Students of Cultural Anthropology Journal

SPRING 2022

VOLUME 4
ISSUE 1

ISSN:2772-8218

Colofon

The Students of Cultural Anthropology Journal appears biannually, publishing written work from Utrecht-based anthropology students. The works published in this edition were written during the first semester of the academic year 2021-2022.

Contact details
Email: scaj.uu@gmail.com
Website: www.studentsofculturalanthropologyjournal.com

Our mission is to empower undergraduate and graduate students of anthropology in Utrecht to feel that their work matters. As such, we work to create a collaborative and independent intellectual space for all students.

Our goals
We strive to *facilitate knowledge exchange* by creating an accessible space equipped for learning new insights and skills. In addition, it is our goal to *foster student engagement*. Students are part of every step of our publication process. SCAJ thus reflects the efforts of Utrecht-based anthropology students through and through.

Our values

We operate in the pursuit of *inclusivity* as a means to further develop as a platform. Utrecht-based anthropology students of all backgrounds are included in our publication process and thus all these students of anthropology may appeal to this platform. For this to be true, we value *transparency* in all of our teams, selections and processes. As such, we strive to ensure that there is no mystery as to how we operate.

Contents

Introduction

It is with great pride that I write the introduction to our fifth publication. Five editions filled with the words of our fellow anthropology students. It is almost unbelievable to realize how much our platform has grown since its founding. These past few weeks have incited moments of great reflection and - at times - great sentimentalism for me. Allow me, dear reader, to share some of these thoughts with you.

On April 22nd of this year, our team celebrated SCAJ's three-year anniversary. Three years prior, a handful of former and current core team members - myself included - sat around Machteld's dinner table, brainstorming her initial ideas for what must have been many hours. Time flew by though. In just one evening, the group of people to whom I was a stranger were now my teammates. Together, we laid the groundworks for this journal and set out a strategy for how to achieve its actualization.

The seeds were sown. Now it was time to grow, with the help of some metaphorical water and sunlight. By this I mean people, of course. We received much help along the way, from professors, professionals in the publishing industry, our personal network, and our peers. Our team grew, shrank, and then grew some more. And every person who has come and gone has left their mark on the journal we observe today.

And so here we are: our fifth edition. At the risk of sounding like a broken record, it fills me with much pride and joy to observe our growth and the reception from our peers. I don't think we could have imagined the scope of our reach when we sat at that dinner table those three years ago. It makes me excited for the future. Who knows what our platform will look like when we publish our tenth edition?

As for every edition, we have a great number of students to thank for contributing to its realization, in no particular order. We express our gratitude to everyone who submitted an assignment. For this edition especially, we were positively overwhelmed with the number of submissions, all of which were a pleasure to receive and review. We thank our reviewers, whose sharp minds and

fruitful discussions have been instrumental in making the selection for the papers you are about to immerse yourself in. And I extend my personal gratitude to our amazing core team. You have grown not only to be my beloved colleagues, but also my friends. Your drive and enthusiasm allow for this platform to improve by the day. And for that, I thank you.

Now, before you turn the page, allow me to give you a small preview of what is to come. This edition houses twelve texts written for a variety of different courses offered by the anthropology departments of Utrecht University and University College Utrecht. Read along with an examination of the relationship between climate change, indigenous cultures, and media representation. Or scrutinize violence against refugees on the border of "Fortress Europe". Enlighten yourself on nuclear energy and electric bikes, or study street harassment, femicide, or casteism through in-depth explorations and case studies. These topics are but a handful of the inspiring and engaging texts that grace the pages of this edition of SCAJ.

I encourage you now to revel in the words of our authors and to get swept up in the narratives they have created. On behalf of SCAJ's core team, I wish you happy reading.

Tamar Oderwald
Editor-in-chief

Before reading

Before you start reading the papers that have been selected for this edition of SCAJ, we feel it is important to share a few comments.

First, the core team of SCAJ would like to emphasize that both the content of the papers as well as the added motivation for producing the work (as quoted beneath the author's name), are completely written by the authors. Each work was checked for possible errors regarding spelling, grammar, and referencing. Any corrections were relayed back to the respective authors, who were then given the opportunity to revise their work accordingly. SCAJ's reviewers and editorial board have thus not made any alterations to the works you are about to read.

To elaborate, the papers in this edition of SCAJ have been selected by our selection committee from a broader range of submissions. This edition's committee consisted of ten students of Cultural Anthropology from different years of study, as well as five members of our core team. During the process of selection, the committee was divided into five groups, each led by one of our core reviewers. Each group used the same set of reading questions as a guideline for the selection process. These reading questions focused on readability, creativity, originality, and structure. However, every reviewer was given the freedom to deviate from these reading questions. We believe that the ability to discuss freely allows for dynamic analyses, providing more valuable insights than rigidly conforming to any guideline. Every group read a number of fully anonymized papers, of which they made a selection fit for publication. Afterwards, the five members of the core team discussed the results and considerations of their respective selection groups to make this final selection.

Second, we would like you to be aware of the fact that referring to the content of this journal in your own academic work might not be encouraged by professors. The works published in SCAJ are written by Cultural Anthropology students who often focus on theories of other scholars and are not (yet) considered credible sources themselves. If you are in doubt whether to

refer to a certain paper published here, we advise you to consult your professor.

Third, the order in which the papers are published in this journal is not based on our judgment of their respective qualities. Rather, we have tried to organize it in a way that is pleasant to read. This means we have tried to avoid placing papers with similar topics next to each other. Other than that, the arrangement of papers is completely random.

Finally, the papers published in SCAJ do not serve as example papers for the courses offered by Utrecht University or University College Utrecht, nor should they be taken as being fully representative of the university's curriculum. SCAJ is an independent platform that relies entirely on the work of students. We are not tied to the university. The papers may not be copied in any format whatsoever without explicit consent from the author.

A future underwater

Displacement, resilience and hope on the Marshall Islands

Sophie Hudson

"This submission is my first anthropology essay and my introduction to the discipline of cultural anthropology. I signed up for Anthropology of Conservation due to my interest in climate change, and I ended up enjoying the class so much that I changed my major to anthropology. While researching this essay, I felt myself heavily gravitating to the concept of hope, which I then combined with an anthropological case study of the Marshall Islands, one of the first island groups projected to disappear due to rising sea levels. In my essay, I research where one can hold hope in times of a climate catastrophe, a topic which I believe might just be my biggest academic interest so far."

When I think about the climate crisis a little too long and a little too hard, I get hopeless and want to run away. I've always imagined that one day – when catastrophe feels so close, I can no longer shut it out – I will pack my bags and move somewhere isolated and remote, a tropical island. As it turns out, the place I thought I could escape to, people will have to escape from. Whilst sea levels are rising everywhere, in the Pacific this is happening at twice the average speed (Laelan, 2020), and it is expected that the world's first nation composed entirely of environmental refugees will originate here (Kirsch, 2020). According to Kirch (1997), islands are natural history's best shot at something approaching the controlled experiment, and they are often studied for local impact on nature. However, islands are threatened by not local but global impact, and nothing about the climate crisis is a controlled experiment – it is unprecedented. We live in an era increasingly defined by apocalyptic rhetoric (Lempert, 2018), and people living in the Pacific have been told repeatedly that their islands are sinking, but how does one deal with a 'future already underwater' (Kirsch, 2020, p. 827), where you can hold hope?

To research the intersection of hope and climate change, I will do a case study on the Marshall Islands. Situated in Micronesia and consisting of many small and flat atolls, it is predicted to be one of the first islands to disappear due to rising sea levels (Evans & Laelan, 2020; Kirsch, 2020; Marshall Islands Journal, 2021; Rudiak-Gould, 2011). First, I will be focusing on the formation of a Marshallese identity under continuously changing circumstances. After this, I will research how the Marshall Islanders navigate their likely displacement with a special focus on belief; do the Marshallese believe in climate change, and do they believe in the necessity of displacement itself? Lastly, I will look at the Marshall Islanders' resilience, which is defined as the capacity to absorb shocks and maintain function, self-organize and learn and adapt (McMillen et al., 2014). I then question how resilience influences the reaction to the threat of displacement, and if it in any way connects to the anthropology of hope.

Although the Marshall Islands have been populated since Pacific Island communities migrated to the atolls approximately 2000 years ago (Barker, 2012), as far as most Marshall Islanders are concerned, 'their people have always lived on the Marshall Islands and have always been Marshallese' (Rudiak-Gould, 2011, p. 94). Despite this, Marshall Islanders didn't see themselves as a unified ethnic group till western colonization (Rudiak-Gould, 2011), although they did travel frequently between islands and spoke closely related languages (Barker, 2012). In the years between the initial colonization of the Marshall Islands and the colonization by the West, male chiefs formed the political backbone of the islands and took care of the people living on the land in exchange for food and labor (Rudiak-Gould, 2011), although in theory property was considered matrilineal (Barker, 2012). On the 1,225 islets of the Marshall archipelago, there are only 180 square kilometers of land (Rudiak-Gould, 2011), none of which is productive without maintenance (Barker, 2012). Thus, land is the most important resource on the Marshall Islands, its immense practical value translating to social value (Barker, 2012), and its scarcity resulting in minimal social stratification (Rudiak-Gould, 2011).

In 1529, Spain had its first known contact with the Marshall Islands and declared the atolls theirs quickly thereafter, but their influence was limited and was primarily defined by trade (Barker, 2012).

Only halfway through the 19th century, when American protestant missionaries and German merchants arrived under Spanish rule, did the West start having a significant impact on the Marshall Islanders (Rudiak-Gould, 2011). Marshallese chiefs attempted to harness power from the new foreign source through trade, yet 'reality refused to behave according to customary expectation', and thus the arrival of the Germans and the Americans resulted in cultural transformation (Rudiak-Gould, 2011, p. 87). The missionaries introduced Christianity with such success that now little is known about the previously dominant indigenous religions (Rudiak-Gould, 2011). The influx of foreign goods caused the Marshallese to remake much of their land into coconut plantations to satisfy German demand for coconut meat, and subsistence farming was scaled back even more due to the new availability of imported food (Rudiak-Gould, 2011). 'As socioculturally diverse peoples around the world are subsumed into globalized forms of governance and exchange, their economies, societies, and cultures are profoundly transformed' (Oliver-Smith, 2010, p. 12) – the reregulation of resources by colonizers often works for indigenous people detriment (Igoe & Brockington, 2007) – and many Marshallese now point out the commodification and monetization of life as the islands biggest problem (Rudiak-Gould, 2011).

