerning the being of everything that appears.[6] The most fundamental of these assumptions is the belief in the existence of the world outside of consciousness. But how can we actually be sure about this? How do we know that the world we perceive is not merely an illusion? For Husserl, in order to attain any certainty in these questions and to see things clearly as they appear using experiential evidence, we need to bracket (i.e., to radically question, make explicit, and eventually suspend) all of our beliefs and presuppositions, whether they stem from our own experience, from communication with others, from religion, and so forth (Husserl 1991). In a sense, it is a way of defamiliarizing the familiar.

Introducing the term 'ethnographic *epoché*', Bidney was the first to interrogate critically the assumptions we make when doing and writing ethnography (Bidney 1973:137). Starting with the work of Jackson (1989), the approach was fully developed in anthropology. Desjarlais, for example, showed how the uses of the concept of 'experience' often contain a 'fundamental' and 'romantic' understanding, and that we need to 'bracket' those understandings to see how people establish meaningful relationships to the world (Desjarlais 1994:887). As a result, he finds 'struggling along' to be a much more fitting term to describe the forms of life his fascinating ethnography reveals. Whereas these reflections are a deliberate process, as in Husserl's *epoché*, they can also occur unbidden, triggered by some other event during fieldwork, as Throop has shown using examples from Malinowski's work (Throop 2018:206).

These *epoché*s remind us to reflect on how we as anthropologists experience the world we describe in our writings. But is this what Husserl had in mind? Zahavi denies this, arguing that the *epoché* is so closely tied to his transcendental philosophy that it is hard to use in the social sciences (Zahavi 2018b, 2019). What he proposes instead, and I follow his suggestion, is to apply the knowledge the *epoché* generates about the

6 The *epoché* draws on the Ancient Greek Sceptics and further develops Descartes' project of doubt. However, unlike Descartes, Husserl does not attempt to doubt the existence of everything and hence the world universally. Instead, he aims to doubt and neutralize the worldly assumptions on which our thinking is unconsciously based.

structure of experiences (including concepts like *embodiment*, *being-in-the-world* and *Einfühlung*) as a guide for empirical analyses.

Free Imaginative Variation

Husserl questions whether we can access the world as 'real.' But how do we then get to the things as they appear? To do so, Husserl introduces the German term *Wesen* or 'essence'. This essence might be conceptualized as the common denominator of the diverse variants of a phenomenon, as well as a variety of perspectives on that phenomenon. In his view, if we look at the phenomenon from all possible perspectives and take into account all possible appearances, some basic characteristics remain unchanged; these constitute its essence or core of identity. Free imaginative variation (*imaginative Variation*) is a way to approach such essences gradually while acknowledging that this process is never complete.

Thinking about the water from the opening page, the philosopher imagines variations of the phenomenon to find out how much she can change her perspective on it in her mind without losing the sense of 'water'. It is the search for the water-ness, or water if you will. While free imaginative variation is primarily a tool to think variations thought in the researcher's mind, it can extend to observations as well. Gallagher called this as a 'factual variation', arguing that it can overcome the philosopher's prejudices (Gallagher 2012:308). This means adding others' perspectives on what water is, if you will.

In this way, as anthropologists we want to ask what kinds of water (or love, or freedom, etc.) exist in a particular context and what its specific historically situated essence is. Acknowledging this situatedness helps avoid problematic essentializations, while recognizing that water shares some characteristics in particular contexts. Without them, it would not be water anymore. Think of how water becomes wine in some religious narratives.

Gelassenheit (Releasement), or Opening Up

While Husserl's techniques are laborious practices for getting rid of assumptions (*epoché*) and working towards the essence of things (*free imaginative variation)*, Heidegger proposes a more relaxed methodology (Wehrle 2022:87).

In his view, phenomenologists should 'open up' to allow themselves to notice the phenomenon as '*das Sich-an-ihm-selbst-zeigende, das Offenbare*', or 'that which shows itself from itself, the obvious' (Heidegger 2006:§7). Heidegger offers some related characterizations to describe this opening up, including '*Sich einlassen*' (getting involved) and '*Mitgehen*' (to go along with). With this, he proposes that phenomenologists should strive for an attunement with the world he calls *Gelassenheit* (often translated as 'releasement') – a leap into a region of letting-be. But why do we need to open up, to let-be? His basic idea, and concern, is that in today's world the true meaning of things

is typically hidden and concealed. In his view, we need to become open to see more clearly (again).

Sometimes this requires work too, for example, tracing the etymological meaning words have, and allowing one to arrive at an understanding of what things mean or are. To get an idea of what Heidegger has in mind, think of the word 'culture'. What does it mean? What do we realize when we learn that the word comes from Latin *colere* 'tend', in the sense of 'cultivate'? Heidegger's answer can be found in the famous essay on *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken* (Building, Dwelling, Thinking) (Heidegger 2000).

Fortunately, in Heidegger's view, there are other expressions in which meaning is much less concealed, artwork, including poetry, being the most important one. Here, we can see things more clearly. In anthropology, Weiner (2001) has shown convincingly how this approach can be mobilized to explore meaning among her Foi interlocutors in Papua New Guinea through rituals, poetry and skilled crafting (Weiner 2001).

Phenomenological Interviews and 'Go Alongs'

But how can we know how the world appears to others through ethnography? Anthropologists mostly rely on a specific kind of qualitative interview that puts the subjective perspective centre stage.[7] With others, I refer to such interviews as *phenomenological interviews* (Bitbol and Petitmengin 2013; Petitmengin 2006; Sholokhova et al. 2022). Other names for overlapping techniques include person-centred interviews (Levine 1982; Levy and Hollan 1998) and lived-experience descriptions (Van Manen 2016). The main characteristic of a phenomenological interview is to guide the interlocutor to recall a concrete experience with as few reflections about the experience as possible.

To imagine such an interview, it helps to picture its opposite. Asking interlocutors how Germans feel when their team lost an important soccer match would not be a phenomenological interview. This question encourages the person to give a third-person description how others (the Germans who are experiencing a defeat) feel. By contrast, a phenomenological interview on the same theme takes a number of steps to capture a person's subjective experience, that is, how it feels for her to be part of a group that felt defeat in a concrete moment. Those steps include the following:

First, encourage the interlocutor to remember a situation when she last felt or experienced this feeling by asking, for example, to remember an important match that was lost. Second, try to direct the person to live through that experience again by asking them to describe the place, the social constellation, the things that happened before, the things that triggered the experience, the situation and the atmosphere when the feeling occurred. That is, where were you when the game was played? Who was there? And so forth. And third, encourage the interlocutor to describe how it felt to be losing in this moment using as little interpretation and reflection as possible, focusing

7 Another approach in phenomenological anthropology that I will not be able to discuss is autoethnography.

on the interlocutor's relations to the world, to the self, to others, and so forth. Finally, and optionally, one might ask the interlocutor to interpret these descriptions and experiences, for example, later, now it has become obvious that the championship is now over for one's own team.

In addition, a phenomenological interview can be informed by the knowledge phenomenology provides about the experience of a certain field, for example, time. To learn how the experience of time varies between people or situations, we can draw on Husserl's general model of temporal experience as a fading in and fading out and see how this varies if, for example, I hope that the redeeming goal will be scored in the final minutes.

In similar ways, other phenomenological concepts can inform the interview too. When I am interested in experiences where breakdowns (Heidegger's *Störungen*) are important, for example, it might be advisable to make this an explicit component of the interview by, for example, asking how it felt when one realized something oneself ('We are out!') or when someone confronted one with the evaluation ('Germany lost so badly – we thought you were good!'). In both cases, the pre-reflective feeling is thematized and becomes something we must relate to.

In addition to the phenomenological interview, an effective way on capturing information in a phenomenological, e.g., embedded way are 'go alongs'. Kusenbach introduced this approach as a way of 'walking and talking' with interlocutors through 'their' environment (e.g., their urban neighbourhood in her case) that captures knowing as it is embedded and emplaced in specific contexts. Although she does not cite Heidegger and his idea of '*Mitgehen*' (go along with; see above), there are obvious parallels. The methodological proposition for doing 'go alongs' is that knowledge comes to exist only in the context in which it is embedded, enacted and emplaced. Therefore, it can only – or most validly – be verbalized by our interlocutors and to some extent co-experienced by the researcher in that very situation (Kusenbach 2003; von Poser and Willamowski 2020).

A Note on Didactics

Having introduced these basics, I will now show how anthropology can benefit from phenomenology. To do so, I follow a three-step didactic approach. First, I introduce the philosophical concepts. Second, I show how anthropologists have applied these concepts. Third, I apply these concepts to one scene from my ethnographic fieldwork in Namibia to show how the different perspectives can contribute to theorizing ethnographic observations. Let me take you to Namibia to introduce this scene, to which I will come back again and again in the analysis.

IV. A Phenomenon: ǀ*Nanus* (Rain) on ǁ*Gamoǃnâb*

Following my interest in understanding how Damara pastoralists *(ǂNūkhoen)* get to know the environment in which they dwell, my ethnography in arid northwestern Namibia also explores the rain, the most distressing weather-related phenomenon in their world (Schnegg 2021b, a, c). During one of my stays, I was sitting with my long-term research partner and friend Charles a little way uphill, where we could see deep into the sky across the flat savannah landscape. It had been an extremely hot day, and the sea wind had been blowing since the early morning. People in the area say that this wind is female and that it seeks its male counterpart far inland, and the two winds return to the area together with the rain (Schnegg 2019). By now they were on their way, and we were enjoying a cold breeze on our sweaty skin.

As we sat there, thunder and lightning approaching on the horizon, I told Charles that our neighbours in the Rockies region would be happy since they were about to receive some rain. 'No, Michael', he replied; 'the rain is much further away'. I wondered if I would ever learn how to align the pictures of clouds in the sky with the landscape beneath. Then Charles said in Khoekhoegowab, the language spoken by most people in the area, 'ǀ*gurukupu* ǀ*nanub* is bad' (literally translated, 'the rain which darkens the soil'). 'ǀ*Gurukupu* ǀ*nanub* kills our animals', he added. I responded by asking how rainfall, which is essential for survival, could be bad? Charles explained that the livestock could sense the rain from far away. When rain fell at the end of a long spell of dry winter months, they would instinctively run in that direction and continue – sometimes for days on end – until they reached the damp spots, where the soil is dark and keeps the smell of the wetness. However, since the first rain did not bring an immediate change in vegetation, they would find very little grazing when they arrived at their destination. 'In the end', Charles continued, 'because they are exhausted by then, some will even die. Therefore, ǀ*gurukupu* ǀ*nanub* is bad'.

On another occasion, Charles and I saw clouds forming again. I remembered our previous conversation and mentioned the different context, and more specifically that this time it could not be ǀ*gurukupu* ǀ*nanub* because the rainy season had already started some time ago. He confirmed this and yet chose a different explanation: 'You know, Oupa Carl passed away, and they are burying him today. This is ǀ*hôa*ǀ*nanub*, the rain that comes after the funeral of a well-known person to wash away the footsteps of the deceased. Only then can he enter the sky peacefully'. In German I would have called both rain events *Wolkenbruch* (cloudbursts) based on their intensity, but Charles had two different names and explanations for them.

I will return to this ethnographic vignette later to explore why and how the rain appeared this way to Charles, and in ways that separated me from him (Schnegg 2021c). I will show how analysing the structure of knowing and experiencing (the *how we know* questions) through notions of *intentionality, being-in-the-world, embodiment, empathy, responsivity* and *atmospheres* provides us with effective tools for understanding *what we know* and how that differs between people and in different situations.

I have selected these scenes because similar observations inspired me to engage with phenomenology. I had observed that both scientists and Damara explain the arrival of the rains as an interplay between two winds. However, their ways of making this meaningful could hardly be more different. While the Damara refer to love and care, scientists talk about convection zones (Schnegg 2019). In search of a paradigm to theorize this, phenomenology seemed to provide the resources to explore how similar observations turn into different experiences and ultimately meaningful entities. While I first found Heidegger's notion of *being-in-the-world* particularly useful (Schnegg 2019), I soon realized that other concepts were productive for making sense of some of the related observations I made, including the way people name and categorize these rains (Schnegg 2021c), the ways the weather is changing (Schnegg 2021d, 2021a) and the social construction of the multispecies world in which all this takes place (Schnegg and Breyer 2022). Above, I cite the works in which I explored these topics because they embed the experience of something in the wider socio-political framework, including, importantly, coloniality and rural marginalization, which is more than I can offer in this text.

V. How Things Appear – Six Phenomenologies

Phenomenologists have developed a wide range of concepts, which I group into six approaches. In so doing, and by naming them, I emphasize specific aspects of their work that I find especially relevant for anthropology, knowing that their philosophies are much broader and more complex than I can touch upon (or comprehend). Husserl makes us aware that how we relate to the world affects how it appears to us. He calls this *intentionality*. I refer to his work as *of-ness* phenomenology. His student Martin Heidegger finds this notion too 'intellectualized' and argues that the connection between mind and world is established through *use* and *being-in-the-world*. I call his approach *in-ness* phenomenology. Maurice Merleau-Ponty adds that our *lived body* establishes this link, which is why I refer to his approach as *embodied-ness* phenomenology. His student Bernhard Waldenfels emphasizes that phenomena emerge in response to the demands that situations articulate. I refer to his approach as *responsive-ness* phenomenology. His contemporary Herman Schmitz proposes that all situations in which we interact are characterized by some atmosphere that affects us emotionally. Because this atmosphere develops between people, places and practices, I refer to his philosophy as *between-ness* phenomenology. Finally, Edith Stein (also Husserl's student) explains the social construction of reality through *empathy* leading to *intersubjectivity*. I refer to her work as *with-ness* phenomenology. This line up shows a development. The primary source of experience – its impetus, if you will – continuously moves towards the world on the subject – world continuum. It shifts from Husserl's consciousness via Heidegger's practices to Merleau-Ponty's body, Waldenfels demands of the alien,

Schmitz' atmospheres and Stein's intersubjectivity from the subject to the material and social world in which it acts.

As I will show, all six approaches emphasize something different when answering the question of *how things appear*. They partly overlap and partly contradict each other. I will not be able to engage with these incommensurabilities and the arguments for or against particular approaches in detail. I will, however, attempt to understand for which kinds of phenomena certain approaches can be especially suitable, given the aspects of experience they bring to the fore. In the end, it is up to the ethnographer to decide which of these concepts if any are productive for theorizing the particular experiences at stake.

Of-ness Phenomenology (Edmund Husserl)

Edmund Husserl argued that our consciousness is characterized by the essential structure of a relationality he calls *intentionality*. Perceiving does not mean retrieving a representation I have stored somewhere in the mind, as it does for Descartes, but rather it is relational. We always see *something*, remember *someone*, desire *something*, and so on. Going back to the '*Sachen selbst*' means recognizing that our consciousness relates to entities by constituting them and itself. But how? According to Husserl, there are six (or seven) different kinds of intentional structures, including perception, memory, fantasy and empathy (Zahavi 2018a). His main aim was to identify the structure of these intentionalities, and to do so, he applied the *epoché*.

The example of perception illustrates how this works and what the results are. Let us consider, with Husserl, the perception of an object like a table first. Catching sight of a table, we know what it is, even if just in its typicity (e.g., as an object to put something on to). We recognize the table as something complete, even though our perspective captures only a fraction of it at any given moment. Critically reflecting on this process of perception, Husserl concludes that there is a process guiding this, which he refers to as *Abschattung* (adumbration) (Husserl 1966a:3). What is this? Typically, most of the table – its underside, its back, its interior and its base – is hidden from our view, yet we 'intend' the table as a whole thing. From our embodied situatedness, we only ever have one *Abschattung* (adumbration), one particular side of the table, at a time. How, then, does it become a complete table in our mind? Husserl argues that we 'co-intend' (*mitmeinen*) aspects based on having seen similar objects or the same object in the past. Plus, we integrate the potential perspectives of others who could at the same moment see the table from other angles. The (partial) presence prompts us to include those other perspectives and utilize them to complete the partial sensory impression we have (Husserl 1966a). With this, Husserl shows that we *do* see or perceive that table as one complete thing on the basis of a complex synthetic process that includes *Abschattung* and *mitmeinen*.

Let us consider the experience of time as another example. A naïve conception of time is that we experience an encounter as a stringing together of many small impres-

sions. Instead, Husserl argues that it is a unity across a succession of 'nows'. Put differently, there is no gap between these 'nows' because the impressions blend together. Even in the very moment one recognizes something, one already anticipates something that might come next. Husserl calls this '*protention*.' Then, once we have experienced an object, this experience does not disappear but remains present as something that has left an impression. Husserl calls this process '*retention*'. In short, the presence is not just the single moment in which we consciously recognize something, but it co-intends perceptions of a before and an after that we link it to. This intersection constructs what we experience as 'now' as a whole (Husserl 1966b).

Whereas Husserl applied his analysis of time perception to short moments, I have extended the length of these intervals to understand how environmental concepts are created (Schnegg 2021c). In the situation I described, Charles and I watched the weather change but interpreted the scene differently. To me, it seemed a promising afternoon that would bring rain. In German, I would have called this a *Wolkenbruch* (literally, a cracking of clouds), referencing the intensity and duration of the precipitation, its physical properties. I further assumed that rain was a good thing in the arid environment, bringing wealth and life. Charles had a different way of seeing the rain – as something that could cause harm, even death. But how do these concepts come about? Charles weaves entities that happened before and that he expects to come again into the present moment. By doing so, he makes it a particular rain. For him, those entities include the past drought, the lack of rain, the anticipation that it would rain somewhere else, the expectation that the animals might run to their deaths. They are, importantly, embedded and circumscribed by larger social and political structures, including coloniality, marginalization and the aspirations for a better future. Without this context, |*gurukupu* |*nanub* would not be deadly; most likely, it would not even exist. In sum, these moments that fade in the particular experience, and that are expected to come next, constitute what this particular rain becomes. For me, as a person who does not know this but who connects something else, the rain becomes something different (Schnegg 2021c).

However, different intentionalities co-exist. The 'switching' between them, sometimes called phenomenological modification (Duranti 2009; Throop 2015), indicates how entities like the rain appear differently depending on how we relate to them, like the famous *Gestalt* figures or Escher's art that seems to 'flip' the moment we look at it differently. The physical object, the figure or the rain, remains the 'same' and yet appears differently through our way of relating to it. This is intentionality, the rationality that creates the consciousness of something. Throop's analysis of suffering on Yap mobilizes this idea to show how suffering is experienced and how pain sometimes becomes sacred and sometimes profane. With this he shows not only how intentional modifications transform pain, but also how historical and political relations produce the possibility for those modifications and how the phenomenon is created through these switches (Throop 2015:84). In a similar manner, Duranti analyses how different ways of relating to the world are taught in everyday language (Duranti 2009). Through forms of com-

munication, cultural models of sharing and morality are established, linking language, cognition and experience. This framing in early childhood establishes trajectories for modifying the world and is one reason why it is difficult to learn new models when we are older (Duranti 2009).

How do phenomena appear with Husserl? They always appear *in consciousness*. We apply a particular perspective to *see something as something*. Because the focus is on consciousness and the mind, phenomena that are to a significant degree 'seen', 'thought' or 'read' are most easily accessible through this approach, including the perception of material objects, things in the environment and partly feelings like pain, as we have seen.

In-ness Phenomenology (Martin Heidegger)

Husserl's student, Martin Heidegger, is a founding philosopher of the European tradition of practice theories. His personal involvement with the National Socialist Party in Germany and his anti-Semitism made him a highly controversial figure (Trawny 2014). Critics claim that his political inclinations reveal inherent problems in his philosophy, whereas supporters argue that his political and philosophical engagements can be separated. Keeping in mind the problematic aspects of his thinking, I nevertheless wish to critically engage and develop another aspect of his work, namely our being-in-the-world.

For Heidegger, the relationship between mind and world is less about an of-something link (Husserl's intentionality) and more about an overlap. For him, Husserl was still caught within the Cartesian divides and was too 'intellectualized'. To capture the in-between more adequately, Heidegger coined the term *In-der-Welt-sein*, 'being-in-the-world'. The three hyphens are the essence of his phenomenology, indicating that subject and world are always already intertwined. Therefore, I describe his approach as *in-ness* phenomenology. But how does this *in-ness* emerge, and what are its consequences?

To theorize this, Heidegger develops the term *Dasein* (lit. 'there-being' [*Da*=there, *sein*=being]) that replaces humans as the analytic category. Heidegger's aim is to show what characterizes *Dasein*, and hence what human existence is fundamentally about (Heidegger 2006; Schwarz Wentzer 2013). If one reads Heidegger's project as a social scientist, one can understand it as an attempt to formulate a basic theory of conduct that seeks to answer how human beings are situated in the world, what moves them, and how meaningful relations with the world emerge.

To understand this, we need to consider what distinguishes us humans from other living beings. We know that we will die. As a result, we always live in the face of our own death and can also envisage what we want to accomplish before that. We imagine how we want things to be – for example, we want to be married and to have a storybook Cinderella home. Imagining our future structures today's actions and forms our relationships in the world – in this case with potential partners or with economic

activities (Bryant and Knight 2019; Schatzki 2010; Schnegg 2023a). Because we want a Cinderella home, we start looking at things differently, including our job, money and the materials we need for building. All these things become something *for* something – equipment (*Zeug*), as Heidegger says. They are good to accomplish some project and aim with.

This relationship of uses also determines what the things become. Heidegger illustrates this through his example of a hammer: how do we get to know the thing composed of wood and steel lying in front of us as a hammer? There are two ways:

The first is hammering. Accordingly, our everyday practice of using things with a specific future-oriented purpose is one way to constitute the nature of things. Through the act of hammering, we are so immersed with the thing that the Cartesian separation between the object and the subject is overcome and an I-hammer entity emerges. Without the act of hammering to put the nails into the wall, we have no hammers! Without bicycling to get from here to there, we have no bicycles! Heidegger refers to this way of being in the world as *Zuhandenheit,* an 'in-order-to', or briefly 'ready-to-hand'. This is why Heidegger has been the inspiration for practice theory.

However, there are also ways of experiencing the hammer, that are much more reflective. Heidegger calls this *Vorhandenheit* ('present-at-hand'). In these moments, we look at the hammer and recognize it through the properties it has, such as its size, colour or shape, and we co-constitute it with our minds. A common way to look at the hammer or any other entity in this reflective mode is scientific thinking. Here, we deliberately isolate entities from the daily uses they have and look at them in an objectified sense, describing what material the hammer consists of, how much it weighs, how old it is, and so forth. Besides scientific thinking, there are also other moments in which we perceive things in a detached mode. One such reflective moment occurs when we miss the nail and now look at the hammer differently: 'You damn thing!' In this moment, the hammer becomes something different, and the immersed relationship between subject and object that is established in the activity is disconnected, lost.

To theorize these switches between pre-reflective and reflective knowing, Heidegger identifies three moments, or *Störungen* (breakdowns): (1) malfunction (conspicuousness, *Unverwendbarkeit, Auffallen*) occurs when something is broken and/or does not work anymore; (2) total breakdowns (obtrusiveness, *Aufdringlichkeit, Fehlen*) happen in situations in which we urgently register the lack of something that is usually there; and (3) temporary breakdowns (obstinacy, *Aufsässigkeit)* are situations in which we miss something when we omit a habitual activity. According to Heidegger, in these moments of *Störung* we see the world more clearly because routines are broken that usually cover its authenticity (Dreyfus 1991:71; Heidegger 2006:72; Zigon 2007).

In anthropology, the idea of the breakdown was developed by Zigon (2007) in his seminal essay on 'moral breakdowns'. In his outline for an anthropology of morality, Zigon shows how morality is a constitutive part of our being-in-the-world. We are just moral. However, as Zigon also shows, moral breakdowns occur at moments when we

recognize that our way of being-moral-in-the-world no longer applies to the situation we face. Then we switch to a more reflective mode and actively rethink how to respond to the demands the situation creates (Zigon 2007, 2008, 2018). With this, Zigon significantly shaped the development of the anthropology of morality – his intervention became a breakdown for the discipline, if you will.

In addition to the anthropology of ethics, the emphasis on being-in-the-world has been mobilized very effectively in the study of the environment. In his pioneering book *The Perception of the Environment*, Tim Ingold (2000) combines a Heideggerian analysis of being-in-the-world with other philosophical concepts to come up with a genuine understanding of how people co-create knowledge and the environment through skilful practical activities. The 'dwelling perspective' he proposes has inspired an entire generation of environmental anthropologists (Anderson et al. 2017; Gieser 2008; Habeck 2006; including, Ingold and Kurttila 2000).[8]

But how does the in-ness perspective add to understanding the situation with ǁ*gamo!nâb*? First, without the practice of pastoralism there would be no ǀ*gurukupu* ǀ*nanub* (the first rain I described that makes the animals run, often to their deaths). Many of the other ten rains I have described elsewhere would also not exist (Schnegg 2021a). All these rains have different uses for something within the pastoral domain: some rains kill livestock, others make the grass grow, some hurt it, and others care for insects. At the same time, this pastoral being-in-the-world takes place within historical, political and economic contexts. The rain is so salient because the colonial powers seized most of the land and relocated the Damara people to areas too small for subsistence farming. This is also why the goats run away to their deaths. Hence, without land scarcity, there would also be no ǀ*gurukupu* ǀ*nanub*.

Whereas the focus on being-in-the-word-as-pastoralists can explain how the rain appears to Charles, it also makes intelligible why it is something different for me, an anthropologist with a regular salary – even though I own some livestock too. Or, for the shop owner in Fransfontein who does not possess any livestock at all, or for the scientists who measures precipitation from afar by looking at the quantity and intensity with which water falls from the sky. I would even go so far as to say that these practices, these different ways of being-in-the-world, can create the rain as different ontological entities, depending on how we enact them (Schnegg 2019, 2021d). If the rain becomes something different by enacting it, it also makes sense that people have very different explanations for the lack of rain they observe with climate change. Some make CO^2 responsible, others coloniality or social decay (Schnegg 2021d, 2021a).

How, then, do things appear for Heidegger? They largely appear *through practices*; we always *use things for something*. This practical use determines what things become, what they are. Because the focus is on practices, phenomena that are to a significant

8 Moreover, Heidegger's phenomenology has proved productive in migration studies (Lems 2016), in exploring corruption (Tidey 2022) and in many other fields (Weiner 2001).

degree 'made' through skilful activities are accessible through this approach, including things that appear in crafts, sports, physical work and other activities.

Embodied-ness Phenomenology (Maurice Merleau-Ponty)

Merleau-Ponty initiated a train of arguments that differentiated between what we know through the lived body (*corps propre*, sometimes also translated as feeling body) and what we know in the mind and that we can – more or less easily – articulate linguistically (Merleau-Ponty 2012:139). How does the body – or the mind – 'know'? When I raise a cup of tea to my mouth, for example, I direct my consciousness towards the cup. Merleau-Ponty says that this intentionality is not performed through my mind, as Husserl has it, but largely mediated through the acting body. My body knows the cup because I learned as a child to use cups without spilling their contents. The habitual aspect of knowing manifests itself in the body – 'it is the body that "understands" in the acquisition of habit' (Merleau-Ponty 2012:144).

Importantly, Merleau-Ponty works out how the body has a dual character. We are both *having a body* and *being a body*. That is to say that we are, for one, in the world through our bodies. This active role is what Merleau-Ponty refers to, drawing on Husserl (and Helmuth Plessner), as the *corps propre* (the lived body). Moreover, while the body is the only means of being in the world, it is also the object of my observation and that other others, for example, when I touch my arm that just lifted the cup or someone else touches me. The touched-arm is what Merleau-Ponty calls the *corps objectif* (sensed body). The *corps objectif* is the objectification of the *corps propre* through me and others.

In anthropology, Thomas Csordas must be credited for developing the embodiment paradigm. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty, he argued famously that the lived body is the 'existential ground of culture and self,' and that this had not been adequately recognized in cultural theory at the time (Csordas 1990:6). Gesa Lindemann wrote that, before the body-turn, the social sciences engaged in the study of angles (Lindemann 2005:114). In this view, culture is not only manifested in symbols and representations, as Geertz, Boas and others would have it, but also in the body (Csordas 2011, 2015; Desjarlais 1992, 1997; Jackson 1983).

Many uses of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology ask how culture, biology and experiences interact. Perhaps most famously, the phenomenological feminist Iris Young (1980) investigated why girls throw differently than boys of the same age in the US. To understand this she points out that in the patriarchal and sexist US American society, the female body is not only a subject, but an object evaluated by others who are more powerful and often male (Young 1980:148). Furthermore, girls are told during socialization to 'close' their legs while they sit, not to stick out their chests, and the like. As this becomes inscribed into the body's habitus, it makes movements like throwing, in which one must expose oneself, difficult. Moreover, because their bodies are objectified under the gaze of others, girls often find themselves in a position where they ask themselves, 'How do I look throwing this ball?' This hinders a free unfolding of the body,

which does not get into the pre-reflective mode of 'just doing'. Young shows how this hinders the female body from connecting to the world in the way of 'being a body', a way Merleau-Ponty assumed was universal (Young 1980).[9]

In a related manner, Downey's ethnography of the Brazilian *capoeira*, a martial art that combines elements of dance, finds considerable differences between male and female athletes in Brazil. However, the degree of difference between them is minimal in comparison to the performance of students in the US. This points to a larger issue, namely that even the masculine, uninhibited way of being-in-the-world differs largely with training and skills acquisition, and also partly by class membership (Downey 2015:132).

How does embodied-ness add to our understanding of the ǁ*gamo!nâb* situation?

The Damara people with whom I work make two winds responsible for the arrival of the rain, the female *huri‡oab* and the male *tū‡oab*. During the morning, the female *huri‡oab* seeks out the male *tū‡oab* in love and care, and people watch as the two meet in the sky east of Fransfontein, where clouds begin to form. Typically, it is very hot, and the *huri‡oab* blows strongly until early afternoon. 'Knowing the weather' includes feeling the heat and the hot air on the skin. Before it rains the wind direction changes, and it gets colder. The coldness and moisture in the air makes people anticipate the rain bodily. This became especially clear to me when I picked up an old man hitchhiking who had spent his life in the hinterlands. It was a hot summer's day and, without him noticing, I turned the air-conditioning on. At the time, there was not a single cloud in the sky and the rainy season was still ahead. Feeling the aircon, the elderly man, who had not experienced this 'wind' before, said, 'Michael, this is strange, it feels as if the rain is coming, but I cannot even see any clouds.' The body knows. And it can also be wrong.

How do things appear with Merleau-Ponty? Phenomena appear *through the body*. Therefore, any subjective position must be an embodied position, and the analysis of knowing must include this too. Phenomena that are to a significant degree 'enacted', such as illness, dance, physical work and ritual, are accessible through this embodied-ness phenomenology.

In my view, three important directions emerge from this. The first is the overall recognition that we are only in the world through the *lived body* and that we must acknowledge this embodiment if we want to understand how our interlocutors experience the world. '4E-cognition' is a recent development along this line of thinking. It acknowledges that all knowing is *embodied, embedded, enacted* and *extended* (Fuchs 2018; Gallagher and Zahavi 2021; Varela et al. 2016). Second, acknowledging the saliency of the body implies that we must take *all* sensual experiences into account, including seeing, tasting, hearing, smelling, feeling and orienting, if we want to under-

9 Young later distanced herself from some of her earlier analyses because she felt that she had defined the female body as a liability that expresses female experience through a sense of victimization and thus becomes subject to the male norm (Young 1990:14).

stand world-making. This has been a salient claim in recent years, and Merleau-Ponty provided the theoretical foundations for it (Geurts 2002; Pink 2015; Spittler 2001; Stoller 1989). Third, the body is not only the medium through which we are in the world but also the repository where traces are stored. This happens through practices as in the case of throwing (Young) and the *capoeira* (Downey), but also through oppression and related suffering (Bourgois and Schonberg 2007; Scheper-Hughes 1992). While it is evident that knowledge is stored in the lived body, the question of 'where exactly' is much less settled. Accordingly, some researchers have proposed the term *Leibgedächtnis* ('body memory') to explore this (Breyer 2021; Fuchs 2012).

Responsive-ness Phenomenology (Bernhard Waldenfels)

In Husserl's view, perception is a process that connects consciousness with the world in an a priori correlation to *see something as something* (Husserl 1968, 1976b, 1976a). Where mind and world meet, phenomena emerge. Bernhard Waldenfels gave the world-mind relationship a different direction. The innovation of his phenomenology was to turn the arrow around. Building on *Gestalt* psychologists like Wolfgang Köhler and Kurt Lewin and their notion of an *Aufforderungscharakter* (demand character) or *Gefordertheit* (requirement), which James Gibson later rendered as 'affordance', Waldenfels argued that the mind does not reach out to ask *What is this*? Rather, the phenomenon asks us *What am I*? It affects us.

The things we encounter pose demands (*Ansprüche*) on us (Waldenfels 2011:63): the laptop on which I am writing this text, the bicycle I rode to get to my office, the atmosphere in the room, my friend. When experiencing these things, something happens to us, affects us, reaches out to us, or, to say it in German, something *widerfährt* (befalls) us (Waldenfels 2011:87). But what is happening, and why? Waldenfels argues that all phenomena are to a certain degree alien (*fremd*) to us. This is the case for the computer I use, my bicycle, the atmosphere and my friend, and it includes myself too. This alienness develops a *Zugkraft* (traction) that demands an answer from us. At the same time, it withdraws itself continuously, leaving aspects *unzugänglich* (inaccessible).

In this view, meaning is an attempt to get a grip on the alien, the insecure and the chaotic that irritate us. Therefore, meaning is not primarily a process of framing, of co-constituting a phenomenon through the mind, as Husserl says. Instead, intentionality comes second. It is the response to the demands a situation makes. Or, as Waldenfels says, 'it is only in responding to what we are struck by that what strikes us emerges as such' (my translation of *Erst im Antworten auf das, wovon wir getroffen sind, tritt das, was uns trifft, als solches zutage*) (Waldenfels 2002:59).