In 1914, Japan took control of the Marshall Islands and tried to replace the matrilineal inheritance system with a patrilineal one modeled after its own (Rudiak-Gould, 2011). This planted a seed for a cultural self-consciousness, which further increased after the United States colonized the Marshall Islands and used some of its atolls as nuclear testing sites (Rudiak-Gould, 2011; Barker, 2012). Between 1940 and 1954, the American military conducted 67 detonations, the biggest of which displaced the people of Bikini and Eniwetok and irradiated their land (Rudiak-Gould, 2011). This displacement was especially damaging in the context of Pacific culture, as understood by eloquent testimonies of the Marshallese about the significance of land for their personal and cultural identities (Kirsch, 2020). The nuclear testing in combination with the subsequent political unification caused cultural self-consciousness to reach a peak, with people strongly identifying themselves as Marshall Islanders (Rudiak-Gould, 2011).

In recent years, Marshall Islanders have become increasingly familiar with the possible consequences of global climate change, which has influenced the way the Marshallese construct their identity (Rudiak-Gould, 2012). The Marshallese see their culture as 'the greatest way of life in the world', although they emphasize that this custom is under threat due to climate change, among other factors (Rudiak-Gould, 2011, p. 92). Marshallese existential anxiety is certainly not unfounded; developing countries such as the Marshall Islands feel the impacts of climate change the most, despite contributing the least emissions (Barnes & Dove, 2005). On-the-ground outlooks such as those held by Marshall Islanders are valuable contributions to climate change discourse (Barnes & Dove, 2005), and, according to Kirsch (2020), 'people whose livelihoods depend on their direct access to natural resources often have strong views on the need for environmental protection' (p. 835). Adding to this, 'it is essential that we pay thoughtful attention to those who have already lived through an apocalypse' (Lempert, 2018, p. 203). Nuclear tests on Bikini and Eniwetok have influenced the Marshall Islands' response to global climate change policy debates, and in combination with their unique on-the-ground outlook, it is especially valuable to listen to the Marshallese response to their islands' changing environments.

Due to issues with translation, communication about climate change to the Marshallese public has been received in a variety of ways. 'The understanding of key terms such as climate can shift, as words assume new meanings in different languages and cultures' (Barnes & Dove, 2015, p. 6). According to Rudiak-Gould, there was not one single word available that matched the English definition of climate when translating the term 'climate change' to Marshallese;

> *To begin with, Marshallese, like many other languages offers no way to distinguish, with a single word, between 'meteorological conditions in the short term' and 'average meteorological conditions in the long term' (2012, p. 49).*

McMillen et al. (2014) have found that small island communities are often more sensitive to the limitations of their environment, and since the Marshall Islands are so remote and have needed to be extraordinarily self-sufficient for most of its history, the

knowledge systems of its islanders are deep-rooted and complex, resulting in the islanders having a more holistic view of climate change than Westerners do (Rudiak-Gould, 2012). Thus, the beliefs that time flows faster now than a few decades ago, that people are lazier than they were back in the day, and that young children no longer speak proper Marshallese, are all effects of climate change in the islanders' narratives; Instead of being seen as an environmental issue, climate change has become a catch-all explanation for all disturbing events (Rudiak-Gould, 2012). Local environmental knowledge is becoming increasingly entangled with scientific models of global climate change (Barnes & Dove, 2015; Kirsch, 2020), and although the Marshallese perception of 'climate' is different from the English definition of the word due to translation, to call it merely environmental would be misleading (Rudiak-Gould, 2012).

The dominant discourse in the Marshall Islands is that of a societal, cultural, and moral decline from a pristine past (Rudiak-Gould, 2012) and because the Marshallese definition of climate change fits so well in this metanarrative, climate change is widely believed (Evans & Laelan, 2020). However, in the discourse, 'climate change becomes framed as an instance of cultural entropy' where all crises become intertwined (Rudiak-Gould, 2011, p. 240). Because 'climate' is a Western term that mostly focuses on environmental aspects, it does not mean much to Marshall Islanders when isolated (Rudiak-Gould, 2011). Instead, 'most local communities are fundamentally concerned with questions of control over their own destinies', which in the Marshall Islands manifests as an obsession with change (Ballard & Banks, 2003, p. 298). Continuously changing circumstances in the island group's history have influenced the Marshallese identity to be focused on change. This, in combination with being sensitive to their limitation due to being a small island community, caused many Marshallese to believe in climate change. Although the Marshallese identity lends to it, and climate change is believed, not many Marshallese recognize that displacement due to rising sea levels will be necessary, which I will illustrate in the following paragraphs.

On the 11th of November, 2021, an article by an unknown author was posted in the online Marshall Islands Journal discussing ways to adapt to global climate change. It read that, 'should existing sea level rise trends continue, the country will confront a

series of increasingly costly adaptation processes to essential infrastructure' (Marshall Islands Journal, 2021). Whilst the article addresses that these adaptations are costly and that more drastic adaptations cannot be funded by the Marshallese government, it never mentions the option of resettlement. When searching the term on their website, nothing related to future resettlement came up, with only the nuclear detonations in Bikini being mentioned. Political leaders in the Pacific reject forced displacement, and in the Marshall Islands this is no different, where President Kabua declared he would not be leaving the island (Kirsch, 2020). Climate change and migration are sensitive topics within the Marshallese community (Evans & Laelan, 2020), displacement is not talked about, and most people refuse even the idea of leaving (Rudiak-Gould, 2011). When people are displaced in conservation practices, they are rarely adequately compensated for their land (Igoe & Brockington, 2007), and a great majority of displaced people have suffered some form of violation of their basic human and environmental rights (Oliver-Smith, 2010). Add this to the cultural importance of land to the Marshallese identity and the consequences of displacement for the Marshall Islanders becomes undeniable, making clear why the Marshallese reject the idea.

Regardless of the suffering displacement might cause, the Marshall Islands may be uninhabitable in as little as 50 years (Rudiak-Gould, 2011). In the podcast Arkansas Atoll, Melisa Laelan is interviewed, who has dedicated her life to 'building her community a home away from home' (2020). Situated in Northwest Arkansas – which hosts the biggest population of Marshallese people outside of the archipelago – Laelan plans on preparing both the region and her people for an influx of Marshallese climate migrants, something she considers a near-future inevitability. She describes her home in a very different tone than the article on climate adaptation in the Marshall Islands Journal did, 'water is coming through like it is nothing, as if it is normal for the wave to come to the door' (Laelan, 2020). In the podcast she mentions her family, 'my family at home heard something is happening, that our lands will disappear, but I am not sure they are processing it', she says people want to 'stay and fight' and would rather stay and 'die with dignity' (Laelan, 2020).

In the podcast, Laelan says she is 'a believer in building, getting prepared, just in

case a crisis will happen' (2020), but Laelan's words may also be interpreted as a dystopic ethnographic depiction, which 'may unintentionally serve to reinforce the dispossession of indigenous futures' (Lempert, 2018, p. 208). The ability of Pacific Islanders to influence global climate change and policy regimes is often downplayed and ignored, and citizens are seen as powerless (Kirsch, 2020). This perceived powerlessness might be pinned on 'the death of the nation-state', however not all researchers believe that, saying it has been greatly exaggerated by both critics and proponents of globalization (Ballard & Banks, 2003). Even if the nation-state would be dead, the rise of neoliberalism – which Igoe & Brockington (2007) define as 'the restructuring of the world to facilitate the spread of free-markets' – also creates new opportunities for non-state actors to take over state functions (Kirsch, 2020). Neoliberalism leads to certain 'marketable' ecosystems such as tropical islands to be more deeply cared about, as people will recognize the ecosystem and have stronger associations with it (Kirsch, 2020). Because the Marshall Islands are already associated with ecological disasters due to the nuclear testing that took place on Bikini and Eniwetok, the Marshall Islands are more visible than other island states (Kirsch, 2020). By positioning themselves as innocent victims of an overheating planet, Marshall Islanders can use their indigenous identity to their advantage when advocating for their environmental rights (Li, 2000).

If the Marshallese 'reject the passive, sacrificial role scripted for Pacific islanders by the popular narrative of rising sea levels and disappearing islands', lobbying as a form of resilience can work (Kirsch, 2020). In the IPCC rapport of 2017, the Marshallese activists managed to change a key phrase on global warming from 'no greater than' to 'well below' two degrees (Kirsch, 2020). Still, this is only phrasing, and with sufficient action to halt climate change not yet having been taken, displacement remains a viable option.

Having discussed both the Marshall Islanders' belief in climate change and their reactions to a possible displacement, a gap between their acceptance of the facts and their rejection of its consequences become clear. Their situation is desperate, the Marshallese are facing enormous material losses and a radical reinvention of self and community, and yet little has been written on their attitude towards hope (Oliver-Smith, 2010). Scholars have attempted to either distinguish boundaries between hope and

related concepts (Miyazaki, 2006) or to delineate the parameters of what it means to hope (Hauer et al., 2018). Miyazaki (2006) mentions the importance of considering cultural and historical specificity in approaching the subject of hope and points out how language differences can change conceptions of the term. The Marshall Islands have a long history of resilience to environmental variability and unpredictability which might influence their attitude toward hope (McMillen et al., 2014), and the translation of the word 'climate' from English to Marshallese as described by Rudiak-Gould (2012) demonstrates Miyazaki's argument (2006). Whilst often the optimism of hope is emphasized, hope can also lead to paralysis (Miyazaki, 2006), something which is seen in Laelan's description of her family (2021). If hope lies in the reorientation of knowledge (Miyazaki, 2006), we must accept that the Marshallese rejection of resettlement is how they maintain resilience and that this resilience is a valid form of hope. 'Hope in the face of a crisis is a scene of negotiated sustenance that makes life bearable, a short-term coping strategy that bridges present and near future' (Bryant & Knight, 2019, p. 153). With a long-term future that is so hopeless, it only makes sense the Marshallese place their hope on short-term resilience by ignoring resettlement.

In my research on hope in the Marshall Islands, I've only found the term to be discussed once. Hauer et al. (2018) theorize that hope is rarely mentioned in anthropology because it remains a 'fuzzy concept' which is not easily translated into research. This, together with the delineation of the parameters of hope, might explain why there is an abundance of research on resilience (Miyazaki, 2006). However, rather than getting stuck on the definition of hope, we should 'leave the quest for essences behind' (Hauer et al., 2018, p. 62) and start treating the concept – like the practice – as a form of futural momentum (Zournazi & Hage, 2003; Bryant & Knight, 2019). After all, 'hope is a sensibility that tends to come into existence through action' (Lempert, 2018, p. 204), and thus hope transforms from a static description to an engaged doing (Hauer et al., 2018). Approaching hope this way seems more hopeful, and this new definition of hope seems to better fit the people who need it most; more similar to the Marshallese view on climate change, it is complex and sensitive on multiple levels, and not merely 'environmental'.

Due to constant switching of colonial rule and a scarcity of natural resources, the Marshallese identity is configured around the concept of change. This causes many Marshallese to believe in sea levels rising but does not extend to them believing in the necessity of displacement. The Marshall Islands probably will not exist in 100 years, and the Marshallese know this, every day they see the water rising in their backyards. Yet, armed with the facts, they still refuse to move. It seems as if recognizing your powerlessness and fighting anyway is the most powerfully hopeful thing to do. It makes no sense, but when it comes to such radical hope, I do not think sense-making is one of the things it ought to do. I cannot pack my bag and run away from climate change, and the grief I feel for this I have not processed yet – I do not think many people have. But with increasingly great storms, there is something to be said for staying rooted and facing them.

Bibliography

Ballard, C., & Banks, G. (2003). Resource Wars: The Anthropology of Mining. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *32*(1), 287–313. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.32.061002.093116.

Barnes, J., & Dove, M. R. (2015). "Introduction". In *Climate Cultures: Anthropological Perspectives on Climate Change* (pp. 1-21). Yale University Press. https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1111/amet.12395.

Barker, H. M. (2012). *Bravo for the Marshallese Regaining Control in a Post-Nuclear, Post-Colonial World* (2nd ed.). Wadsworth. https://books.google.nl/books?hl=en&lr=&id=xZsJAAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR5&dq=anthropology+resettlement+Marshall+islands&ots=44sTwjckDN&sig=mwOiJN-UfJpS2mf5jqp8H2Q48cE&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=true.

Igoe, J. & Brockington, D. (2007). Neoliberal Conservation: A Brief Introduction. *Conversation & Society*, *5*(4), 432-449. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26392898.

Bryant, R., & Knight, D. M. (2019). "Hope." In *The Anthropology of the Future* (pp. 132–157). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108378277.007.

Evans, N. (Host). Laelan, M. (Guest). (2020, December). Rising Waters (No. 5). [Audio podcast episode]. In Arkansas Atoll. Arkansas Story Vault. https://open.spotify.com/episode/5CrqklxlD2pdTfzttOJOTt?si=872a7e2f99b042c8.

Hauer, J., Østergaard Nielsen, J., & Niewöhner, J. (2018). Landscape of hoping – urban expansion and emerging futures in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. *Anthropological Theory*, *18*(1), 59–80. https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499617747176.

Kirch, P. V. (1997). Microcosmic Histories: Island Perspectives on "Global" Change. *American Anthropologist*, *99*(1), 30–42. https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1997.99.1.30.

Kirsch, S. (2020). Why Pacific Islanders Stopped Worrying about the Apocalypse and Started Fighting Climate Change. *American Anthropologist*, *122*(4), 827–839. https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13471.

Lempert, W. (2018). Generative Hope in the Postapocalyptic Present. *Cultural Anthropology*, *33*(2), 202–212. https://doi.org/10.14506/ca33.2.04.

Li, T. M. (2000). Articulating Indigenous Identity in Indonesia: Resource Politics and the tribal slot. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, *42*(1), 149-179. https://www.academia.edu/21142767/Articulating_Indigenous_Identity_in_Indonesia_Resource_Politics_and_the_Tribal_Slot.

McMillen, H. L., Ticktin, T., Friedlander, A., Jupiter, S. D., Thaman, R., Campbell, J., Veitayaki, J., Giambelluca, T., Nihmei, S., Rupeni, E., Apis-Overhoff, L., Aalbersberg, W., & Orcherton, D. F. (2014). Small islands, valuable insights: systems of customary resource use and resilience to climate change in the Pacific. *Ecology and Society*, *19*(4). https://doi.org/10.5751/es-06937-190444.

Miyazaki, H. (2006). Economy of Dreams: Hope in Global Capitalism and Its Critiques. *Cultural Anthropology*, *21*(2) 147-172. https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1525/can.2006.21.2.147.

Oliver-Smith. A (2010). *Defying Displacement: Grassroots Resistance and the Critique of Development*. (pp. 1-41). University of Texas Press. https://muse.jhu.edu/book/571.

Rudiak-Gould, P. (2011). Facing climate change in the Marshall Islands: a study in the cultural cognition of risk [Ph.D. thesis, University of Oxford]. British Library EThOs. https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.543614.

Rudiak-Gould, P. (2012). Promiscuous corroboration and climate change translation: A case study from the Marshall Islands. *Global Environmental Change*, *22*(1), 46–54. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2011.09.011.

Zournazi, M., & Hage, G. (2003). "On The Side of Life" - Joy and the Capacity of Being: A conversation with Ghassan Have. In *Hope: New Philosophies for Change* (pp. 150–171). Routledge. https://books.google.nl/books?id=-hfTXAxZuFAC&hl=nl&source=gbs_navlinks_s.

The paradox of the electrification of things

An ethnography of electric bicycles in Amsterdam

Eva van Dijk & Jamie Betz

"Electric vehicles are on the rise. We have noticed an increase in electric bicycles appearing in the streets of cities that we live in. Columnists and journalists are writing about the phenomenon, often with a critical note. Electric bicycle brands have slick marketing and claim their place in the transition to a fossil-free mobility industry. However, we found out that within anthropology the e-bike is heavily understudied. Inspired by anthropologist Natalie Ortar's autoethnography on her e-bike use and the embodied experiences, we decided to examine this topic a bit further. Our research took the experience of electric bicycles users as well as that of the regular bicycle users into account."

Introduction

All over the world, electrical vehicles are making their way into the daily lives of people. Electric vehicles are seen as a carbon-low alternative means of transportation, "crucial in the process of 'greening' transportation" (Zuev 2018, 10). In recent years, subsidizations have been offered by countries and cities for purchases of electric bicycles, amongst others in Belgium, Norway, and the Netherlands, encouraging commuters to use electric vehicles (Zuev 2018, 2).

In the Netherlands, 12,5 percent of all bicycles are electrical, and this number is growing steadily. Within our research location, the bicycle-dense city of Amsterdam, this rise is increasingly noticeable. With bicycles ubiquitous in the streets, cycling culture plays an important role in the construction of the national Dutch identity. The city has over 881,000 bicycles for 871,873 residents, 58 percent of the population cycles daily, and the infrastructure is adapted to cyclists' needs. Among Amsterdam cyclists, many are using

electric bicycles. This can be seen as part of the process of making transport more sustainable. However, using a regular bicycle is in theory 'greener' than the use of an electric bicycle. This suggests there are other explanations for the rise of the electric bicycle. We aim to gain a better understanding of the implications of electrification in the daily lives of urban area residents and the reasons behind it. Hence, this paper seeks to understand the effects of the rise of electric bicycles in the city of Amsterdam for users and non-users. The everyday energy ethics "forms an implicit register through which people make sense of their experiences of using energy" (Groves et al. 2017, 79). The mundane is used in this study to access hidden ethics. The mundane can become "a route for interrogating that which comprises it, including those elements that can be attached to the exposition of 'controversiality'" (Mike 2016, 88).

We did participant observation while riding an electric and a normal bicycle to compare the difference between both experiences. We drove in traffic at different times of the day to get an overview of busy and quieter moments and cycled around various parts of the city, including the downtown area and more upscale neighborhoods. To capture our embodied experience, we employed sensory ethnography. The sensory method includes the body's perception and experience of place in reaction to the individuals' emotions and state of mind, sense of self, social, and cultural connections, and predispositions (Ortar 2019, 91). We have visited the VanMoof store, an electric bicycle brand, where people can try out the bicycles and we went for a test ride ourselves. Additionally, we collected data through semi-structured interviews with two users of electric bicycles and two users of regular bicycles. Since both vehicles interact in traffic daily, it is important to keep both experiences in mind. The consequences of electric bicycle use were discovered to have an impact on more than simply the lives of the users. This data gave us a more in-depth insight to decipher energy ethics. We explore the findings of the beforementioned study in three themes: ethics, identity, and speed. First, a theoretical framework is provided followed by the research findings.

Theoretical framework

There is very little anthropological work on electric bicycle use (Zuev 2018; Ortar 2020). The body of academic work on the social and

behavioural of cycling is limited to studies that focus on cycling and gender (Song, Kirschen, and Taylor 2019) and on cyclists and identity (Aldred 2013a; 2013b; Freudendal-Pedersen 2015; Füssl and Haupt 2017). These studies are conducted within motorized situations, in which bicycle use is an exception. Therefore, we researched a field site where cycling is more common, and infrastructure and policy are adapted to cyclists' needs. Zuev (2018) describes the growth of the electric bicycle in urban China. In this context, vehicles are seen as a carbon-low alternative means of transportation, "crucial in the process of 'greening' transportation" (Zuev 2018, 10). New green policies in the Global North have led to increases in green electromobility, and the electric bicycle can play a role in the energy transition. This shift from fossil mobility to electromobility has generated the rise of green extractivism and in particular that of lithium, in what is even being described as 'lithium fever' (Jerez, Garcés, and Torres 2021, 1). Anthropology has shown how studies on the shift from fossil fuels to electro power are urgent and necessary (Dunlap 2018; Jerez, Garcés, and Torres 2021; Howe 2019; Schwartz 2021). However, in this paper, we take a different angle: we study the mundane energy use of electric bicycles and the perceptions of it by users and non-users. Studying energy is necessary to understand modern life. In contemporary society, we are increasingly bodily engaged with energy-using devices and infrastructures (Groves et al. 2017, 76). This study is on the one hand inspired by the auto-ethnographic study of social anthropologist Nathalie Ortar (2019), who describes her e-bike use and its effects on her daily life. However, electric bicycles do not merely affect the daily routines of its user: the electrification of things changes our culture, social relations, and human-nature relationships (Winther and Wilhite 2015).

The importance of energy was highlighted by White (1943) in his evolutionary theory of human development where he showed how energy can shape societies. Although his work was highly controversial for its linear way of thinking, it "stimulated new thinking that incorporated energy into discussions surrounding political economy and societal development" (Winther and Wilhite 2015). To show this entanglement of everyday lives, power and politics, Boyer (2011) introduces the concept of 'energopolitics'. Control over energy in the modern state is so fundamental that energy needs an anthropology of its own. The

concept is an expansion of Foucault's biopolitics and seeks to "understand the complex operation of modern states and modern power that have always sought to control and capitalize on the transformational power of energy" (Boyer 2011, 5). Kaur (2021) on the other hand, critiques Boyer for not including the global South and governmentality that follows from colonial regimes in the concept of energopolitics. We acknowledge the importance of this scientific debate by using it as an underlying theory and meet the need to research anthropologically by the study of everyday use of electric bicycles.