In responding, we rely on answer registers (*Antwortregister*) that belong to some larger order. When registers fit a situation well, we respond habitually, pre-reflectively. However, in some situations this is not so easy, such as one in which we are exposed to multiple and contradicting demands. Should I finish this plate? I feel I should not, otherwise I might feel bad. My friend talks about the climate and how much she hates

throwing food away. The food can be taken home, but will it go bad? What will the waiter say if I ask for a doggie bag? Because demands are heterogeneous and contradictory, I must switch to a more reflective mode to respond to them. Reflective responses also become necessary when a demand is especially alien, and we do not have an appropriate answer at hand. One particularly useful characteristic of the responsivity approach is that it radically *decentres* the process of meaning-making. It starts with the world to which the subject must respond.

Waldenfels' phenomenology is new in anthropology. Among those who have engaged with his work, Leistle's contribution stands out. For one thing, Leistle has provided well-written introductions in which he focuses on Waldenfels' notion of alterity (Leistle 2016, 2020a, 2020b, 2022b). For another, Leistle effectively applies these conceptions to the analysis of rituals, possession and other ethnographic fields (Leistle 2014, 2017). Moreover, Grøn offers a rich ethnographic analysis of obesity in which she renders Waldenfels' notion of responsivity into a responsive self to analyse how her informant frames her body (Grøn 2017b, 2017a, 2022) and Mattingly (2018) provides a fascinating investigation of the structures of ethical experience among African American families which also builds on Waldenfels' phenomenology. Other uses of the responsive approach include the works of Hepach and Hartz (2023) Louw (2019) and Meinert and Whyte (2017), and Schwarz Wentzer (2018). How does Waldenfels' responsive-ness add to our understanding of the situation regarding the rain on ǁ*gamo!nâb*? With Waldenfels, the focus is on how the world is alien and demands answers from us. The weather situation affects me. While we are sitting there, the clouds, the wind and the sun are alien, and we cannot understand them, as they continuously withdraw themselves. They ask, *Where are we?* and Charles and I answer in significantly different ways. Or they ask Charles, *Am I* ǀ*gurukupu* ǀ*nanub or any of the more than ten rains you know?* As the clouds shift their colours and shapes, they withdraw from his attempt to order them. They remain alien. *Will it even rain?* To answer these demands, we need to consider the wind. Is the west wind still fighting, not letting the east wind in? Will the two agree and bring rain? Was it hot enough during the day for the rain to come? The environment poses provocations, dangers, all of which contain some elements of alienness, and we respond.

The situation regarding ǁ*gamo!nâb* also shows different demands articulated through the distinct entities the situation contains: the clouds, the behaviour of the animals, our intentions as pastoralists, and the condition of the pastures here and elsewhere. The meaning we give is an attempt to come to grips with the alien they contain. This principle can also help explain the differences between what Charles knows and what I know, and between different rains on different days. Linking the alien to different orders (pastoral, religious, scientific), the phenomenon emerges as something different. Taken together, then, one of the great advantages of Waldenfels' approach is that it allows us to explain how we know situationally and how this differs between different people and at different times.

To conclude, with Waldenfels and the responsive-ness phenomenology, a phenomenon appears through the response to the demands *articulated in the situations* themselves. The idea is still relatively new but provides an especially good framework for understanding experiences that are perceived as radically *fremd*, including intercultural experiences, one's own body and illnesses, religious experiences like possession and healing, and the like.

Between-ness Phenomenology (Hermann Schmitz)

Most lay and scientific perspectives view emotion as an affective framing of the world through the psyche. This reading is already inscribed in the meaning of the Latin *emovere*, combining *e-* 'out' and *movere* 'move'. As we have seen, this is also Husserl's train of thought, according to which I, the subject, perceive (or feel) the world *as something*.

Hermann Schmitz argues that it is a misconception to theorize emotion as a process in which the psyche reaches out to the world. According to him, this prejudice is 'new' and Eurocentric. It emerged in Greece around the second half of the fifth century BC, sometime between Heraclitus and Sophocles. At that time, Schmitz finds, a fatal splitting of the world (*schicksalhafte Weltspaltung*) occurred (Schmitz 2016:19). The world, which used to be one, was divided into inner and outer worlds.

In this process, emotions became part of the inner world. Only they were encapsulated in the mind, and only reason, which became salient in Western philosophy and thinking, could control them! From then on, the realm of experience was dissected by ascribing to each subject a private sphere containing their entire experience (Schmitz et al. 2011:247). Whether one fully agrees with his historical analysis or not, it is hard to deny that in the modern era emotions are predominantly viewed as something inside, in the mind (see also, Rosaldo 1983). Schmitz paves the way for theorizing emotions in a less psychologistic way and taking them out of the 'box' into which they were put, he thinks, 2,400 years ago.

To theorize emotions in the space between people, objects and practices, Schmitz uses the term *atmosphere*. According to Schmitz, any situation has an atmosphere that is created through the entities that constitute it and the ways in which we relate to them. Accordingly, he defines emotions as atmospheres that are 'poured out' in space from where they grip and retune humans through the lived body (*Leib*) (Schmitz 2016:19). The space itself is occupied through feelings and experiences, allowing the *Leib* to receive them and the mind to cognitively frame them. Because emotions (as atmospheres) are intangible and in between, he calls them *Halbdinge* (half-entities). Let me provide an example to illustrate this.

Imagine it is Monday morning and you are entering the coffee kitchen at work. You join your colleagues in their chat about things that happened over the weekend. Coffee is running slowly through the machine. The atmosphere of the coffee kitchen lingers between weekend reflections and some heaviness of the working week ahead. As you chat, your boss comes in. The talk stops. The atmosphere changes. It touches you, and

you feel uncomfortable, looking at the coffee machine, hoping that it will run through faster so that you can return to your desk without an excuse.

To theorize the shared affectivity this situation contains and its sudden shift, I propose – following Schmitz – to consider the affect as an atmosphere. This atmosphere is constituted in the network of relationships that includes people, furniture, the space of the kitchen, narrations, aims, the burdens of the working week ahead, the tiredness of a Monday morning, the smell of the coffee and much more. As you enter the situation, it touches you. As your boss enters, it changes, affecting you, soliciting your lived body (*Leib)* in such a way that you must develop an attitude towards it. One of the attractive aspects of Schmitz's conceptualization of emotions as atmosphere is that every situation has an atmosphere. But why might entering the room feel different for you and for me? According to Schmitz, past experiences and the disposition we have can explain these differences. We have, so to speak, socially learned ways of attuning to an atmosphere.

This conception of emotions as atmospheres is new to anthropology. It has mostly been used to study collective situations and their affective layer. Wellgraf (2017), for example, shows how boredom is experienced as an atmosphere in a German secondary school (*Hauptschule*) and how it is shaped by historical, material and political processes (Wellgraf 2017), while I explore rural boredom as an atmosphere of feeling blocked in post-colonial Namibia (Schnegg forthcoming b). In a related manner, Bens (2018, 2022), in his ethnography of the trial of a commander of the Lord's Resistance Army in the International Criminal Court (ICC), explores how atmosphere becomes important in courtrooms (Bens 2018, 2022). Another line of research emerges around music, aesthetics and rituals, where Eisenlohr (2018a, b) offers a fascinating analysis of *na't khwan* recitations as a Muslim devotional practice (Eisenlohr 2018a, 2018b), Heidemann (2021) explores the atmosphere in a South Indian temple festival, and Bille (2015, 2020) analyses the role light plays in home-making and aesthetics in Denmark. Most recently, Keil has used Schmitz's conceptual tools to study pig-dogging (a collective hunt) and its atmosphere in Australia (Keil 2021).[10]

But how does the between-ness perspective add to our understanding of the situation around the rain on ǂ*gamo!nâb*? In my reading, the feelings Charles develops – being worried, frightened, fearful – are best described as an atmosphere that affects him. This atmosphere is produced in between the nodes of a network that constitute the situation in which he finds himself. These nodes include the view of the sky that opens a window to perceiving what might happen soon; the rain that will come, with its many effects; the sky that grows dark; and the wetness of the wind, which begins

10 While the term 'atmosphere' is comparably new in the anthropological debate, two other terms have been used to analyze similar phenomena: mood (Throop 2014) and *Stimmung* (Borneman and Ghassem-Fachandi 2017). All three terms have been used in various contexts, and their meanings overlap. In addition to these uses, anthropological classics, especially Turner and Geertz, mobilize similar ideas to explain how rituals, spaces, music and repetition inspire people and groups.

touching our skin. Something is in the air! ǂ*Oab!nâ*, 'under the wind', as people say. The way an atmosphere touches us and can lead to worry and fear is a process Schmitz describes as a narrowing of the emotional space. We close up emotionally. The scene also reveals how different atmospheres can surround two or more people, even if they are at the same place at the same time. My body is not receptive to the atmosphere he feels, partly because I have not felt it repeatedly before and because I do not have the knowledge about what will come next. Charles' reaction, to be worried and to take action to protect the animals, can be explained to a certain extent through the atmosphere that characterizes the situation and that touches him emotionally.

So how, then, does the world appear to us with Schmitz and in light of a *between-ness phenomenology*? One salient focus Schmitz develops is atmospheres. To understand them, we must recognize how they are formed between people, entities and practices. Being there, they befall us, shaping what we (can) feel, think and do. This offers a sophisticated tool for exploring emotions, especially those that are felt collaboratively and in situations like boredom, loneliness, exuberance or grief (Schnegg forthcoming a, b). In addition to that, I find that *between-ness phenomenology* has great potential because many situations we analyse – think of the 'the bridge' or 'the cockfight' – have an atmosphere. However, the affective layer and the potentialities and constraints it creates for individual and collective behaviours have rarely been explicitly theorized. The notion of atmospheres provides a means for doing this. Finally, the interest in shared affectivity that *between-ness phenomenology* expresses also resonates well with the affective turn (Berlant 2011; Mazzarella 2009; Stewart 2007; Schnegg 2023c, von Poser and Willamowski 2020).

With-ness Phenomenology (Edith Stein)

Edith Stein asks, if we compare a person to an object such as a table, do we make sense of a person as 'a whole' in the same way? The answer is obviously 'no'. When we see a person, we realize that she has a subjective body (*Leib*) and a genuine perspective too. Therefore, we want to understand what her consciousness points to, what her intentionality is. Husserl calls this process of trying to understand another person's intentionality *Einfühlung* (empathy) (Flatscher 2013; Husserl 1973a: 187).

His student Stein explains *Einfühlung* as a three-step process of experiencing another person's experience (Schnegg and Breyer 2022). First, I experience that another person has an experience (e.g., an emotion) which may be different from mine, for example, when I see the pain in a person's face when she hits her thumb with a hammer (perceiving expression). Then, because I realize that her body is similar to mine, I am pulled into her position to follow the experience through and to imagine what the experience is like for her (following through). Finally, I come to an understanding of what meaning the experience has for her by using this understanding to interpret her behaviour, for example, when she shakes her hand to counter the pain of having been struck (understanding the other anew) (Stein 2008: 18-19; Svenaeus 2018). In brief, I

recognize an expression (Step One), I am pulled in to follow through (Step Two), and I understand the other anew (Step Three).

One of the interesting aspects of Stein's theory is that it describes empathy as a multilayered process in which we could also stop after Step One or Two when, for example, I cannot imagine how the other might feel. This happens, Stein says, in the case of a plant. We interpret the expressive behaviour – its look indicates that it is feeling unhappy (e.g. a wilted houseplant that needs water) – but we still do not easily follow through because only with great difficulty can we imagine what the world is like for a plant. An expert gardener, however, who spends more time with plants, might find it easier to imagine a plant's world (Stein 2008:§5 i).

Early phenomenologists like Stein and Husserl engaged with empathy to explore the foundation of the intersubjective and intercorporeal (Merleau-Ponty) construction of reality. In this perspective, reality results from an interpretation of the world through empathic relations (*Einfühlungszusammenhänge*) (Husserl 2002:195). Building on Husserl, Merleau-Ponty further develops this view when he shows how an object (like a table) changes its significance when someone else sees it, too. Because the other's view is added to mine and because I am aware of this, the world becomes something different (and properly shared) (Merleau-Ponty 2012:369; Throop and Zahavi 2020:286). But how does combining perspectives work?

Since I realize that the other is a subject too, and different from me, I can use her perspective to confirm and refine mine. If the other were the same as me, a copy, she could hardly have this effect. This would, to quote Wittgenstein, add as much as reading the same story again in a duplicate copy of the morning paper to confirm that what the journalist says is really true (Wittgenstein 1997:94). Only by reading a similar story in a different newspaper (by a different journalist) does it alter my relation to reality. In the same way, the intersubjective experience is reinforced by engaging with other perspectives through empathy (Zahavi 2003:116).

Although beyond-humans are not the focus of their analyses, Stein and Husserl assume that we can have empathy with beyond-human beings too, including God, animals and plants (Stein 2008:§5 b, c, i). Stein picks a dog wagging her tail to explore this. We know that the dog has a perspective that is shaped by the sensory capacities she possesses. Therefore, if we see her wagging her tail (first step), we are equally trying to 'follow through' to put ourselves in the dog's subjective position to understand what the dog is experiencing (second step). In doing so, we imagine having the sensory capacity of a dog, which allows us to know the world from her perspective. Then, in the third step, we use this understanding to interpret the behaviour of the dog when we find her relaxed and we pet her (Stein 2008:§5, b).[11]

Stein's analysis of empathy has proved very productive for anthropology (Hollan and Throop 2008; Throop 2008, 2010; von Poser 2011). Recently I and a colleague

11 Husserl uses the jellyfish to make a similar argument (Husserl 1973b: 118-120).

have used her model to explore the effect of non-human subjectivities for the social construction of a multispecies world (Schnegg and Breyer 2022).

So how does the with-ness perspective add to our understanding of the situation around the rain on ǁ*gamo!nâb*? There are different entities involved with whom one could empathize, notably the female *huriǂoab*, the male *tūǂoab* and the animals. But which ones do people empathize with, and how does this change the social construction of the world? On the first day, Charles empathizes with the goats when he tries to understand what their world is like. He follows all three steps in Stein's model. The goats become something different for him than what they are for me – I do not empathize with them. In Charles' social construction of the world, not only do the goats become different, but the entire landscape becomes different from mine. A landscape that is arid for me becomes a threat for him, knowing what it might sound, smell and look like for goats searching for green pastures. While Charles fully empathizes with the animals, the empathetic process stops after Step One with the two winds. He is not pulled through; he does not try to understand what the world is like for them. Because of this, they do not add to the social construction of his world. Empathy changes not only the perspective of the individual, but also the social reality in which he finds himself. And sometimes this reality is not shared, as was the case with Charles and I.

To conclude, how does the with-ness perspective contribute to our understanding of how things appear? It adds intersubjectivity, which allows us to understand how those appearances construct shared social realities.

VI. Contextualizing the Mind

Phenomenology provides universal concepts for theorizing experience. They are not, by themselves, suitable for understanding the different experiences Charles and I have in a particular situation – such as being in the rain. To understand this, we need to add something to these transcendental structures of experience that phenomenologists have discovered and described. This is where the historical, cultural, social, political and economic contexts come in – and so does the anthropologist. Simply stated, my idea for phenomenological anthropology is that *what* we experience in a situation is a function of *how* we experience it plus the *context* in which the experience takes place.

But what does the context add, and how?

Let me return to Husserl's analysis of time to exemplify how the context adds to experience. Husserl has shown how, in moments, we connect the 'now' with past and future impressions to make experience meaningful. For Charles, then, ǀ*gurukupu* ǀ*nanub* links the rains to the seasonal cycle, the arid environment and the expectation that his livestock is likely to run to its death. The particular web of relationships only makes sense against the background of his pastoral being-in-the-world, colonial expropriation and the resulting land scarcity. If there was sufficient land, animals would not

run away, and |*gurukupu* |*nanub* would not be threatening or even exist. Thus, while Husserl's analysis provides us with a universal principle for how we experience through time, we as anthropologists must add the context to understand how this becomes a specific experience for the people with whom we work. And we must add context to explore why the experience of rain might translate differently for Charles and for myself.

Similarly, Stein's notion of empathy proposes a general principle for how we experience other subjectivities and how they impact what the world jointly becomes. Initially meant to explore relationships with humans, her three-step model can be applied to all sorts of subjectivities. But who has subjectivity, and with whom do we empathize? As we have shown, the Damara attribute subjectivity not only to humans but to animals, tricksters, winds and many other entities in their world (Schnegg and Breyer 2022). However, they empathize to different degrees with these entities. Therefore, the perspectives of tricksters and animals add to the social construction of a multispecies world, whereas that of the wind does not. This example again reveals how one can connect phenomenological concepts with the social and cultural context to understand *what* appears to a specific person.

Lastly, consider Schmitz' atmospheres. People around Fransfontein experience the time after Christmas as an atmosphere of absence they describe as *!*Ūke-*ai*, collective loneliness (Schnegg forthcoming a). This atmosphere is felt as something that hovers in the place and touches people, making them feel in particular ways. How does it get there? In December, most migrants return to their rural homes, filling the marginalized hinterlands with their presence, their food, their music, their cars, their noises and much more. December is *khoe-xa*, full of everything, as people say. Then, in January, when the migrants go back, only the traces of empty food cans, car tracks and memories are left. The presence of these traces creates an absence people describe as an atmosphere of collective loneliness. However, *!*Ūke-*ai* does not last long. After a couple of weeks, these absences are filled in. January comes after December, but at the same time it is before the next December. Things will come again. This example again shows how a universal conception – emotions as atmospheres – can be connected to a specific context to make an experience such as loneliness intelligible (Schnegg forthcoming a).

These examples, and my analyses throughout the text, reveal that *what* we experience is a function of *how* we experience it and the context in which the experience occurs. Because of this entanglement of different aspects of experience, phenomenological anthropology, even though it starts with a first-person perspective, allows us to address society if we turn the arrow around. We can address the coloniality that shapes the meaning of rain, the Damara understanding of subjectivity that influences what the world jointly becomes, and the marginalization and migration patterns that create an atmosphere of absence in January. But can we go one step further? Can phenomenological anthropology also be used to criticize some of these processes? Can it open ways of imagining a possible otherwise? And should it? These questions are at the heart of current debates (Al-Saji 2017; Guenther 2021; Weiss et al. 2020).

VII. Critical Phenomenology

A widespread critique of phenomenology is that it neglects the political and economic structures that shape what people experience (Bedorf and Herrmann 2020; for a discussion see, Desjarlais and Throop 2011:94ff.). This critique was already voiced by the Frankfurt School, most prominently by Theodor Adorno, who felt that phenomenology ranged from an 'uncritical' and 'bourgeois' philosophy at best (Husserl) to promoting a 'jargon of authenticity' (Heidegger) that fitted National Socialist ideology well (cited in, Zahavi and Loidolt 2022).

Whereas its preoccupation with knowledge and authenticity is justified, I do not agree with this critique in general. Husserl's *Krisis* (Husserl 1976c) is a critical analysis of scientific knowledge production, and Heidegger engages critically with traditions and technologies (Heidegger 2006). More importantly, phenomenologists Merleau-Ponty, Frantz Fanon, Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre and Hannah Arendt produced classic texts that not only reflect knowing critically but (1) engage critically with the injustices in their societies and (2) support projects for a better and more just world (Guenther 2020; Zahavi and Loidolt 2022). In so doing, many of these authors draw on Marxist thinking. Already in the late 1970s, Waldenfels edited four volumes *Phänomenologie und Marxismus* (phenomenology and Marxism) to further explore this interconnection (Waldenfels 1977).

Acknowledging these contributions, an increasing number of scholars now agree that the classics were political but not political enough. To develop these aspects of phenomenology further, a new school is emerging that calls itself *critical phenomenology*, reaching out from phenomenology to critical theory (Guenther 2020, 2021; Magrì and Mcqueen 2023; Salamon 2018; Weiss et al. 2020). These philosophical texts share many of the concerns of earlier anthropological attempts to mobilize phenomenological thinking for social critique (especially, Desjarlais 2005; Good 1994; Willen 2007), turning *critical phenomenology* into a truly interdisciplinary arena (Mattingly et al. 2018; Zigon 2017, 2018). A first set of topics includes those social fields in which oppression or suffering is especially present, such as solitary confinement (Guenther 2013), Whiteness and racialization (Ahmed 2007; Yancy 2016), White policing (Guenther 2019), being-queer (Ahmed 2006), transgender and transphobia (Salamon 2010, 219), migrant lives at the margins (Willen 2007; Willen 2021), care (Aulino 2019; Mattingly 2014, 2017), dementia (Dyring and Grøn 2021), homelessness (Desjarlais 1994, 1997), loneliness (Schnegg forthcoming a, b), the war on people (Zigon 2018) and related themes. In addition to this, a second field of research broadens Heidegger's notion of *being-in-the-world* to a *being-in-worlds*, *being-between-worlds* and *world travelling*, to fully acknowledge the multiplicity of worlds people often inhabit (Lugones 1987; Ortega 2016).

But what does critical phenomenology criticize? And how?

In my understanding, there are several approaches. I use a first approach here when I refer to the social, economic and material contexts (i.e., structures) that circumscribe

what a subject experiences. A large number of phenomenological anthropologists have argued along similar lines and shown convincingly how the analysis of first-person experiences – often suffering – allows us to point critically to the injustices in which the experience is rooted (Biehl 2013; Desjarlais 1997; Good 1994; Mattingly 2010; Scheper-Hughes 1992; Willen 2021). In a highly inspiring recent article, Mattingly called this 'critical phenomenology 1.0'. She proposes moving to 2.0, in which anthropology's *perplexing particulars* allow 'defrosting' the concepts we, as anthropologists, use. In this sense, ethnographic observations, and the concepts our interlocutors use, help to destabilize and eventually strengthen the theories we have (Mattingly 2019:433).

The Gaze: Entangling First- and Third-Person Perspectives

In this article, I have foregrounded an approach that highlights the relationship between the first- and the third-person perspectives. What do I mean by that? For Jean-Paul Sartre, subjective experience (a first-person perspective) is confronted with objectifications from a third-person perspective, something which he refers to as the 'gaze' of others (Sartre 2001). These perspectives limit how we can experience ourselves and the world. For example, if you call me old, lonely, or male, these categorizations have a normative dimension that interacts with what and how I (can) experience myself, others and the world. Striving to transcend the limiting determinations of this kind is freedom, Sartre says (Sartre 1992).

While Sartre developed the idea of the 'gaze', Frantz Fanon and Simone de Beauvoir must be credited with fully – and critically – developing his argument for the purpose of articulating social critique. Their main intervention was to add that some gazes have more power to restrict than others. In addition, they argue that some people are better equipped to 'look back'. When the Martinique-born philosopher and psychiatrist Fanon describes being looked at as 'Black' in France in the 1920s and de Beauvoir as 'woman' or 'old', they both show vividly how the gazes of powerful groups (e.g., 'white', 'men', 'young') destroy subjectivity and make a free becoming impossible (De Beauvoir 1974, 1996; Fanon 2008). To explore such exclusionary processes, both authors ask which social and political conditions make possible and legitimate these gazes, and how people can shield themselves from them and resist them.

Recent philosophical works that further develops this thinking include Alcoff's (2005) analysis of racialized identity, Yancy's *Black Bodies, White Gazes* (Yancy 2016) and Ortega's (2016) work on *Mestizaje* and *Latinidad* (Alcoff 2006; Ortega 2016). In anthropology, scholarship in postcolonial studies pushes in a similar direction, adding that categories like race are not (only) in the eye of the beholder but in the practice of violence, superordination and exploitation, demarcating the rule of Europe over non-Europe (Afolayan 2018; Hesse 2016; Rosa and Bonilla 2017). With this, they further explore the power relations that make some views ('gazes') more dominant and others less so.

Some phenomenologists now refer to this as the analysis of normativity, seen as a set of quasi-transcendental structures (Guenther 2021). They are quasi-transcendental because they shape the possibilities of experiences in *specific social and historical contexts*. Quasi-transcendental structures are also referred to as 'ways of seeing', 'ways of feeling' and even 'ways of making the world', as Guenther (2020:12) says, including, for example, the patriarchy, white supremacy and heteronormativity that permeate thinking in ways that go beneath a particular thought (ibid.). We might also call them prejudices, acknowledging that all humans have prejudices. But where do these 'ways of seeing' come from? To address this, Zigon proposes the idea of a situation and shows how shared but distributed 'conditions' provide a basis for 'possible ways of being, doing, speaking and thinking within that situation' (Zigon 2015; 2018:38). To decipher these normalization processes and the consequences they have is the task critical phenomenology assigns itself.

But how can we do that?

Among Damara pastoralists, it is a common practice to demand food from one's neighbours, usually once or twice a day (Schnegg 2015, 2021b). Sharing is initiated by the recipient and applies to goods that are either so abundant or so essential that one can hardly deny others access to them. Sharing and the dependency it shows has long been a valued social practice that expresses belonging by allowing others to show how they care. Recently, however, this practice has begun to change, as those who make such demands increasingly feel ashamed. Let me exemplify this.

When I talked to Sarah about shame, she remembered one situation especially well. She had approached her uncle's house to demand some sugar and tea late one afternoon. As she was about to leave again, unexpected visitors appeared. 'Immediately I tried to hide the cup he had given to me', she said, 'but it was too late!' 'The tree has fallen (*Hais ge go !gauhe*)', meaning that the secret has been revealed. In this moment, when she thought that people had realized the intention of her visit, she felt the striking gaze of the visitor first, then her shame. But why? And how did this experience come about?

In this moment, an atmosphere of exclusion emerged, singling her out from the rest of the group. To theorize her feelings, I argue with other phenomenologists that shame is felt when the taken for granted social being-in-the-world is disrupted (Rukgaber 2018). Now, the gaze of others makes us painfully aware of our body, our position and our relation to them. In the moment the visitors see her, this breakdown leads to an atmosphere of exclusion in which she is singled out, resulting in the feelings she has.

But when does this rupture occur? And how does this allow us to critique the underlying social processes? With food-sharing, people increasingly fear that asking displays a dependency on others that could become a 'story' (*ǂhôab*) in the community. But how has dependency, which was a sign of belonging, become bad? It has to do with neoliberal and Pentecostal discourses that changed the conception of the self. The self has now become *responsible for itself*. At the same time, the structural transformations

brought about by neoliberalism also imply that a large number of people are being increasingly marginalized and cannot take care of themselves.

To shield oneself from the potential shamefulness of the neoliberal gaze, people like Sarah maintain some reciprocal relationships in which they have revealed their vulnerabilities. Beyond these relationships people aim to hide their dependencies, which have become bad.

This example reveals how discourses and institutions, including neoliberal and partly Christian ideologies of the self, change what is 'normal' and, with this, the 'gazes' the subject must face. These discourses and institutions can be conceptualized as a quasi-transcendental structure that circumscribes the possibilities of experience. This structure is expressed as a third-person perspective and creates situations in which demanding, for example, a valued social relationship in the past, can become shameful.

The example also shows why I wrote so many pages on the fundamental phenomenological concepts before getting to the potential for a critical analysis, which may be the most appealing part to anthropologists. The traces these structures leave on Sarah's feelings have been carved out through the application of phenomenological concepts, including (1) the basic distinction between reflectivity and pre-reflectivity, (2) atmospheres and (3) the gaze in combination with the ethnographic context in which feeling exists. Only in combination do they allow us to make visible what the neoliberal transformation of the self does to a particular self, Sarah in this case.

This intersection is something other theoretical models, including Foucault, cannot cope with. Especially in his earlier works, he is mostly interested in understanding how a subject comes to understand itself as a subject. He puts a great deal of emphasis on the power relations that shape discourses and discipline the self. This view leaves much less room for the self as someone who is experiencing, responding creatively and resisting. Maybe even more than Foucault, Latour's Actor-Network-Theory devalues the role of human subjects that become 'one among millions', an unprivileged node in a constantly shifting network of more-than-human relationships.

Another major advantage of critical phenomenology over other approaches is that it conceptualizes knowing as irreversibly embodied. The gaze is part of my *Leib* that does not 'end' at my skin, as Schmitz says. Sarah feels it painfully before she experiences shame, an emotion deeply intertwined with body processes itself (Casimir and Schnegg 2002).

Future Directions

A generative future potential of critical phenomenological anthropology lies in further exploring the embodied relationships between self, others, categorizations and norms. The study of norms (rules, institutions, regimes) and categorizations (of others, things, etc.) has long been a concern in anthropology. And yet, I know of no *experience-based* theory that can explain how such categories emerge (and change), to which norms they are tied, and to which experiences they lead.

In my view, anthropology is in a privileged position to contribute to this aspect. More than any other approach, ethnography allows space for showing how norms and categorizations emerge in collectives where power is always distributed unequally. To theorize these processes, Marxist theories offer effective resources that spell out the link between norms, power and economic structures (Neveling 2019). While Marxism enters critical phenomenology through French Existentialism, I find that a more direct engagement with Karl Marx would be promising. Based on such an analysis of norm formation, phenomenology provides a sensitive means of studying – through the first-person perspective – how categorizations and norms shape what people *must, can* and *want* to experience and what their world becomes. To describe these linkages between subjects and the world, the phenomenological concepts I introduced (i.e., embodiment, being-in-the-world, atmospheres) provide a theoretical guide.

The focus in critical phenomenology is mostly on the exclusionary aspects of normativity and the gaze. It would, in my view, be enormously fruitful to explore its liberating and empowering potential, too. This includes, for one, the emergence of inclusionary norms, such as the appreciation of 'diversity' that undermines the exclusionary potential of the gaze. For another, it includes recognizing that gazes can empower, support, encourage, or enchant. They can make one feel welcome, attracted and hot. Adequately theorizing the empowering potential of the gaze and the larger atmospheric situations gazes create remains a key challenge for phenomenological anthropology (Ahmed 2007).

What is more, the focus on the empowering potential opens up a path towards imagining the potentialities of living otherwise – phenomenology not only *as critique* but *as hope*, if you will. This is what some scholars have in mind when they began to explore how phenomenology allows us to envision a 'being-together-otherwise' (Zigon 2018; 2021:80). In addition to scientific reflections and analyses, another way to do this is through collaborations with artists in what is becoming known as 'imagistic anthropology' (Mattingly and Grøn 2022). Yet another way is to engage with activism. Both are promising paths for not only thinking about but also initiating change (Guenther 2020, 2022).

VIII. Conclusion

There is another serious criticism of phenomenology. How can a philosophy developed in Europe and largely by men serve as a blueprint for exploring experience globally? What do *they* know? I see three promising ways to respond to this important critique. First, a growing philosophical literature is being written in other world regions, extending the vocabulary accordingly (Anzaldúa 2007; Lugones 1987). As the Latina feminist phenomenologist Ortega puts it, to her this means philosophizing not with a hammer but with a keen attunement to justice (Ortega 2016:xi). These philosophies are part

of the emerging critical phenomenology I have described. Second, some authors have begun to show how basic phenomenological ideas (e.g., the duality of reflectivity and pre-reflectivity) are salient in other world views as well, including Buddhism, Taoism and ancient Chinese philosophy (Hepach 2018; Krummel 2017; Ogawa 1998; Varela et al. 2016). If so, this would strengthen the universal claim the phenomenological program makes. Third, anthropologists can contribute to destabilizing and broadening phenomenological concepts when using them in ethnographic contexts that are significantly different. In so doing, anthropologists help to test the limits of these concepts and/or to develop them in ways that allow them to capture a broader range of experiences (Bubandt and Wentzer 2022; Mattingly 2019).

To conclude, I see three ways in which phenomenological anthropology contributes to theorizing beyond what other approaches have to offer. First, phenomenology provides a *theory of experience* that starts with the embodied first-person perspective. This allows the relationship between the knower and the known to be studied in nuanced ways. In so doing, phenomenological anthropology connects universal phenomenological concepts (some of which I have introduced) with the specific social and historical contexts in which the experience takes place. Second, by separating *how we know* from the context that frames specific experience, we can carve out the roles that material, social and normative structures play in constituting a phenomenon. This allows us to track the traces these particular structures leave in our bodies and our consciousness. No other theoretical approach has such a powerful theoretical vocabulary to describe this interaction between structures and embodied experience. Singling out structures in this way and making them visible opens up a unique opportunity for reflecting on social processes critically. Third, phenomenological anthropology applies the same concepts to the ways our interlocutors dwell in their worlds and to how we, as anthropologists, experience their world-making. With this, we do not need to make different assumptions about how we as scientists and others experience.

Jointly, then, phenomenology and anthropology can provide a sophisticated, reflexive and critical way of understanding *how* and *as what* things appear *in* consciousness *for* a subject, and thus a way of studying how worlds emerge in between ours and the other's point of view.

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The Question of Experience

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I welcome the opportunity to reflect on Michael Schnegg's fine article, 'Phenomenological Anthropology: Philosophical Concepts for Ethnographic Use'. Professor Schnegg's comprehensive overview of the intricate relations between phenomenology and anthropology is much-needed one, as it offers significant ways in which anthropologists can draw on phenomenological concepts and modes of thought and analysis in their research and writing. The article also suggests ways in which phenomenology can be informed by anthropology, particularly in expanding the scope, depth and cross-cultural dimensions of phenomenological inquiry in philosophy, the humanities and the social sciences.

There are many fine and highly significant aspects to the article, from the informed articulation of key theoretical concepts established in phenomenology through its history of concepts such as 'intentionality', 'being-in-the-world' and 'embodiment' (to name just a few) to the specific ways in which anthropologists can employ phenomenological modes of inquiry and analysis in their work. These modalities range from specific and highly useful research methods (including 'phenomenological interviews', 'free imaginative variation' and 'opening up') to a more general awareness of the phenomenological dimensions of everyday social life in diverse places in the contemporary world. All told, the article is remarkably perceptive and insightful, and holds out the promise of being read and used by diverse readers. I can readily envision the text being assigned as required reading in any number courses in phenomenological anthropology and critical phenomenology taught by anthropologists and philosophers.

The article has provoked vast swirls of thought and reflection in my own close reading of the text. I would therefore like to describe several thoughts and questions that keep coming into my mind as I reread and rethink certain arguments and conclusions at hand. In doing so I refer to my own first-person, phenomenologically inclined encounter with the text.

First, there is the question of *experience*. Michael Schnegg rightly observes that the gist and purpose of phenomenology are to look at the 'structures of experience' that are evident in how human beings and other life forms perceive the world, as the world and its many diffuse and varied phenomena appear to us and to others. While this claim is indisputable, I do think that we need to consider more closely what we mean by 'ex-

perience' or any given 'structures of experience', As I argued some years ago (Desjarlais 1994, 1997), as a foundational concept in philosophy and the human sciences, as we now know and understand that concept, the concept of experience is a relatively recent one within the history of European thought. And yet experience strikes me as a kind of 'bucket concept' that is used to hold lots of different things, such as apparent forms of perception, consciousness, affect and emotion, corporality, sensate knowing and empathy. However, the very idea and form of the bucket itself is often not considered closely. In other words, it is not enough to stand by the idea that phenomenology is the study of experience and then proceed from there. We need to dig into the implications of this idea and reflect on the many complicated forms that something like 'experience' assumes in our lives and the lives of others. The complications quietly involved are suggested by the fact that in the German language there are two words that are often considered cognate with the English word 'experience': namely, *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, with the former suggesting (as I roughly understand it) something like 'to experience something' within the busy stream of life, while the latter indicates an experience that one has gone through and gained something from. This begs the question: would it be said in German that phenomenology involves the study of the structures of *Erlebnis* or of *Erfahrung* or a complicated mix of the two? The point I am trying to make it that there is a whole gamut of connotations, implications and linguistic and conceptual histories in words such as *Erlebnis*, *Erfahrung* and 'experience', or words and concepts in other languages that might resemble (or not quite resemble) these rather European/American terms. It would be good for us to reflect in careful ways on the implications of all this in moving forward with any inquiries in phenomenological anthropology and critical phenomenology. For that matter, the secure and important question, 'How do you experience X?', if posed to interlocuters while doing phenomenologically inclined ethnographic research in non-western settings, might lead to any number of tricky problems and concerns. One is how to parse the verb 'experience' within a local language and how to describe how a person does something like 'experiencing' within the world, or even if there is something like 'experience' going on for any of the given peoples involved. It is not as easy or as straightforward as it might look.

Another concern of mine relates to the genealogy of critical phenomenology, which is outlined in the article. Schnegg notes that 'a new school is emerging that calls itself *critical phenomenology*, reaching out from phenomenology to critical theory' while citing publications by philosophers, the earliest being in 2018. Schnegg goes on to note that these philosophical texts share many of the concerns of 'earlier anthropological attempts to mobilize phenomenological thinking for social critique', as though these earlier attempts were antecedent to a more fully realized critical phenomenology as launched by philosophers. Yet the idea, scope and promise of a 'critical phenomenology' had already been clearly established in the discipline of anthropology by the mid-1990s. Byron Good sketched out the key ideas involved in his book *Medicine, Rationality, and Experience* (1994), while the present author produced a definitive statement in the book *Shelter Blues* (1997):

> In my reckoning we need a critical phenomenology that can help us not only to describe what people feel, think, or experience but also to grasp how the processes of feeling or experiencing come about through multiple, interlocking interactions. Such an approach is phenomenological because it would entail a close, unassuming study of 'phenomena,' of 'things themselves' – how, for instance, people tend to feel in a certain cultural situation. But the approach is also critical in that it tries to go beyond phenomenological description to understand why things are this way: to inquire, for instance, into what we mean by feeling, how it comes about, what it implies, and what broader cultural and political forces are involved. In addition, the phenomenology is a critical one because it tries to take into account the makings of its own perceptions. (Desjarlais 1997:25)

The ethnography in which this statement appears goes on to show the ways in which concepts such as 'experience,' 'agency', 'selfhood', 'personhood', 'mental illness', 'body' and 'the senses' are deeply charged by complex political, social, economic and discursive forces coursing through situations of life in and around a homeless shelter in Boston. It thus calls for critical analyses and reconsiderations of the very forms of thought involved in the social sciences and the humanities, phenomenology included. From the mid-1990s on, a number of writings by anthropologists developed further the conceptual aims and concerns of such engagements in critical phenomenology (as noted, for instance, in Desjarlais and Throop 2011, and Zigon and Throop 2021). It might be that phenomenologists trained in philosophy have not been so aware, understandably, of this in-depth work in anthropology in developing their own recent forms of critical phenomenology. Presently emergent, in any event, is a rich and generative interchange between philosophers and anthropologists when it comes to the critical analysis of life and death in many crucial situations in the contemporary world. Critical phenomenology is in an exciting fecund moment, as Schnegg astutely observes.

Yet another key aspect of Schnegg's innovative article is the framework in which 'six phenomenologies' are highlighted, with salient ethnographic examples situating these ideas in concrete social contexts. *Of-ness*, *in-ness*, *embodied-ness*, *responsive-ness*, *between-ness*, *with-ness*. Schnegg's reflections on these six modalities of phenomenological inquiry are highly incisive and useful. Along with this, I think there is a need to stress the ways in which the tenors of imagining and phantasmal appearance and ghostly spectralities course through many forms of contemporary life and perception, including situations of political violence and oppression, such that a wide-ranging 'phanomenology' is called for as much as any given phenomenology (Desjarlais 2017, 2018, Desjarlais and Habrih 2022). Perhaps, then, '*imagine-ness*' might be phantasmally added as an abiding coefficient to the six phenomenologies just noted?

More generally – and I believe that Michael Schnegg would agree with this – my sense is that a next good step would be to draw on these and related orientations in undertaking comprehensive ethnographic research on certain topics within the complexities of intersubjective life, in order to grasp and to show how these orientations

intersect with and inter-affect one another. There is a need to attend to complicated arrangements in life in which many forces are at work at once, with busy interfaces between disparate but interrelated forms of life and consciousness, perception, technology, analogue and virtual media, and organic and non-organic life. The contemporary world implies a close imbrication of technology and consciousness, of technologically mediated forms of consciousness, and various breeds of techno-consciousness and artificial intelligence processors synched into animate fields of human consciousness. We therefore need to develop ways to analyze and grasp what is involved with the charged multiplicities that course through all of this. In my estimation, the future of phenomenological anthropology belongs to a mix of actualities and virtualities, to singular moments and flows of life tied to forms of collective perception and agency and virtual actualities. This future belongs to refractions of multi-vectored temporalities and energies – of affect, perception, memory, imagining, fantasies – which themselves are tied into economies of simulation and virtuality. We are far from Husserl here, far from a 'transcendental philosophy as the analysis of lived experience in the conscious, living present' (Stiegler 1998:4). The concept of 'lived experience' in itself, by itself, in anything like a discrete living present, in the purity of its claims and dimensions, now strikes one as simple, quaint and anachronistic. The future of phenomenology might well imply a post-phenomenology.

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Between Weak and Strong Anthropological Phenomenologies

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Michael Schnegg's article makes an important, inspiring, and timely contribution to debates within phenomenological anthropology that have grown in recent years and are increasingly gaining attention within anthropology as a whole. Schnegg offers a substantial and solidly grounded overview of a set of key concepts in philosophical phenomenology – *intentionality* (Edmund Husserl), *being-in-the-world* (Martin Heidegger), *embodiment* (Maurice Merleau-Ponty), *empathy* (Edith Stein), *responsivity* (Bernhard Waldenfels) and *atmosphere* (Hermann Schmitz) – which, he argues, are useful in making better sense of specific experiences during fieldwork. To substantiate this claim, he productively draws on his ethnographic encounter with a Damara pastoralist in Namibia dealing with the weather and compellingly demonstrates how the conceptual vocabularies developed within different varieties of philosophical phenomenology can be mobilized in order to perspectivize anthropological understandings of what 'rain' means locally and how it is experienced.

However, Schnegg's ambitions go beyond illustrating the usefulness of phenomenological concepts for ethnographic analysis. Instead, he wants to develop phenomenological anthropology further, arguing that '*[w]hat* things appear *as* in a situation is a combination of *how* they appear and the social context'. In other words, the universal concepts of philosophical phenomenology about the 'transcendental structures of experience' need to be contextualized historically, culturally, socially, politically and economically – and this is anthropology's contribution – in order to explain localized variations and also divergent experiences among differently situated beings that are capable of subjectivity and some first-person perspective.

Moreover, he also wants to use this phenomenological anthropology for the purpose of criticizing these socio-cultural contexts. Such a critical phenomenological anthropology may proceed, Schnegg argues, by analysing first-person experiences of suffering pointing towards structures of injustice and discrimination, as well as by using the emic concepts of our interlocutors to destabilize our own. It can also be put into practice by uncovering the 'quasi-transcendental structures' that misleadingly prestructure and thereby unduly delimit, in empirically variable ways, what is locally mis-

perceived as what is possible or inevitable. Thus, using phenomenological anthropology as a means for an experience-based critique, Schnegg insists that it may also open up a space for hope, allowing us to imagine a possible otherwise.

This thorough engagement with phenomenological concepts for potential ethnographic usage is compelling and offers food for thought in many ways. At the same time, it also raises some questions. One pertains to the extent and depth of anthropology's engagement with, and commitment to, phenomenology that the text seems to be recommending: are we ultimately dealing with a weak or a strong anthropological phenomenology?

On the one hand, there are indicators that Schnegg seems to have a weak engagement in mind, in which 'the ethnographer' may eclectically decide which of the featured phenomenological 'concepts if any are productive for theorizing the particular experiences at stake'. Moreover, the recommended *epoché* is also 'ethnographic' rather than properly phenomenological in Husserl's transcendental sense. Yet, if we are to make a distinction between phenomenology as a transcendental philosophy and a form of empirical anthropology and stick exclusively to the latter, then many of the proposed 'philosophical concepts' may boil down to reformulations of what anthropology has been doing all along: *epoché* might turn out to be mere reflexivity; *intentionality* possibly highlights merely variable social constructions of the same reality; *being-in-the-world* might just refer to the importance of different socio-cultural contexts and interests at different scales and temporalities; *embodiment* could come down to the relevance of shared sense perceptions constitutive of any fieldwork conducted in physical co-presence; *responsivity* might boil down to the need, for research partners and anthropologists alike, to handle contingency and uncertainty through finding meaningful answers; *atmosphere* may function as a mere reminder to take intersubjective affects and emotions into account; and *with-ness phenomenology* could turn into an insistence on the importance of *empathy*, which has been defining anthropology ever since the discipline set out to 'grasp the native's point of view' through extended periods of fieldwork. Of course, there is nothing wrong with using phenomenological concepts as a terminological apparatus to capture these key elements that have been characterizing the anthropological project. Yet to the extent that the engagement with phenomenology remains weak and situational, the claim possibly loses some of its appeal that using philosophical concepts allows us to explore specific experiences in the field more thoroughly than has been the case before.

If, on the other hand, this is ultimately about a strong anthropological phenomenology that is simultaneously empirical and phenomenological in the philosophical sense, then the profound ethico-onto-epistemological differences between the assembled phenomenological varieties start to matter. After all, it does make a difference whether we see our task in epistemologically preparing for describing the true and objective essence of a phenomenon (Husserl) or ontologically interpreting the true being as it reveals itself (Heidegger); it makes a difference whether we believe the world to be already routinely understood and '*zuhanden*' (Heidegger) or to be alien and continuously in

demand of a response (Waldenfels); it makes a difference whether we see embodiment (Merleau-Ponty) or empathy (Stein) as being of prime importance; it makes a difference whether we see affects and emotions as unfolding within and between subjects or within atmospheres (Schmitz). Within such a strong phenomenological project, it would thus not really be up to the ethnographer to decide eclectically from situation to situation which concepts are productive – this would rather follow from foundational meta-decisions perspectivizing the entire anthropological project.

What is more: if we are indeed to take seriously some variety of phenomenology as a first philosophy of 'experience' – and there are passages in Schnegg's text suggesting this, as when a refined phenomenological anthropology is seen as combining the universal phenomenological insights into the transcendental structures of experience with anthropological knowledge about contexts – then empirically focusing on 'experiences' in such a world might unduly delimit the field of vision. Such an approach might mistake the empirical 'experience'-in-the-world for the transcendental world-as-experience-as-all-there-is. It would run the risk of confusing, in Niklas Luhmann's rendering, the 're-entry' for the world-constituting distinction 'experience/non-experience' itself, into which it is copied again. In other words, such a phenomenological meta-anthropology would not principally reveal itself through its incessant reference to 'experience', 'intentionality' et al., but through a language that is always constitutively (but not necessarily literally) perspectivized by such a transcendental understanding (irrespective of its concrete object of reference). If this is the case, however, then the added value of a 'phenomenological anthropology' would not lie primarily in 'philosophical concepts for ethnographic use'; instead, its added value would rather consist in making explicit the criteria according to which better apprehending engagements and meaningful descriptions of human interactions as intersubjectively entangled first-person perspectives would be possible in the first place. In short, its relevant contribution would be meta-theoretical: as transcendental anthropology, not as empirical anthropology.

Schnegg's subsequent arguments about a truly phenomenological anthropology on the one hand, and its further potential for critique on the other, seem to be entangled with this question as well. Schnegg recommends complementing a transcendental phenomenology of experiences with concrete contexts of socio-cultural structures. Yet what is the ontology of these contextual structures, and what are the epistemological conditions of their knowability? Presumably these contexts or structures are experiential, too. This seems to invoke the conundrums around mutual entanglements between singularities and systemic aggregates, between agency and structure, actor and system, the micro-macro link etc. that have engaged debates in social theory for a long time. It is no coincidence that Pierre Bourdieu's proclaimed synthesis in his praxeology seeks explicitly to combine 'phenomenological' with 'objectivist' approaches, as he makes clear in the opening pages of his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977). Against this backdrop, it would be helpful to clarify in more detail in what ways a renewed phenomenological anthropology may go beyond well-rehearsed ways of conjoining 'subjectivist' and 'objectivist' approaches within theories of structuration.

Last but not least, the project of a critical phenomenological anthropology does indeed sound highly promising. Yet in the current rendition, some important questions seem to deserve more attention. For instance, how are we to move from an analysis of what experience in socio-culturally variable contexts is to what, transcending quasi-transcendental structures, experience *could and should be*? On what basis are we to evaluate, and criticize, structures of injustice and discrimination? And more directly to the point of this text, how are these evaluative standards of criticism related to (some variety of) philosophical phenomenology? Do they constitute an intrinsic phenomenological ethic (an entire field of study of its own)? Or do they need to be conjoined with phenomenology from the outside, mobilizing, for instance, Marxist thinking as the text seems to suggest?

The fact that this text provides the focal point for asking questions such as these within a spirited forum of the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie | Journal of Social and Cultural Anthropology* attests to its importance for contemporary debates in anthropology. Much recent theorizing in the discipline has been concerned with how to practice an anthropology that is theoretically, methodologically and ethically reflexive, empirically grounded as well as socio-politically engaged, addressing current issues and challenges and actively promoting exchange between academia and non-academic publics. It is one of the great achievements of Schnegg's intervention to highlight the potential that a more profound engagement with phenomenology might offer this endeavour.

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Experience and Concepts: How Do They Relate?

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I would like to start my short commentary by expressing gratitude to Michael Schnegg for providing us with such an impressive *tour de force* of phenomenological thinking. Not only does he revisit the origins and original intentions of phenomenology, he also provides focused readings of some of its most important concepts, offers an original classification, and asks how exactly phenomenology might help answer some of the discipline's fundamental questions. He does so in the way most phenomenologists do, by taking small and apparently simple situations of everyday life – a cool breeze, clouds on the horizon – and rethinking them in phenomenological ways. By situating these small but telling events in an ethnographic setting he is very well acquainted with – northwestern Namibia – he aims to prove empirically that phenomenology makes a difference not only in how to approach such events theoretically and methodologically, but also in actually understanding them.

Phenomenology is not new to anthropology: Schnegg traces the history of this engagement himself, necessarily briefly, considering the vastness of the field, and with some originality: He makes no reference to Paul Stoller, for example, whom I consider an eminent figure in this respect; he also focuses on works in English and thus bypasses contributions from German-speaking anthropology, some of which are quite elaborate, like, for example, Till Förster's work (1998, 2001, 2011). Nonetheless, Schnegg insists on starting afresh from the original concepts, a task I wholeheartedly support for a number of reasons. First, this is always a good idea: theories that were once well-reflected and brilliantly argued tend to become shallow in the process of their reception, often being reduced to a minor set of claims and requests to be met in empirical settings. This is especially the case for phenomenological anthropology, where the claim to consider experiences is often made without taking the larger epistemological framework into account. Second, it allows us to confront new topics with established ways of thinking, and thus to approach them from relatively solid ground. Third, and maybe most importantly with respect to the topic at hand, going back to rigorous philosophical debates on the nature of knowledge allows us to reflect on how we conceptualize knowledge today and have been doing so for several decades: as an entity that is socially constructed, by and large through language. In insisting that knowledge

relates to the world itself, even if mediated by experience, Schnegg convincingly argues that phenomenology provides a means of critically rethinking social constructivism's fundamental claim that language is prior to experience (p. 8). His reflections thus provide a perspective on the non-discursive dimensions of knowledge that contributes to ongoing explorations of concepts like affect, atmosphere, material agency, human-nonhuman relationality and similar attempts to consider how knowledge relates to the world. It is another strength of the paper that it in the end attempts to prove that this epistemological concern does not rule out critique.

There is, however, a certain ambiguity in Schnegg's argument that I am struggling with, an ambiguity I already stumbled across in other phenomenological works and on which I would like to take the opportunity to elaborate. This ambiguity derives from the fact that, even though 'experience' is crucial to phenomenology, the concept remains astoundingly vague both in respect to its nature and to how it relates to reflexive, conceptual, language-based forms of knowledge. Phenomenology is, of course, an enormous field that is hard to pin down; fortunately, the paper develops the problem well, so I can concentrate on it in trying to substantiate my discomfort, which I hope will provide material for further debate.

At its core, phenomenology is a theory of experience not of reality proper, but of reality as it appears (p. 7). In denying access to reality itself, phenomenology therefore shares much with social constructivism. But while the latter approaches knowledge as a social practice that is fundamentally shaped by language and discourse, phenomenology, in Schnegg's words, claims 'an irreducible mine-ness of experience (...) which is not precisely a construct of social practices, but feeds into them' (p.8). Phenomenology thus takes a different stance toward a similar problem, which is how knowledge in its conceptual form comes into being.

In order for this juxtaposition to be of epistemological value, there must be a substantial difference between the two positions: somehow, experiences must diverge from the words and concepts we use to approach the world reflexively. Yet, this difference remains blurred in Schnegg's text as in others, which results in an argumentative vagueness already exemplified in the formulation 'not precisely' in the above-mentioned quote. Knowledge does take its departure from experience, Schnegg argues and illustrates, but it seems to translate into language quite smoothly: not only do 'language, cognition and experience' merge into one another, as he puts it in a telling sequence quoting Duranti (p. 18); he also considers experiences, and finally even the world to which they relate, to be prefigured by already existing concepts: 'I would even go so far', Schnegg states four pages later, 'to say that (...) different ways of being-in-the-world can create the rain as different ontological entities' (p. 22). From this perspective, experiences are thus either not categorically different from language, in which case phenomenology loses its original claim to draw its knowledge from the world and begins to dissolve into social constructivism. Or experiences are categorically different, but easily submit to existing concepts and discourses, which render them peripheral in respect to the resulting knowledge. In either case, a weak understanding of experience results that

ultimately fails to fulfil its original promise. Unlike social constructivism, phenomenology convincingly shows that cultural explanations are rooted in experience. The explanations themselves, however, being presented in pre-given concepts, resemble those that social constructivists would provide. I would argue that this is because experiences are not considered powerful enough to provide an actual alternative and resist their conceptual taming. In fact, the originality of Schnegg's ethnographic vignettes lies in his exposition of how experiences trigger epistemic processes, rather than in the actual explanations they put forward.

In my view, this somehow unclear relationship between experience and concepts is based on an indistinct understanding of experience. On the one hand, as their structural opposition to language and discourse implies, experiences are considered meaningful in themselves, as a kind of alternative, 'worlding' knowledge. On the other hand, they are presented as empty vessels of bodily sensation still to be filled with meaning, as indicated by concepts like 'feelings', 'emotions' and 'perceptions', which are used throughout the text to characterize experiences. Phenomenology, it seems, hesitates to take sides, unlike aesthetic theory, a related yet different body of theory on which I decided to draw for exactly this reason in my own struggle to understand experience. Here, experience is consistently understood as a form of knowledge that, because of its 'sensual' nature, cannot be translated into concepts; the result is a strong understanding of experience as a form of knowledge in its own right.[1] While 'sensual' knowledge does depend on critical conceptualization in order to rethink and elaborate on it, it will never be exhausted by concepts, language or discourse, thanks to its ontological difference. This results in an irresolvable tension that defines any attempt to grasp the epistemic content of an experience reflexively. In aesthetic theory, therefore, the act of conceptualizing experiences resembles attempts to understand art (as the term in fact already indicates): the experience of an artwork also needs to be reflected on, but will never really submit to any explanation. Seen from this perspective, therefore, experiences do not just trigger their explication into cultural concepts, but rather processes of exegesis which may soon come to a pragmatic end or result in further exploration, depending on the will – or the need – for engagement in given situations. This will, or need, for further exploration may become more significant in cases where experiences become more complex: the atmosphere at a meeting, for example, or the way in which a beautiful landscape or a tasty dish affects us. But even in those relatively

1 Aesthetics, understood as the study of sensual perception and sensual knowledge, goes back to Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* from 1750/58 (Baumgarten 1983[1750/58]); in the field of music, which I study, Theodor W. Adorno can be seen as the last thinker to provide a major philosophical system in this tradition (Adorno 1997[1970]; for a more recent and more accessible exposition of the central problems, see Wellmer 2009. In anthropology, Steven Feld's concept of 'acoustemology', which he developed in critical engagement with structuralism's overemphasis on language, is driven by a similar attempt to understand experience – in his case the experience of sound – as a form of sonic knowledge (Feld 2015, 2017); for a related idea of aesthetics in the field of visual anthropology, see David MacDougall's introduction to his book on social aesthetics (MacDougall 2005).

minor everyday situations from which Schnegg, like most phenomenologists, takes his point of departure, approaching experience from an 'aesthetic' angle does make a difference. To come back to his basic example: imagining the experience of dark clouds and a sudden cool breeze in a hot and dry landscape like that of Namibia, loaded with meanings it derives, among other things, from a range of spiritual entities, complex colonial reminiscences, and deep concern for livestock and thus finally for survival, it does not seem far-fetched to argue that any explanation that might be offered will only explore this experience in part. So, even when experiences seem to easily slip into concepts, it is crucial, I would argue, to keep them separate in order not to prevent further investigation. What is at stake is ultimately the nature of knowledge itself – the degree, more precisely, to which it is bound to language, concepts and discourse. It is one of the great merits of Michael Schnegg's paper that it reintroduces the history and relevance of this fundamental question by insisting on the actuality of phenomenological thinking and by proving that, at its core, "experience" is still crucial to reflections upon the relationship of knowledge to both words and the world.

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Affective Lives: A Critical Pheno|Psycho|Anthro Lens on the Arduousness of Experience

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For my commentary, I would like to take up Michael Schnegg's question 'what does the context add [to experience, A.v.P], and how?' I deliberately take the example of a feeling-state as a phenomenon to explore, simply because I am both a sociocultural and a psychological anthropologist who, up until now, has mostly been interested in understanding the entanglements of culture, society and the human psyche (Stodulka, von Poser, Scheidecker and Bens 2023). In order to discuss the above question, I offer a brief ethnographic glimpse into a re-occurring contextual experience that, in my view, is both charged with affects and telling in terms of affective resonance across times and spaces:

'How are you?', I usually ask Mrs. N. whenever we meet. Mrs. N. is a woman over sixty, whose name I anonymize here. Mrs. N. is a social worker who, before migrating to Germany, had been born and raised in Vietnam. In a socially highly committed way, she works in an urban psychosocial carescape in Berlin, which has been a site of my anthropological and continuous engaged research since 2015 (Ta et al. 2021, von Poser 2023, von Poser and Willamowski 2020). 'I am still alive' is the answer I usually get from her, and every time I hear these words, I feel that she utters them in a slightly moving voice. At least, and speaking in terms of 'affective scholarship' (Davies and Stodulka 2019, Stodulka, Selim and Mattes 2018), I sense that the moving voice as it appears to me epistemically affects me as a researcher. In the beginning of our ethnographic encounters, I therefore pondered why Mrs. N. framed her answer in the way she did. Why was she always saying that she was 'still alive'?

Only years later – experiential years of walking and talking together, of visiting places and people together, of sensing, silencing, and reflecting felt irritations in the relational encounters that are hers (into which I am allowed to delve to a certain degree), of walking and hanging around together without talking, of preparing and eating meals together, of touching plants together, picking strawberries together and sharing melon seeds, of sensing how eyes get widened, how eyes get filled with tears, how tears dry, how, first, a smile and, then, a laughter re-emerges – I dare to say that I am almost able to comprehend and contextualize what Mrs. N. has, in intersecting intensities,

experienced throughout her life and why the words 'I am still alive' truly have a serious weight. I am now aware that Mrs. N.'s embodied and emplaced memories entail existentially fraught experiences of war, hunger, repression and poverty, of displacement and inequality in migration, of discrimination, cultural ostracism and racism, as well as existentially mobilizing experiences of re-orientation, re-empowerment, hope, joy and success, all phenomenal layers that are repeatedly mixed with a feeling-state she describes as being 'still alive'. I am also aware that there are situations that lead Mrs. N. to enter states of remembering and even re-experiencing these multiple layers of her life in multiple affective ways.

My encounters with Mrs. N. are situated in the wider context of a collaborative research project between psychological anthropologists and cultural psychiatrists and psychologists (Heyken et al. 2019, Nguyen et al. 2021), who have jointly taken inspiration from the field of a global and interdisciplinary critical phenomenology of health (e.g., Kirmayer, Lemelson and Cummings 2015). Based primarily on a sensorially immersive ethnography (Pink 2015) of this context, I have conceptualized the arduousness of experience as a prism, which elsewhere I have called *Affective Lives* (von Poser 2018). This prism encapsulates the idea that emotional experiences are the result of complex, overlapping, sometimes exceptionally arduous and affective processes of coping with the felt irritations that shape and shake feelings of non/belonging and in/exclusion over the entire course of life. Moreover, this shaping and shaking always occurs situationally, with different intensities on the level of felt experience and in relation to people's temporal, spatial and sensorial emplacements and relational encounters in and with the world. Here, I wish to reveal this prism as a critical Pheno|Psycho|Anthro lens since, in condensing the perspective of experience as a literally 'lived' and thus much more complex, complicated and, in fact, 'abjective' (Willen 2007, 2021) experience, phenomenological and psychological anthropologists are required to be extremely cautious in their choice and use of a particular methodology.

Of course, Schnegg does hint at the aspect of 'lived' experience in his article by means of a detailed reference to a number of scholars who have been at the forefront of a critical phenomenology in anthropology (Desjarlais 1994; see also Willen 2007, Zigon 2007, Desjarlais and Throop 2011, Mattingly 2019). In my opinion, however, the very 'lived-ness' of experience, which posits complexity, ambivalence, conflict and arduousness, remains rather under-examined, at least clearly, in his *methodological* reflections. I basically share Schnegg's general observation that phenomenology is an integrative and salient anthropological approach to the theoretical and empirical study of experience. In fact, my own previous and current ethnographic works on foodways, empathy and relatedness in a rural Ramu River society of Papua New Guinea (von Poser 2013, 2017), as well as the affective efforts of migration in Viet-German car-escapes, would not have been possible had I not taken a general phenomenological stance towards the experiential dimensions of societal and subjective life and of social conduct in these settings. I also basically agree that tinkering variously with the 'of-ness', 'in-ness', 'embodied-ness', 'responsive-ness', 'between-ness' and the 'with-ness' of

the experience of (certain) phenomena might be helpful in sharpening our awareness as situated and socially committed researchers with regard to the analytical potential that is obviously inherent in phenomenology and anthropology.

I do think, however, that there is not only a need to 'defrost' *concepts* in this context, as Schnegg convincingly emphasizes with reference to a recent claim made by Cheryl Mattingly (2019), but to 'defrost' *methods* as well, depending on what kinds of 'livedness' we aim at investigating as anthropologists. Also, I think it is worth reflecting on what interests us most as phenomenological anthropologists and whether there are differences in the ways we categorize certain phenomena and approach them in terms of methodology. To me, wanting to know how phenomena such as a rain shower, a glass, water, a coffee machine, a soccer match or even the ritualized practice of a cockfight appear is quite different from wanting to know how individuals and collectives deal with the phenomena that appear as severe ruptures in their lives. I am quite confident that it is easier to ask someone to remember, re-experience and describe feelings related to situations that involve a rain shower, a glass, water, a coffee machine, a soccer match or even the ritualized practice of the cockfight.

Things are completely different, though, when it comes to, for instance, severe illness and suffering or feeling-states, which involve experiences of war, violence, or death, the loss of beloved ones, loneliness, discrimination, poverty and racialization, to name just a few scenarios of 'struggling along' (Desjarlais 1994), into which individuals as well as collectives can become enmeshed over the courses of their lives. In phenomenological encounters, in which such experiences take center stage, it is sometimes of the utmost importance not to ask questions in ways that might lead people to the re-experience of experience. It can likewise become mandatory to ask questions only in the company of others who are part of one's multi-perspectival research team and who can jointly (and hopefully better) approximate to an encounter. Finally, actively staying silent and perhaps even taking into account the possibility that one will not find out how things appear to others can be crucial.

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Power Relations and Phenomenological Anthropology

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In his article, Michael Schnegg provides us with important and helpful tools for conducting phenomenologically informed anthropological research. In an accessible manner, Schnegg captures the essence of complex philosophical concepts, demonstrates how anthropologists have applied them, and guides us through the different analyses and interpretations these allow based on his ethnographic material, collected among Damara pastoralists. These three aptly interwoven aims of his paper lead the reader to the crucial question of the future of phenomenological anthropology and its promising potential to reveal other ways of relating to and being in the world. In my opinion Schnegg's text shows us one of phenomenology's strengths, namely its capacity to account, via the discussion of experience, for what is universal, what is profoundly individual and what is political. We, as humans, all find ourselves in a state of 'being-in-the-world' (Husserl), in a state of 'embodiment' (Merleau-Ponty) or of 'thrownness' (Heidegger) into a world that is alien to us, to cite only a few of the currents that figure in this text. Yet, we are also fundamentally alone in how we experience this condition. At the same time, specific socio-historical contexts shape '*how* and *as what* such objects appear from a first-person perspective' (p. 1).

Although I tend to share Schnegg's hope for phenomenology's potential to 'envision being-together-otherwise' (Zigon 2021), my comment proposes to think about the kinds of relationships between researchers and research partners that allow a phenomenological approach in anthropological research in the first place. These reflections stem from my own research experience on tourism dependency in the Swiss Alps. For more than five years, I followed various inhabitants of a globalized mountain valley to understand what it meant to make a living in a place with no viable alternative to the very demanding economy of tourism. To understand tourism dependency beyond its economic aspect – that is, as a socio-historical as well as an affective and existential category shaping life in an Alpine village where local inhabitants claimed to be 'nothing without tourism' – I deployed a phenomenologically informed research framework. In an international resort that is visited by thousands of tourists every day, I turned to phenomenology [or, rather, existential anthropology as proposed by Jackson and Piette (2015)] in order to deepen my understanding of the place and its inhabitants' experi-

ences and move beyond the touristic, romanticizing narratives on the area. I selected a handful of informants whom I would visit regularly, and we talked for hours about their difficulties, their hopes and fears, for themselves, their children and their valley at a time of global acceleration, of a scarcity of snow and global warming. Thanks to the deployment of phenomenological tools foregrounding subjective experiences (p. 67), many of my interlocutors shared deeply personal experiences – of betrayal, threat, humiliation, disappointment, joy, etc. – with me. Some described these experiences as ordinary or even boring, but others felt that their (usually difficult) life stories needed to be heard or told to a greater audience. All trusted me in ways that I am still deeply grateful for.

In general, ethnographic fieldwork is based on certain levels of proximity between researcher and research participants. Participant observation and repeated, long stays belong to the anthropologists' toolkit precisely because they enable us to get a sense of how people live (Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Herzfeld 2015). Yet, the phenomenological approach seems to require a specific closeness, challenging boundaries separating researcher and research partners in particular ways. On the one hand, it requires a deep form of commitment and responsibility, as well as empathy from the side of the ethnographer, to gain a profound understanding of the subjective experiences of others (this is, as Schnegg notes, also an aspect of Husserl and Stein's approaches; see also Sholokova, Bizzari and Fuchs 2022). On the other hand, it rests on the trust and vulnerability of informants, who agree to share their intimate experiences and stories with researchers. This process, as described by various phenomenological or existential anthropologists, requires time, being dynamic and intersubjective (Jackson 2013; Lems 2018). Schnegg's ethnographic material also conveys this sense of trust and proximity, if not intimacy, with his research interlocutors, many of whom he has known for two decades (p. 92).

However, the interpersonal closeness that seems to be the basis of phenomenological approaches also comes with certain limits. During my research, I met with various categories of village dwellers, such as the employees of transporting companies, farmers or migrant hospitality workers, with whom I formed long-lasting relationships. They told me about the complicated relations they had with an industry that was simultaneously creative of jobs, history and identity, as well as threatening for the environment, their heritage and the future. As time went by, it became clear that I also needed to collect the perspectives of those who shaped this industry locally, nationally and transnationally. However, when working with local elites such as hotel owners, tourism lobbyists or political representatives – usually older men – I was repeatedly faced with a certain distance. Our meetings took place in public spaces or offices, they viewed our meetings as very formal, and they expected clear questions to which they could give ready-made answers in a given time-frame. As much as I tried to develop these relationships, my meetings with them remained 'expert' interviews, in which feelings and subjective experiences were carefully avoided or minimized. The closeness and vulnerability that was so crucial when working with other informants seemed impossible to achieve with them. At best, I was a researcher who had to be informed about a given issue, and at worst (although rarely) I was unwelcome. This experience speaks to many

anthropologists' reflections on the difficulties of working with elites, the suspicion they tend to have towards researchers and also their inaccessibility, both practically and on a more interpersonal level (Gusterson 2021; Souleles 2018). As representatives of institutions and interests on a different scale, people in positions of power perform ideals of professionalism and authority where vulnerability is likely to appear as weakness.