Increasingly, anthropologists have become interested in energy transitions, energy ethics and energy justice. Electrification and electricity have been studied in multiple ways: its social meanings to everyday life (Cross 2019; Winther and Wilhite 2015), how its use contributes to 'the good life' (Groves et al. 2017), and its unexpected by-products (Schwartz 2021; Dunlap 2018; Jerez, Garcés, and Torres 2021; Argenti and Knight 2015; Howe 2019). Ortar (2019) expands on the significance of electricity in anthropology, focusing on the examination of daily life and routines, materiality's consequences, reliance, sensory stimuli, and temporality.

Electricity is a central element in contemporary life and senses of modern belonging. The electrification of contemporary society even enables the way of modern life (Cross 2019). Therefore, the study of electrification can provide for conversations about modernity, materiality, and sustainability (Winther en Wilhite 2015, 574). At the same time, its distribution is highly subject to political choices (Cross 2019). In his research on electricity in rural India, Cross (2019) shows how the electrical infrastructure not only distributes electricity but also diffuses differences and inequalities. This can influence the relationship between state and citizen and shape citizenship. Anusas and Ingold (2015) approach the positive and negative aspects of energy in society. New forms of electricity can trigger complicated interactions between local ways of doing things and numerous opportunities for change. The social interpretation of these changes is noticeable in everyday life. The authors show how electricity has its limitations and that new forms often lead to occlusion rather than entanglement. Anusas and Ingold encourage us to remain critical

and investigate the consequences of the materiality of energy.

Besides electricity, the introduction of other new technologies set negotiations of cultural values into motion. New technologies ask for "organizing social life, triggering negotiations, conflict, and potentials for social transformation, but may also be used by groups in power to further strengthen their positions" (Winther and Wilhite 2015, 574). Cross (2019) shows how electrification can create many types of citizenship and that flows of energy can imply political acknowledgement. With the growing dependency on electricity in our contemporary world, there are social, political, and economic implications. Electricity thus offers a way to explore new types of social interaction and the use of electricity in modern society. Therefore, studying electrification as a social phenomenon is likely to spark discussion about modernity, materialism, and sustainability (Winther and Wilhite 2015). In their study of electrification in Zanzibar Winther and Wilhite (2015) show the implications this has on everyday lives and the perception of the state as the supplier of electricity. The introduction to electricity is linked to ideas of progress and modernity, but the process itself is not linear nor equally distributed. To understand the transformation of local experiences, trans-local interconnectedness and the implications to human lives, the study of electrification is essential (Winther and Wilhite 2015, 570). Anthropology offers a way to study the mundane and everyday practices of energy and its ethical distribution. We do so by exploring the mundane practice of the electrification of bicycles. While most research on energy ethics and justice is based on quantitative data, Groves et al. (2017) explore the ethics of energy use in everyday life in a qualitative way. All humans have an implicit ethical life, that takes shape in their actions. Energy ethics consist of multiple layers and can be conflicting. The mundane energy practices are shaped by attachments to certain ideas or feelings, liminal transitions, and embodied entanglements with technologies (Groves et al. 2017, 73).

Technological inventions are not simply tools, but intervene in experiences of the world around us, and transform how we act. Groves et al. (2017, 76) state that: "The introduction of new technologies can thus help to change implicit evaluations of what is right or good, in ways which have significant

implications for how (and how much) energy is consumed by particular practices." If we understand the ethics of mundane energy practices, we can implicitly read the debate on what matters and consider the ethical implications of electrification and energy transitions. Our findings show how the electrification of bicycles entails paradoxes in the perception of users and non-users.

Energy ethics: reasons (not) to have an electric bicycle

Everyday ethics of energy are about the negotiation of entangled norms and imperatives. The interviews we have conducted among bicycle users in Amsterdam show the participants' reasons for using or not using an electric bicycle and expose implicit ethics. Some of our findings were in line with Ortar's autoethnographic experiences (2019): Interviewee Bart told us how his new job for example was far away from his home, and while not wanting to arrive at work sweaty and tired, an electric bicycle was a welcome solution. But there were other reasons as well: Frida, a woman in her fifties, told us how she fell ill two years ago and has since then made use of an electric bicycle that she borrowed from a friend. Because of the electric bicycle, she was able to spend time outside. It gave her extra freedom of movement to travel bigger distances than she would otherwise be able to do. This shows how energy consumption is intertwined with personal life course transformations, both experienced and expected (Groves et al. 2017). Falling ill or starting a new job prompted switching from a regular to an electric bicycle. The comfort that Frida and Bart experience in the daily use of the electric bicycles demonstrates how they justify their electric bicycle use for themselves.

On the other hand, the interviews with regular bicycle users showed us a different ethic. An ethical attitude is distinct from an expression of preference since it is an attempt to give voice to what is right or good in general (Groves et al. 2017, 72). Because these participants grew up riding a regular bicycle, they saw this as the right thing to do. We interviewed regular bicycle rider Otis, who used his bicycle daily and expressed irritations about electric bicycles. Otis shows a certain attachment to the practice of riding a regular bicycle. He expressed value for having to work for something for it to be rewarding. Here, the practice of cycling is attached to ideas of physical work, autonomy, reward, and satisfaction.

Interviewer: "But what if you have headwind all the way?"
Otis: "Then you will have a tailwind on the way back!"

Regular bicycle users expressed they felt it should be considered as normatively be agreed upon to use a regular bicycle. However, consumers of electric bicycles exhibit paradoxes that suggest different energy ethics as well. Bart expressed a conflict, making his ethical register explicit (Groves et al. 2017, 72): when using his electric bicycle, he missed the feeling of working out. He felt lazy and therefore he would also only use his electric bicycle to go to work. In other cases, he would use his regular bicycle. We have seen this ethic recur in the opinions of electric and regular bicycle users. Frida expressed that if she was not sick, she would not be using an electric bicycle: "At least not before my sixtieth birthday!" She prefers regular bicycles: "It is good for you, some moving!" Users and non-users have the idea that healthy, young people should be riding a regular bicycle. Otis commented on adolescents on electric bicycles: 'If you grow up like that, you never learn to actually cycle'. All the participants we have spoken to express their ethical doubts towards young people and children on electric bicycles. Perceptions about electric bicycles appear to be linked with prejudices. It seems to value human independence and autonomy: If it is something that humans can do by themselves, we should not be using a technology requiring energy for it. We believe this to be an implicit ethic in the context of electric bicycle use in Amsterdam.

Life in the city: cycling and identity in Amsterdam

It is busy in the VanMoof flagship store. The young employee of the brand store hands me the VanMoof bicycle. It looks flashy. There are no visible cables, no visible lock nor bell. Those features are incorporated in the design of the bicycle. The bell just is a small button on the frame, and you are supposed to lock the bicycle with a mobile phone. The employee tells me the bicycle is suited for and adapted to 'fast city life'. He explains that a fast bicycle suits the speed of city life and helps us to get faster to where we need to be. He tells me therefore VanMoof is also successful in London

and New York, where electric bicycles are mostly being used for commuting.

This conversation with the employee at the electric bicycle company VanMoof shows how the electric bicycle and ideas of the fast life in the city are connected. Besides that, our interviews showed how the use of an electric bicycle, and especially a VanMoof bicycle, is connected to identity as well. VanMoof users are seen as privileged young urban professionals who can afford one. Cycling, as a mode of transportation, supports "practices of identity and meaning formation" (Jensen 2009, 154). The use of an electric bicycle in Amsterdam is according to our interviewees also a practice of identity. The different types of electric bicycles that are present in Amsterdam are very distinctive and our participants clearly emphasized what kind of bicycle they had. We have interviewed users of a 'sporty lady bicycle' that carried the idea of being for 'older people', a rental 'Swapfiets' that was emphasized to be 'not that fast', and a 'VanMoof,' a designer electric bicycle, which we now focus on.

With prices starting from €2198 the VanMoof electric bicycle is quite expensive. Remarkably, they are highly represented in Amsterdam. Frank, who owns a VanMoof bicycle, told us how he believes the VanMoof is connected to a certain status. As Frank describes: 'VanMoof drivers are mostly the same types, who feel important and ring their bell very often.' Bart told us he looked at VanMoof as well but had found it too expensive, now he has a Swapfiets that does not go that fast.

New sources of energy, according to Anusas and Ingold (2015), can create complex links between local ways of doing things and an excess of possibilities for change. In everyday life, the social interpretation of these shifts is visible. And in Amsterdam, this is expressed in divisions of users who ride on 'expensive' vehicles like a VanMoof, a more affordable electrical bicycle, or a regular one. As Anusas and Ingold (2015) explain this demonstrates that electricity has limitations and that new forms of electrification frequently result in occlusion rather than entanglement. However, the assigned status and identity of VanMoof users as privileged, for example, can be considered prejudiced.

Fastness: positive and negative aspects of electric bicycles

The speed of the electric bicycle was what stood out from our personal experiences. The electric bicycles that we tried go up to 25 kilometers per hour, and the bodily sensation of speed was very pertinent in terms of surroundings and traffic situations flashing by. Since the technology is so well embedded in the bicycle, it felt impossible not to go fast. Riding the bicycle feels smooth: there is not much physical energy needed and it evokes feelings of sliding through the city. The speed made us more aware of the cold and since our bodies were not warming up by the exercise we would have on a regular bicycle. In our own experiences as well as in the interviews, electric bicycles evoked feelings of 'racing', 'gliding through the city', 'passing by so fast'.

Notions of speed, acceleration and modernity have been intertwined (Bauman 2000; Eriksen 2016; White 1943). Sociologist Bauman (2000, 2) states: "We associate 'lightness' of 'weightlessness' with mobility and inconstancy: we know from practice that the lighter we travel the easier and faster we move." In his evolutionary theory of human development, White (1943) shows the importance of energy. He touches upon accelerated mobility in combination with energy: "The speed with which man could travel, the range of his projectiles and many other things could not have advanced beyond a certain point had he not learned to harness more energy in new forms. And so it was with culture as a whole" (White 1943, 348). The efficiency of the use of human energy is to be seen in the use of the bicycle, which allows humans to move forward faster and effortlessly, shaping modern society. This ties in with the idea of 'fast city life' that the VanMoof employee expressed. Inevitably this influences aspects of human life (Cross 2019; Winther and Wilhite 2015), and as previously described, humans seek a way to morally justify this. So how do electric and regular bicycle users experience this fastness in everyday life?