I wonder, then, if what Laura Nader famously termed 'studying up' (1973) – i.e. the study of the wealthy, the elites, or of 'those who structure the life of others' (Archer and Souleles 2021) could, broadly speaking, be seen as one phenomenological anthropology's blind spots. This question may very well point to my own incapacity to conduct research with those situated above me in local or national politics with the tools described in Schnegg's article, for instance. However, it is striking that the majority of the scholarship in phenomenological anthropology cited here seems to cover the experiences of the suffering, the dispossessed or the subaltern. Let me emphasize here that I believe that phenomenological anthropology successfully reveals the complexity of experiences that have otherwise often been treated with miserabilism or fascination, such as the migrant condition (Lems 2018) or homelessness (Desjarlais 1997). To be clear, I also do not mean to imply that the powerful are completely absent from phenomenological anthropological scholarship, but that experiences of stability and privilege as such seem rather understudied, whereas the opposite, i.e., experiences of acute marginality and precariousness, are central to the works of many phenomenological anthropologists.

Schnegg's genealogy of phenomenological concepts provides some explanations for this focus, such as the Merleau-Ponty-derived tradition that foregrounds bodily experiences of suffering (p. 78) or the Heideggerian moments of *Störungen* that dramatically interrupt routines and thereby expose the structures of normality when they are no longer present (p. 74). A further explanation could also relate to anthropology's own historical biases and preferences to study the underdog or to insist on the 'dark' or 'harsh' aspects of life in late capitalism, as both Nader (1973) and Ortner (2016) have noted. Yet, I think that another, perhaps more practical reason stems from the difficulties ethnographers can encounter when working with people in positions of power using a phenomenological approach that calls for proximity and vulnerability.

If explicable, this lack of the powerful's experiences in phenomenological anthropology remains questionable. Like Nader and many others, I am convinced it is crucial for anthropologists to consider those who embody and live in 'cultures of affluence' (Nader 1973) and who benefit from structures of inequality being maintained for the development of a critical anthropological scholarship. A growing number of anthropologists have recently successfully accessed spheres of power and influence and revealed the complex social and affective worlds at play in sectors (e.g. banking) that usually present themselves as 'rational' and 'objective', in typically modernist fashion (Ho 2009; Zaloom 2009). Making experiences of privilege, success or entitlement visible could in my opinion also respond to the recent calls for a critical phenomenological anthropology that Schnegg mentions here (e.g. Mattingly 2019), by complexifying our understandings of power (and the lack thereof), its fragility and uncertainty, even for those who live and embody it.

However, as I have experienced myself, the level of interpersonal closeness that phenomenological anthropology requires can often stand in the way of conducting research with CEOs, lobbyists, policy-makers and experts. Should or could alternative tools be developed for a phenomenological study of elites like Nader proposed in her time? Could phenomenologically informed forms of autoethnography, for instance, help us navigate such contexts? I do not have any answer to these questions myself, but I believe that they should push us to reflect on the types of relations, whether of power, proximity or vulnerability, that allow for or impede on the deployment of a phenomenological anthropological approach in given situations.

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True Beginnings: Experiential Process and Phenomenological Critique in Anthropology

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Edmund Husserl intended phenomenology to be a 'science of true beginnings'. This sense of beginnings is not so much about temporal origins in the form of history or archaeology as it is about the human source of phenomena in themselves, as they are constituted in experience. Every time we undertake a phenomenological interrogation or project we begin again at this moment of existential beginning, penetrating to the essence of a phenomenon at its inner horizon or allowing the layers of that phenomenon to unfold to its external horizon. Every time a scholar begins thinking phenomenologically and using the method of phenomenology it is also a true beginning, not a "reinvention of the wheel" but the inauguration of a fresh perspective on the nature of human reality and the meaning of being human. Bringing a fresh perspective to phenomenological anthropology is precisely what Schnegg achieves in this article, as he explicitly acknowledges that he has only recently begun to work in this way.

In the first few lines Schnegg already previews concepts fundamental to phenomenological anthropology insofar as it defines a starting point or level of analysis and engagement: reality, how and as what things appear, the first-person perspective, experience, world. With respect to his summary of anthropology's relationship with phenomenology over the last 75 years, Schnegg identifies more phenomenological sensibility in Geertz's work than was recognized by most when his influence was in its prime. At that time in the 1970s and 80s, Geertz's evocation of the experience-near in culture took a back seat to culture as public system of symbols in the same arena as Derrida's texts, Levi-Strauss' structures, and Foucault's discourse. Regardless of this caveat, Schnegg's goal is worthy of endorsement, namely to outline a phenomenological anthropology that can identify and make visible the traces of experiential processes that would otherwise be obscured, and to elaborate its critical potential for anthropology.

Schnegg introduces phenomenological method with its basic techniques of *epoché, free imaginative variation, Gelassenheit,* followed by suggestions on how to conduct phenomenological interviews. I am skeptical about the value of creating a special purpose phenomenological interview as opposed to adopting a phenomenological standpoint toward ethnographic interviews in general, but commend how Schnegg takes care to

define 'phenomenon' and practically engages a cultural phenomenology by means of concrete ethnography. Insofar as one can 'define phenomena as things as they appear in experience', I would add that a phenomenon is 'any thing, event, process, or relationship that we perceive'. Schnegg's case in point is how rain is constituted as a particular *meaningful* cultural phenomenon in the *lived bodily experience* of Damara pastoralists in Northwestern Namibia, *transformed* by context and differing from that of Schnegg as observer from a different culture. His strategy of repeatedly returning to the ethnographic situation to demonstrate the instantiation of phenomenological insight in concrete reality is a principal strength of the article.

This strategy is at its most effective in the interesting and innovative middle section of the piece, in which Schnegg outlines and ethnographically illustrates six approaches to *how* phenomena appear in experience, each identified with a specific thinker. He observes that these approaches 'partly overlap and partly contradict each other'. However, while it is the case that a phenomenological work can fruitfully begin from any of these approaches or thinkers, I would emphasize that what Schnegg achieves is to capture across this body of phenomenological work a shared level of analysis at which one can identify a constellation of complementary and intersecting dimensions of how humans constitute and engage the world of lived experience. These are what he calls of-ness, in-ness, embodied-ness, responsive-ness, between-ness, and with-ness. The suffix 'ness', like the near-ubiquitous suffix 'ality', transforms a word of whatever part of speech into an abstract noun of quality. In the present instance these qualities do not define distinct *modes* of being but *modalities* of the phenomenal world in lived experience.

What situates these modalities at a common level of analysis, and what I would add to help consolidate recognition of their complementarity, is their shared participation in another constellation of abstract nouns of quality that form an alliterative set of what I will call the five 'i's. *Immediacy* is about the here and now, presence spatially in a situation and temporally in the present moment. *Indeterminacy* refers to never completely coinciding with ourselves, but always running a bit ahead or trying to catch up from behind. *Intentionality* is the inherent tending toward the world and others that comes with being human, regardless of whether there is an explicit intention or motivation in play. *Intersubjectivity* and *intercorporeality* are not simply a fancy way to reinstate the duality of mind and body, partly because they are abstract nouns of quality rather than things or entities, and partly because the prefix 'inter' requires us to recognize the impossibility of solipsism in the human world. Taken together, these two sets of *abstract* nouns, ironically or not, contribute to defining the *concrete* nature of our human world.

Schnegg's final section takes up the idea of a 'critical phenomenology' that engages issues of politics, economics, and social justice. While this term is acceptable in a strict sense when it is a question of synthesis or dialogue between critical theory and phenomenology, in a more general sense it is redundant insofar as phenomenology is by definition inherently critical because it insistently and relentlessly calls into question ['brackets'] basic presuppositions. To be sure, phenomenology per se does not carry a political message, and it would be juvenile to imagine that reading Heidegger would

subliminally 'turn one into' a Nazi or reading Sartre would 'turn one into' a Marxist. It is also the case that a writer does not have the same purpose or audience in mind for every text: Merleau-Ponty's philosophical and political writings were distinct bodies of work, just as Fanon's clinical and political writings were distinct. For this reason, it is preferable from an anthropological standpoint to refer to 'cultural phenomenology' that can then be put at the service of phenomenological critique.

From this standpoint, what anthropology brings to the meeting with phenomenology is its concern with meaning, which is essential on three levels: the question of what it means to be human, the question of meaning as the outcome of interpretation and hermeneutic, and the meaning of any particular act or utterance. For anthropology, the meaning of being human has always been with reference to other humans in the face of our diversity and similarity, but also in recent years it has become increasingly evident that it must also be the meaning of being human in relation to other species of living beings and to the material world as such. With respect to the interpretation of cultures, meaning means a double hermeneutic of the meanings people constitute for themselves and the meanings we construct about their meanings. The meaning of a particular act or utterance situates us in the most intimate space of performative immediacy, the bodily site of meaning's generation.

Meaning, however, is abstract and alienated from the concrete if it is separated from experience, which is everything that happens to a person or people that has meaning for them. Cultural phenomenology not only brings a phenomenological sensibility and standpoint to the study of culture and cultures, but more importantly it underscores the recognition that human phenomena are always already culturally constituted. Given the many possible definitions of culture, the one I prefer is that it is everything we take for granted about the world, ourselves, and others. Bringing this taken for grantedness to light, or thematizing it, is the central movement that animates the method and allows phenomenological description to become phenomenological critique.

Phenomena, again, are whatever appears to us in the human lifeworld, from what is usually described as a 'first person' perspective – that of an I or ego as opposed to the perspective of him, her, or them. This methodological move means that our starting point, and central concern, lies in our immediate natural attitude toward the world rather than in anonymous process, natural law, institutional constraint, or social forces. Most importantly, the first person does not refer only to the anthropologist as phenomenological analyst, but to everyone else as well. From this standpoint another person is not him, her or them, but as Merleau-Ponty said, 'another myself'. To paraphrase the classic cosmological origin myth, the world is not built on elephants all the way down, or turtles all the way down, but 'I's all the way down', experience all the way down, other myselves all the way down.

If all phenomenology entails critique insofar as it discloses the taken for granted and brackets presuppositions, and a phenomenon is any thing, event, process, or relationship that we perceive, then cultural phenomenology does not begin and end with a thick description of the anthropologist encountering their desk or picking up a utensil.

An encounter with a phenomenon takes place within two kinds of horizons that extend from the immediate to the distant spatiotemporally, and from the personal to the political with respect to relations of power and influence. Because they are all human phenomena, there can be a cultural phenomenology of race hatred and misogyny, climate change, gun violence, displacement of people as refugees, religion as practice and performance. In this respect I diverge from Schnegg's aim of reconciling first and third person perspectives, and suggest that the true challenge for phenomenological critique is to persevere in maintaining the first person perspective – that of immediacy in the lifeworld – even when addressing phenomena that appear more distant spatiotemporally and more constituted by broad relations of power and influence.

How, for example, would one develop a critique of a geopolitical phenomenon such as the current war in Ukraine (or any war, or war in general)? That which is taken for granted and presupposed in the first person perspective by those of us following the war from a distance in the media must differ dramatically from what is taken for granted by the combatants, by the civilian Ukrainians living in combat or non-combat areas within the country and those displaced internally or externally, and by political or military leaders and policy makers in Ukraine and other countries.

What would it mean to capture the first-person immediacy of this set of perspectives detached from their presuppositions? Leave aside the anonymous processes that appear to lurk behind how many tanks and howitzers are deployed in which cities, or the historical sources of Russian imperialism. Is the common thread among those perspectives perhaps a sinking feeling accompanied by the question 'how can this be possible, and how can anyone come to take this state of inhumanity for granted?'

In this potentially shared moment of indeterminacy – moral, political, existential – the phenomenon is not constituted as a flux or oscillation between anonymous macrosocial processes and the immediacy of personal experience, but between the first person perspective as mine and as that of many other myselves. Schnegg's elaboration of six modalities of how phenomena appear invites moving in this direction. His interpretation of rain in the Damara lifeworld captures the immediacy of first person experience framed by their postcolonial situation, yet it is worth pushing the point that colonialism can be construed as more than a third person quasi-anonymous contextual process, and not only a structural legacy but a legacy of lived experience. This methodological stance is at least implicit in Schnegg's thoughtful intervention into phenomenological anthropology, and it deserves further development as he pursues this line of thought.

A Critical Phenomenological-Hermeneutics of Us

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There are a lot of great introductions and reviews of phenomenological anthropology available for the interested reader (see, for example, Jackson 2005; Desjarlais and Throop 2011; Zigon and Throop 2021). Michael Schnegg has now provided us with what could become the defining text, as it offers an exceedingly clear and well-founded introduction to both philosophical phenomenology and the ways in which it has been taken up within anthropology. I know of no other text that so clearly articulates the foundational basics of phenomenology and that links them not simply to anthropological theorizing, but more importantly to ethnographic practice.

In particular, there are two parts of this essay that I find most helpful and that I think any other reader will as well: first, the section on methodological approaches; and second, that on six phenomenologies. The three methodological approaches that Schnegg discusses – *epoché, free imaginative variation*, and *Gelassenheit* – won't be knew to anyone who already knows the phenomenological tradition and method. But they are vital for anyone who doesn't, and Schnegg articulates them here expertly and in a voice that is understandable to the most uninitiated of readers. He isn't the first anthropologist to discuss these (e.g., Throop 2012; Zigon and Throop 2021; Zigon 2019), but having them here in one essay is important.

Schnegg's typology of what he calls the six phenomenologies is, to the best of my knowledge, a novel way of making distinctions within the phenomenological tradition. Again, this is done in an extremely clear and helpful manner. Ultimately, I believe the lasting contribution of this essay will be precisely this classification, for it articulates very well to an anthropological readership that there is *no one thing* that can easily be identified as phenomenology. Rather, over the course of the last 125 years or so, several different phenomenologies have, in fact, developed.

This is important for anthropologists for at least two reasons. First, those of us who claim to be doing phenomenological anthropology too often write as though there is simply one phenomenology and that we are all doing it. Any close reading of our various texts should reveal that this is, in fact, not true. This is so, even if on occasion we self-identified phenomenological anthropologists may gloss over the differences. Perhaps one of the reasons this is done is to create a united front against those anthropologists who critique phenomenology, oftentimes while knowing almost nothing

about its internally differentiated tradition. Thus, the second reason this typology offered by Schnegg is important for anthropologists is its very clear demonstration that, while some of these critiques may be more or less appropriate to one typology, they are often not appropriate to the others.

One common critique of phenomenology by anthropologists is that it focuses only on individuals or subjectivity while ignoring larger structures such as history or power or the like. Schnegg's essay, and especially his six-part typology, shows that this is simply untrue. Thus, even the phenomenology that would most easily be mischaracterized as such – the Husserlian 'of-ness phenomenology'– does not simply focus on individuals or subjects, but rather on the relationality of intentionality. And here is where I would have challenged Schnegg if I were a reviewer of this essay. For, despite clearly acknowledging that phenomenology's focus is on relations, he takes up the very same language used by Husserlian phenomenologists and many phenomenological anthropologists in describing phenomenology as concerned above all with experience from a first-person perspective. I contend that it is precisely the continuous articulation of this description by most phenomenological anthropologists, along with the engrossing narrative writing of many of them, that has reinforced the subject-focused critique. This language is even more easily heard as such when there is such widespread phenomenological illiteracy within anthropology.

It is for this reason that I prefer to speak of phenomenology as concerned above all with relationality and the ways in which different entities – both human and non-human – emerge out of the differential flows and trajectories of relations. Thus, phenomenology is not about individual subjects because such entities do not exist other than as a temporary 'knotting' – to use a concept of Tim Ingold (2016) – of relations that then give way to other intertwinings. In this way, relationality is not about connecting two already existing dots, as Marilyn Strathern argues it is so often conceived within anthropology (2020). Rather, the image we might prefer to have in mind is something like several fireworks exploding in the dark sky and the ways in which their various rays of light cross one another temporarily. This crossing – this Merleau-Pontian chiasmic intertwining (1997) – is the temporary 'knotting' that give way to us beings-in-the-world.

Thus, if we were to add a seventh typology to Schnegg's list, it might be called 'dative phenomenology' or 'us phenomenology'. Indeed, some of the most influential phenomenology done today is making precisely this claim – that what makes us (whoever and whatever each one of us is) is nothing more than a momentary knotting together or gathering of relational forces. Though this has real similarities to the 'responsive phenomenology' Schnegg writes about, and some have written about an 'us' in the dative as a response (e.g., Mattingly 2018; Wentzer 2018; Dyring 2021), these responsive phenomenologists nevertheless remain focused on a first-person perspective. In contrast, the focus of 'dative phenomenology' is precisely the becoming of each of 'us' – noting that both human and non-humans count as 'us' – from the dative perspective and not a first-person perspective. Here I'm thinking of the work of, for

example, Jean-Luc Nancy (1997; 2000) and Jean-Luc Marion (2002) in philosophy, and my own in anthropology (Zigon 2019; 2021).

It is not difficult to see how this 'dative or us phenomenology' helps us do a critical phenomenology of the otherwise. For when the starting point of phenomenology is not the first-person perspective, but rather the relational forces that intertwine to make us, one clear focus can be a critical analysis of what those forces are, how they intertwine, and how they can be made otherwise. In this way, phenomenology can no longer be critiqued for not taking account of the larger forces, e.g., history, power, capitalism, etc., that make us. Rather, now critical phenomenology can ask those very critics: 1) just how is it that their non-relational or quasi-relational ontologies give way to an otherwise?; and 2) what assumptions do they have of the subject that allows an otherwise to come about? My critical phenomenological-hermeneutic guess is that their answers will be: 1) they don't; and 2) their subject is the very agentive and willful individual they so often critique. Be that as it may, I will simply end this brief commentary by saying that I believe it is critical phenomenology that will come to have the most significant impact on anthropology today, just as it has in contemporary phenomenological philosophy.

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Towards a Phenomenological Anthropology of the Capitalist World System

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One lineage in the history of anthropological theory is the discipline's struggle to connect the experiences and worldviews of individual humans to the arena of global political economy. Michael Schnegg's article offers an important step forward from the heavy reliance of recent theories on auxiliary concepts in bridging the subjective and the intersubjective. The globalization talk of the 1990s and 2000s pretended that the impact of the capitalist world-system on everyone and everything on the planet was a recent phenomenon. The focus on neoliberalism offered a more precise dating and analysis of capitalism's global cycle and its impact on subjectivities and intersubjectivities in the 2000s and 2010s. Yet again, the global scale of anthropology's analysis suffered from an ahistorical predicament, as there was little to no interest in understanding the continuities and discontinuities from previous cycles of accumulation in the neoliberal era (Neveling 2010).

Recent research on the history of anthropology has made the reasons for this predicament easily identifiable. The strongholds of anthropological knowledge production have for many decades been universities and research centres in the West European and North American core of the capitalist world-system. The political and economic praxis sustaining that core has been the (super-)exploitation of the planet in a colonial, imperial and postcolonial interstate system. Resistance and alternatives to capitalist exploitation have been violently quashed wherever subjects resisted on shopfloors, plantations, streets, parliaments and beyond. Marxist and other anti-capitalist teaching and research in those university departments that defined anthropology's canon led to bans from the profession in many cases. Often, it had to be conducted in clandestine ways. Leading figures in the discipline's mainstream instead made their career in alliances and with funding from predatory foundations and institutions of the US and other Western colonial and Cold-War capitalist regimes (Price 2016).

Many canonical texts in anthropology thus come with an early and unwitting variant of the key form in George Spencer Brown's famous *Laws of Cognition* (Spencer-Brown 1969). Spencer Brown designed this key form a 'Cross' and explains that it demarcates the boundary between the field of research and the outside – between the

object of study and what is outside (in Niklas Luhmann's system theory, for example). The 'Cross' of the anthropological canon has for decades demarcated the impact of the political economy of colonialism and capitalism on everyone as the 'outside' of the sphere of research. This is why, in recent years, Bruno Latour's contribution to so-called Actor Network Theory (ANT) has been the most popular variant in mainstream anthropology's denial of service (DoS) attack on critical political-economy approaches, especially Marxist anthropology (Neveling 2019). A key theme linking ANT with earlier anti-Marxist DoS (aMDoS) is the statement that critiques of the political economy of capitalism were 'woven out of the same tiny repertoire of already recognized forces: power, domination, exploitation, legitimization, fetishization, reification' (Latour 2005: 249 in Holifield 2009, 653). Leaving aside the question whether such a repertoire was 'tiny', one wonders why Latour called for new paradigms when existing Marxist paradigms in anthropology had powerfully criticized a world stuck in a downward spiral of capitalist exploitation, at the behest of then being excluded or side-lined from the profession. Rather, an anthropology confronting the challenges of global warming and capitalist upper-class warfare on everyone else is thus in need of thorough implementations based on advances of existing Marxist and anti-capitalist anthropological theories.

Michael Schnegg's overview and implementation of recent phenomenological approaches is an important and potentially path-breaking point of departure in anthropology because of its rigorous attention to the long-standing philosophical concepts undergirding phenomenological anthropology. Moving from the difference between Descartes and Husserl in the latter's insistence that 'mind and world are *relationally intertwined* in constituting what appears phenomenally' to the difference between Kant and Husserl in the latter's call to take philosophical enquiry 'back to the things themselves' (Schnegg 2023:62–3, his italics), Schnegg establishes a firm intersubjective paradigm. Winds, other meteorological phenomena and climate and ecology more generally are imbued not with the Kantian *a priori* that loiters on all nodes of the ANT paradigm's insistence on a flat ontological agency of things. Instead, in 'Phenomenological Approaches', what constitutes a given situation emerges from the *longue durée* of the relational intertwining of mind and world. Importantly, Schnegg salvages the 'situation' (p. 78) with reference to Waldenfels' *Antwortregistern* (answer registers) from the grips of Heidegger's frame that has humans cast into the world with the existential thread of being cast out lurking should the replica womb of the *Volk* no longer be 'at hand' (Kapfinger 2021).

Two important additions emerge from a close reading of Schnegg's work. First, it seems appropriate to develop a critical historical approach to phenomenology itself. Heidegger's philosophy may be less suited as a general theory of being, for example. However, it may become better suited if anthropology were to employ a sophisticated understanding of Heidegger's world-views to study the unfortunate and dangerous rise of neo-fascist movements all over the planet. Such a research project has been foreshadowed in recent work by Daniel Gyollai, who shows that a critical phenomenolo-

gy can identify how the racist turn in Hungarian state politics establishes structures of relevance in the wider society that then shape the racist treatment of refugees by Hungarian border guards (Gyollai 2022). Elsewhere Susanne Klien and I have shown how ethno-traditionalist and racist communities have world-views that are closely linked to Carl Schmitt's political theology and its rejection of an epochal shift with the world-historical transition to capitalism. Where Schmitt argued that twentieth-century nation states lacked political legitimacy and thus built their sovereignty solely on earlier sources of power, in an exchange of letters the German philosopher Hans Blumenberg argued that this denial of modernity as an era of new forms of political legitimacy, largely due to the transition to capitalism, led Schmitt to relate uncritically to German fascism. Thus, Schmitt's denial of an epochal shift with the onset of global capitalism and his insistence on a political theology is mirrored in contemporary political movements' insistence that contemporary political legitimacy was rooted in long-standing ethno-nationalist and racist political formations – ignoring the fact that those political formations have never existed in the way right-wing movements imagine them (Neveling and Klien 2010).

Second, building on this suggestion to research Schmitt's and Heidegger's own 'situations' in comparative historical perspective, it seems important to respond to Schnegg's call for a direct engagement with Karl Marx's writings in critical phenomenology to supplement the derivative Marxism from French existentialism. An obvious point of departure for such an endeavour is Marx's labour theory of value, which highlights that value in capitalism is not a thing in itself, an absolute derived from the *a priori* inputs of labour, capital and rents, as classical and neoclassical economic theories had it. Instead, value and capital are social relations shaped by forces and relations of production that enable capitalists to extract a surplus from proletarians that have nothing to sell but their labour. These insights are akin to Husserl's relational analytical approach as an alternative to Kantian philosophy, in which he calls for an analysis of how things appear in reality and how mind and world relate to one another (p. 63). To Marx, the value of labour is an abstraction of different labouring activities via the fetishes of commodities and money. The very fact that value exists as an economic category and is socially constructed is the result of a historical shift in the mode of production (Marx 1962). There may thus be more Marx in Husserl than is commonly assumed as both call for a return to a philosophical enquiry of the things themselves instead of a focus on their surface appearance.

Accordingly, Marx noted that human world-views and thought may change with changes in the relations and forces of production. The alienation of labour derives from a particular appearance of both things and social relations. Now, the question is how to bring together phenomenological anthropology in the spirit of Schnegg's treatise and Marxist anthropology's critique of political economy. The theoretical insights in Eric Wolf's book, *Envisioning Power*, are a good point of departure. For Wolf's theory of power incorporates a range of theories according to their most suitable scale of analysis. His model considers four dimensions; intersubjective power, or 'how persons enter into

a play of power' (Nietzsche); charismatic/interpersonal power, or 'the ability of an *ego* to impose its will in social action on an *alter*' (Weber); tactical and organizational power, or 'the instrumentalities through which individuals or groups direct or circumscribe the actions of others within determinate settings' (Gramsci); and structural power, which is 'manifest in relationships that not only operates within settings and domains but also organizes and orchestrates the settings themselves, and that specifies the direction and distribution of energy flows' (Foucault/Marx) (Wolf 1999:5, his italics).

Combining the analysis of the scales of power with the analysis of the scales of being and world-views, we can move forward with Schnegg's three concluding foci on phenomenology in anthropology as, first, a '*theory of experience*' (in lieu of the Nietzschean focus on the intersubjective scale in Wolf); second, 'an effective means of studying the *situationality* of knowing' (as informed by Marxist insights into the interplay of forces of production and relations of production as a macro-situation at a high intersubjectivity scale); and third, a theory for 'separating *how we know* from the context that frames experience' (as a 21st century extension of Marx's concept of fetishism; (Schnegg 2023:91, his italics).

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Response
Experience and Concepts

Michael Schnegg

First and foremost, I want to express my deep gratitude to the commentators for engaging so thoroughly with my text. In pointing out omissions and shortcomings in my argument, the commentators are developing phenomenological anthropology into the multi-layered paradigm it deserves to become.

All the comments establish good vibes (maybe 'relationality' in Zigon's terms) and create a positive atmosphere around phenomenological anthropology. At the same time, they challenge my argumentation – and sometimes the paradigm at large – and I am grateful for the opportunity to reply. To organize my text, I formulate several questions that demand a response, as Waldenfels would say. Unsurprisingly, this selection is biased and reflects my subjective experience of reading its rich feedback. It centres around experience and concepts and the relationship between the two, which I not only find in many of the comments but also anticipate being a salient and important challenge of future phenomenological anthropology.

The first question is, *what is experience, after all*? Robert Desjarlais makes the valuable intervention that my text, and maybe phenomenological anthropology more generally, does not engage thoroughly enough with the question it posits to be at the core. In so doing, he also reminds us of his seminal work in which he outlines the ambiguity of the concept and the difficulties in translating *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* into the English experience (Desjarlais 1994, 1997). Desjarlais showed some years ago in his ethnography of homeless people that, despite the many conceptions of experience in the philosophical literature, none describe how people feel living their lives. Furthermore, the literature's preoccupation with 'reflexive depth, temporal integration, and a cumulative transcendence' might – at least for some people – be much more a relic of the past than it is felt to be now (Desjarlais 1994:898). Instead Desjarlais proposed taking the concepts of our interlocutors seriously, for example, concepts such as 'struggling along'. He encouraged us to acknowledge the disrupted condition of experience, which he also highlights in his reply and in his more recent work, an experience that has become so commonplace three decades later that he suggests capturing it through a 'post-phenomenology' in his inspiring comment.

In the Namibian context where I work, the Khoekhoegowab word that comes closest to experience is *hō!â*. It is a compound of *hō*, to find, and *!â*, the front of the body. Literally it translates as 'finding something in front of one(self)'. Experiencing thus means encountering something or running into something. A phenomenon becomes something by *being-in-the-way*, to paraphrase Heidegger. This resonates well with what I have called responsive-ness phenomenology, the attempt to theorize meaning-making as something that starts elsewhere. My reference to the Namibian *hō!â* and Desjarlais' much more sophisticated analysis of 'struggling along' show how useful it is to analyse our interlocutors' understandings of what it means to them to be in the world.

Where can this lead? In my view, anthropology should oscillate between relativistic and comparative/universal poles (Schnegg 2014). Phenomenology has the potential to facilitate this more than any other paradigm. Comparing and contrasting, however, requires a conceptual language, which phenomenology can provide. For such a project and for a collaboration between anthropology and phenomenology as a philosophical discipline, I therefore propose that we begin exploring a question like *what it means to experience* with philosophically validated concepts (Schnegg 2022). The ethnographic cases and the understandings of experiences they provide – such as 'struggling along' or '*hō!â*' – would be used to broaden, destabilize, and develop them further (Bubandt and Wentzer 2022; Desjarlais 1997; Mattingly 2019). In addition to ethnographic observations, exploring similarities and differences between phenomenology and theories that emerged outside the Western philosophical context provides equally important possibilities to decentre theoretical development. Varela et al. (2016), for example, have shown that phenomenology and the Indian Buddhist Abhidharma school have many parallels and can be integrated (Varela et al. 2016). While they point to similarities, difference can be equally stimulating for developing a more comprehensive account (Aulino 2019).

Comparing and contrasting schools of thought in this way would further concepts to capture adequately the complexity and friction of experiences that characterize most moments in today's world, which Desjarlais works out convincingly in his reply, his theorizing and his ethnography. At the same time – and I will say more about this below – I read Desjarlais's comments as also supporting the notion that there is always an excess of experience over concepts requiring us to acknowledge that some things will and must remain unsaid.

In important ways, Olaf Zenker also engages with the question of what experience is, distinguishing between its empirical and transcendental dimensions. He differentiates between a 'weak phenomenology', as in the application of phenomenological concepts to ethnographic cases, and a 'strong' transcendental phenomenological anthropology, which is in search of a meta-theory for the relationship between the knower and the known and the possibilities of knowing. In his view, the weak rendering I propose does not add significantly to what is already in use. While I agree to some extent, his observation is true for some concepts more than for others, including, for example, describing emotions as atmospheres. But even for the concepts that have been

in use for a long time – embodiment is a prime example – some recent developments have not been explored and critically reflected upon anthropologically. These include, for example, 4E-cognition (embodied, embedded, enactive and extended cognition), which stresses that external objects and practices are sometimes not only *supportive* but *constitutive* of cognition and knowing (Colombetti 2014; Newen et al. 2018; Noë 2012; Rowlands 2010). 4E-cognition shows how some concepts continue to develop significantly outside anthropology (e.g., in psychology and philosophy). I therefore suggest that we keep up with these developments to avoid sticking to Schütz's reading of Husserl or Bourdieu's engagement with Heidegger and the way they entered social theory long ago.

Whereas I defend my project in this regard, I see the merits of developing a more philosophically sound phenomenological anthropology, eloquently proposed by Zenker. Such a transcendental theory would allow us to describe *how* and *what* we as anthropologists (along with all other human beings) can know and would be an enormously valuable contribution to many debates. It remains a challenge to work out in detail how this project would be carried out methodologically, whether and how it would include empirical evidence, and how its results might inform how we do and write ethnography.

These critical engagements with experience bring me to the challenging question Markus Verne asks: *How are concepts and experience related*? In my reading, this is one of the most interesting questions in terms of not only linguistic concepts but also values and norms – all representation if you will. Verne rightly remarks that my text is inconsistent in this regard. Given this messiness, which he finds not only with me, Verne proposes separating conceptual knowledge and experience more radically. To do so, he suggests aesthetic theories that treat experience in its own right as a theoretical guide (Schlitte et al. 2021; Verne 2015). I find this a very intriguing proposal and would like to take it up.

According to some aesthetic theorists, including prominently Theodor Adorno, experience and conceptual knowledge have different ontological statuses and are incommensurable, implying that one cannot be translated into the other.[1] In this view, experience can inform concepts but will never be completely absorbed in them. As I will argue, there is always an *excess of experience* over concepts. Adorno explains this by using the example of art experience when he writes,

> Artworks speak like elves in fairy tales: 'If you want the absolute, you shall have it, but you will not recognize it when you see it.' The truth of discursive knowledge is unshrouded, and thus discursive knowledge does not have it; the knowledge that is art, has truth, but as something incommensurable with art. (Adorno 1997:126)

1 I am grateful to Markus Verne for our communication on this topic and for pointing me to the relevance of Adorno and this part of his work.

With this, Adorno makes several important points. For one, there are two different ways of knowing, one being discursive (rational) and the other lying in our sensory experiences of artworks (and one can extend this to other experiences, like walking through a forest, being in pain, etc.). Adorno has a clear understanding that knowledge that is rooted in sensory experiences is superior and ultimately the only knowledge that ever comes close to 'reality,' a transcendental truth he calls 'unshrouded' (*das Unbedingte*). At the same time, this 'truth' is more than what even art can capture, which is why the two (truth and art) are 'incommensurable'. With this, Adorno establishes both a dichotomy and a hierarchy. In his philosophy of music, Adorno develops this thesis when he argues that Schoenberg's music was able to perceive political threats like the rise of German fascism as 'truth', while language could neither grasp nor adequately convey this (Adorno 1949).

At the same time, some phenomenologists, including Husserl and Ricœur, would add that the same is true the other way around (Husserl 1999; Ricoeur 1991). Concepts that are shared by a social group as abstractions or narrations of experiences contain an excess over experience. Consider being drunk. It is certainly true that the concept and narrations only partly capture how it feels. At the same time, even as a child or as someone who was never drunk, the concept allows one to imagine and 'experience' things one never felt bodily. Or consider the idea of 'God' and what many religious traditions associate with it. The concept also contains aspects that elude experience. Both examples indicate that *while there is an excess of experience over concepts, there is also an excess of concepts over experience*!

I see the elegance of an aesthetic approach that separates experience and discursive knowledge (e.g., concepts), thus radically allowing us to focus on experiences as knowledge of its own kind. Most likely, and this is also an empirical question, it depends on the kind of experience. Therefore music and art – the focus of Adorno's work – might be especially difficult to capture conceptually. Another advantage of reaching out to aesthetics is that it opens up the possibility of including aesthetic theories from other world regions, including, for example, *rasa theory* from India and the Chinese notion of *ganying* (Iskra 2023; Menon 2017).

While I find that the approach allows us to see the properties of experience clearly, in my view it should not distract us from studying how experience shapes concepts and vice versa (even if they are different ontologically). Today, some years after Adorno's stimulating and then radical claim, this is increasingly acknowledged in aesthetic theory (Hamburger 1979). To explore the relationship between concepts and experience, the work of Hubert Dreyfus might be a productive entry point (Dreyfus 2007). To visualize the relationship, Dreyfus introduces the metaphor of an edifice with more than one floor. Experience is on the ground, concepts (and language) on the upper floors. To build on this, Shaun Gallagher proposes applying the 4E-model of cognition to it, which I agree could be constructive material from which to build a stairway between the floors (Gallagher 2017:197). In my view, this image could become a productive framework, even though it does not yet solve the problem empirically and methodolog-

ically. While the floors constitute their own 'worlds', there is a stairway between them. But not everything will pass, neither up nor down the stairs. There is always an excess!

I take an initial step to explore the relationship between experience and concepts when trying to explain why Khoekhoegowab-speaking people distinguish eleven different types of rain. To do so, I mobilize Husserl's analysis of the subjective experience of time (i.e., his notions of protention and retention) and argue that past moments and future expectations fade in the experience of any particular 'now', leading to a myriad overlaps of experiences that constitute the experience of a particular kind of rain (Schnegg 2021). The analysis also shows that we still have much to learn to fully understand how concepts emerge from particular aspects of experience, practices and communication (especially socialization) and how they change if experiences and concepts do not match. Exploring the relationship between experience and concepts more thoroughly requires a sophisticated methodology, as both von Poser and Leitenberg argue convincingly when they pose the following question:

How can we study experience ethnographically? Furthermore, when might it be better to abstain from ethnographic inquiry? In her thoughtful comment, Anita von Poser points out that the study of experience needs more sensitivity than I have indicated in my text. Importantly, she notes that we should listen carefully when our interlocutors answer comparatively broadly, for example, when Mrs N replied to von Poser routinely, 'I am still alive'. Or, to quote a common response from Khoekhoegowab-speaking interlocutors, '*Hâs lguisa ta ĩ*' (I am just there). While the (impatient) phenomenologist in us might be inclined to explore in detail what experience this entails, von Poser points very carefully to the potential consequences of such questioning, which we cannot always foresee. We may, for example, re-traumatize our interlocutors, at least with some experiences. Sometimes we need to be silent, she says. Instead of probing in the interviews, she shows how going along with people and lives might allow us to understand the weight and meaning of an experience that is communicated when someone says routinely that she is still alive.

We should also take the answer at face value. Following what I said above, the answer is a concept that resides in the upper floor and is most likely grounded by some more durable and culturally shared experience of the group. That means it is not only a window to the personal experience of our interlocutors but also a reflection of a more general understanding of *being-in-the-world*. In the Namibian case I explore, it reflects an atmosphere of loneliness and boredom that characterizes rural livelihoods in postcolonial Namibia (Schnegg forthcoming) and that emerged in the context of migratory patterns: it is said by those who stay behind (and do not migrate). Maybe it is also a form of critique. 'I am just there' indicates a feeling of pointlessness, an accusation against those who disrupted the connection with a meaningful life in a world where most promises are eventually blocked.

Danaé Leitenberg reflects equally eloquently on the limits of the methodological approach when she describes how phenomenology reached its limits for her when she interviewed the elite in an Austrian village. She knew that many of these interlocutors

were more responsible for suffering than suffering themselves. Geertz asked famously, 'What happens to *verstehen* when *einfühlen* disappears?' (Geertz 1974:28). Of course, he was talking about Malinowski and had something different in mind. But the issues seem comparable. If as researchers we do not want to be empathetic and maybe even cannot be, how far can the phenomenological approach take us? To address this question and to further a critical phenomenology, Leitenberg suggests that we might need different methodological approaches. I find this suggestion to have an enormously important appeal, especially since discussions on methodologies are not very advanced, transparent, or common in phenomenological anthropology. There is, for example, not a single overview. One way to study elites phenomenologically might be to include an analysis of social media profiles. In addition to developing novel approaches to access the first-person perspective of elite interlocutors, we should also focus on their 'ways of seeing' and thus the concepts they coin. Even if we cannot access the first-person experiences of elites in the Alps or, even more unlikely, the global capitalist elite, we are all confronted with the structures and categories they make and maintain. This brings me to another point I read in Csordas' stimulating *réplique*.

What is the use of including a third-person perspective? In his profound and thoughtful response, Thomas Csordas challenges my proposal of entangling first- and third-person perspectives for developing a critical phenomenology. He proposes instead grounding a critical perspective in cultural phenomenology where the taken for granted is bracketed and becomes the focus of the analysis, allowing us to address it critically. While I agree that this is *one* productive approach, I do not see why it excludes other ways in which phenomenology can become critical. These other ways involve, among others, reflecting on our own investigations critically as Husserl has shown so eloquently, and critically following the positive and negative traces that experiences leave in our bodies and in our consciousness to reflect the processes that leave them.

In my text, I argue that material, social and economic structures (including coloniality and its remains) challenge, confront and objectify the first-person perspective contributing to these traces. Csordas makes a convincing argument when questioning this dichotomy between objectifying and objectified, arguing that these structures are also legacies of lived experiences. This is certainly true. The challenge becomes theorizing how the two are intertwined, and this involves the more general problem or decision of whether one conceptualizes structural factors as 'external' and thus as shaping the subjective experience (my attempt in the text), or as 'internal' and thus part of the experiences themselves.

Reflecting upon Csordas' reply, I find that my theorization of this relationship was oversimplified and that a more complex view is needed. This problem about the relationship between material, social and economic structures is comparable to the relationship between concepts and experience – as simultaneously structuring and structured, which I have referred to before. I would propose that, besides the six different phenomenologies, a 4E-approach to cognition that explicitly takes materialities and

social groups into account could be promising for capturing these entanglements adequately (Gallagher 2017).

Whereas the roles of these material, social and economic structures remain ambivalent, the attempt to understand experience from the first-person perspective needs, in my view, to acknowledge that those perspectives are confronted with value-laden objectifications by others who influence what we can become. Those perspectives and the categorizations they entail come from someone and are experienced as alien (*fremd*). They can restrict becoming, while also occasionally empowering it too.

This brings me to a question Jarrett Zigon poses so powerfully: *Do we need to overcome the first-person perspective*? Zigon argues convincingly that the focus on the first-person perspective might be too narrow. He calls for a shift to relationality and what he calls a 'dative phenomenology', a perspective on 'us'. With this, he formulates an eloquent reply to two common critiques of phenomenological anthropology, namely, that it focuses on idiosyncratic experiences, and that it is unpolitical. The approach Zigon advances overcomes the Husserlian subject as an active and intentional agent and places more emphasis on the affecting relations in which it is embedded and that shape what it can become. While Zigon acknowledges that this pathic relationality is to some extent realized in the responsive-ness phenomenology, he also finds that these authors still focus too much on the individual subject and the way she is affected, individually.

In his outline of a 'dative phenomenology', Zigon goes far beyond existing attempts when he focuses on the forces that intertwine many human and non-human 'Is', often in loose, ephemeral meshworks. With this focus on relations, he opens up a path for phenomenological anthropology to analyse power and the structures that shape these interconnecting forces. In the framework I often use in my text, this might imply asking what power relations make some gazes exclusionary and hurtful and how they can be overcome. The focus on relationalities brings phenomenology into closer communication with some of Spinoza's work, which is today rendered in affect theories. Spinoza argues in favour of a relational ontology in which entities affect each other and borrow power from one another, leading to situations in which some entities have more power than others. Importantly, affect for Spinoza also includes the ideas and concepts of affection (Curley and Spinoza 2020: 154).

I agree with Zigon's suggestion to focus the analysis on the relationships that link us. Experience starts somewhere else, Waldenfels says. However, I think that Zigon would largely agree that there are good reasons to keep an interest in human subjects and their becoming and to avoid slipping into a flat ontology (Latour) that treats all entities as similar or the same. Thus, while I fully support considering the myriad forces, networks and atmospheres that shape becoming, I find that the subject and its well-being, vitality, agency and so on are what we – as anthropologists – can most adequately describe ethnographically. These descriptions also open up ways to imagine a possibly otherwise in which these forces become less restricting, more empowering, and eventually lead to a better life for the subject. While it is ethically desirable to study non-human subjectivities in similar ways, there are some challenges in doing so

(Schnegg and Breyer 2022). These subjectivities tend to be even more opaque, making it much more difficult to tell, for example, whether my non-human companion experiences an act or an atmosphere as exclusionary, empowering, or entirely different.

Other relations between bodies, however, including labour, sex and gifts, create ties that are often more lasting. Patrick Neveling has such manifest ties in mind when he explores *how power shapes those relationships in a lasting way*. Arguing from a Marxist perspective, he shows a very promising way to integrate phenomenology and political economy. This must include the analysis of phenomenological thinking and thinkers, including how and why some of them were aligned with and supported fascist theories. However, it must also include ways of tracing power in experience itself. Drawing on Wolf, Neveling eloquently suggests that power operates on different scales, including the intersubjective, interpersonal, organizational and structural. Based on this, Neveling shows how an analysis of power might be entangled with a theory of experience that acknowledges its situationality. In this view, forces that operate on different scales shape the situation in which we find ourselves, and thus the experience.

Returning to the question of experience and concepts, we might now ask how categories change and how exclusionary categorizations are overcome. A combination of political economy and phenomenology might allow us to understand the conditions under which people turn their experiences into resistance and when they may be successful in doing so. In my view, Neveling's ideas open another promising track for understanding exactly this.

In brief, the eight comments confirmed to me how important it is to search for an '*experience-based* theory that can explain how such categories emerge (and change)' and to suggest that phenomenological anthropology is in a privileged position to contribute to this. However, they have also shown me that my attempt in this direction was too narrow and that I need to consider aspects I did not see or was unaware of. Thinking about the relationship between concepts and experience as two floors has been productive for me – floors between which a stairway exists. While not everything on the ground floor of experience can or will pass, concepts allow access to realms we do not experience or that elude experience. There is an excess of both experience over words and words over experience. To fully understand this remains a major challenge for the discipline. I do not see any approach more suitable for doing this than phenomenological anthropology.

It has been said that there are as many phenomenologies as phenomenologists. As I have tried to show, there might be fewer – but still more than six, as the comments have shown. The commentators named some of them, including 'imagine-ness phenomenology' (Desjarlais), 'dative phenomenology' (Zigon) and 'post-phenomenology' (Desjarlais). To stay with the metaphor I have borrowed, these are rooms on the upper floor, concepts that evolved from the experience of thinking, communicating and ethnography. For others, although proposed equally eloquently, we might still need names. I look forward to seeing them emerge from the experiences we have with each other, existing theoretical concepts, our interlocutors and their worlds.

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Buchbesprechungen/Reviews

Gingrich, Andre, und Peter Rohrbacher: Völkerkunde zur NS-Zeit aus Wien (1938–1945): Institutionen, Biographien und Praktiken in Netzwerken.
3 Bände. 1739 S. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2021. ISBN 978-3-7001-8670-0

1739 Seiten, 42 Beiträge und 29 Autor:innen: Die Herausgeber Andre Gingrich (Emeritus-Professor der Sozial- und Kulturanthropologie an der Universität Wien und Gründungsdirektor des Instituts für Sozialanthropologie der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften) und Peter Rohrbacher (eben dort tätig) haben mit der dreibändigen, digital kostenfrei auch als E-Book erhältlichen ‚Völkerkunde zur NS-Zeit aus Wien (1938–1945)' für die deutschsprachige und die Wiener Universitäts- und Museumsethnologie eine bislang einzigartig umfassende, detail- und facettenreiche Wissenschafts- und Wissensgeschichte vorgelegt, die für die Fachgeschichtsschreibung der Sozial- und Kulturanthropologie und ihrer Nebenfächer neue Standards setzt. Krieg, aber auch zunehmender Antisemitismus und Rassismus in Europa unterstreichen die Aktualität der Neuerscheinung, ebenso wie die erst vor wenigen Jahren intensivierte Erarbeitung der kolonialen Verflechtung der NS-Völkerkunde: War doch ab 1938, mit dem ‚Anschluss' Österreichs, in Wien, der zweitgrößten Metropole des ‚Dritten Reiches', eine ‚Zentralstätte' der kolonialen NS-Afrikaforschung geplant (s. u.a. Julia Gohm-Lezuo, S. 449f.; Barbara Plankensteiner, S. 559).

Ausgestattet mit zahlreichen Schwarzweiß-Abbildungen, auch mit Originaldokumenten und anschaulichen Graphiken ist das mit nüchterner Sachlichkeit minutiös erarbeitete Opus Magnum als Nachschlagewerk für das wissenschaftliche Arbeiten, aber auch für interessierte Laien konzipiert. Vorsicht jedoch bei dem Versuch, die drei Wiener Bände in einem Zug vollständig lesen zu wollen: Geboten wird eine überaus dichte Informationsfülle, der nur durch eine gezielte Auswahl und ein punktuelles Eintauchen in ‚Institutionen, Biographien und Praktiken in Netzwerken' – so der Untertitel des Werks – beizukommen ist. Dabei ist es spannend, den entsprechenden, in unterschiedlichen Beiträgen immer wieder anders beleuchteten Verflechtungen zwischen Institutionen, Akteuren und Netzwerken anhand des umfassenden Personen- und Sachwörterverzeichnisses nachzuspüren (Band 3, Anhang, S. 1671–1735). Über wenige Fehlverweise, z.B. auf Paul Leser und Eva Lips, sollte hier hinweggesehen werden. Der etwas schwerfällige Titel ‚Völkerkunde zur NS-Zeit aus Wien (1938–1945)' verweist über den lokalen Tellerrand hinaus auf eine transnational erweiterte, europäische Perspektive: Die vorgelegten Untersuchungen beziehen auch während der NS-

Zeit verfolgte, aus Wien vertriebene und international exilierte Fachvertreter:innen ein (z.B. Marianne Schmidl, Band 1 u. 3, Pater Wilhelm Schmidt, Band 1 u. 3, Wilhelm Koppers und Robert Heine-Geldern, Band 3). Im Fokus stehen Studierende (Band 1), Prominente (z.B. der Prähistoriker Oskar Menghin, der deutsche Rassekundler Otto Reche, Band 1 oder der Doyen der ethnologischen Himalayaforschung Christoph Fürer-Haimendorf, Band 3), weniger Bekannte (z.B. der in der deutschsprachigen Ethnologie bislang namenlose NS-Wissenschaftsmultifunktionsträger Viktor Christian, Band 1 u. Band 3) und ‚Vergessene' (z.B. Hans Becker, Band 3) sowie jene, die aus dem deutschen ‚Altreich' (z.B. der Berliner Afrikanist Hermann Baumann, Band 2), aus europäischen (z.B. der Niederländer Frederic Martin Schnitger, Band 2) und nicht-europäischen Ländern (z.B. Oka Masao, Band 1) an die Wiener Lehrstätte für Völkerkunde wechselten. Durch langjährige Forschungsarbeit konnten zahlreiche Wissenslücken geschlossen, zugleich aber auch neue oder bislang zurückgestellte Forschungsdesiderate unterstrichen werden: z.B. mit Blick auf Berlin, dem seinerzeitigen, mit Wien eng verflochtenen Schaltzentrum nationalsozialistischer Macht. So wird in der sechsbändigen Berliner ‚Geschichte der Universität unter den Linden 1810–1945' mit Blick auf Vertriebene, Gebliebene und durch den Nationalsozialismus Gestärkte der NS-Völkerkunde auf einen unzureichenden Forschungsstand verwiesen (Imeri et al. 2010: 315). International neu zur Diskussion gestellt wurde indessen bereits die Wissenschaftsbiographie des österreichischen Juristen, Ethnologen und Soziologen Richard Thurnwald, der an der Berliner Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität ab 1935/36 der nationalsozialistischen Kolonial- und Rassenpolitik zugearbeitet hatte (Gingrich 2005: 122,129). Thurnwalds Verhältnis zum Nationalsozialismus beförderte beispielsweise anlässlich der internationalen Tagung mit dem Titel: ‚Unsichere Felder. Hilde und Richard Thurnwalds ethnologische Forschung', die vom 8.-9. Juli 2021 in Paris stattfand, kontroverse Diskussionen: Anlass genug für Peter Rohrbacher, der Sache auf den Grund zu gehen und Thurnwalds Beziehungen zum Nationalsozialismus erstmals 2022 anhand von umfassenden, intensiven Archivrecherchen minutiös nachzuspüren (https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s43638-022-00045-z). Da sich Thurnwald im Fach Völkerkunde nicht in Wien, sondern an der deutschen Universität Halle qualifiziert hatte und nicht in Wien bzw. Österreich tätig war, klammert die neue Wiener Publikation – mit zahlreichen Verweisen auf den Ethnosoziologen – einen eigenen Beitrag zu seiner Person aus (zu weiteren Aussparungen siehe S. 28).

Das Wiener Herausgeber- und Autor:innenteam konnte von einem reichhaltigen und vielschichtigen Forschungsstand der deutschsprachigen und Wiener NS-Universitäts- und Fachgeschichtsforschung profitieren (S. 17f.). Die Perspektive, mit der Wiener Völkerkunde standortbezogen die NS-Geschichte eines einzigen akademischen Faches in den Blick zu nehmen, eröffnete sich auf der Grundlage einer Vielzahl von Pionierarbeiten, auch solcher der Beitragenden. Ausgehend von ‚größeren weißen Flecken', offenen Fragen, bisher genutzten und neu zugänglichen Archivquellen rückte die nähere Erkundung der institutionellen Fachentwicklung, der maßgebenden wissenschaftlichen Akteur:innen, ihres prägenden Einflusses auf Mitarbeiter:innen und Schüler:in-

nen und der während des Nationalsozialismus für die Völkerkunde relevanten Nebenfächern (physische Anthropologie, Prähistorie und Volkskunde) in den Mittelpunkt. Methodisch maßgebend wurde der betont quellenbasierte ‚neue Realismus', der für die ethnologische Fachgeschichtsschreibung die Ansätze der historischen Anthropologie mit denen der Zeitgeschichte verbindet. Durchgängige wissenschaftliche Kohärenz beförderten fünf inhaltlich verflochtene Zugangskriterien, die wissenschaftsbiographisch orientiert Forschungspraxen, Netzwerkverknüpfungen, Institutionen- sowie Ideengeschichte und Ideologiekritik in den Vordergrund rückten. Diese Methodologie, dargestellt als interdependentes Pentagramm, akzentuierte darüber hinaus die Wirksamkeit der zeitgeschichtlich relevanten Aspekte Gender, Rassismus und soziale Schichtung (S. 27).

Das dreibändige Wiener Werk ist in zwei Kapitel (Kapitel 1, Band 1; Kapitel 2, Band 1–3) und einen umfassenden Anhang (Band 3, 3., S. 1643–1739) mit Verzeichnissen zu den benutzten Archiven, den verwendeten Abkürzungen und Abbildungen sowie den erwähnten Sachwörtern und Personen und den beteiligten Autor:innen (in der gedruckten Ausgabe wohl versehentlich ohne Berücksichtigung von Barbara Plankensteiner) gegliedert. Das kürzere, einleitende erste ‚Ausgewählte Kapitel zur Völkerkunde in Wien 1910–1938' (Band 1, 1., S. 33–368) widmet sich mit Einblicken in ethnologische, aber auch physisch anthropologische Theorien und Methoden (Band 1, 1.1, S. 35–204) sowie der Beleuchtung der Nebenfächer Japanologie und Prähistorie (Band 1, 1.2, S. 205–292) und der Analyse der NS-Affinität von Nachwuchsethnologen (Band 1, 1.3, S. 293–368) vorwiegend der fachlichen Vorgeschichte der einschneidenden Zäsur von 1938. Die Dimensionen des nationalsozialistischen Fachumbaus werden im umfangreichen Hauptkapitel über die ‚Wiener Völkerkunde im Nationalsozialismus 1938–1945' (Band 1, 2 und 3, 2., S. 369–1642) nachvollziehbar. Hier richtet sich der Blick auf strukturelle und personelle Veränderungen innerhalb der Universitäts- und Museumsethnologie (Band 1, 2.1, S. 371–537; Band 2, 2.2, S. 549–740), fachliche Vernetzungen zum ‚Altreich' (Band 2, 2.3, S. 741–965), die NS-Forschungsschwerpunkte koloniale Völkerkunde (Band 2, 2.4, S. 967–1069), Kriegs- und Rassenforschung (Band 3, 2.5, S. 1081–1214), die ethnologische Forschung für das SS-Ahnenerbe (Band 3, 2.6, S. 1215–1365) und das schattierungsreiche Spannungsfeld zwischen sowohl Anpassung und Widerstand (Band 3, 2.7, S. 1367–1486) als auch Verfolgung und Emigration (Band 3, 2.8, S. 1487–1642), in das österreichische Ethnolog:innen gezwungen waren.

Jede einzelne Studie dieser umfassenden Gesamtschau wäre eine eigene Rezension wert. Auch wenn die Komplexität der detailliert erarbeiteten Ergebnisse einen zusammenfassenden Überblick verwehrt, bleibt grundsätzlich festzuhalten, dass alle Beiträge in wechselseitig profitable Verflechtungen zwischen Wissenschaft, Weltanschauung und Politik führen (Mitchell G. Ash, Band 1, Vorwort, S. 14) und dabei ‚Untiefen menschlichen Verhaltens' zutage fördern, ‚Konkurrenz, Intrigen und kollegiale Gemeinheiten, die (auch) … in der heutigen Wissenschafts- und Museumswelt nicht unbekannt sind. Doch erhielten solche Verhaltensweisen in der Zeit des nationalsozialisti-

schen Regimes, unter dem Denunziation und Bespitzelung zum System gehörten, eine Dimension, die lebensbedrohende Auswirkungen auf die Betroffenen haben konnten' (Barbara Plankensteiner, Band 2, 2.2, S. 552). Es grenzt an ein Wunder, dass sich dessen ungeachtet am Museum für Völkerkunde eine Widerstandsgruppe formieren konnte (s. u.a. ebd. S. 567f.).

Längst überfällig in der deutschsprachigen ethnologischen Fachgeschichtsschreibung war eine Auseinandersetzung mit dem hochrangigen NS-Wissenschaftsfunktionär Viktor Christian, der die Gleichschaltung der Wiener Völkerkunde im Wesentlichen steuerte (Band 1, 2.1, Andre Gingrich, S. 373–423). Der Nebenfach-Völkerkundler und Direktor des Instituts für Orientalistik wirkte gleichzeitig als kommissarischer Leiter der Institute für Völkerkunde (1938–1940) und Anthropologie (1938–1941), Dekan der Philosophischen Fakultät (1938–1943), Prorektor und Rektor der Wiener Universität (1943–1945), Präsident der Wiener Anthropologischen Gesellschaft (1936–1945), Mitglied der Akademie der Wissenschaften (ab 1938) und Abteilungsleiter der ‚Lehr- und Forschungsstätte für den Vorderen Orient' im ‚SS-Ahnenerbe' (1938–1945) (Band 3, 2.6, Andre Gingrich, S. 1217–1301). Diese Anhäufung hochrangiger Ämter in Personalunion entfaltete ihre Effizienz in weitverzweigten Netzwerkverflechtungen bis zur NS-Spitze und beförderte für die Völkerkunde einen ideologiekonformen Schulterschluss mit der Rassenkunde, der nicht nur im Rahmen der großzügig geförderten, methodisch an Untersuchungen in den Gefangenenlagern des ersten Weltkriegs (Band 1,1.1, Britta Lange, S. 63–83) anknüpfenden rassenkundlichen Forschungsprogrammen des SS-Ahnenerbe wirksam wurde (Band 3, 2.6). Dabei blieb die institutionelle Eigenständigkeit der Völkerkunde ebenso unangetastet wie die der physischen Anthropologie, die im ‚Ringen um das Monopol der Rassenkunde und Rassenhygiene' (S. 958) mit der Medizin konkurrierte (Band 2, 2.3, Katja Geisenhainer, S. 927–965).

Einschneidende fachliche Umwälzungen verhinderten jedoch nicht, dass sich der 1941 aus dem Konzentrationslager entlassene Hans Becker nur wenige Monate später bei prominenten NS-Fachvertretern mit der Note ‚sehr gut' in der Ethnologie promovieren konnte und – weiterhin dem Widerstand verbunden – bis in die frühe Nachkriegszeit überlebte. Nach seinem ungeklärten Tod geriet er in Vergessenheit (Band 3, 2.7, Christian F. Feest, S. 1369–1391). In der vom Kalten Krieg überschatteten Nachkriegszeit, in der die Wehrmachtsaustellungen des Hamburger Instituts für Sozialforschung heftige Kontroversen auslösten und Wehrmachtsdeserteure bis in das Jahr 2002 um ihre Rehabilitation kämpfen mussten, hüllte sich ein Mantel des Schweigens auch über das Schweizer Exil des Mentors der kulturhistorischen Wiener Völkerkunde, Pater Wilhelm Schmidt. Erst die aktuell vorgelegte Wiener Studie belegt, dass der dem Austrofaschismus nahestehende, katholisch-antisemitische Ordenspriester (Band 1, 1.1, Reinhard Blumauer, S. 37–62) als Gegner des deutschen Nationalsozialismus und Asylsuchender in der Schweiz ab 1943 moralisch und finanziell Wehrmachtsdeserteure sowie andere vor dem NS-Regime Geflüchtete unterstützte und darüber hinaus auf konspirativen Wegen einer logistisch von britischen und schweizerischen Geheim-

diensten ausgerüsteten Widerstandsbewegung Hilfsgelder des Vatikan zur Verfügung stellte (Band 3, 2.8, Peter Rohrbacher, S. 1611- 1642). Aus Wien vertrieben worden war der Begründer der theologisch angelegten Wiener Kulturkreislehre 1938 vom Prähistoriker Oskar Menghin, der nur zehn Jahre zuvor gemeinsam mit Schmidt die Institutionalisierung einer von der physischen Anthropologie unabhängigen kulturhistorisch ausgerichteten Völkerkunde unterstützt hatte (Band 1, 1.1, Katja Geisenhainer, S. 129–152). Doch unterzeichnete Menghin in seiner Funktion als Unterrichtsminister der nationalsozialistischen Übergangsregierung Seyß-Inquardt nach Österreichs ‚Anschluss' unbeirrt die Amtsenthebung und Verfolgung zahlreicher jüdischer und andersdenkender Wissenschaftler und Studierender, von denen er viele persönlich kannte – darunter 1938 auch die ‚Beurlaubung' des Direktors des Wiener Völkerkundeinstituts, Wilhelm Koppers (Band 1, 1.2, Otto H. Urban, S. 231–292). Über Koppers Begegnung mit seinem ehemaligen Schüler und Assistenten Christoph Fürer-Haimendorf hinter dem Stacheldraht des britischen Internierungslagers Ahmednagar im heutigen indischen Bundesstaat Maharashtra im Jahr 1939 wurde in der Nachkriegszeit fachintern in verschiedenste Richtungen spekuliert. Dass der seit den frühen 1950er Jahren international anerkannte Experte der ethnologischen Nepal-Himalayaforschung und Lehrstuhlinhaber der Londoner School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) 1938 am Wiener Völkerkundeinstitut frisch habilitiert zur rechten Hand des kommissarischen Institutsleiters und NS-Wissenschaftsfunktionärs Viktor Christian aufgerückt war, hätte jedoch alle Vermutungen gesprengt. In die Vorbereitungen zur Berufung einer Nachfolge für Koppers vakante Professur – ein Thema, das Koppers 1939 sehr interessiert haben dürfte – war Fürer-Haimendorf jedoch nicht eingebunden. Diese Position hatte er für sich selbst ins Auge gefasst. Doch unterstützte Christian die Berufung des Berliner Afrikanisten Hermann Baumann, der Koppers Nachfolge dann auch 1940 antreten sollte (Band 1, 2.1, Julia Gohm-Lezuo/Andre Gingrich, S. 425–448; Julia Gohm-Lezuo, S. 449–469). Fürer-Haimendorf vollzog dagegen nach seiner Entlassung aus dem Internierungslager einen Frontwechsel und stellte sich in Indien als Regierungsethnologe den Diensten der britischen Kolonialverwaltung zur Verfügung (Band 3, 2.8, Andre Gingrich, S. 1582–1610).

Koppers, dessen siebenjähriges Exil bislang unerforscht war, siedelte wiederum 1940 in die Schweiz über. Seine nachfolgend geplante Emigration in die USA unterstützte der ehemalige Kollege am Wiener Völkerkundeinstitut Robert Heine-Geldern (Band 3, 2.8, Peter Rohrbacher, S. 1489–1527). Der Großneffe Heinrich Heines war Anfang 1938 nicht von einer Reise in die USA nach Österreich zurückgekehrt. Wissenschaftlich etabliert sowie antifaschistisch national-österreichisch engagiert war er auch beratend für die US-Behörden tätig. Nach dem Kriegseintritt der USA beteiligte sich Heine-Geldern zudem aktiv an US-amerikanischen Einsätzen zur Rettung von Kulturgütern in Südost- und Ostasien (Band 3, 2.8, Verena Neller, S. 1529–1551). Koppers Pläne für einen Wechsel in die USA scheiterten letztendlich aus ordensinternen Gründen. Eine Begegnung mit Heine-Geldern kam erst im nachkriegszeitlichen Wien zustande, wo Koppers 1945 seine Position als Ordinarius des Instituts für Völkerkunde

wieder aufnehmen konnte und auch Heine-Geldern ab 1949 erneut als Professor wirkte bis in das Jahr 1957, in dem beide Re-Migranten emeritiert wurden.

Die Nachkriegszeit und die Nachwirkungen der NS-Umstrukturierungen auf die Wiener Völkerkunde werden in der neu vorgelegten Wiener Publikation allerdings nur ausschnitthaft beleuchtet. Eine umfassende fachhistorische Erhellung dieses Zeitabschnitts markiert ein neues Forschungsdesiderat. Für ein solches Nachfolgeprojekt, das auf der Grundlage der vorgelegten Ergebnisse aufbaut, zu plädieren, fällt nicht schwer, z.B. mit Blick auf Oswald Menghin, der seine wissenschaftliche Karriere in der Nachkriegszeit als ‚Osvaldo F.A. Menghin' in Argentinien fortsetzte. Mit Blick auf Menghin, stellt sich allerdings die Frage, ob aus dessen langjähriger Verbindung mit dem Bonner Universalhistoriker Fritz Kern tatsächlich auf einen beide Wissenschaftler prägenden, rassenhistorischen Ansatz geschlossen werden kann (Band 1, 1.2, Otto H. Urban, S. 276): Stellt doch Kerns Wissenschaftsbiographie ebenso bis heute eine Forschungslücke dar – auch und gerade bezogen auf seine Verbindung zum antinazistischen Widerstand sowie den Entwurf seiner Weltgeschichte ‚Historia Mundi', die als Publikationsreihe ab 1952 posthum unter der Verwendung seines Namens herausgegeben wurde. Zu klären bleibt auch die nachkriegszeitliche Kontinuität der Karriere des Linguisten und Mitarbeiters Viktor Christians beim SS-Ahnenerbe Johann Knobloch (S. 1228f.), der 1956 – Seite an Seite mit erklärten Faschismusgegner:innen – vor internationalem Publikum als Delegierter der DDR anlässlich des 32. Internationalen Amerikanistenkongress in Kopenhagen auftrat.[1]

Zu solchen ungebrochenen Lebensläufen steht die Biographie der 1942 bei ihrer Deportation in ein Konzentrationslager ums Leben gekommenen Marianne Schmidl in einem krassen Gegensatz (Band 1, 1.1, Katja Geisenhainer, S. 153–204; Band 3, 2.8, Katja Geisenhainer, S. 1553–1581). Hier bleibt nur hinzuzufügen, dass die wissenschaftliche Qualität ihrer 1926 begonnenen, nach wie vor einzigartigen Arbeit über afrikanische Korbflechtereien (Band 1, S. 175f.; Band 3, S. 1554f.) – die so gar nicht in die NS-Kolonialforschung passte und sich auch kolonialpropagandistisch nicht verwerten ließ – noch in den 1990er Jahren streng vertraulich, hinter vorgehaltener Hand am Kölner Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum erwähnt wurde. War doch Schmidls Studie 1939 zu Händen des NS-konformen, offiziell erst ab 1940 amtierenden Museumsdirektors Martin Heydrich nach Köln gelangt (S. 1572). Weil aber circa 55 Jahre später weder Angaben zum Namen der Autorin noch zum Verbleib ihres Manuskriptes in Erfahrung zu bringen waren, führte die damalige Recherche der Rezensentin nach ethnologischen Publikationen über die kunstvoll abstrakt mit geometrischem, symbolisch zu lesendem Dekor geschmückten Deckelkörbe – übergeben als Abschiedsgeschenk von Frauen an Frau in einem kleinen Dorf zu Füssen des Ruwenzori-Gebirges in Uganda – ins Leere.