Speed in combination with the effortlessness of an electric-powered bicycle is perceived as positive by users and as negative by non-users. Fastness provides extra freedom of movement, arriving at work well-rested, and reduced travel time. Regular bicycle users are annoyed by fast electric bicycles that pass them by, feeling that it is unfair others go as fast with help of electric power and evoke feelings of unsafety. Piet, a regular bicycle user, expresses his irritations:

"I now cycle much less than I did a few years ago since the presence of all those electric bicycles has made it impossible for me to cycle comfortably." Electric bicycle users seem to want to mitigate these feelings, Bart claims his bicycle is not as 'grossly' fast as other electric ones, aiming at VanMoof bicycles. Frida states: "Other people on electric bicycles pass us by. I don't go that fast." Bart and Frida seem to want to stress that although they are helped to move by electric power, others are relying more on electric support. Both electric and regular bicycle users tell us they believe that the number of accidents has increased with the rise of electric bicycles: Fastness is linked to danger as well.

> *Frank: "I had two accidents. One time, I broke my arm. The other time I was unharmed, luckily. It is dangerous. It is easy to underestimate the power and your reaction speed."*

We experienced the ride on electric bicycles to be more dangerous than on a regular bicycle since it was harder for other road users to estimate our speed. Regular bicycle riders have raised concerns: electric bicycle riders seem to be racing through the city, having to get from A to B as fast as possible. With the rise of electric bicycles, we stress that the dimension of speed and the potential dangers that accompany it should play an important role in scientific and public debate.

Conclusion

By comparing an electrical and regular everyday experience, we have shown how the rise of electric bicycles is a multilayered experience. The everyday use of energy in urban areas is shaping contemporary society and users and non-users navigate ethics, ideas, and perceptions. Not only does the mundane use of electric bicycles help in the daily lives of its users, but it also brings along irritations and feelings of danger for non-users. The presence of electric bicycles entails several paradoxes, expressed by our participants. One of the paradoxes is needing electric support but at the same time missing the feeling of physical work. We also noted judgments about young people using an electric bicycle, not getting the experience of a regular bicycle while growing up. These paradoxes, nuances and subtleties of everyday energy use expose ethical tensions and conflicts.

Secondly, we have shown that perceptions of users and non-users are connected to prejudices. These prejudices are triggering users to give reasons to justify their use of the electrical bicycle to mitigate them. Also, a characteristic of the electric bicycle such as fastness can entail two separate meanings: For the user, it can be a positive effect of electric support, for the non-user it can have a negative meaning: being overtaken by faster bicycles gives rise to feelings of annoyance.

The Netherlands has a rich cycling culture and cycling is a mundane practice in Amsterdam. Whereas in other studies on electric bicycles (Ortar 2019; Zuev 2018), they appear to replace a motorized vehicle, this was not the case with our research participants in Amsterdam. Rather than being considered as a replacement for carbon-fueled cars, electric bicycles appear to be seen as a replacement for ordinary bicycles. Moreover, it seems that riding an electric bicycle is more connected to identity and status than to sustainable practices. We follow Rasch and Köhne (2017, 68) in their claim that "researchers, as well as policymakers, should therefore take local practices and imaginations of energy justice into account in research design and project development." With the urgent change from fossil fuels to new energy sources, and in the transition to carbon low mobility, this should be considered.

In this paper, we have touched upon ideas of ethics, fastness, and dangers. As this small research already stumbled upon many paradoxes, we can only recommend more extensive research on the electrification of bicycles. We recommend research on feelings of belonging and identity that are intertwined with the use of an electrical bicycle. Moreover, this approach opens a field of studies of embodied engagement with technologies. If technology becomes more and more embodied, invisible, what does this mean for our perception of the materiality of technology? What does this do to one's perceptions of time and space, mobility, and connectivity? Thus, this study leaves room for further research in which the electric bicycle could function as a symbol of the disconnection between technological environments we find ourselves in, and the complex material realities this entails.

Bibliography

Aldred, Rachel. 2013a. 'Incompetent or Too Competent? Negotiating Everyday Cycling Identities in a Motor Dominated Society.' *Mobilities* 8(2): 252–71. https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2012.696342.

Aldred, Rachel. 2013b. 'Who Are Londoners on Bikes and What Do They Want? Negotiating Identity and Issue Definition in a "Pop-up" Cycle Campaign.' *Journal of Transport Geography* 30 (June): 194–201. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2013.01.005.

Anusas, Mike, and Tim Ingold. 2015. 'The Charge against Electricity.' *Cultural Anthropology* 30(4): 540–54. https://doi.org/10.14506/ca30.4.03.

Argenti, Nicolas, and Daniel M. Knight. 2015. 'Sun, Wind, and the Rebirth of Extractive Economies: Renewable Energy Investment and Metanarratives of Crisis in Greece'. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 21(4): 781–802. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.12287.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.

Boyer, Dominic. 2011. 'Energopolitics and the Anthropology of Energy.' *Anthropology News* 52(5): 5–7. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1556-3502.2011.52505.x.

Cross, Jamie. 2019. 'No current: Electricity and disconnection in rural India.' In: *Electrifying Anthropology: Exploring Electrical Practices and Infrastructure*, edited by Simone Abram, Brit Ross Winthereik, and Thomas Yarrow, 65-81. London: Routledge.

Dunlap, Alexander. 2018. 'Counterinsurgency for Wind Energy: The Bíi Hioxo Wind Park in Juchitán, Mexico.' *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 45(3): 630–52. https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2016.1259221.

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 2016. 'Overheating: The World since 1991.' *History and Anthropology* 27(5): 469–487. https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2016.1218865.

Freudendal-Pedersen, M. 2015. 'Whose Commons Are Mobilities Spaces? - The Case of Copenhagen's Cyclists.' *ACME* 14(2): 598–621.

Füssl, Elisabeth, and Juliane Haupt. 2017. 'Understanding Cyclist Identity and Related Interaction Strategies. A Novel Approach to Traffic Research.' *Transportation Research Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behaviour* 46 (April): 329–41. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trf.2016.08.003.

Groves, Christopher, Karen Henwood, Fiona Shirani, Gareth Thomas, and Nick Pidgeon. 2017. 'Why Mundane Energy Use Matters: Energy Biographies, Attachment and Identity.' *Energy Research & Social Science* 30: 71–81. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2017.06.016.

Howe, Cymene. 2019. 'Greater Goods: Ethics, Energy, and Other-than-human Speech.' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 25(S1): 160–76. https://doi.org/10.1111/14679655.13020.

Jensen, Ole B. 2009. 'Flows of Meaning, Cultures of Movements – Urban Mobility as Meaningful Everyday Life Practice.' *Mobilities* 4(1): 139–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/17450100802658002.

Jerez, Bárbara, Ingrid Garcés, and Robinson Torres. 2021. 'Lithium Extractivism and Water Injustices in the Salar de Atacama, Chile: The Colonial Shadow of Green Electromobility.' *Political Geography* 87 (May): 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2021.102382.

Kaur, Raminder. 2021. 'Southern Spectrums: The Raw to the Smooth Edges of Energopower.' In *Ethnographies of Power: A Political Anthropology of Energy*, edited by Tristan Loloum, Simone Abram and Natalie Ortar, 24-51. New York: Berghahn Books. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1tbhpzp.

Mike, Michael. 2016. 'Engaging the Mundane: Complexity and Speculation in Everyday Technoscience.' In *Remaking Participation*. Science, Environment and Emergent Publics: 81– 98. London: Routledge.

Ortar, Nathalie. 2019. 'What the e-bike tells us about the anthropology of energy.' In *Electrifying Anthropology: Exploring Electrical Practices and Infrastructure*, edited by Simone Abram, Brit Ross Winthereik, and Thomas Yarrow, 83-10. London: Routledge.

Ortar, Nathalie. 2020. 'Zuev, Dennis. Urban Mobility in Modern China: The Growth of the E-bike. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6 (November): 884–85. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.13378.

Rasch, Elisabet Dueholm, and Michiel Köhne. 2017. 'Practices and Imaginations of Energy Justice in Transition. A Case Study of the Noordoostpolder, the Netherlands.' *Energy Policy* 107 (August): 607–14. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2017.03.037.

Schwartz, Steven. 2021. 'Wind Extraction? Gifts, Reciprocity, and Renewability in Colombia's Energy Frontier.' *Economic Anthropology* 8(1): 116–32. https://doi.org/10.1002/sea2.12192.

Song, Lily, Mariel Kirschen, and John Taylor. 2019. 'Women on Wheels: Gender and Cycling in Solo, Indonesia: Gender and Cycling in Solo, Indonesia.' *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 40(1): 140–57. https://doi.org/10.1111/sjtg.12257.

White, Leslie A. 1943. 'Energy and the Evolution of Culture.' *American Anthropologist* 45(3): 335– 56. https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1943.45.3.02a00010.

Winther, Tanja, and Harold Wilhite. 2015. 'Tentacles of Modernity: Why Electricity Needs Anthropology.' *Cultural Anthropology* 30(4): 569–77. https://doi.org/10.14506/ca30.4.05.

Zuev, Dennis. 2018. Urban Mobility in Modern China. Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76590-7.

Seeking refuge in Fortress Europe

How migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea experience violence due to border control

Jantine van der Grond

"The course Anthropology of Violence allowed me to explore the topic of violence experienced by migrants who try to enter the European Union via the Mediterranean Sea. Every now and then you can hear about this in the news when, for example, a vessel with migrants capsizes at sea. But what is the context and which actors are involved in these violent situations? That is what I tried to explore in this paper. I hope this analysis will make readers aware of this issue that, to this day, is happening in our "Fortress Europe"."

Introduction

Between 2014 and 2019, nearly two million migrants[1] have crossed the Mediterranean sea from Africa to seek asylum in Europe (Camarena et al. 2020, 1). Since 2014, more than twenty thousand of these migrants have died at sea whilst trying to reach the European mainland, according to the United Nations[2]. These refugees, fleeing their countries because of war and conflicts, risk their lives to get to Europe in hopes of finding a safe haven. The path from Libya to Italy, the so-called 'Central Mediterranean', has since 2016 become the most traveled and simultaneously the deadliest route to Europe (Camarena et al. 2020, 1). There are numerous factors that contribute to the violence that migrants experience on this route that makes it so hostile, from the European Union's migration policy to Libyan smugglers. To this day, migrants find themselves in violent situations when they try to reach Europe (Al Jazeera 2021), and even though the issue is complex, it should be thoroughly explored.