1 Universitätsarchiv Leipzig, Nachlass Lips 2/5.45.

Mit dem Versuch, anhand von nur einigen ausgewählten Beispielen einen komprimierten Einblick in die Vielzahl und Vielschichtigkeit der neu vorgelegten Ergebnisse zur deutschsprachigen und zur Wiener NS-Geschichte der Völkerkunde zu vermitteln, stellt sich der Rezensentin die Frage, ob eine konsequent sachlich quellenbasierte Erarbeitung der NS-Vergangenheit der heutigen Sozial- und Kulturanthropologie überhaupt erst im gegenwärtigen 21. Jahrhundert möglich ist. So geraten heutzutage die unter der Prämisse des Kalten Krieges gängigen Narrative der Geschichtsschreibung des 20. Jahrhunderts zunehmend ins Wanken: Nicht nur mit der hier vorgestellten Wiener Publikation, sondern auch durch die konsequente kulturpolitische Förderung einer demokratischen Erinnerungskultur an die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus, die heute eine breite Öffentlichkeit motiviert, sich mit einer zuvor verdrängten Vergangenheit auseinanderzusetzen. Einen Wechsel der Perspektive auf die Verortung historischen Geschehens impliziert auch die offizielle Anerkennung des ersten Genozids des 20. Jahrhunderts an den Herero und Nama in Namibia, die auf europäischer und internationaler Ebene hitzige Debatten um während der Kolonialzeit begangenes Unrecht und die Restitution von Sammlungsobjekten an indigene Herkunftsgesellschaften beflügelt. Für die Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie steht damit die Chance im Raum, gerade mit Blick in den aktuell vorgelegten Wiener Spiegel ihrer kolonialen und NS-Vergangenheit das Profil und die Zielsetzungen des eigenen Faches in einer krisengeschüttelten Gegenwart neu zu verorten, in der Antisemitismus, Rassismus und antidemokratische, neonazistische Strömungen weltweit neue Zugewinne verzeichnen.

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Meurer, Michaela: Curupira und Kohlenstoff. Eine praxistheoretische Revision Politischer Ontologie am Beispiel von Umweltschutz in Amazonien.
352 S. Bielefeld: transcript, 2021. ISBN 978-3-8376-5810-1

Das vorliegende Buch befasst sich mit der Vielfalt an Regeln für die Nutzung von Ressourcen in gemeindebasierten *Reserva Extrativista* (Resex) in Brasilien im disziplinären Rahmen der Umwelt- und Rechtsethnologie. Die Autorin Michaela Meurer setzt ihren theoretischen Schwerpunkt aber vor allem auf Entwicklungen innerhalb der Ontologischen Anthropologie, die sie an Anlehnung an Eduardo Kohn als ethnologische Untersuchung von Realitäten versteht, sowie der Politischen Ontologie, in der Hierarchien und Machtgefüge in ontologischen Ansätzen mitgedacht werden. Der Politischen Ontologie widmet die Autorin daher das erste ihrer vier thematischen Kapitel und leistet damit gleichzeitig eine umfassende Einführung in den Forschungsbereich.

Die Orte ihrer Feldforschung werden im dritten Kapitel vorgestellt. Resex Schutzregionen, eine von zwölf Kategorien staatlicher Naturschutzgebiete in Brasilien, sind geschützte Regionen, die einerseits den lokalen Bevölkerungen Zugang zu Land und Subsistenz ermöglichen sollen, andererseits aber auch einen Schwerpunkt auf Umweltschutz legen. Hier erhalten die Leser:innen einen Überblick über die Entstehungs- und Entwicklungsgeschichte der Resex in Brasilien. Seit den 1990er Jahren wurden insgesamt 95 dieser Schutzgebiete etabliert und werden insbesondere durch ihre partizipativen Verwaltungsstrukturen von anderen Gebieten unterschieden. Soziale sowie ökologische Maßnahmen zur Nutzung der lokalen Ressourcen werden nicht vom Staat auferlegt, sondern von den Bewohner:innen der Regionen selbst injiziert und auch verwaltet.

Neben den Problemen und Chancen partizipativer Verwaltungsstrukturen untersucht Michaela Meurer insbesondere die rechtliche sowie soziale Normierung von Subsistenzpraktiken durch neue Nutzungsabkommen. Damit reiht die Autorin ihre Forschung in eine Bandbreite von Ethnographien ein, die sich mit Ressourcennutzungen, Co-Management, und Subsistenzpraktiken beschäftigen. Sie beschreibt in diesem Kontext gelebte Praxis und informelle Regeln, die lokale Subsistenzpraktiken normieren, und diskutiert diese innerhalb ontologischer Fragenstellungen. Als theoretischen Ausgangpunkt wird eine politisch-ontologische Analyse genutzt, die nach Machthierarchien in der normierten Ordnung fragt. Gleichzeitig hinterfragt die Autorin auch, ob diese für die Untersuchung vielfältiger alltäglicher Praktiken nicht-homogener Gruppen sinnvoll nutzbar ist. Sie legt Wert darauf, die lokale Bevölkerung in den von ihr beschriebenen Gemeinden Nova Canaã und Atrocal nicht als eine homogene Interessensgruppe zu deuten und macht deutlich, dass sie in ihrer Forschung im Resex Tapajós-Arapiuns kein kollektives ‚wir' angetroffen hat. Bei einem lokalen Schutzgebiet handelt es sich nun mal in erster Linie um ein politisch-administratives Projekt, das nicht mit einer deckungsgleichen sozialen oder kulturellen Einheit verwechselt werden darf. An dieser Stelle übt die Arbeit daher auch berechtigte Kritik an der oft binären und homogenen Darstellung von Gruppen (z.B. indigen und nicht-indigen) innerhalb

der Politischen Ontologie. Meurer kritisiert hier vor allem die Strömungen innerhalb der Politischen Ontologie, die durch ihre Arbeiten vereinfachte, multiple und homogene Welten beschrieben. Generell hätte ich mir aber an mehr Stellen des Buches eine kritischere Auseinandersetzung mit den genutzten Ansätzen sowie auch den politischen Gegebenheiten vor Ort gewünscht. So fehlt beispielsweise eine umfassende Kontextualisierung der Kolonialisierungsprozesse in Brasilien oder ein Bezug auf andere Arbeiten zu Land(nutzungs)rechten und deren Reformen. Zudem sind Arbeiten innerhalb der Politischen Ontologie, die sich explizit mit Marginalisierung und Ungleichheiten auseinandersetzen, zu wenig beachtet worden.

Neben anthropologischen Abhandlungen zu Ontologien bezieht die Autorin sich auch auf Konzepte des Rechtspluralismus. Meurer nutzt hier die Analyse der Besitz- und Nutzungsverhältnisse von Pflanzen als Beispiel. Angelehnt an die Konzepte von Franz von Benda-Beckmann (2009) unterscheidet die Autorin nicht zwischen Besitz und Eigentum, sondern untersucht Besitzbeziehungen, die durch Nutzungsabkommen aber auch lokale Normen in den Gemeinden etabliert wurden. Während in ihrem Beispiel das Sammeln von Pflanzen zur Subsistenz in allen Gebieten erlaubt ist, betrifft dieses nicht Pflanzen, die von anderen individuell angebaut werden. Statt Land- sind es also Nutzungsrechte von Subsistenzquellen, die unterschiedliche Legitimationen durch Besitzbeziehungen bekommen. Die Autorin geht dann in ihrer Ausarbeitung einen Schritt weiter und verknüpft den Rechtspluralismus mit der Politischen Ontologie, müssen doch Nutzungsrechte im Zweifelsfall auch mit *Curupira*, einer lokalen nicht-menschlichen Akteurin, die Wald und Lebewesen beschützt, oder anderen sogenannten *Encantados* ausgehandelt werden. Der Relevanz dieser nicht-menschlichen Akteur:innen im Rahmen der Nutzungsrechte widmet sich Meurer in Kapitel fünf. Sie haben zwar umfassenden Einfluss auf die Subsistenzpraktiken vor Ort, sind aber nicht in schriftlich verfassten Nutzungsabkommen festgehalten. *Curupira*, auch Herrin des Waldes oder Mutter der Tiere genannt, dient, wie der Titel Meurers Buches ankündigt, als Beispiel für eine Normierung von Fischfang und Jagdpraktiken, die nicht durch eine niedergeschriebene (staatliche) Ordnung stattfindet. Diese macht sich Jäger:innen durch Geräusche oder ein plötzliches Angstgefühl bemerkbar und bleibt sonst unsichtbar. Ist sie vor Ort wird die Jagd an dem Tag nicht mehr erfolgreich sein. Ihr Eingreifen wird oft als Sanktion verstanden, besonders für diejenigen, die sich nicht respektvoll gegenüber den als Beute ausgewählten Tieren gezeigt haben.

Um die zentrale Fragestellung nach der Vielfalt an Regeln zur Nutzung der Ressourcen im Resex weiter zu analysieren, untersucht Meurer aber auch beispielweise juristische Personen und ihren Einfluss auf die Normierung von Subsistenzpraktiken. Die Autorin nutzt die lokalen Gemeindeverbände, die ihrer Ansicht nach die formalisierte Organisation kollektiver Performanzen sind und Autonomie und Eigenständigkeit entwickeln können. Neben dem Nutzungsabkommen bleiben in den Gemeinden weiterhin lokale Normierungen bestehen, auch wenn sich diese in einem hierarchischen Machtgefüge befinden. Konsensus muss also vor allem über diese lokalen Praktiken, weniger über die niedergeschriebenen Gesetze herrschen. Während auch

andere Autor:innen dominante Ontologien beispielsweise im Ressourcen Management beschrieben haben, setzt Meurer das Konzept der ontologischen Hegemonialität ein. Im Sinne von Antonio Gramsci sei diese nicht nur als Dominanz, sondern auch als eine Art Konsens zu verstehen, dem sich Zwang anschließen kann. Leider geht Meurer hier nicht weiter auf das Konzept ein und es bleibt unklar, wie sich die ontologische Hegemonialität von Gramscis Hegemonie-Begriff genau unterscheiden soll. Ähnlich steht es um die nicht-Erwähnung der *Encantados* in Abkommen oder den Gremien. Obwohl die nicht-menschlichen Akteure Einfluss auf lokale Praktiken haben, werden sie weder diskutiert noch in Dokumenten festgehalten. Leider beschreibt Meurer ihre Daten an diesem Punkt als erschöpft und liefert keine Analyse einer möglichen Vereinbarung über die nicht-Nennung. Dabei hätte Curupira als Titelgeberin des Buches mehr Aufmerksamkeit zugestanden und gerade diese Ausarbeitung wäre im Kontext ihrer Arbeit sehr bereichernd gewesen.

Das letzte große Beispiel für ontologischen Pluralismus, der auch im Titel des Buches genannt wird, ist Kohlenstoff. Hier arbeitet die Autorin mit einer was-wäre-wenn Situation: Ein geplantes Kohlenstoff-Projekt, bei dem die Kohlenstoffbestände über CO2 Zertifikate verkauft werden können, wurde im frühen Planungsstadium und nach Protesten gestoppt. Meurer beschreibt, wie eine Implementierung dieses Projektes Einschränkungen auf die Nutzungsrechte gehabt hätte. Sie analysiert, wie der Kohlenstoff allein durch die Diskussionen schon ein realer Akteur geworden ist. Kohlenstoff kann sich, wie auch ein *Encantado*, in seiner Gestalt transformieren. Anders als ein *Encantado* reagiert Kohlenstoff jedoch als passives Objekt. Wie die Autorin schreibt, dürfen Diskussionen um diesen Rohstoff nicht als ontologischer Konflikt missverstanden werden, da dieser in seiner Existenz ja nicht hinterfragt wird. Auch wenn die Auseinandersetzung mit nicht-menschlichen Wirkenden ins Thema passt und die anderen Beispiele wirkungsvoll kontrastiert: Warum genau dieses Bespiel nun ausgewählt wurde bleibt m.E. unklar und lenkt von den ontologischen Konflikten ab, die als zentral und wichtig in ihrer Forschung hervortraten. Hier macht sich die fehlende Konzeptualisierung von Agency in der Arbeit deutlich bemerkbar und schwächt die wichtige Analyse von sozialen Handlungsmächten und ontologischen Pluralismen in dem untersuchten Resex-Gebiet ab.

Das Buch ist vor allem für solche Leser:innen zu empfehlen, die eine erste Auseinandersetzung mit ontologischen Fragenstellungen zu den Themenbereichen Ressourcen- und Co-management suchen. Zudem bietet die Arbeit eine gute Grundlage, um die in dieser Theorie und Praxis verankerten Diskussionen auch in der deutschen Sprache nachzuverfolgen. Meurer trägt mit ihrer Forschung zu der Literatur bei, die sich auf Verhandlungen um Ressourcen und verschiedene Verständnisse von Umwelten konzentriert und Konflikte hierbei in einem Diskurs der Politischen Ontologie untersucht. Dabei geht sie gezielt auf das lokale Verständnis dieser Unterschiede ein, statt sich allein auf eine Beschreibung von Konflikten zu beschränken. Für ihre eigenen theoretischen Überlegungen arbeitet Meurer mit definierten Begriffen, die in der Ausarbeitung etwas schwerfällig und manchmal nicht präzise dargestellt sind, um voll-

ständig zu überzeugen. Insbesondere die unterschiedlichen genannten Akteur:innen und deren unvollständige Analyse machen es manchmal schwierig, ihrer Argumentation vollständig zu folgen. Zudem profitieren nicht alle Beispiele von einer Betrachtung aus dem Blickwinkel der Politischen Ontologie.

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Aly, Götz: Das Prachtboot. Wie Deutsche die Kunstschätze der Südsee raubten.
235 S. Frankfurt a.M.: S. Fischer Verlag, 2021 ISBN 978-3-10-397036-4

Kein Boot der Südsee hat in der letzten Zeit so viel Aufmerksamkeit und mediale Präsenz erhalten wie jenes aus der Sammlung des Ethnologischen Museums Berlin von der Insel Luf im heutigen Papua-Neuguinea. Die Publikation von Götz Aly,[1] der bisher bekannt war als Autor und Historiker zu Themen des Holocaust, weist mit dem Untertitel jedoch auf die viel größere Debatte hin, die vor allem, aber nicht nur, mit der Planung und dem Bau des Humboldt Forums in Berlin entstanden ist: Kolonialismus und die Entstehung der Sammlungen mit außereuropäischen Gegenständen.

Das Buch ist in zwölf Kapitel gegliedert, mit zahlreichen Abbildungen und erklärenden Kurzbiographien zu den Akteuren des ‚Kunstraubes'. Die Titel der Kapitel geben den Grundtenor des Bandes wieder, mit Worten wie ‚Tatort', ‚Räuber', ‚Betrügen, stehlen, plündern', ‚Kahlfraß'. Von der persönlichen Geschichte seines Urgroßonkels Gottlob Johannes Aly (1855–1938) ausgehend, der an einer der militärischen Aktionen der deutschen Kolonialverwaltung in Neuguinea teilnahm, hat Aly in zwar akribischer, aber einseitiger und voreingenommener Quellenarbeit versucht, die Geschichte des Bootes zu rekonstruieren. Doch schon im ersten einführenden Kapitel unterlaufen ihm Fehleinschätzungen in der Darstellung: Das ‚Luf'-Boot war nie als Hauptattraktion, und schon gar nicht in einer ‚Schau zur globalen Entwicklung der Menschheit' (S. 14), von den Kuratoren:innen des Humboldt Forums vorgesehen.[2] Bei den sehr detailreichen Ausführungen greift Aly immer wieder auf sehr verallgemeinernde Formulierungen zurück: es ist die Rede von den ‚ungezählten Gewaltverbrechen' (S. 14), von den ‚eingefangenen Arbeitern' (S. 14) und davon, dass ‚die Eroberer die kulturellen

1 Um nur die wichtigsten Zeitungsartikel zu dem Buch von Aly zu nennen: Bohr et al. 2021, Häntzschel 2021, Hauser-Schäublin 2021. In der Wochenschrift ‚Die Zeit' rangierte die Schrift von Aly in der Sachbuch-Bestenliste für Juni und Juli/August 2021 an erster Stelle mit dem Hinweis, es würde die Geschichte eines Diebstahls im Rahmen eines Völkermordes beschreiben, als weiteres Beispiel in der Kunstraub-Debatte. Für eine Erwiderung auf den Artikel von Hauser-Schäublin siehe Aly 2021.

2 Zur geplanten und ausgeführten Präsentation der Südsee-Boote siehe Schindlbeck 2011:36 und von Poser 2021:60–61.

Erzeugnisse Ozeaniens für ihre Museen' (S. 14) raubten. Die Umbenennung der zahlreichen ethnologischen Museen sieht Aly als Versuch, den Fragen nach einer Provenienz der Sammlungen ‚zu entfliehen' (S. 15), er spricht von ‚Verbalmimikry', Ansätze zu einem Dialog verunglimpft er als ‚scheinbar bußfertigen Ablaßhandel' (S. 17f), die ethnologischen Museen hätten ‚großteils zusammengestohlene „exotische" Bestände' (S. 18). Heutige Kuratoren:innen wüssten, dass ihre ‚wundervollen Schaustücke betrügerischem Erwerb, massenhafter Hehlerei, systematischem Diebstahl und Raubmord' (S. 18) zu verdanken seien.

In den Medien wurden die pauschalen Darstellungen von Aly meist unhinterfragt übernommen, so die irrtümliche Verwendung des Terminus ‚Hochkultur' (Häntzschel 2021) oder die Beschwörung eines Südsee-Paradieses vor der Ankunft der Europäer, in dem ‚Nahrung im Überfluss' vorhanden gewesen sei. Anderhandt (2021) und Hauser-Schäublin (2021) haben versucht, diese einseitige Darstellung zu korrigieren. Hauser-Schäublin (2021:53) sieht in der Schrift ‚ein Paradebeispiel dafür, wie ethnographische Objekte und Sammlungen in eine koloniale Gräuelgeschichte eingewoben werden'.

Betrachten wir die von Aly benutzten Quellen, so fällt auf, dass er deutsche Historiker nicht herangezogen hat, lediglich Hierys Bildband ‚Bilder aus der Deutschen Südsee' von 2005 wird als ‚ethnologisch drapierter Voyeurismus' klassifiziert.[3] Dagegen werden bezeichnenderweise als ‚Pioniertaten deutscher Ethnologen' die Schriften ‚Die Hamburger Südsee-Expedition' von Hans Fischer (1981) und ‚Andenken an den Kolonialismus' von Volker Harms (1984), letztere vor allem von Studierenden verfasst, angeführt.

Im dritten Kapitel wird die Erwerbung des Luf-Bootes in den Mittelpunkt und die Forderung nach einem Beleg für die Zahlung einer Geldsumme an die ursprünglichen Bootseigner durch den Erwerber Max Thiel gestellt. Da es ein solches Schriftstück nicht gibt, behauptet Aly, es sei ‚enteignet', ‚einfach weggenommen' (S. 38), ‚entführt' (S. 189) worden. Dies geschah 20 Jahre, nachdem eine ‚Strafexpedition' 1882/83 in wenigen Tagen Häuser und Boote der Insel Luf zerstört, Pflanzungen verwüstet und zahlreiche Einheimische getötet hatte, worauf Aly im vierten Kapitel eingeht.

Immer wieder geht Aly auf Äußerungen von Hermann Parzinger, dem Präsidenten der Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz ein, dass er mit ‚wolkigen Worten' (S. 35) die Erwerbung des Bootes umrissen habe, und bezeichnet Parzingers Darstellung der Ermöglichung der Bootserwerbung wegen eines ‚Bevölkerungsrückgangs' auf der Insel als ‚Mär' (S. 42); die ‚Besitzerin des Raubguts', die Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, verhalte sich ‚geheimniskrämerisch' (S. 178) in Bezug auf die Herkunft der Sammlungen.[4] Tatsächlich gab es auf verschiedenen Inseln der Südsee nach der Ankunft der Europäer eine Abnahme der Bevölkerung, die aus heutiger Sicht vor allem die von Europäern eingeschleppten Krankheiten und die Arbeiteranwerbung, vor allem auch von

3 Weitere wichtige deutschsprachige Autoren zur Kolonialgeschichte wären Horst Gründer, Gerd Hardach und Hermann Mückler gewesen.

4 Siehe auch die verbalen Angriffe auf Parzinger S. 181 und S. 188 und Monika Grütters S. 178.

Frauen, als Ursache hatte und nicht allein auf Militäraktionen zurückzuführen ist. Im fünften Kapitel wird der Berliner Museumsgründer Adolf Bastian in ein Netzwerk von ‚Räubern' (S. 63) gestellt. Unerklärt lässt Aly allerdings, wie es angesichts des von ihm entworfenen Bildes dann dem Marinearzt und späteren Ethnologen Augustin Krämer wenige Jahre später 1906 gelingen konnte, von Männern auf Luf zu dem ‚geraubten Boot' während vierzehn Tagen wichtige Informationen zu erhalten.

Anderhandt, dem Aly ein ‚gründlich gearbeitetes' (S. 20) Buch über Eduard Hernsheim attestiert, hat eine Rezension des Buches von Aly geschrieben, auf die hier verwiesen werden muss. Er hält fest, ‚wie einseitig und verengend Aly aus dem Material geschöpft hat'. Wichtig sind die Hinweise auf von Aly ausgesparte Details: dass Eduard Hernsheim Augenzeuge eines Messerkampfes von geraubten Frauen der Nachbarinseln (Anachoreten) vor den Herrschern von Luf gewesen sei, was diesen zu seinen sehr negativen Ansichten über die Luf-Bewohner brachte. Aly geht auch nicht auf die Details ein, die zu der Strafexpedition führten, dass nämlich Anfang 1882 der Händler Southwell getötet worden war, weil er, gegen den Willen der Herrscher, Bäume hatte fällen lassen. Die übrige Stationsmannschaft wurde umgebracht und das Gebäude verbrannt, die kleinen Dampfer ‚Pacific' und ‚Freya' wurden beschossen, als sie in der Lagune ankern wollten, der Kapitän Homeyer der ‚Freya' wurde erschossen; nach Anderhandt wollte Hernsheim kein Massaker, sondern die Täter gefangen nehmen lassen. Auch ein anderes Schiff von Hernsheim, der 1878 verschollene Schoner ‚Elise', soll bei einem Angriff der Luf-Leute versenkt worden sein: ‚hatten die Hermit-Krieger das Schiff gekapert, die Besatzung ermordet, die Fracht geplündert, den Schoner mit ihren Großbooten auf See geschleppt und dort verbrannt'. Auch die Frau des Kapitäns und deren Kind wurden dabei nicht verschont. Das erfuhr Hernsheim von Augenzeugen, als er im Juli 1884 auf die Insel kam. Offensichtlich ist, dass die Luf-Bewohner anfänglich kriegerischen Widerstand gegen die Kolonialherrschaft leisteten. Dies rechtfertigt in keiner Weise das Massaker von 1882/83, das aus Sicht der Kolonialisten ein Vergeltungsschlag war. Der anfängliche Widerstand wich Jahre später, als das Boot erworben wurde, der Bereitschaft zum Handel, wie es auch aus anderen Gebieten Neuguineas bekannt ist.

Noch wichtiger aber ist eine andere Auslassung von Aly, dass Bug und Heck des Luf-Bootes von dem Marineoffizier Hans Gygas schon vor 1902/03 als Sammlungsstücke erworben wurden, das Boot also nicht mehr vollständig war. Als Max Thiel Anfang 1902 auf die Insel kam, ließ er neue Bug- und Heckverzierungen schnitzen, vermutlich bereits mit dem Vorhaben das Boot zu erwerben. Im gleichen Jahr muss dann das Boot nach Matupi gelangt sein. Eduard Hernsheim hatte die Südsee 1892 schon verlassen, konnte also nur indirekt am Kauf beteiligt gewesen sein.

Hauser-Schäublin (2021) weist darauf hin, dass Aly bewusst eine Legende zu einer Fotografie von ‚zehn gut erhaltenen Wohnhäusern' aus dem Dorf Luf von 1902/03 zu ‚Nothütten' änderte. Auch übergeht er, dass nach der so genannten Strafexpedition wiederum Boote gebaut wurden, so dass 1889 eine Flotte von vier Booten nach der Nachbarinsel Ninigo aufbrach. Das Berliner Boot konnte nicht zu Wasser gelassen

werden, weil nicht mehr genügend Männer vor Ort waren. Vier Jahre zuvor war der letzte ‚Häuptling' von Luf gestorben und das Boot hätte mit ihm als Grab im Meer versenkt werden sollen. Hauser-Schäublin vermutet, dass erst der Tod des ‚Häuptlings' die Abgabe des so reich verzierten Bootes, das nun keine Funktion mehr hatte, ermöglichte.

Im achten Kapitel verfällt Aly in die, in letzter Zeit immer wieder konstruierte, Entstehungsgeschichte der Ethnologie ‚als Kind des Kolonialismus'. Wie Katja Geisenhainer und andere nachgewiesen haben, wurde die Ethnologie zu der Zeit, die von Aly hier gemeint ist, keineswegs ‚neu erfunden' (S. 104), ihre Entstehung, wenn man nicht bis auf Herodot zurückgehen will, ist vielmehr in der deutschen Aufklärung zu verorten. Anders als Aly behauptet, stand Bastian der Etablierung von deutschen Kolonien durchaus skeptisch gegenüber. Und genauso übersieht er bei der Fachgeschichte der Ethnologie deren Trennung von physischer Anthropologie bzw. ‚Rassenkunde'. Das Bild der Südsee, das Aly in Gegenüberstellung zu den Gräueltaten der Händler, Ethnologen und Kolonialleute entwirft, entspricht ziemlich dem Klischee des 19. Jahrhunderts, dass die indigenen Kulturen sich nicht ändern und damit auch auf den europäischen Einfluss nicht reagieren könnten. Eigenartigerweise wird gerade Felix von Luschan, obgleich er ja das Boot nach Berlin holen ließ, von Aly mit positiven Kennzeichen versehen, da ‚den von ihm zusammengetragenen Hinterlassenschaften ein erheblicher Wert' (S. 111) zukomme und er ‚die Verengung der Anthropologie zur Rassenkunde' bremste. Zu Unrecht behauptet Aly, man habe Felix von Luschan vergessen. Dagegen wird Richard Thurnwald in undifferenzierter Weise zu den Erb- und Rassenhygienikern Eugen Fischer und Otto Reche gezählt (S. 112). Wie andernorts auch übergeht Aly die gerade auch deutsche Beschäftigung mit dem Kolonialismus.

Im 9. Kapitel stellt Aly die ‚Beschaffung' des Luf-Bootes vor, das von Max Thiel im Auftrag der Handelsfirma Hernsheim & Co. 1903 erworben und über Matupi im Bismarck-Archipel nach Berlin gelangte. Im danach folgenden Kapitel beschreibt Aly mit romantisierenden Worten ein Südseeparadies der Luf-Bewohner: ‚Der Reichtum der Vegetation und des Meeres ermöglichte ihnen ein Leben, das nicht zu andauernder harter Arbeit zwang', so dass Künste, Tänze und Rituale ‚gedeihen' konnten zu ‚Zeichen einer Hochkultur' (S. 113). Nach Aly hatten sie einen ‚uralten Ahnenkult' (S. 135) und Boote, die es ‚schon vor Jahrtausenden gegeben haben muss' (S. 151). In Widerspruch zu den zahlreichen Berichten von Schiffbrüchen behauptet Aly: ‚Falls ein solches Boot kenterte, ging es nicht unter, sondern ließ sich von der Mannschaft verhältnismäßig leicht aufrichten' (S. 139). Aly kennt nicht, die schon damals unter Ethnologen verbreitete Evolutionstheorie zur Menschheitsgeschichte, wenn er behauptet, Ethnologen würden Indigene ‚außerhalb der allgemeinen Evolution' als ‚nicht entwicklungsfähig' beschreiben. Ausführlich beschreibt er dann zunächst die Untersuchungen von Georg Thilenius von 1899, der das Luf-Boot noch vor Ort sah, um dann auf Augustin Krämer einzugehen, der ja nach dem ‚Raub' 1906 so detaillierte Erklärungen zu dem Luf-Boot erhalten hatte.

Das bekannte, so genannte ‚Massaker' von Baining, bei dem 1904 zehn Missionsangehörige von Indigenen umgebracht wurden, wird von Aly für ein Horror-Szenario der Europäer in der Südsee benutzt: ‚Schwer bewaffnet blieben sie Tag und Nacht auf der Hut. Innerlich standen sie mit dem Rücken zur Wand' (S. 166). Dennoch betrieben sie nach Aly eine ‚Gewaltpolitik […] in der Verschleppung zur Zwangsarbeit', indem man für die Plantagen ‚viele tausend einheimische Männer einfangen' (S. 170) ließ. Wenn es auch bis in die australische Kolonialzeit hinein immer wieder Fälle gab, in denen junge Männer gegen ihren Willen rekrutiert wurden, so sah die Rekrutierung mit all ihren Schwierigkeiten der Beschaffung von Arbeitskräften ganz anders aus, wenn die Quellen genau gelesen werden.

Im Schlusskapitel nennt Aly die ethnologische Sammlung Berlins ein ‚Monument der Schande' und assoziiert damit eine andere äußerst unzulässige Redewendung der AFD zum Holocaust-Denkmal. Die Heidelberger Erklärung der deutschen Direktor:innen ethnologischer Museen von 2019 wird als ‚kaltschnäuziges Nein' (S. 182) zur Restitutions-Debatte abgetan, denn ‚verwerflich bleiben alle genannten ‚Erwerbsumstände'' (S. 183). Alle ethnographischen Museen mit Gegenständen aus ehemaligen Kolonien stehen nach Aly unter Verdacht Erwerbungen im Unrechtskontext getätigt zu haben, da ‚auf kolonialistischen Verbrechen […] große Teile ihrer Sammlungen beruhen' (S. 185). Die Versuche, mit ‚Herkunftsgesellschaften' in Verbindung zu treten – wie es im Zuge der Provenienzforschung fast schon üblich geworden ist, von Ethnolog:innen aber schon seit der Einführung der Feldforschung ausgeübt wird – lehnt Aly ab, da es Herkunftsgesellschaften nicht mehr gäbe (S. 179). Herabwürdigend ist seine Charakterisierung der Sammlung des Nationalmuseums in Papua-Neuguinea als ‚bescheiden' (S. 192). Mit dieser undifferenzierten, pauschalisierten Argumentation geht er auch gegen ein wichtiges Argument der Museen vor, die ‚salvage anthropology' betrieben, indem sie Objekte ‚retteten', nach Aly jedoch, um damit zu handeln, Wohnzimmer, Missionsklöster und Museen zu schmücken' (S. 186).

Betrachtet man die Einseitigkeit der Darstellung von Aly, seinen Sprachstil und die immer wieder geäußerten Angriffe auf Parzinger und andere am Humboldt Forum beteiligte Personen, so scheint es naheliegend, das hier rezensierte Buch nicht als Sachbuch, sondern als Kampf- oder Schmähschrift zu beurteilen. Eine quellenkritische historische oder ethnologische Abhandlung zur Seefahrt in Ozeanien, zur Kolonialgeschichte und zur Museumsgeschichte ist es nicht. Wenn es einerseits auch erfreulich ist, dass ein Boot der Südsee so viel Aufmerksamkeit erhalten hat, so dient es gegenwärtig als ein Kainsmal des Kolonialismus im Humboldt Forum. Das Buch hat erreicht, dass in Zukunft ein Südsee-Boot mit den Benin-Bronzen als Raubgut bezeichnet werden kann, auch wenn es keinerlei Belege dafür gibt und als politische Waffe in der Kampfansage gegen das Humboldt Forum missbraucht wird.

Markus Schindlbeck,
Elchingen

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Matlon, Jordanna: A Man Among Other Men: The Crisis of Black Masculinity in Racial Capitalism.
306 pp. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022. ISBN 978-1501762932

Jordanna Matlons *A Man Among Other Men: The Crisis of Black Masculinity in Racial Capitalism* ist ein intellektuell anregendes Buch mit ungemeiner narrativer Kraft. Die Autorin schließt sich dem akademischen Konsens einer durch *agency* und Kreativität gekennzeichneten Lebenswelt afrikanischer Stadtbewohner:innen nicht an, und zeigt stattdessen mit Rückgriff auf die Theorien von Antonio Gramsci, Frantz Fanon und Stuart Hall globale ökonomische und politische Zwangsverhältnisse auf, aus denen sich Akteur:innen, in diesem Fall junge Männer in Abidjan, der Hauptstadt der Elfenbeinküste, nur schwerlich befreien können. In einer empirischen *tour de force* vom Sklavenhandel zu Straßenverkäufern in Abidjan, von politischen Rednern mit Universitätsabschluss und ohne Arbeit zu transatlantischen Ikonen schwarzer Popkultur wird den Leser:innen mit sprachlicher Wucht, die vor analytischer Einfachheit nicht zurückschreckt, ein ums andere Mal vor Augen geführt, dass der ‚schwarze Mann' in Abidjan mit zwei Archetypen männlichen Erfolgs konfrontiert ist: einerseits dem sich der kapitalistischen Lohnarbeit hingebenden Patriarchen, ein Relikt aus der kolonialen Vergangenheit der Elfenbeinküste, als es sogenannten *évolués* gelang, durch Imitation französischer Ideale von kapitalistischer Arbeit und Häuslichkeit an den Früchten weißer Männlichkeit zu partizipieren, und andererseits dem transatlantischen Migranten, der, die Kleidung und den Habitus schwarzer Popstars imitierend, für ökonomischen Erfolg steht, ein Versprechen, das im Zeitalter restriktiver Migrationspolitik zunehmend brüchig erscheint (S. 6).

Beide Archetypen, einer aus dem kolonialen Zeitalter einer ausbeuterischen Ökonomie, der andere aus der ausschließenden Ökonomie des 21. Jahrhunderts (S. 20), eint, so die Autorin, dass sie Männlichkeit primär an ökonomische Macht knüpfen. Dies führe dazu, dass einem Großteil der Männer nichts anderes übrigbleibe als sich als prekäre Tagelöhner oder Klein- und Kleinstunternehmer durchzuschlagen, um so wenigstens an einem Abend, oder für einen kurzen Moment, einem Männlichkeitsideal zu entsprechen, das den Grad der Maskulinität eines Mannes immer anhand seiner Position in ‚economic registers of worth' bemisst (S. 14). Gleichzeitig gelinge es, und hier wird das Argument aufgrund einer Gleichsetzung von Rassismus und Kapitalismus etwas unscharf, dieser ‚double commodification of Blackness, as productive potential and cultural artifact' (S. 15), den *racial capitalism* zu reproduzieren, der aus dem schwarzen Mann einen Akteur macht, dessen Wert darin besteht, entweder Konsument zu sein oder andere beim Konsum zu unterstützen (S. 19). Während der erste Teil des Buches dieses Argument theoretisch zu untermauern versucht, indem die Hauptannahmen des Buches ausführlicher zur Debatte gestellt werden (Kapitel 1–3), arbeiten sich der zweite (Kapitel 4–7) und der dritte Teil (Kapitel 8–11) historisch respektive ethnographisch an der Hypothese der doppelten Warenform schwarzer Männer(körper) ab. Die Verschränkung von Rassismus und Kapitalismus, so die theoretische Quintessenz des Buches, ermögliche es nicht nur seit Jahrhunderten, schwarze Männer(körper) als Arbeitskraft auszubeuten, sondern erlaube es ebenso, kommerzielle Produkte mit Hilfe schwarzer Körper als ‚hip' und ‚progressiv' zu bewerben und zu verkaufen, was im Laufe des 20. Jahrhunderts nicht selten zu einer Entpolitisierung von schwarzen Protestbewegungen geführt habe.

Der historische Teil bietet nicht nur eine gelungene Einführung in die politische und wirtschaftliche Geschichte der Elfenbeinküste, sondern zeigt auch luzide, dass männliche Bewohner der Elfenbeinküste in der Geschichte unterschiedlichen Stereotypen unterworfen wurden, die sie nutzbar für die kapitalistische Verwertung machten. Während die entmenschlichende Sklavenarbeit mit dem Bild des sexuell unersättlichen und gewalttätigen Wilden einherging, so die koloniale Zwangsarbeit mit der Vorstellung, der schwarze Mann sei von Natur aus faul. Die zeitgenössische Fokussierung auf schwarze US-Amerikanische ‚businessmen', Sportler:innen und Musiker:innen schließlich macht den schwarzen Körper als konsumierendes und zum Konsum anregendes Artefakt und nicht mehr nur als Arbeitskraft ökonomisch verwertbar.

Im ethnographischen Teil fokussiert Jordanna Matlon sich auf die täglichen Praktiken zweier sozialer Gruppen. Während ich die Darstellung der ‚orators', die auf öffentlichen Plätzen in Anzügen und mit dem Gebaren international versierter Geschäftsleute Reden über lokale und internationale Politik halten und dadurch versuchen, ökonomisch gewinnbringende Verbindungen zur städtischen Elite aufzubauen, mit großem Gewinn gelesen habe (Kapitel 8–9), handelt es sich bei den Kapiteln über die männlichen Straßenverkäufer Abidjans um eine weitere, wenngleich ethnographisch ebenfalls interessante, Analyse der Lebenswelt junger, unverheirateter afrikanischer Männer, die sich durch Gelegenheitsjobs über Wasser halten und dabei davon träu-

men, Rapstars zu sein (Kapitel 10–11). Derartige Darstellungen sind jedoch in der zeitgenössischen Literatur zu afrikanischen Städten, die in den letzten Dekaden kaum noch andere Männer zu kennen scheint als junge, unverheiratete ‚Gangster' mit Bandana und 2-Pac T-Shirt, äußerst üblich und liefern daher selten neue Erkenntnisse.

Letztlich kann ich Leser:innen mit einem Interesse an den ökonomischen und politischen Konsequenzen rassistischer Konzepte afrikanischer Männlichkeit dieses Buch, das mit einem lesenswerten Postskript zur Positionalität der Autorin endet, die als Kind eines weißen Vaters und einer schwarzen Mutter im Feld manchmal als schwarz und manchmal als weiß gelesen wurde, ausdrücklich empfehlen. Auch wenn die simplifizierende Gleichsetzung von Rassismus und Kapitalismus stellenweise zu empirisch ebenso simplifizierenden Aussagen führt, so ist es doch zugleich diese Gleichsetzung, die es Jordanna Matlon erlaubt, in kurzer Aufeinanderfolge Diskurse und soziale Praktiken an der Elfenbeinküste mit solchen in den USA zu parallelisieren, was ein ums andere Mal zu erkenntnisgewinnenden Beobachtungen über die Verknüpfungen von Rasse und Kapital im globalen Kapitalismus des 21. Jahrhunderts führt.

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Dilger, Hansjörg; Warstat, Matthias (Hrsg.): Umkämpfte Vielfalt: Affektive Dynamiken institutioneller Diversifizierung.
340 S. Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 2021. ISBN 978-3-593-51412-3

Im Sammelband „Umkämpfte Vielfalt: Affektive Dynamiken institutioneller Diversifizierung" geben 32 Autor:innen Antworten auf die Frage, wie kulturelle Vielfalt im institutionellen Alltag in Deutschland diskursiv und performativ hervorgebracht wird. Sie untersuchen, wie Kämpfe um kulturelle Vielfalt Institutionen affektiv beeinflussen, verändern und modifizieren. Die Beiträge beleuchten „**affektive Diversität**" eindrucksvoll in vielfältigen Kontexten des institutionellen Alltags von Politik, Medien, Migrationsverwaltung, Literatur, Gesundheitswesen, Theater, Bildung und Museen.

Ausgehend von der pluralen deutschen Gesellschaft als „**postmigrantisch**" orientiert sich der Sammelband zunächst an Definitionen von Steven Vertovec (2007) und Naika Foroutan (2015), die anerkennen, dass die Gesellschaft als Ganze maßgeblich von Migration geprägt ist und die vielfältigen ethnokulturellen Hintergründe das tägliche Zusammenleben bestimmen. Als „gesellschaftliche, historisch gewachsene Einrichtungen, die einer Stabilisierung des Zusammenlebens dienen, indem sie Wandel normativ steuern" (S. 11–12), würden **Institutionen** – so die Definition der Herausgeber – einen Spiegel gegenwärtiger sozialer und politischer Verhältnisse in dieser postmigrantischen Gesellschaft darstellen. Doch dass diese (erfolgreiche) Repräsentation stark in Frage gestellt werden muss, arbeiten die Autor:innen überzeugend heraus und kommen in

verschiedenen, jeweils spezifischen Kontexten zu einer gemeinsamen, ganz zentralen Erkenntnis: Obwohl sich die ethnisch-kulturelle Zusammensetzung der deutschen Gesellschaft und das Zusammenleben durch Migration nachhaltig verändert, wird anhand der vierzehn Kapitel sichtbar, dass Institutionen der deutschen postmigrantischen Gesellschaft von der Abbildung *gelebter* und *erfahrener* kultureller Pluralität noch weit entfernt sind. Bereits einleitend fordern Dilger und Warstat daher eine Anpassung in Form einer „**Institutionalisierung kultureller Vielfalt**" (S. 8). Sie sei die wesentliche Voraussetzung für eine Transformation des gesellschaftlichen Zusammenlebens, das geprägt ist von gestärkter sozialer Teilhabe, Chancengleichheit und der strukturellen Bekämpfung von Diskriminierung.

Die folgenden Kapitel beschreiben diese institutionellen Entwicklungen, elaborieren deren transformatives Potenzial und gehen gleichwohl Widerständen und Schwierigkeiten auf den Grund. Mithilfe des Konzepts der „**Reibung**" („friction", Tsing 2005) betonen die Herausgeber die Bewegung und Dynamik, die durch Diversifizierungsprozesse erzeugt und die Handlungsmöglichkeiten, die dadurch eröffnet werden können. Der Begriff trägt gleichermaßen der Tatsache Rechnung, dass durch „Reibung" ebenso Blockaden, Stillstand und damit „affektive Ambivalenzen" (S. 28) entstehen können. Damit wird folgerichtig hervorgehoben, dass soziale Öffnungsprozesse untrennbar mit kulturellen Abgrenzungsdynamiken verbunden sind, die sich in Nationalismen, Fundamentalismen oder in der Identitätspolitik einzelner Gruppen äußern.

Eine Bestandsaufnahme der Gesellschaftssituation liefert **Bilgin Ayata** ausgehend von der NSU-Mordserie und bietet damit einen äußerst gelungenen Start des Sammelbands und einen Einstieg in die Auseinandersetzung mit den drängendsten Fragen des postmigrantischen Zusammenlebens. In ihrem Beitrag macht sie die Zusammenhänge zwischen institutionellem Rassismus und dem wieder aufkeimenden Heimat-Begriff sehr überzeugend deutlich. Obschon die NSU-Affäre im Jahr 2011 den Weg für Auseinandersetzungen mit institutionellem Rassismus und der Bedrohung des Rechtsextremismus ebnete, blieb die staatliche Aufklärung mit der Zeit aus. Stattdessen lässt sich ein nahezu diametraler institutioneller Wandel beobachten: Statt etwa eine staatliche Behörde für Rassismusbekämpfung zu installieren, setzte die Bundesregierung darauf, 2012 einen „Arbeitskreis zu Terrorismus- und Extremismusabwehr" im umstrittenen Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz und 2018 ein Ministerium für „Heimat" einzurichten. Ähnliches lässt sich in der Europäischen Union beobachten: Während die Schengen-Grenzen weiter verriegelt und der Grenzschutz militarisiert werden, trug das Migrationsressort 2019 nach der Umbenennung von Ursula von der Leyen als neuer EU-Kommissionspräsidentin den Titel: „Schutz (später „Förderung") unserer Europäischen Lebensweise". Anhand dieser Entwicklungen beschreibt Ayata die Agendaverschiebung von NSU und Rassismus hin zu Heimat(„-schutz") treffend als symptomatisch für die Verweigerung, sich mit dem gesamtgesellschaftlichen Problem des Rassismus auseinanderzusetzen. Stattdessen dreht sich weiterhin alles um die (affektiv aufgeladene) Frage: Wer gehört zu Deutschland und wer nicht?

Wer in der Darstellung, Beurteilung und Anerkennung von Diversität die Definitionsmacht klar für sich beansprucht, stellen einige Beiträge stichhaltig heraus. So ist es beispielsweise die Institution des Theaters im Beitrag von **Juliane Gorke, Hans Roth und Matthias Warstat**, die auf die Vorwürfe des „Blackfacing" als rassistische und stigmatisierende Praxis ablehnend reagiert und durch eine fast schon übliche Täter-Opfer-Umkehr versucht, die Deutungshoheit des Diskurses zu behalten: Die antirassistische Kritik, weiße Schauspieler:innen lieber schwarz anzumalen, statt Rollen mit Schwarzen Schauspieler:innen zu besetzen, wird als inakzeptabler „Eingriff in die künstlerische Freiheit" (S. 191) abgetan und der Griff zu diesem Mittel als notwendig legitimiert – hätte es doch keine ausreichend qualifizierten Schauspieler:innen of color gegeben. Am Beispiel der chorischen Polyvokalität zeigen die Autor:innen auf, dass im Theater dynamischere und diversere Identitätskonstellationen möglich sind.

Auch das Humboldt-Forum schafft es, in der Kritik einer exotisierenden Zurschaustellung kolonialer Raubkunst die öffentlichen Debatten für seine Interessen umzudeuten und so die Macht über den Diskurs zu behalten. Das Museum inszeniert sich strategisch als „offenen Ort für Austausch und Diversität" (S. 167), an dem alle – preußisch-imperiale bis postkoloniale – „Meinungen" nebeneinander existieren könnten. Die konkreten eurozentrischen Rahmenbedingungen per se werden so nicht zur Disposition gestellt und die Institution nicht substanziell verändert. **Paola Ivanov und Jonas Bens** zeigen daran sehr überzeugend, wie Diversität zum kolonialen Regierungsmodus des politischen Liberalismus wird, indem das Humboldt-Forum als vermeintlich neutraler Raum unsichtbar gemacht und die postkoloniale Kritik emotionalisiert dargestellt wird.

Anhand der Erziehungshilfe im vietnamesischen Berlin zeigen auch **Birgitt Röttger-Rössler und Hoang Anh Nguyen**, dass der als Norm geltende Wertekanon der Dominanzgesellschaft kein Diskussionsgegenstand ist: Die meisten Entscheidungsträger:innen in der Jugendhilfe urteilen auf Basis eigener Sozialisationserfahrung und Fachwissen, das in der Regel einer weißen Mittelschicht-Perspektive entspricht. Migrantische Lebensrealitäten, transnationale oder kulturell vielfältige Familienkonstellationen, sind den entscheidenden Expert:innen oftmals nicht nur wenig geläufig, sondern werden ferner negativ bewertet, wenn sie den vertrauten Erziehungsstilen widersprechen.

Es scheint der deutschen Dominanzgesellschaft und ihren Institutionen schier unmöglich, sich für andere Perspektiven zu öffnen oder zu realisieren, dass es auch andere Befindlichkeiten als die eigenen gibt. In Redaktionen deutscher Medienhäuser, so stellen **Margret Lünenborg und Débora Medeiros** fest, besteht die Belegschaft noch immer vornehmlich aus weißen Männern der Mittelschicht, die über ganz zentrale Fragen entscheidet: Wer spricht, wer wird gesehen, über wen *wird* gesprochen und wer bleibt unsichtbar? Diversität wird zwar grundsätzlich befürwortet, konkrete Maßnahmen zur Durchsetzung aber abgelehnt. Journalist:innen of color kommen meist dann zu Wort, wenn sie von Flucht-, Migrations- oder Rassismuserfahrungen berichten. Denn in der Außendarstellung und als Symbolpolitik („diversity management")

vieler Institutionen ist Diversität und Vielfalt durchaus angekommen – zumindest in ihrer „domestizierten" (S. 88), gezähmten und kontrollierbaren Form, wie die Beiträge von **Larissa Vetters und Olaf Zenker** und **Dominik Mattes, Omar Kasmani und Hansjörg Dilger** zeigen: Die Vielfalt, die von der Dominanzgesellschaft anerkannt und gewünscht ist, wird von dieser selbst definiert. So sind es letztlich auch Klassifikationen und sozialstatistische Kategorien, die nicht aus Selbstidentifikationen, sondern aus Fremdzuschreibungen entstanden sind, um Diversität lesbar und handhabbar zu machen (z.B. „Person mit Migrationshintergrund"). Diese lenken, strukturieren und emotionalisieren die öffentliche Wahrnehmung und Debatten kultureller Vielfalt. Während sie einerseits zu Inklusion führen können, indem sie fehlende Teilhabe oder Repräsentation sichtbar machen, wirken sie gleichermaßen ausgrenzend, indem sie weiterhin Unterscheidungen markieren, wie auch **Gülay Çağlar und Jennifer Chan de Avila** an der Diversitätspolitik deutscher Universitäten exemplarisch verdeutlichen. Diversität funktioniert als Aushängeschild „moderner, weltoffener" Universitäten (S. 319), nach außen gilt sie als bereichernd und innovativ. Wie aber die *tatsächliche* Sozialstruktur des institutionellen Gefüges aussieht, hinterfragen die Autor:innen hier am Beispiel der Universität, aber auch in weiteren Beiträgen des Sammelbands sehr kritisch.

Bei der Umsetzung einer „Institutionalisierung kultureller Vielfalt" scheitert es offenbar vor allem daran, eigene Privilegien abzugeben und grundsätzliche Strukturen im Kern zu verändern. Dies stellen nicht nur **Ceesay Sambojang und Jan Slaby** anhand einer historischen genealogischen Untersuchung des deutschen Schulsystems fest, auch am Beispiel des literarischen Feldes beobachtet **Anne Fleig**, dass die Forderung nach Vielfalt allein die Hierarchien und Wertmaßstäbe von Institutionen nicht wirksam in Frage stellen wird. In diesem Sinn fordern einige Autor:innen eine grundsätzlich kritische Auseinandersetzung mit der organisationalen Dominanzkultur und Privilegienverteilung. Denn alle Beiträge zeigen folgerichtig: Solange die eigenen Positionen und Privilegien unreflektiert bleiben, wird eine ernsthafte Auseinandersetzung mit strukturellen Diskriminierungsbedingungen ausgehebelt. Stattdessen müssen wir in der postmigrantischen Gesellschaft über bestehende Strukturen nachdenken und offen dafür sein, sie auch in ihren Grundsätzen zu verändern.

Thi Minh Tam Ta, Anita von Poser, Max Müller, Edda Willamowski, Thi Quynh-Nhu Tran und Eric Hahn zeigen am Beispiel vietnamesischer *Care-scapes* in Berlin, dass ein spezielles Netzwerk, das an die Bedürfnisse vietnamesischer Migrant:innen angepasst ist, gefordert und begrüßt wird. Sie verdeutlichen aber anhand von „Reibungen" auch, dass diese Diversifizierung von Care in der Umsetzung hochkomplex ist. Die Autor:innen konstatieren, dass eine „interkulturelle Öffnung" bestehender Care-Strukturen ohne die grundlegende Beteiligung von Akteur:innen, denen „kulturelle Diversität" (S. 131) zugeschrieben wird, kaum gelingen kann. Diese Aushandlungen mögen schwierig sein, sind sie doch ganz zentral und notwendig für ein gemeinsames Miteinander. Unbequemlichkeiten müssen artikuliert und zugelassen werden; oder in den Worten von **Jürgen Brokoff, Aletta Diefenbach, Tim Lörke und Christian von Scheve**: „Das muss die deutsche Gesellschaft aushalten. Für gelingende kulturelle Viel-

falt muss sich auch die Mehrheit bewegen“ (S. 245). Sie erkennen an, dass die Aushandlungsprozesse, die kulturelle Vielfalt herbeiführen können, von Verunsicherungen und Verletzungen geprägt sind. Wie zentral deshalb die Kopplung der eigenen Emotionen und Affekte im antirassistischen Lernprozess und in der unbequemen Auseinandersetzung sind, arbeiten **Nadine Maser und Nina Sökefeld** prägnant an beispielhaften Materialien der antirassistischen Bildungsarbeit heraus.

Viele der Beiträge elaborieren nicht nur die Reibungen solcher unbequemen Auseinandersetzungen und ihr mögliches Transformationspotenzial sehr gelungen, sondern zeigen richtungsweisende neue Wege für die postmigrantische Gesellschaft auf. Seien es dekoloniale Ansätze im Journalismus, um diverse Wissensformen erkennbar zu machen und gleichwertig anzuerkennen oder das ästhetische Mittel chorischer Polyvokalität im Gegenwartstheater – dieser Sammelband zeigt, dass „reibende“ Dynamiken über extrem unterschiedliche Felder zu verzeichnen sind und lässt auf eine potenzielle Neuorientierung und Veränderung in der gesamten Gesellschaft hoffen; sind es doch genau diese Unbequemlichkeiten, die einen *echten* Wandel in unserer diversen postmigrantischen Gesellschaft herbeizuführen vermögen.

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Kasparek, Bernd: Europa als Grenze. Eine Ethnographie der Grenzschutz-Agentur Frontex.
379 S. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2021. ISBN 978-3-8376-5730-2

Die Europäische Agentur für die operative Zusammenarbeit an den Außengrenzen der Europäischen Union, kurz: Frontex, existiert seit 2004. Um ihrer Aufgabe der Unterstützung der EU-Mitgliedsstaaten bei der Kontrolle ihrer Außengrenzen nachzukommen, vernetzt sie Akteure und Institutionen des Grenzschutzes, erstellt Risikoanalysen und führt eigenständige Operationen durch. Hierfür erhielt die Agentur zunehmend umfangreichere Ressourcen und Kompetenzen und firmiert seit Ende 2019 als Europäische Agentur für Grenz- und Küstenwache. Ausgestattet mit weitreichenden Befugnissen hinsichtlich Grenzkontrollen und Abschiebungen sowie einer ständigen Reserve von bis zu 10.000 Mitgliedern ist Frontex seitdem die erste bewaffnete Polizeieinheit der Europäischen Union. Gleichzeitig ist die Agentur seit Gründung beständiger Kritik ausgesetzt, unter anderem hinsichtlich Verstrickungen in Menschenrechtsverletzungen im Rahmen ihrer operativen Tätigkeiten. So stellte auch das europäische Amt für Betrugsbekämpfung (OLAF) im Jahr 2022 eine Reihe von Missständen innerhalb der Agentur fest, u.a. die Förderung und Vertuschung von Rechtsverstößen gegenüber Migrant:innen durch griechische Behörden sowie Behinderungen der Arbeit der Frontex-eigenen Grundrechtsbeauftragten. Diese Vorwürfe führten schließlich zum

Rücktritt des damaligen Exekutiv-Direktors Fabrice Leggeri und der Ankündigung interner Reformen.

Zum Zeitpunkt dieser jüngsten Ereignisse war Bernd Kaspareks Buch ‚Europa als Grenze' bereits erschienen. Seine Analyse, für die der Autor den Antonio Gramsci Dissertationspreis für kritische Forschung in der Migrationsgesellschaft 2021 erhielt, endet 2019 mit der Etablierung von Frontex als Europäische Grenz- und Küstenwachagentur. In diesem Ereignis verortet Kasparek dann auch den Schlusspunkt einer Entwicklung, die 1985 mit dem Schengener Abkommen begann: der (vorläufigen) Vollendung des Projekts Europäischer Grenzschutz.

Dieses Projekt nachzuvollziehen ist das Hauptanliegen des Buches. In Form einer doppelten Genealogie rekonstruiert Kasparek, wie die Figur ‚Europäische Grenze' ihre gegenwärtige Form – in politischer, diskursiver, institutioneller, materieller Hinsicht – gewonnen hat. Verortet ist die Studie dementsprechend sowohl in der kritischen Europäisierungs- wie auch Grenzregimeforschung. Grenze und Europa, so die zentrale These, konstituieren sich gegenseitig: Wer die „changierenden Praktiken und Modi der Europäisierung" verstehen will, muss die Grenzpolitiken der EU mitdenken; wer die „Genese der europäischen Grenze" (S. 14) nachvollziehen möchte, muss dies vis-à-vis den Entwicklungen des europäischen Projekts tun. Diese Entwicklungen ‚verdichten' sich wiederum in der Agentur Frontex, die damit den empirischen Dreh- und Angelpunkt des Buches darstellt.

Seiner Rekonstruktion der „doppelten Dynamik der Transformation von Grenze und der Transformation von Europa" (S. 15) widmet sich Bernd Kasparek im Rahmen von sechs empirischen Kapiteln (plus Einleitung und Ausblick). Im ersten Kapitel, *Netzwerke*, diskutiert Kasparek seine beiden methodologischen und analytischen Ansätze: die ethnographische Grenzregimeanalyse und die Genealogie. Eine zentrale Rolle spielt für ihn dabei der Netzwerkgedanke. Einerseits ist dieser tief in den Untersuchungsgegenstand selbst eingeschrieben; Frontex als Netzwerkakteur zu begreifen und diesem zu folgen ist ein wichtiger Ansatzpunkt der Studie. Andererseits bezieht sich Kasparek auf seine eigene Praxis kollaborativer Wissensproduktion in akademischen und aktivistischen Netzwerken und hebt deren Bedeutung für seine(n) Forschungsprozess und -ergebnisse hervor.

Der *Grenze* und ihrer Verhandlung in EU-Europa widmet sich das folgende Kapitel. Über einen Zeitraum von etwa 50 Jahren zeichnet es die doppelte Entwicklung des Europäischen Projekts und seiner Grenze(n) nach. Die Gestalt der Europäischen Außengrenze, so wird deutlich, ergibt sich dabei weniger aus der (ökonomisch motivierten) Abschaffung der Binnengrenzen, sondern erwächst primär den Logiken einer europäischen Justiz- und Innenpolitik, insbesondere den transnationalen Polizeikooperationen des Schengener Projekts. Spätestens mit dem Vertrag von Amsterdam 1997, der die EU als „Raum der Freiheit, der Sicherheit und des Rechts" – und damit auch ihre Außengrenzen – definiert, rückt Migration und ihre Kontrolle in den Mittelpunkt der europäischen Grenzpolitik. Zentral ist dabei das Konzept des *integrated border management* (IBM) – welches jedoch, wie Kasparek zeigt, lange Zeit ein leerer Signifikant bleibt.

Hier kommt schließlich Frontex ins Spiel. Ausgehend von Diskussionen um die institutionelle Verfasstheit einer mit dem europäischen Grenzschutz betrauten Organisation zeichnet Kasparek nach, warum Frontex in Form einer europäischen *Agentur* (so der Titel des Kapitels) gegründet wird. Dieser fällt eine zentrale Rolle bei der konkreten Ausgestaltung des IBM zu, insbesondere im Lichte der beständigen politischen Aushandlungsprozesse zwischen Schengener Apparat, Mitgliedsstaaten und Kommission. Bezugnehmend auf Andrew Barry's Konzept der „Technologischen Zonen" (2001) diskutiert Kasparek schließlich die Rolle der Agentur Frontex hinsichtlich der Etablierung und Ausgestaltung einer „technologischen Zone des europäischen Grenzschutzes" (S. 178). Diese stellt einen spezifisch europäischen Modus des Regierens des Grenze-Migration-Nexus dar.

Klarer wird dies im darauffolgenden Kapitel *Risiko*. Dieses kreist um die primäre Wissensproduktion von Frontex – die Risikoanalyse. Dabei arbeitet Kasparek heraus, dass der Begriff des Risikos eine fundamentale Rolle für den Grenzschutz in Europa spielt, in seiner konkreten Bedeutung jedoch von den daran beteiligten Institutionen unterschiedlich interpretiert wird – und das Risikoverständnis der Agentur dementsprechend fragmentiert und widersprüchlich bleibt. Dies zeigt sich insbesondere am Herzstück der Frontex'schen Risikoanalyse, dem *Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model* (CIRAM), welches Kasparek als „bricolage" aus Versatzstücken verschiedener institutioneller Logiken interpretiert. Kohärenz wird jedoch unter anderem dadurch hergestellt, dass Migration durchweg als Bedrohung, als Risiko für Europa konzeptualisiert wird. Die vermeintlich neutrale, technische Wissensproduktion der Agentur entlarvt Kasparek so im doppelten Sinne als zutiefst politisch: zum einen hinsichtlich ihrer fundamental ablehnenden Haltung gegenüber Migration, zum anderen mit Blick auf die darauf basierenden Handlungsvorschläge.

Stand in den bisherigen Kapiteln die theoretische Auseinandersetzung mit dem Projekt Europäischer Grenzschutz im Vordergrund und wie sich dieses gegenüber und durch die Agentur Frontex konstituiert, widmen sich die beiden anschließenden Kapitel den praktischen Implikationen dieses Verhältnisses. In *Operationen* steht der erste Einsatz der *Rapid Border Intervention Teams* (RABIT), Frontex Notfall-Interventionsmechanismus, an der griechisch-türkischen Landgrenze im Winter 2010/11, im Mittelpunkt. Klar zutage treten dabei die teilweise grundverschiedenen Rationalitäten und Zielsetzungen der verschiedenen mit Grenz- und Migrationskontrolle befassten Akteure. Die auf EU-Ebene gezogenen Lehren des (für die beteiligten Institutionen) von eher zweifelhaftem Erfolg gekrönten Einsatzes zeichnet Kasparek schließlich als Grundlage für die Etablierung eines „Praxismodus der Europäisierung" dar. Dieser wird in den folgenden Jahren insbesondere durch die *Joint Operations* (JOs) von Frontex vorangetrieben.

Plastisch wird dies im letzten empirischen Kapitel *Hotspot*. Damit bezieht sich Kasparek auf den Hotspot-Ansatz, der 2015/16 in Italien und Griechenland eingeführt wurde und das Regieren von Migration im europäischen Grenzregime erneut transformierte. Das Ziel einer beschleunigten und reibungslosen Identifizierung und Klas-

sifizierung von Migrant:innen unter dem Hotspot-Ansatz bleibt jedoch eine „logistische Phantasie" (S. 306), wie Kasparek anhand des reichhaltigen ethnographischen Materials im Buch darlegt. Seine Feldforschung im Hotspot-Zentrum Vial auf der griechischen Insel Chios gibt detaillierte Einblicke in dessen interne Abläufe und zeichnet nach, wie die Rationalitäten und Ziele der beteiligten Akteur:innen das alltägliche Geschehen in der „pipeline" (einer Reihe von Containern, in denen die Identifizierung von Migrant:innen stattfindet; S. 312ff.) gestalten. Die Multivalenz, Widersprüchlichkeit und Brutalität des Hotspot-Ansatzes in Griechenland werden dabei bedrückend deutlich. Vor diesem Hintergrund analysiert Kasparek – wiederum unter Rückgriff auf Barry – den Hotspot als *intensive Zone*, in der die verschiedenen Modi des Regierens von Migration in Europa mitsamt ihren jeweiligen Rationalitäten und Akteur:innen über alle Skalen hinweg miteinander verschmelzen. In diesem Licht muss schlussendlich auch die Transformation Frontex zur Europäischen Agentur für Grenz- und Küstenwache 2019 verstanden werden: sie stellt, so Kasparek, „unter der primärrechtlichen Konstitution der Europäischen Union das Maximum an Europäisierung dar, das möglich war" (S. 331).

Die zentralen Schlussfolgerungen des Buches folgen abschließend unter dem Titel *Europa*. Dabei identifiziert Kasparek im Hotspot-Ansatz einen neuen, „punktuellen und intensiven" (S. 336) Modus der Europäisierung. Dieser ziele nicht auf die dauerhafte Übertragung institutioneller Kompetenzen ab, sondern vielmehr auf die Definition der Rahmenbedingen nationalstaatlicher Souveränität. Legitimiert wird dies mit dem Verweis auf die Existenz krisenhafter Situationen – wobei diese wiederum durch die spezifische Wissenspraxis der Frontex'schen Risikoanalyse überhaupt erst als solche definiert werden. Weiterhin diskutiert Kasparek die extrem enge, spezifisch EU-europäische Verzahnung von Migrations- und Grenzpolitiken. Insbesondere im Lichte der vermeintlichen Neutralität der Technologie des *border managements* identifiziert Kasparek diese Verquickung jedoch als eines der fundamentalen Probleme des Projektes Europäischer Grenzschutz. Dies macht er im Fazit deutlich, wenn er – bezugnehmend auf Étienne Balibar's (2002) ‚demokratischen Radikalismus' – eine Re-politisierung und Demokratisierung nicht nur der Agentur Frontex, sondern der europäischen Grenzen an sich fordert. Doch auch im Dialog mit seinem Material und den darauf basierenden Analysen der verschiedenen Kapitel bleibt Kaspareks Haltung durchwegs klar.

In Anbetracht der Größe des bearbeiteten Feldes und des weiten Erkenntnisinteresses bleibt Kasparek erstaunlich präzise. Und doch: die Fülle des bearbeiten Materials ist manchmal fast erschlagend, und die Kleinteiligkeit einiger Analysen stellenweise so voraussetzungsvoll, dass es ohne ähnlich tiefes Vorwissen schwer ist, ihnen zu folgen. Ein Glossar, oder etwas mehr Kontextualisierung (z.B. von Institutionen, Gremien, Arbeitsgruppen…) hätte die Lektüre in dieser Hinsicht zugänglicher machen können. Weiterhin erscheint die Charakterisierung der Hotspots als „intensive Zone" zwar plausibel; die Analyse hätte m.E. jedoch davon profitiert, auch andere Manifestationen des Hotspot-Ansatzes (weitere Zentren, aber auch temporäre ad-hoc Hotspots wie in

den italienischen Häfen) mit einzubeziehen oder wenigstens – unterstützend wie einschränkend – auf diese zu verweisen.

Bernd Kaspareks Arbeit leistet in methodologischer und analytischer Hinsicht einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Kritischen Grenzregime- wie auch Europäisierungsforschung. Insbesondere das enorme kritische Potential eines kombinierten genealogischen und ethnographischen Ansatzes macht dies deutlich: die Erfahrung ‚dessen, was ist' kann die Rekonstruktion seiner Gewordenheit in einer Art und Weise informieren, die sich nicht aus textuellem (visuellem, auditivem) Material ableiten lässt. Gleichzeitig arbeitet sich Kasparek durchgängig am Stand der Forschung ab. Nicht zuletzt im kritischen Dialog mit einschlägigen Arbeiten, die er nuanciert korrigiert, denen er widerspricht und die er ergänzt, erweitert Kasparek das Verständnis um die Problematisierungen und Rationalitäten, Logiken und Kontingenzen, aus denen sich das Verhältnis von Europa und seiner Grenze speist. Auch wenn der Untertitel vielleicht anderes erwarten lassen mag (eine Innenansicht der Agentur Frontex ist das Buch sicherlich nicht): als langer Blick hinter die Kulissen der *Europäischen Grenze* ist es absolut lesenswert.

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347 S. Frankfurt, New York: Campus Verlag, 2020. ISBN 978-3-593-51068-2

In ihrem Buch beschreibt Melina Kalfelis Entwicklungen der Zivilgesellschaft Burkina Fasos anhand von burkinischen NGOs, ihren internationalen Partner:innen und vor allem anhand der Lebensgeschichten der Gründer und einer Gründerin. Ihre Untersuchung ordnet die Autorin der *anthropology of development* zu, die sich kritisch mit der Entwicklungspraxis befasst. Darüber hinaus setzt sie sich mit den Bedeutungen von Begriffen aus der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit in der Sprache Mooré, eine der drei am meisten gesprochenen Sprachen Burkina Fasos, auseinander, um einerseits zu zeigen, dass einige Konzepte, die häufig als europäische Konstruktionen verortet werden, sehr wohl in afrikanischer Geschichte wurzeln und andererseits, um Begriffe

wie ‚Armut' in differenzierte, emische Kategorien aufzuschlüsseln und verständlich zu machen. Ein ausführlicher methodischer und theoretischer Teil (Teil I) geht einem historischen (Teil II) und zwei zeitgenössischen voraus (Teil III und IV).