In this paper I explore the ways in which migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea experience violence due to border control. In order to do so, I will firstly discuss who acts as an actor in the infliction of violence on migrants. I will then elaborate on how there is a system of pre- and post-border policies (Van Houtum and Bueno Lacy 2020, 706) that is maintained by coastguards and North-African and European (intergovernmental) authorities behind this. In the third place, I will discuss how the violence migrants experience can be defined with the help of Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois' anthology on violence (2004), after which I will conclude that the direct physical violence experienced, as well as the symbolic and everyday violence, is intertwined with the structural violence that is at the heart of the matter.

The context of violence

In the last decade, the number of migrants and refugees fleeing violence, war and conflict from all over the world has doubled to more than 25 million (Camarena et al. 2020, 1). Out of these 25 million refugees, two million migrants made the dangerous journey to Europe by crossing the Mediterranean Sea between 2014 and 2019. Where Camarena (2020, 1) reports about 18,000 people having died during their attempt to reach Europe since 2014 by crossing the Mediterranean Sea, Al Jazeera (2021) reports one year later about more than 20,000 deaths at sea, of which 17,000 people were following the most dangerous Central Mediterranean migration route – both numbers from reports released by the International Organization for Migrants (IOM). According to Camarena (2020, 1), nearly all of the two million people who crossed the Mediterranean Sea used a smuggler. Human smuggling to the European Union (EU) is annually a five-to-six-billion-dollar industry, according to Camarena (2020, 1). Al Jazeera (2021) describes how Libya in North-Africa has emerged as the dominant transit point for refugees, since the uprising in 2011 that removed longtime leader Gaddafi. Refugees, who have fled their country of origin often because of violence and conflict, arrive in conflict-stricken Libya which rarely marks the end of the squalor they experience, from where they try to escape to Europe by crossing the Mediterranean with the help of human smugglers. Camarena et al. (2020, 3) describes how migrants in Libya who decide to go to Europe and have enough money to

pay a smuggler first contact an intermediary, who takes them to a holding place, where they have to wait until the sea conditions are favourable and there are enough people – smugglers put eighty to hundred people on one vessel – to fill a boat. Then, smugglers launch vessels, often unseaworthy rubber dinghies or wooden fishing boats, onto the Mediterranean Sea in the middle of the night without food and water, life jackets only available for those who can afford them[3]. In a seaworthy boat, the journey from Libya to Italy takes less than a day, but since the boats used by smugglers are unequipped, overcrowded and unseaworthy, it can take up to seven days or more in the best circumstances (Camarena et al. 2020, 3). When the boats depart from Libya, the passengers on board are aware that they have to rapidly put a considerable amount of distance between them and the Libyan coast, since the Libyan coastguard is likely to chase after them in high-speed boats (Mezzadra 2019, 3). Al Jazeera (2021) describes how since 2017, at least 36,000 people have been – oftentimes forcefully - intercepted by the Libyan coastguard to stop them from escaping to Europe. This Libyan coastguard receives training, funding, and equipment from the EU through a lucrative deal (Mezzadra 2019, 3): according to Al Jazeera (2021), the European Union has spent more than 90 million euros in training and funding this coastguard to stop refugees from crossing the Mediterranean to get to Europe. According to Mezzadra (2019, 3), the Libyan authorities actively participate in the "smuggling business" through the practices of the coastguard, and its exploitation of migrants results in it being a main source of economic rent and profit for the country. Through United Nations agencies, the EU has sent more than 327,9 million euros to Libya, of which huge amounts have been diverted into networks of traffickers and coastguards exploiting migrants, according to Associated Press[4]. The Libyan coastguard does everything in its power in the international waters between Libya and Italy to prevent migrants from getting to the European mainland, from for example actively trying to capsize refugees' boats, to shooting at their vessels to make them turn around to Libya (AP News 2021). Associated Press (AP News 2021) reports that after successful interception of migrant boats, the Libyan coastguard returns the refugees to Libya, where many of them are placed in detention centers where they are often met with physical violence in the form of abuse and

torture – Mezzadra (2019, 3) calls it mass abduction. Mountz and Loyd (2013, 185) cite the following statement released by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in 2011:

> *The whole system is to make life in Libya so miserable that you are drawn to the coast to leave by boat. This is where you are then caught again, returned to prison again, asked for money in order to be released again, etc.*[5]

Italy, member state of the European Union, has apart from the already existing support from the EU made a bilateral deal with Libya to keep migrants from crossing the Mediterranean by funding the Libyan coastguard: Italy pays for the capture, detention and deterrence of migrants after they are captured on sea and taken back to Libya (Mountz and Loyd 2013, 185). Tunisia, sharing borders with Libya, has its own migration camps along the Tunisian-Libyan border, where refugees are being held against their will (Mountz and Loyd 2013, 184). Mountz and Loyd (2013, 184) describe how migrants who were detained in those camps shared traumatic stories of slavery in the custody of Libyan officials, gang rape and other forms of abuse and sexual violence, both men and women alike. MSF found that access to medical or mental care for those who have traumas from experiencing sexual violence and torture is scarce (Mountz and Loyd 2013, 185).

What happens at the Libyan borders is part of a system – of border politics – that is strategically orchestrated and organized by coastguards and European authorities (Mezzadra 2019, 2) focused on keeping migrants away from Europe. Practices such as the so-called "push-backs" (Pallister-Wilkins 2015) are not limited to implementation only in Libya or Tunisia, but are carried out along almost the entire European (natural) border of the Mediterranean Sea. When the dangerous Central Mediterranean route is not used by migrants, they move through alternative routes. According to Camarena et al. (2020, 10), the two most natural routes are through the Western Mediterranean to Spain, or through the Eastern Mediterranean to Greece. Between Turkey and Greece, similar practices occurred when migrants were threatened with guns by smugglers and shot at by the Turkish coastguard when they tried to cross the Mediterranean sea from Turkey to Greece (Ben Farhat et al. 2018, 6). Through

a European-Turkey deal made in 2016, the EU and Turkey agreed that all new migrants crossing the Mediterranean to the Greek islands would be returned to Turkey – if they were not applying, or not eligible for asylum, or if their asylum request would be considered inadmissible in the EU (Ben Farhat et al. 2018, 2). The Western Mediterranean route to Spain is, according to Mountz and Loyd (2013, 180), mostly being patrolled by Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, who in the same way as the other coastguards intercepts migrant vessels and returns them to where they came from.

From pre-border to post-border strategies

Van Houtum and Bueno Lacy (2020, 706) call this policy of actively preventing migrants from reaching Europe over the Mediterranean "pre-border" processes, and the processes that are implemented after the entry of migrants into the EU "post-border". When migrants and refugees successfully are able to reach the European mainland, they are usually put into so-called "reception centers", detention camps close to the natural European Mediterranean border that enclose undocumented people after their arrival, such as the Moria refugee camp on the Greek island Lesbos. Most of these camps in Greece and Italy were designed in 2015 – at the height of the so-called "migration-crisis" – as "hot spots" as to register, fingerprint and pick out the migrants who were meant to be relocated to other countries – "economic migrants" who would be deported (Guiraudon 2018, 158). In these refugee camps, often overseen by the UNHCR (the United Nations' agency in charge of refugees), the conditions are well below any basic living, health and safety standards (2018, 158). Guiraudon (2018, 158) writes how the European Commission estimated in 2015 how many asylum requests needed to be processed every day in order for the camps such as Moria to not become overpopulated; while they assessed that in Moria's case 200 requests had to be processed per day, only 18 cases were administered. In 2020, the now infamous Moria refugee camp was housing 13,000 asylum seekers, although it was designed for fewer than 3,000 people (Franko 2021, 387). In September 2020, the camp was destroyed by a massive fire, after which the Greek police prevented migrants from leaving the camp (2021, 387), despite the aggravation of the already terrible living conditions. Van Houtum and Bueno Lacy (2020, 707)

discuss how numerous NGOs have documented how migrants in refugee camps are left at the mercy of their own despair and how the "sweeping human rights violations" that take place in camps such as those in Greece have aggravated both gender-based violence against women and girls as well as mental health problems amongst refugees of all ages. Those violations of human rights are what has given Greece, within the EU, the notoriety of one of the worst violators of human rights in the reception, processing, and detention of refugees (Mountz and Loyd 2013, 186). When refugees take the Central Mediterranean route and arrive in Italy, they are strongly encouraged and sometimes coerced into being fingerprinted, photographed and registered by the Italian border authorities (Davies, Isakjee, and Dhesi 2017, 1272). Those who refuse to be fingerprinted are put into long term retention in the refugee camps, approved by the European Commission in a statement[6] to Italian authorities (2017, 1272). Following registration in Italy, refugees are then often explicitly directed and coerced – sometimes even with the provision of maps – into moving to other European countries and told that they should not expect provisions in Italy (2017, 1273). Registration in Italy disallows migrants to request asylum in any other EU country for the next twelve months; no registration in Italy and being coerced into moving to other EU states also removes the right to ask asylum since the European Union's Dublin Convention orders that refugees must request asylum in the first country they arrive in (Guiraudon 2017). Davies, Isakjee and Dhesi (2017, 1272) call this process of surveillance of migrants through registration a biometric act and connect this with Foucault's thoughts on biopolitics. Foucault (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004, 79-82) describes how biopolitics allude to a historical shift towards the use of power to protect, regulate and manage the life of the population. Foucault (Foucault 1978, as cited in Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004, 80) writes: "One might say that the ancient right to take life or let live was replaced by a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death."

According to Davies, Isakjee, and Dhesi (2017, 1267) biopolitics can therefore refer to the ways in which governments and other authorities administer life within, and sometimes beyond its borders, through bureaucratic means. They write that the biopolitical process of documentation with the underlying threat of retention in case of

refusal can be seen as a technique for subjugating bodies in order to control populations, according to Foucault's argumentation (Davies, Isakjee, and Dhesi 2017, 1272).

Defining violence

Davies, Isakjee and Dhesi (2017, 1280) argue that this process of documentation and registration ascribed to biopolitics that begins at the very point when migrants cross the European borders is an operationalized form of structural violence. They describe, using Galtung's definitions, that structural violence is something that is more silently being maintained through structural institutionalization, which is therefore normalized (Galtung 1969, as cited in Davies, Isakjee and Dhesi 2017, 1269). In line with Foucault's above-mentioned thoughts on the power that either fosters life or disallows it, Davies, Isakjee and Dhesi (2017, 1270) argue that structural violence takes place when certain people are left to suffer in agonizing circumstances that are normalized through the law. The migrants who arrive in Europe and are either taken to refugee/detention camps or coerced to leave to other EU states may not be actively killed, but they are instead allowed to suffer "the brutal indignity of harmful spatial environments" (2017, 1270). Davies, Isakjee, and Dhesi also argue that the line between direct violence, that is often more visible, and less visible structural violence should not be too starkly divided. Physical violence – in the form of being attacked with weapons or abused in detention camps – and psychological violence – denial of provisions or movement – that migrants suffer from works in unison with the structural horrid conditions they are exposed to (Davies, Isakjee and Dhesi 2017, 1270). The direct violence that migrants experience when they get pushed back on sea to Libya with the (in)direct help of the EU, but also the coercion to another EU state where they cannot request asylum which can be seen as symbolic violence since it is manifested in power differentials (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004, 426), is according to human rights organizations, in violation with the Geneva Convention, the European Human Rights Convention and EU laws (Guiraudon 2017, 158) – but this violation of international law is normalized. This normalization of violence, which can be linked to Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois' concept of everyday violence (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004, 426), can also be

seen in the way how stories of migrants' violent experiences hardly make the news nowadays, apart from the occasional reports on migrant vessels capsizing with dozens of people dying or missing (Al Jazeera 2021), contrary to the peak of the "migration crisis" or "refugee crisis" in summer 2015 when there was a European-wide debate about the stream of migrants and how that should be tackled (Keshavarz 2020, 21).

Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004, 2) argue that violence itself defies every categorization, as it "can be everything and nothing; legitimate and illegitimate; visible or invisible". Whether it is direct political violence administered by authorities that Bourgois describes (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004, 426), which can be seen in the way refugees are being treated by coastguards around the Mediterranean, or the everyday violence that migrants experience when the squalid conditions of the refugee camps are so normalized that they hardly make the headlines anymore (Van Houtum and Bueno Lacy 2020, 707-708), or the structural violence that is operationalized through the anti-migration policy of the EU and its member states, all these forms of violence are intertwined with each other and cannot be seen as standing on its own.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated how migrants and refugees experience violence inflicted through the means of border control when they cross the Mediterranean Sea. The violence is first directly operationalized when migrants in North Africa attempt to cross the sea. Most of these people who try to cross the most dangerous migratory route in the world, the Central Mediterranean, end up in Libya where they have to pay a human smuggler to send them on unseaworthy vessels to Europe. Thousands of people have tried to escape North-Africa in this way, only for hundreds of them to either die en route, or to be sent back to Libya where they usually end up in abusive detention centers. Not only on the Central Mediterranean route between Libya and Italy do coastguards – trained, funded and equipped by the EU – actively carry out the EU's push-back policy, but also on the Western Mediterranean between Morocco and Spain and the East Mediterranean between Turkey and Greece. The policy that is being implemented is the same for the entire Mediterranean area: to

prevent migrants from coming. If refugees are able to land in Europe, they are coerced into either registration for asylum, long retention in camps, moving to other states or deportation. This system of pre-border and biopolitical post-border mechanisms are en large an operationalized form of structural violence: people left to suffer in agonizing circumstances normalized through the law, whether this is on unseaworthy vessels in the Mediterranean or in refugee camps on Greek islands. This violence maintained through structures is intertwined with the other forms of direct, physical and psychological violence, as well as symbolic and everyday violence which the migrants are exposed to and experience. It is also important to conclude that this is a complex situation that needs to be more looked into, by both academic and political fields, especially in regard to the illegitimate ways in which the EU implements its Mediterranean migration policies. The EU proclaims that it stands for its European values of humanity and freedom, but that should be visible.

Endnotes

1. There are many terms for people who try to enter Europe without permission of authorities, such as "illegal migrants", "undocumented people", "real migrants", "economic migrants", "*gelukzoekers*" in Dutch, etc. In this paper I will use both "migrants" and "refugees" to describe the people who try to find a better life in Europe for reasons of their own.

2. Al Jazeera (2021) "'Deadly sea crossings': 41 migrants drown in the Mediterranean." *Al Jazeera*, February 24, 2021.

3. Al Jazeera (2021) "'Deadly sea crossings': 41 migrants drown in the Mediterranean." *Al Jazeera*, February 24, 2021.

4. Al Jazeera (2021) refers in their article to this source: Associated Press. 2019. "Making misery pay: Libya militias take EU funds for migrants." December 13, 2019. Making misery pay: Libya militias take EU funds for migrants (apnews.com).

5. Mountz and Loyd (2013) cite from the following source: Médecins Sans Frontières. 2011. "From North Africa to Italy: Seeking Refuge, Finding
Suffering." May, 2011. http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/publications/reports/2011/MSF.

6. Davies, Isakjee and Dhesi (2017) refer to this report: European Commission. 2015. "Progress Report on the Implementation of the Hotspots in Italy." Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, COM/2015/0679.

Bibliography

Al Jazeera. 2021. "'Deadly sea crossings': 41 migrants drown in the Mediterranean." Al Jazeera, February 24, 2021. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/24/un-says-41-europe-bound-migrants-drown-in-mediterranean.

Associated Press. 2021. "Caught on camera: Libyan coast guard shoots at migrant boat." AP News, July 1, 2021. https://apnews.com/article/europe-middle-east-shootings-migration-50cd94330a6059a7ff47d8c373574e3a.

Ben Farhat, Jihane, Karl Blanchet, Pia Juul Bjertrup, Apostolos Veizis, Clément Perrin, Rebecca M. Coulborn, Philippe Mayaud, and Sandra Cohuet. 2018. "Syrian refugees in Greece: experience with violence, mental health status, and access to information during the journey and while in Greece." *BMC Medicine* 16(40): 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-018-1028-4.

Camarena, Kara Ross, Sarah Claudy, Jijun Wang, and Austin L. Wright. 2020. "Political and environmental risks influence migration and human smuggling across the Mediterranean Sea." *PLOS ONE* 15(7):1-16. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.

Davies, Thom, Arshad Isakjee, and Surindar Dhesi. 2017. "Violent Inaction: The Necropolitical Experience of Refugees in Europe." *Antipode* 49(5): 1263-1284. https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12325.

Franko, Katja. 2021. "The two-sided spectacle at the border: Frontex, NGOs and the theatres of sovereignty." *Theoretical Criminology* 25(3): 379-399. https://doi.org/10.1177/13624806211007858.

Guiraudon, Virginie. 2018. "The 2015 refugee crisis was not a turning point: explaining policy inertia in EU border control." *European Political Science* 17(1): 151-160. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41304-017-0123-x.

Houtum, Henk van, and Rodrigo Bueno Lacy. 2020. "The Autoimmunity of the EU's Deadly B/ordering Regime; Overcoming its Paradoxical Paper, Iron and Camp Borders." *Geopolitics* 25(3): 706-733. https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2020.1728743.

Keshavarz, Mahmoud. 2020. "Violent Compassions: Humanitarian Design and the Politics of Borders." *Design Issues* 36(4): 20-32. https://doi.org/10.1162/desi_a_00611.

Mezzadra, Sandro and Maurice Stierl. 2019. "The Mediterranean battlefield of migration." *Open Democracy*. Academia.

Mountz, Alison and Jenna M. Loyd. 2013. "Constructing the Mediterranean Region: Obscuring Violence in the Bordering of Europe's Migration 'Crises'." *ACME* 13(2): 173-195.

Pallister-Wilkins, Polly. 2015. "The Humanitarian Politics of European Border Policing: Frontex and Border Police in Evros." *International Political Sociology* 9(1): 53-69. https://doi.org/10.1111/ips.12076.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy and Philippe Bourgois eds. 2004. *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*. Blackwell Publishers.

Casteism in the 21st century

Understanding the structural violence against Dalit manual scavengers in Mumbai

Tarana Kamdar

"While I have pursued Anthropology from a predominantly Western perspective, it has been of great importance for me to also understand systems of power that have influenced my own upbringing in India. As an upper-caste individual myself, such themes have barely been investigated in my life until I took it upon myself to un-learn and re-learn. This paper is a way for me to undertake such processes while also shining a light on the systematic oppression that takes place in urban spaces contrary to popular beliefs."

Introduction

In late November of 2021, the Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment announced that over 73 percent (42,594) of manual scavengers in India are members of scheduled castes, popularly known as Dalits (Tribune News Service, 2021). This staggering number exists despite a 2013 ban on the practice of lifting and removing human excreta manually (The Wire, 2016). Such "scavengers" are employed not only to clean dry latrines in rural inland areas, but also in metropolitan cities to clean septic tanks, storm drains, and open and closed sewer lines (The Wire, 2016). Further, a majority of those employed come from historically marginalised castes – together known as Dalits. As activist and founder of Safai Karamchari Andolan – a human rights organisation working to eradicate the practice of manual scavenging - Bezwada Wilson puts it, ''Every Dalit is not a manual scavenger, but all manual scavengers are Dalits'' (translated by the author) (ScoopWhoop Unscripted, 2019). In this paper I argue that this confluence of caste with

profession in a metropolitan city like Mumbai, 71 years after caste-based discrimination was made illegal, is representative of structural violence against Dalits.

Before continuing my argument, it becomes important to briefly explain caste and related terminology that is central to the paper. From an ideological perspective, the caste system divides Hindus into four broad hierarchical categories with further subsections, originally on the basis of profession (Jeffrey, 2001). Over centuries of existence the system became rigid and hereditary such that the fourth category of individuals and everyone excluded from the system have faced generations of oppression, marginalisation, and violence to the point where their mere existence has become associated with untouchability (Chakravarti, 2018). The term Dalit can be translated into 'broken' or 'oppressed' and was coined in the 1930s by members of the various communities that were seen as untouchables (Dubey & Murphy, 2021). Thus, the confluence of caste and profession that I am investigating in this paper is a historical link that is at the root of structural violence.

My own engagement with caste has been marked by privilege. Narratives of caste present in my life have been limited to the extent that I have only just begun understanding my complicit nature in upholding the system. One of my most vivid memories involving casteism occurred at UCU as a first-year student, when my European counterparts enquired whether caste was “still a thing” in India. The question made me uncomfortable, because it made me realise that I did not know enough to answer it despite having spent eighteen years in Mumbai. I brushed off my ignorance by saying that caste was not a 'thing' that happened in big cities. This lack of knowledge of on-ground reality, that this paper will be engaging with, belies how little caste affected my position in India. My own experiences with marginalisation in Europe highlighted the degree of privilege I held in my home country. Such realisations, and increasing knowledge about power structures in academic settings, have culminated in the current paper. Not only does the paper explore structural violence inherent in the caste system, but it also comes from my own processes of learning and unlearning that have occurred in the past two years. To reduce the bias my own positionality generates, I rely on experienced scholars and lived experiences brought forth

in documentaries, news articles, and academic writings.