Grundlage des Buches ist eine neunmonatige Feldforschung, die sich über acht Jahre erstreckte (2009–2017), während der sich die Autorin immer wieder in Zorgho, einer Provinzhauptstadt im Zentrum von Burkina Faso aufhielt. Die reflexive Beschreibung der unterschiedlichen Stationen der Feldforschung (Zürich, Zorgho, Ouagadougou), der freundschaftlichen und beruflichen Verhältnisse zu den Mitarbeiter:innen der NGOs und der eigenen Rolle durchziehen alle ethnografischen Teile der Publikation und machen sie schon aus diesem Grund lesenswert für alle, die sich für Feldforschungsmethoden, sowie die Auswertung von Biographien und Lebensgeschichten interessieren. Vier Gründungsgeschichten von burkinischen NGOs werden detailliert beschrieben, teils kommen die Befragten selbst zu Wort, teils gibt die Autorin eine Zusammenfassung der Narrative wieder, beleuchtet ihre Rolle im Erzählprozess und erleichtert das Verständnis durch Erklärungen zur Geschichte Burkina Fasos und gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen.

Der Vergleich der Gründungsgeschichten lässt Handlungsroutinen, Sichtweisen, Normen und Erfahrungswelten der NGO-Akteur:innen Kontur annehmen. Insbesondere zwei gegensätzliche Umstände können zur Gründung einer lokalen NGO führen: eine gesicherte Existenz wie z.B. eine Beamtenposition, die ein lebenslanges Einkommen mit sich bringt und Investitionen in gemeinnützige Projekte erleichtert, genauso wie eine momentane Perspektivenlosigkeit, die zur risikoreichen Gründung einer NGO als mögliche Einkommensquelle motiviert. Alle untersuchten NGOs konzentrieren ihre Aktivitäten auf die Herkunftsregionen der Gründer:innen, nicht zuletzt um von ihren dortigen Netzwerken zu profitieren. Doch nicht nur wirtschaftliche Gründe oder der Wunsch anderen zu helfen, spielen eine Rolle bei der Gründung einer NGO. Melina Kalfelis zeigt überzeugend, wie unzuverlässig die ökonomischen Anreize in einem Umfeld des ‚organisierten Wartens auf Gelegenheiten' sind (Kapitel 5). Andere Beweggründe wie ein Karriereanschub und Fortbildung, eine Verbesserung des sozialen Stands, der Respektabilität und das Knüpfen neuer Kontakte, sowie die eigenen Erfahrungen mit zeitweiligem Geldmangel und großer sozialer Unsicherheit, können ebenso ausschlaggebende Motive einer NGO Gründung sein. Der Beginn einer NGO ist immer eng mit den biografischen und pragmatischen Lebensumständen der Gründer:innen verbunden, die in den meisten der untersuchten Fälle selbst von prekären Lebenssituationen gezeichnet sind.

Der Vergleich der Gründungsgeschichten gibt ebenfalls Einblicke in Bürokratisierungs- und Professionalisierungstendenzen burkinischer NGOs und in damit zusammenhängende Konfliktpotentiale. Die Analyse der globalen Verflechtungen der burkinischen NGOs mit internationalen Entwicklungsorganisationen unterstreicht die Kluft zwischen endogener und exogener Agenda, das Ressourcengefälle zwischen verschiedenen Organisationsformen (*association* oder NGO), sowie das Einkommensgefälle zwischen burkinischen und ausländischen Mitarbeiter:innen der Zivilorganisa-

tionen. Deutlich wird auch die Kurzlebigkeit burkinischer NGOs. Die Hälfte der 60 aktiven NGOs in Zorgho besteht nicht länger als 6 bis 10 Jahre. Männer und Frauen in Burkina Faso haben Erfahrung mit dieser Kurzlebigkeit und wissen, dass NGO-Projekte unsichere Zukunftsperspektiven bieten, auch wenn sie zeitweilig einen Lichtblick in einer prekären Lebenssituation darstellen können.

Die Sprache Mooré bietet zwei Begriffe an, um prekäre Lebenssituationen, die häufig mit dem Begriff ‚Armut' beschrieben werden, zu umreißen: *naongo*, was mit finanzieller Volatilität oder vorübergehender Geldknappheit übersetzt werden kann und *fare,* was sich der Bedeutung von Misere nähert, und das Fehlen eines sozialen Netzwerkes miteinschließt. Während *naongo* für Außenstehende schwer zu erkennen ist, kann man *fare* einer Person direkt ansehen. Häufig führen soziale Ausschlussmechanismen zu einer Situation, die als *fare* beschrieben wird. Die Autorin nutzt die Analyse der beiden Begriffe, um Alltagsphänomene zu beleuchten und Handlungen verständlich zu machen. Erfahrungen mit *naongo* oder *fare* produzieren Handlungsroutinen und Entscheidungsprozesse, die erst im Rahmen einer ‚Ökonomie der Gelegenheit', d.h. einer flexiblen Orientierung an kurzfristigen Krisen verständlich werden, wenn z.B. Projektempfängerinnen lieber an einer Trauerfeier teilnehmen als an einem seit langem geplanten Abschlusstreffen, das für die NGO als wichtige Evaluierungsphase unerlässlich ist, um weiter Subventionen zu bekommen. Entwicklungsexperten stufen solche Entscheidungen gerne als leichtfertige Planungen, die den Projektzeiten entgegenstehen, oder als wenig sinnvolle Investitionen, im Vergleich zur globalen Projektkalkulation, ein.

In den letzten Kapiteln verbindet Melina Kalfelis individuelle Handlungen und Lebenswelten mit der Analyse institutioneller Ordnungen der NGOs. Sie untersucht verschiedene Partnerschaftsformen zwischen burkinischen und ausländischen NGOs, Führungsstile, und Rechenschaftssysteme. Sie analysiert ebenfalls welche Rolle die Themenschwerpunkte, mit denen sich die NGOs beschäftigen für die Ressourcenallokation spielen. Um die Entwicklungsrhetorik im Kontext ihrer ethnologischen Erhebungen zu problematisieren, verweist die Autorin darauf, dass die ‚globale' Dimension nicht nur den ausländischen Expert:innen zugewiesen werden dürfe und die ‚lokale' Situiertheit nicht nur die afrikanischen Akteur:innen betreffe. Entscheidungsträger:innen und Mitarbeiter:innen in den Zentralen in der Schweiz oder Schweden handeln genauso lokal eingebettet, wie burkinische Mitarbeiter:innen global verflochtene Entscheidungen treffen. Die in der Schweiz oder Schweden arbeitenden Entwicklungsakteur:innen handeln ohne die Komplexität der Lebenswelten in Burkina Faso zu kennen, auf der Grundlage von Vermutungen und antizipierenden Entscheidungen, während die burkinischen Entwicklungsakteur:innen ihre ausländischen Partner:innen häufig falsch einschätzen, da ihnen grundlegende Informationen über veränderte Verträge oder Evaluierungsprozesse nicht zur Verfügung stehen.

Idealtypisch werden von der Autorin zwei NGO-Partnerschaftstypen (mechanisch/dynamisch) entworfen, die auch über den regionalen Rahmen der Untersuchung hinaus anwendbar sind. Die Veränderungen der vergangenen 20 Jahre, die institutionel-

len Geldgebern mehr Kontrolle über NGO-Programme erlauben, weisen darauf hin, dass mechanische Ansätze in der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit zunehmen. Immer mehr NGOs fungieren, so die Autorin, als Umsetzer für *multi-stakeholder* Entwicklungsprogramme, anstatt sich ihren selbstentworfenen, bereits etablierten Projekten widmen zu können. Quantitative Studien von 2019 haben ergeben, dass nur 0,2 % des Entwicklungsbudgets an lokale NGOs fließen und 51 % an multilaterale Organisation, vorzugsweise die UN. Doch auch den ausländischen NGOs fehlt durch veränderte Gesetzgebungen die Freiheit, mit den Mitteln, die sie einwerben, flexibel auf Projektideen ihrer lokalen Partner:innen eingehen zu können. Dazu kommt, das Entwicklungsbudgets selten in die institutionelle Stärkung der Kapazitäten lokaler NGOs fließen. Häufig bestimmen die Geldgeber von Beginn an, wie hoch die Verwaltungsausgaben sein dürfen, sowie weitere strikte Bedingungen, die an das Entwicklungsbudget geknüpft sind. Dieser wachsende Einfluss lässt die Partnerschaften zwischen lokalen NGOs und ausländischen als ‚Euphemismus globaler Machtverschiebungen' erscheinen (Kapitel 11). Die Arbeit der burkinischen NGO-Akteur:innen wird in diesem Kontext von der Autorin als zutiefst antagonistisch beschrieben, da sie aktiv an der Verbesserung der Prekarität beteiligt sind, deren Auswirkungen sie selbst gut kennen und von denen sie wissen, dass sie sich durch Rechenschaftspraktiken, Fotos, Berichte und andere authentische Zeugnisse erfolgreich kaschieren, aber nicht beseitigen lassen. Wichtig ist auch die Beobachtung, dass die Präsenz von auswärtigen NGOs es den burkinischen Akteur:innen erschwert Selbstfinanzierungsmechanismen zu entwickeln. Je erfolgreicher die burkinischen NGO-Akteur:innen rigide Projektregeln durchsetzen, desto mehr legitimieren sie sich vor den ausländischen Partner:innen. Der Legitimationszwang hat auch zur Folge, dass burkinische NGO-Akteur:innen es vorziehen unter bestimmten Bedingungen Kritik oder Fehlplanungen zu verschweigen. Empirische Beispiele machen deutlich, dass mehr Kontrolle nicht zu mehr erfolgreichen Entwicklungsprojekten führt, denn wenn Planungsvorhaben und Eigeninteressen der Betroffenen zu sehr auseinandergehen, können (oder wollen) auch die burkinischen NGO-Akteur:innen nicht mehr vermitteln.

Melina Kalfelis lokale, mikropolitische Analyse globaler Entwicklungsorganisationen bietet eine willkommene Gegenperspektive zu dominanten Entwicklungsdiskursen über NGO Partnerschaften. Ihre Analyse lässt sich auf andere geografische Kontexte als den untersuchten übertragen und lohnt sich nicht nur für Burkina- und Westafrika-Interessierte als Lektüre. NGO-Akteur:innen stellt das Buch Argumente bereit, um notwendige Veränderungen der Entwicklungskooperation nachdrücklich zu verteidigen.

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Joh Sarre: Zugehörigkeit und Heimat in Kenia. Some call it slum, we call it home! Das Ringen um Anerkennung der Nubi in Kibera/Nairobi.
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In Kibera – dem Ruf nach einer der größten Slums Afrikas – leben dicht gedrängt Menschen diverser ethnischer Zugehörigkeit – jüngste Zahlen sprechen von 170.000–250.000 Bewohner:innen dieses Teils der kenianischen Hauptstadt. Die Bezeichnung Slum evoziert Bilder von Armut und schwierigen Lebensverhältnissen, zugleich schaffen sich hier Menschen unter den Bedingungen von Unsicherheit und Gewalt ein, wenn auch prekäres, Zuhause. Joh Sarres mit dem Preis der Stadt Bayreuth ausgezeichnete Dissertation, die auf mehrere Feldforschungsaufenthalte in den Jahren 2011–14 zurückgeht, untersucht, „wie die nubischen Einwohner:innen Kiberas ihre Zugehörigkeit zu diesem Ort, aber auch zur kenianischen Nation herstellen und aushandeln" (S. 14). Mit den Nubi nimmt Sarre eine Gruppe in den Blick, die zwar durch eigene Sprache, spezifische kulturelle Ausdrucksformen sowie ihre islamische Religionszugehörigkeit als ethnisches Kollektiv bestimmt werden kann, die aber zugleich trotz ihrer langen Ansiedlungsgeschichte nicht als offizieller Teil der kenianischen Gesellschaft anerkannt ist. Aushandlung von Zugehörigkeit meint insofern auch Kampf um politische Anerkennung.

Wie diese Aushandlung um Zugehörigkeit vonstattengeht, wird in sechs Kapiteln entfaltet. Im ersten führt Sarre ihre Leser:innen zunächst in den Slum, legt Erkenntnisinteresse sowie konzeptionelle Überlegungen dar und schildert das methodische Vorgehen aus teilnehmender Beobachtung, Interviews, Befragungen und Dokumentenanalyse als reiterativen Prozess, bei dem (Zwischen)Ergebnisse wiederholt mit Forschungspartner:innen diskutiert wurden. Zugleich wird eindrücklich das eigene Involviertsein in die beobachteten Prozesse und der reflexive Prozess damit geschildert. Das zweite Kapitel erschließt die Entstehung der Phänomene ‚Nubi' und ‚Kibera' aus historischer Perspektive. Nachgezeichnet wird die Formierung des kenianischen Staats als ‚ethnische Landkarte' sowie der Hauptstadt Nairobi, dabei die dichte Koppelung von Anerkennungsfragen mit Landbesitzansprüchen herausgearbeitet. Gezeigt wird, wie für die nubischen Einwohner:innen der Anspruch auf den urbanen Raum Kibera als *homeland* zur Basis von Citizenship-Ansprüchen wurde. In den nächsten drei empirischen Kapiteln nutzt Sarre unterschiedliche Felder, um zu zeigen, wie und gegen welche Widerstände diese Ansprüche in gegenwärtigen Praktiken legitimiert und mobilisiert werden. Zunächst geht es um Praktiken der Benennung: Sarre arbeitet heraus, wie mithilfe von Ortsbezeichnungen um Deutungshoheit über Raum gerungen wird. Gegen staatliche Bezeichnungen gesetzte nubische Benennungen schreiben die eigene Siedlungs- wie Herkunftsgeschichte in den Raum und machen mit dem Anspruch auf Kibera als ihr *homeland* auch die Forderung nach Anerkennung als ethnische Gruppe und legitime Staatsbürger:innen Kenias sichtbar. Die folgenden beiden Kapitel gehen von Ritualen aus. Zunächst zeichnet Sarre anhand nu-

bischer Hochzeiten „räumliche und performative Aspekte von Zugehörigkeit" nach. Bei Hochzeitsfeiern und den dazugehörenden Umzügen greifen individueller Statuswechsel, Beziehungsarbeit und die temporäre Besetzung von öffentlichem Raum ineinander bei der Herstellung einer nubischen Gemeinschaft und der Sichtbarmachung territorialer Ansprüche. Dagegen wird am Lebensende – Gegenstand des fünften Kapitels – das Recht auf einen Beerdigungsort zum Ankerpunkt, um die Beziehung zwischen Individuum, Kollektiv, Raum und Staat herzustellen. Mit der im Zuge der Kolonialisierung durchgesetzten Praxis der Erdbestattung wurden Land, ethnische Zugehörigkeit und Begräbnisort miteinander verknüpft. Mit der Aktualisierung dieser Verbindung bei den Bestattungsritualen werden zugleich kollektiv-politische Zugehörigkeiten artikuliert. Sarre weist auf die Besonderheit eines eigenen urbanen Friedhofs hin, der als exklusiver Ort zugleich für die Landansprüche der nubischen Einwohner:innen steht. Im letzten Kapitel werden die Ergebnisse zusammengefasst und der empirische, theoretische und methodische Mehrwert der Studie herausgearbeitet. Unter Verweis auf die besondere Bedeutung einer räumlichen Perspektive für die Analyse von Zugehörigkeit betont Sarre zugleich die Besonderheit des territorialen Zugehörigkeitsdiskurses in Kenia.

Sarres Studie überzeugt durch ihre empirische Vielschichtigkeit und Differenziertheit. Die Ethnographie zeichnet aus unterschiedlichen Perspektiven und anhand dichter empirischer Materialien die Verwobenheit individueller, kollektiver und politischer Zugehörigkeiten nach, wobei die tiefe Teilhabe am Leben vor Ort die Grundlage bildet, um Debatten rund um Landrechte und damit verknüpfte Staatsbürgerschaftsrechte zu erschließen. Die Analyse verweigert sich konsequent aller primordialen Zuschreibungen und arbeitet detailreich Prozesse der In- und Exklusion heraus. Durch die über mehrere Jahre verteilte Forschung wird Kibera als Ort schneller Veränderungen sichtbar, an dem sich individuelles Navigieren schwieriger Lebensbedingungen und politische (Miss-)Erfolge gleichermaßen artikulieren. Im Ergebnis kann Sarre auf überzeugende Weise die aktuelle Realisierung der über lange Jahrzehnte hergestellten Verknüpfung von Territorialansprüchen als Grundlage sozialer wie politischer Zugehörigkeiten aufzeigen. Weniger eindrucksvoll erscheinen mir die über den Einzelfall hinausgehenden Erkenntnisse zu Konzept und empirischer Operationalisierung von Zugehörigkeit. Dass Raum auch in einer globalisierten Welt Bedeutung behält, ist ebenso wenig überraschend wie der Befund, dass Prozesse der Aushandlung konkrete Orte der Untersuchung benötigen. Eindrücklich ist dagegen die genaue Beobachtung des Ineinandergreifens individueller, kollektiver und politischer Aspekte der Verhandlungen und deren Situiertheit in konkreten, machtvoll strukturierten Prozessen der longue durée. Erhellend wäre ein Blick auf die affektiven Anteile der Zugehörigkeitspraktiken und deren Verschmelzung mit territorial-politischen Ansprüchen auf Land gewesen. Damit hätte auch die in meinen Augen zu schnelle Gleichsetzung von *homeland* und Heimat an Plausibilität gewonnen. Am Ende bleibt aber, dass Joh Sarre eine ebenso lebendige

wie differenzierte Analyse der Kämpfe um Zugehörigkeit vorlegt hat, die nubische Einwohner:innen Kiberas gegen anhaltende Diskriminierung und Marginalisierung führen.

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Danesi, Marcel: Comedic Nightmare: The Trump Effect on American Comedy. Brill Research Perspectives in Popular Culture.
114 pages. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022. EBook ISBN 978-90-04-53586-2

One might have thought that the apocalyptic images of the storming of the Capitol heralded the end of Donald Trump's political career, but that is not in sight. In addition, his impact on political rhetoric, often referred to as 'the Trump effect', persists in debates on migration, race, gender and intellectual elites. Marcel Danesi shows how this rhetoric is shaped by practices that have a long history in US-American comedy.

Although the author tends to overlook frictions in the society of the US prior to Trump's presidency and creates an essentialist concept of US-American humour, his book is insightful for scholars concerned with the slippages between comedy and politics today. Anthropologists such as Dominic Boyer, Tanja Petrović and Mirco Göpfert draw attention to the fact that more and more comedians have become politicians. Wolodymyr Selenskyj is just one of many other examples. Moreover, late-night talk shows and satirical journalism prove the increasing impact of humorous practices on politics and society.

At no point does Danesi leave his readers in any doubt that he views Trump's often blatantly clownish strategies as a serious threat to US democracy; his knowledgeable report on the Trump effect is devastating. Reading his book is, nevertheless, highly enjoyable, as the author elegantly weaves together complex theories on humour, such as those of Plato, Freud and Bakhtin, with studies on social media and garnishes it all with pearls of humour. The book comprises five chapters, entitled 'American Comedy', 'Buffoonery', 'Dark Comedy', 'The Circus Came and Went' and 'A Comedic Nightmare'.

An attempt to trace the structure of the book would fail, since Danesi meanders through it, but one wants to follow him even when he frequently digresses and writes a bit too much about Commedia dell'arte and too little about social bots. Admittedly, he often gets lost in details that are not very illuminating regarding the Trump effect, but it is amusing to learn that when a priest asked Voltaire on his deathbed whether he wanted to renounce the devil, the philosopher is said to have replied that now was a bad time to make new enemies (p. 68). Certainly, it would be more to the point to analyse how Trevor Noah, one of the most influential comedians in the US, countered

Trump's irresponsible COVID policies. He and other comedians became very serious back then and repeatedly explained hygiene measures to prevent the disastrous effect of the disinformation coming out of the White House, notably in black communities.

Danesi does not even mention Noah and almost completely ignores issues such as race, class and gender. He tends to look at the pre-Trump US as a monolithic, unified bloc and has a somewhat romanticized view of 'the core of the American comedic spirit', claiming that it was 'wry, witty, and innocent, free of political harangues and ideological antagonisms' (p. 2) before Trump came into power. This is all the more astonishing since he digs deep into the history of US-American comedy. Danesi should know that the racist minstrel shows can hardly be described as innocent and that Charlie Chaplin, whom he often mentions (albeit neither his films *Modern Times* nor *The Big Dictator*), was accused of Un-American Activities. The political 'harangues' of the avowed communist and 'ideological antagonisms' had incited the FBI's distrust.

Moreover, Danesi himself draws attention to antagonisms in the US, notably at the advent of the sitcom *All in the Family* in 1971. He analyses the confrontation between the character Archie Bunker, a defender of the Vietnam War and right-wing politics, and his son-in-law Michael Stivic, an opponent of the war and supporter of racial and gender equality. Danesi (p. 35) reminds his readers that during the 1972 presidential campaign, T-shirts and bumper stickers promoted 'Archie Bunker for President', and he analyses how Trump became a Bunker redux and copied his outrageous outbursts. Even his mispronunciations of common words bring back memories of the popular comedic character.

Showman Phineus Taylor Barnum also became a model for Trump. Danesi shows how the president copied his 'hyperbolic, bombastic verbiage' (p. 74) Barnum used when he advertised hoaxes which his audience was only too happy to believe, for example, when he presented Joice Heth, allegedly a 161-year-old slave, as George Washington's nanny. Trump is often compared to the famous impostor who eventually became a politician, and he even adorns himself with the comparison. Trump learned from Barnum how to decry moral decay and, at the same time, celebrate excesses, as well as how to stage pseudo-events that do not deceive audiences when they are revealed as hoaxes, as long as they are entertaining.

Danesi is a professor emeritus of semiotics and linguistic anthropology; his strength is in dissecting figures of speech and rhetorical skills. He accurately and convincingly demonstrates what Trump learned from Bunker and Barnum in this regard. His brilliant presentation of the significance of jokes delivered in a single line, the so-called one-liners – according to Danesi, the staple of US-American comedy – deserves special mention here. He has tracked down some hilarious examples, also showing how W. C. Fields and Will Rogers made one-liners popular in vaudeville and how the Three Stooges used them. He quotes famous one-liners by Rodney Dangerfield and Lenny Bruce, retracing how they have been adapted for use in social media. Danesi argues that one-liners became Trump's most important weapon during his campaigns and presidency, whether in direct confrontation with an audience or via twitter. The US

president used them to make fun of face masks, wind turbines and political correctness, to chide political opponents and unpopular comedians, and to downplay the importance of climate change or social inequality.

Danesi asserts that the US went through a 'Comedic Nightmare' when a clown became president. However, his supporters enjoyed his performances – others, by contrast, perceived him as an 'evil clown'. The clown, usually an emblem of cheerful open-mindedness, is also perceived as a 'harbinger of bad things' (p. 73) in the US: Cecil B. DeMille's *The Greatest Show on Earth* (1952) introduced the character of a clown who used his funny mask to hide from police in American popular culture, while Stephen King emblemized an evil clown character in his novel *It* (1986).

The underlying assumption of Danesi's investigation is open to criticism because it is based on an essentialist concept of culture: he departs from the idea of a formerly innocent and unpolitical comedy, the 'cultural bloodstream of America' (p. 9), to which audiences would have reacted as a unified group. Numerous studies on the reception of popular culture falsify such assumptions, not least Stuart Hall's groundbreaking insights in *Encoding/Decoding* (1980). There is little doubt that audiences and US-American society have become more fragmented and polarised since Trump entered the political stage, but what is to be learnt from the Trump effect is obfuscated through embellished simplifications of American history. It is misleading to claim that the US was a unified country welded together even more tightly by laughing at the same jokes before Trump came into power. To be sure, statements that went viral, such as 'liberals can't take a joke' (p. 92), are certainly a reaction to the demands of political correctness that Trump repeatedly attacked as an evil promoted by liberal intellectual elites. The claim that 'right-wing comedy found its way into the mainstream' (p. 92) after he became president sounds convincing, though it poses a question of definition: misogynous and racist jokes have a long history in the US. It is certainly more illuminating to consider how Trump made use of already existing divisions and reinforced the construction of dichotomies concerning race, class and gender.

In the light of countless studies on the impact of humorous practices on in- and outgroup dynamics, Danesi's often repeated dogma that the goal of US-American comedy was once to make all people laugh is questionable. It is astonishing to find such a well-read author basing his analysis on such ahistorical simplifications, but it seems he is in a state of shock, overwhelmed by developments that he, like many scholars, did not believe were possible. Nevertheless, the book is a treasure trove for anyone interested in the connection between comedy and politics. Danesi quotes Will Rogers, a comedian who triumphed early last century: 'I don't make jokes. I just watch the government and report the facts' (p. 8). About a hundred years later, a comedian seems to have modified this for TikTok: Sarah Cooper just lip-synced Trump's statements – for example, his absurd advice regarding COVID – and thus drew the attention of countless young voters.

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Dilger, Hansjörg: Learning Morality, Inequalities, and Faith: Christian and Muslim Schools in Tanzania.

266 pages. London etc.: International African Institute and Cambridge University Press, 2022. ISBN 978-1-009-08280-8

How does one attain a "good life" in a religiously diverse landscape? In *Learning Morality, Inequalities, and Faith: Christian and Muslim Schools in Tanzania,* Hansjörg Dilger engages with this question ethnographically following ten months of fieldwork between 2008–2010 in six Muslim and Christian schools in Dar es Salaam. He explores the roles that global inequalities and local searches for socio-moral belonging play in younger and older people's religious experiences and practices.

Throughout the book's seven chapters, Dilger demonstrates in a thorough and rigorous manner how we can understand everyday moral formation as inherently embodied, situated and affective if we turn our attention to the spaces and relations within which moral-ethical training and self-formation take place. Dar es Salaam's new faith-oriented schools were mostly established in the wake of privatization from the 1990s onwards to cater to a growing, mostly middle-class demand for moral-ethical education beyond the secular subjects that are taught in government schools. By zooming in on these differently positioned sites of moral socialization, Dilger's choice of field site allows us to understand deeply how the process of learning morality is intertwined with "both individual and political affairs" (p. 16).

The book consists of two parts, which work well in complementing historical contextualization with ethnographic case studies. In the first part, Dilger offers a historical and political genealogy of the emergence of religious difference and education by showing how (post)colonial histories and related memories of educational and religious difference have shaped Christian and Muslim encounters in Dar es Salaam (Chapter 2) and by describing the historical entanglements of Tanganyika/Tanzania's educational system with increasing socio-religious inequalities (Chapter 3).

The book's second chapter offers a critical discussion of various aspects of coloniality. Dilger traces convincingly how the 'Christian missions became indispensable to the educational system of the colonial state in Tanganyika' (p. 46) and shows how on the one hand this was accompanied by an overall favouring of Christian associations in the general building of the colonial state, accompanied on the other hand by a critical neglect of Muslim organizing with regard to, for example, the colonial government's social service provision. Equally important is the attention Dilger repeatedly pays to the paradox of the continuing use of English instead of Kiswahili as the medium of instruction in secondary and higher education in Tanzania today. This privileging of English is made evident by the ongoing policing of the speaking of Swahili in the form of, for example, 'the rule to speak English at all times' (p. 200) or of the use made of student 'class monitors' who 'reported Kiswahili speakers to the teachers' (p. 202) – another result of colonial oppression which continues to play a role in the shortcomings of Tanzania's educational system today.

Methodologically innovative and insightful is the quantitative analysis presented in the third chapter of two different sets of government registration books, including data on the official registering and deregistering of religious organizations between 1980 and 2009. This analysis allows him to shed new light on inter-religious similarities where diversity or difference may be assumed by default, and to question productively how competition for registration and institutionalization genuinely takes place in addition to the state's attempts to organize and order it.

The genuinely evocative ethnographic chapters in the second part then zoom in on the varied experiences and practices of moral becoming across Christian and Muslim faith-based schools – schools 'with a distinct ethical and social spirit' (p. 222) – in an overall context of socio-economic inequality. Dilger manages to demonstrate how learning values in Dar es Salaam has itself become a highly diverse phenomenon by taking us through the examples of two schools under the authority of a neo-Pentecostal church (Chapter 4), two Islamic seminaries (Chapter 5) and a Catholic primary school and its corresponding high school (Chapter 6). These chapters are particularly dense but are usefully broken up with 'intermediate conclusions' that help the reader move through them. The book concludes (Chapter 7) by highlighting the convergences and divergences in the striving for a good life across the Christian and Muslim educational fields.

Particularly impressive in Dilger's ethnographic analysis of the neo-Pentecostal schools is how the categorization of 'Christian' in itself, alongside the 'implicit presence' (p. 128) that faith had in the schools' everyday operations, is best understood alongside internal conflicts. Dilger illustrates this by zooming in on the spirit possessions and their healing that take place in the spaces of the Christian school. The fact that these spirit possessions occur almost exclusively in female Muslim students 'became a powerful moral counternarrative' (p. 136) and reflects patterns of extreme social stratification that affect the population's access to educational institutions and the 'good life' and people's moral evaluations of an increasing neoliberal market orientation.

In the ethnographic part on the two gender-segregated Muslim-only Islamic seminaries, the interrelatedness of religious difference and social status comes to the fore and makes the reader aware of how students' structural positions in society and the wider educational market – usually 'at the lower end of the scale' (p. 149) – are affected by it. The explicit religious and ethical framework of the seminaries thus functioned as 'an arrangement with these injustices' (p. 150), providing 'protection against the vagaries of everyday life' (p. 152) and the socio-economic conditions both students and teachers were exposed to.

Finally, in the Catholic school where Dilger conducted his research, a privileged social status and the Catholic church's continuing 'dominant place in the educational market in Tanzania' (p. 177) is evident and tied to broader notions of (middle-)class formation. The extent to which the Catholic schools' students from mainly elevated socio-economic backgrounds are themselves 'highly conscious of their own privilege' (p. 195) is especially recognizable when the learning of values in this context of faith is

exercised by, for example, the visit to an orphanage and students' immediate reactions of empathy and compassion.

A particularly important achievement of the book is its comparative framework, which genuinely serves to demonstrate a nuanced view of how the quest for a good life in a setting of religious diversity has been shaped by post/colonial histories of education and interreligious encounters. Through his focus on the coexistence of different Christian and Muslim school settings, Dilger allows the reader to see not only the internal diversity in each field, but also, and more importantly, the complexities that define the relationality between them. This angle makes visible the extent to which both Muslim and Christian engagements with how values are learned and taught are united by entangled struggles for moral becoming and how they 'have to be understood in relation to the larger societal and political-economic conditions they share' (p. 233).

Another striking achievement of this ethnography is its dedication to unmaking and countering political discourses that have contributed to deepening socio-religious marginalization and to widening the gap between the structurally weak position of Muslim educational institutions and their associations with 'educating "future terrorists"' (p. 151), while Christian schools remain in an '"excellent" position' (p. 177) and enjoy an 'overall privileged status' (p. 19). By demonstrating how this discrepancy can be traced back to the 'governance of religious difference during colonial and political times' (p. 19), Dilger's analysis helps us reflect on how power dynamics have long been experienced negatively by Muslim actors in the field of schooling specifically, as well as contributing to marginalization in society more broadly.

Particularly rich and important in this account of ethical subject formation is Dilger's conceptual and theoretical engagement with childhood, the body and humour. Dilger helpfully does not frame his ethnography as one of 'childhood' per se but treats children with great sincerity and compassion as equal conversation partners and interlocutors in their own right in his endeavour to shed light on how values are learned and good lives lived. This book is striking proof of the necessity to engage more with children for an anthropology of ethics that takes seriously how children are 'actively involved in making values ordinary' (p. 13) and that truly engages with philosophical reflections on life as lived and experienced by different generational groups.

As I have demonstrated in my own book in the context of Zanzibari schools (Fay 2021), in Tanzania young people's moral (self-)formation takes place to a large extent in, on and through the body. By integrating discussions on physical discipline in schools, such as the use of kneeling as a form of punishment that is frequently considered 'less "psychologically affecting" than caning' (p. 201), Dilger productively foregrounds 'the body as the central site of proper self-care and conduct' (p. 197) and makes it possible to think of the constitution of a moral landscape as taking place within and outside a physical and embodied sphere, but always in close interaction with it.

Finally, Dilger intriguingly proposes to think more with joking and humour as another way 'of dealing with potentially conflicted moralities' (p. 225) and overall moral ambiguities. This suggestion should be taken seriously in future engagements

with ethics in anthropology because it helps us engage more directly with those spaces and expressions of contestation and refusal that reflect how people – like the students and teachers in this book – 'express a stance on, or merely raise, issues that could not be addressed otherwise' (ibid.)

If for anything additional, I would have been intrigued by a more direct engagement with what Saba Mahmood has termed 'the subject of freedom' and what James Laidlaw has discussed extensively in advocating an anthropology of ethics and freedom. The discussions in this ethnography, especially where they reveal the deep ambiguities inherent in, for example, the structural marginalization and economic deprivation of the Muslim schools' settings that do not seem to stand in the way of students', teachers' and parents' commitments to those spaces, would have potentially offered themselves to this question of freedom.

With its profound insights into how ethical subjects and the 'good life' are always in formation in ordinary educational spaces, how these spaces are deeply entangled with the colonial past and capitalist present, and how young people are some of the most interesting conversation partners from whom we can learn about these processes, *Learning Morality, Inequalities, and Faith* makes a unique contribution to the fields of the anthropology of ethics, political anthropology, the anthropology of childhood and youth, and Swahili Studies more broadly.

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