Literature on caste and society has existed for centuries, starting with ancient Hindu texts elucidating the division of Hindus on the basis of their profession and their duties and obligations to society (Dubey & Murphy, 2018). Such texts also became important in the colonial project where several sociologists and anthropologists, most notably Louis Dumont, undertook fieldwork to understand the caste system (Chakravarti, 2018). Dumont's understanding of caste as "Homo Hierarchicus" stems from the hegemonic narrative of purity versus impurity. Such works have been countered multiple times by Dalit scholars and activists, whose writings focus on the suffering and oppression such a system brings forth for those it categorises as impure (Chakravarti, 2018). The most prominent of these is Bhimrao Ambedkar, who is responsible for the de jure abolishment of caste-based discrimination (Dubey & Murphy, 2021).

Manual scavenging as a practice of caste discrimination lies at the intersection of multiple disciplines such as politics, law, sociology, and anthropology. Political and legal literature stem from a need for change in policy and shed light at the government's ignorance of Dalit pleas (Pradhan & Mittal, 2020). Pradhan and Mittal (2020) take on a comparative analysis of manual scavenging legislation and practices in India with the aim of finding alternative solutions to the issues at hand. They find that despite having technologies to replace manual scavengers, there is a general lack of political will to initiate the replacement (Pradhan & Mittal, 2020). Fields of sociology and anthropology provide insight into the on-ground implications of such a lack of will. Dubey and Murphy (2021), for instance, look at the case of manual scavengers in Mumbai through fieldwork and showcase the experiences of workers who undergo a violation of their human rights on an everyday basis while working for a local governmental body, albeit through private contractors. To understand how such dissonances between de jure and de facto realities can occur, I use Bourdieu's conceptualisation of structural or symbolic violence. A primary reason for selecting Bourdieu is his undoing of the binary between structure and agent and instead seeing the two as entangled entities, in a system where invisible violence governs the treatment of those left marginalised by the structures (Maton, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

Caste as Capital

Perhaps one of Bourdieu's most important contributions is his extension of capital from denoting merely an economic resource to encompassing multiple forms of capital that shape an agent's subjectivity, which Bourdieu terms as habitus (Maton, 2014). Capital, according to Bourdieu, takes on three main forms – social, cultural, and economic. These three forms of capital are interactive and can undertake 'transubstantiation'(Maton, 2014). This means that various forms of capital are influenced by each other and can transform from one form to another. In the case of caste, for instance, this can be seen in how the economic profession has implications for the social position of the agent (Jeffrey, 2001). Bourdieu's understanding of capital is part of a larger conceptualisation of 'field' where agents accumulate capital. The field, for Bourdieu, is not a neutral space where every agent can expect similar outcomes (Maton, 2014). Rather, it is influenced by deeply entrenched values and norms that shape the field and further influence the actors and institutions that are present in the field. These values and norms are understood by the term 'doxa' (Maton, 2014). The allocation, accumulation, and embodiment of capital are thus inherently political and rooted in power dynamics (Topper, 2001).

By extension of this line of thought, it becomes clear that any capital held by an individual is symbolic of their position in the power structure. The more economic, social and cultural capital one has, the more power one holds (Jeffrey, 2001). Consequently, those who are favoured by the field hold symbolic power over those who do not. Such power shows itself in the violence of everyday experiences (Topper, 2001). This violence is invisible and opaque, yet it allows for all other forms of violence to take place (Morgan & Björkert, 2006). As Topper (2001, p. 42) puts it, " opaque power relations [...] contribute to and sustain various forms of domination not only within formal legal and political institutions, but in relations and spheres of life commonly thought to lie outside of the arenas of power and politics"

Regional Indian theoretical understandings of caste, as expressed by M.N. Srinivas' dominant caste theory, echo similar conceptions of social reproduction (Jeffrey, 2001). Caste, for Srinivas, functions not only economically but also as a kin network with rituals that are specific to it (Jeffrey, 2001). Here, caste can be understood in terms of social capital. The upper castes

assert their dominance through economic wealth that translates into more power in institutions such as local governing bodies (Jeffrey, 2001). It is therefore unsurprising that the bulk of cultural capital lies with members of the higher castes (Jeffrey, 2001). Furthermore, the division of all forms of capital on the basis of caste makes it possible to see casteism as a deeply entrenched value with significant norming capacities – as a doxa.

Caste and Class

Srinivas' work provides us with an operational framework of how Bourdieu's work can be applied to understanding caste and casteism. However, Srinivas' work was primarily focused in rural inland areas where caste takes a much more predominant role than in cities. Indeed, a common narrative that was present in my own upbringing was that caste-based discrimination does not happen in urban developed areas. As Dubey and Murphy (2021) point out, this narrative is embedded in and upholds the inequality brought about by neoliberal capitalism. Neoliberal capitalism's key trope is that everyone in the market has an equal opportunity to work hard and be successful (Harvey, 2007). Workers provide their labour in return for wages and employers are on the lookout for cheap labour (Harvey, 2007). When such a system is brought into a context where a certain category of labourers has had no bargaining power for generations, their further exploitation is all but guaranteed (Dubey & Murphy, 2021). Casteism and neoliberalism thus reinforce one another (Dubey & Murphy, 2021).

Case Study

The city of Mumbai is popularly also known as the City of Dreams. Having transformed itself from a small fishing village into the financial capital of India, Mumbai truly is the neoliberal dream come true (Raghavan, 2021). It holds many success stories of people who started as nobodies, worked hard, and are now real-life superstars. My own parents, who eloped from their middle-class families and started from scratch in a small, rented apartment are examples of what Mumbai represents for many thousands of people. It comes as no surprise then that Mumbai sees a huge influx of migrants every day. The most recent census (2011) suggests that over 43 percent of Mumbai's population self-identified as migrants (Shaikh, 2019). Yet the success stories and Mumbai's self-representation as a haven for migrants is not

true for everyone. As Ashis Nandy (1998, as cited in Dasgupta, 2017) puts it,

> *The official city cannot survive without its unintended self, but it cannot own up to that self either. For that other city consists of a huge mass of technically and officially discarded 'obsolete' citizens who form the underground of modern city. They provide the energy - literally the cheap labour - that propels both the engine of civic life in a Third World society and the ambitions of its modernizing elite.*

Manual scavengers form a part of this unintended 'other' city of Mumbai, without whose work the city cannot possibly function. The Asian Human Rights Commission defines manual scavenging as,

> *Lifting and removal of human excreta manually', at private homes and toilets maintained by municipal authorities. The practice consists of gathering human excreta from individual or community dry toilets with bare hands, brooms or metal scrapers into woven baskets or buckets. This the scavengers then carry on their heads, shoulders or against their hips, (and in wheelbarrows if they can afford it) into dumping sites or water bodies. Apart from this, many scavengers are similarly employed to collect, carry and dispose excreta from sewers, septic tanks, drains, and railway tracks (AHRC, 2009).*

A baseline survey conducted by the Municipal Corporation and Tata Institute of Social Sciences found that the number of workers employed in manual scavenging had remained similar for over a decade while the waste generated by the city went from 7,800 metric tonnes per day in 2014 to 9,400 metric tonnes per day in 2017 (Darokar, 2018). The Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) is the richest civic body in the country, but the safety equipment provided to workers is usually damaged, broken, or ill-fitting - if it is provided at all (Darokar, 2018). In a documentary by ScoopWhoop Unscripted, workers told the filmmakers that the gear was only brought because of the presence of the cameras (ScoopWhoop Unscripted, 2019). Health checks, mandatory for those employed by the MCGM, are hardly conducted and only deaths of registered workers are compensated. Some who get

insurance through unions also complain about the process (Dubey & Murphy, 2021),

> *It is a long procedure. First, we have to pay the bills, then we have to show the medical certificate, then they pay the expenses…It gets troublesome later on. Do this, do that, go here, go there. So instead of this running around, we pay whatever medical expenses are there.*

Without proper safety equipment, manual scavengers undertake potentially fatal work. Maintaining storm drains that need to be cleared before the monsoon season involves a worker being lowered into an underground drain where chemicals and faecal matter have decomposed to release poisonous gases (Dubey & Murphy, 2021). The only hope for safety in such a scenario is onlooking workers, who need to ensure that they pull the person up before they die. One participant described the death of two workers that occurred last year to Dubey and Murphy (2021),

> *The water was so deep around us (hand up to his chest), and all the "butter" was floating around us… The gutter was full of all the faeces. And as we were cleaning it, people were flushing their toilets from above, someone's shit, someone's piss, warm, everything fell on our bodies.*

On average, around 300 workers die when engaged in manual scavenging in a year (Darokar, 2018). Many of these are not reflected in national statistics as the employees are not registered with the employers (Dubey & Murphy, 2021). Such deaths are, by extension, not compensated.

The element of caste in manual scavenging is also visible in two primary ways. First, in the treatment of sewage workers by the wider population. Dubey and Murphy (2021) report that manual scavengers were treated poorly by the society they help sustain. This is not only evident in the lack of benefits and compensations provided by the government, but also in everyday interactions,

> *Aamchi pidhi hech kaam karat hoti, ani pudhe suddha hech kaam karnar aahe (Our entire generation has been doing this work, our next generation will also inherit the same work.) The locals call us kachrewala (person of the*

garbage) or gutterwala (person of the sewer). They say that the municipal corporation pays you for doing work. We know that we clear garbage and clean gutters, but that does not mean that the people will address us by our occupation. We are also humans. We have feelings too (Ajay, sanitation worker as cited in Darokar, 2018).

What is succinctly captured in the words of Ajay is the dehumanisation of people who undertake such work (Darokar, 2018). This dehumanisation is not a conscious effort, it is terminology everyone uses casually. My own family ensured that we did not treat the cleaner and cook employed in our own home as someone beneath us yet even we called the person who came to collect garbage kachrewala. The derogatory element of calling someone by their profession did not register for me until reading such accounts.

Ajay's work already alludes to the second sign of casteism – the generational nature of manual scavenging. In a documentary titled "Manual Scavengers of Mumbai" one of the workers who are interviewed, Sunil, holds five degrees and is a PhD student at a reputed institute in Mumbai (ScoopWhoop Unscripted, 2019). When he applied for a job with the municipality, the only job he was given was that of a sanitation worker. His father too was a sanitation worker. Unsurprisingly, Sunil belongs to the Dalit community (ScoopWhoop Unscripted, 2019). As another participant in Dubey and Murphy's (2021) research puts it,

Now even if they have studied class 15, 16, or 17 (under graduation and graduation), then also they don't have any job. He (a fellow worker) did not get any job. He has done a BA (Bachelor of Arts) and is still doing this same work (of sanitation).

The right to education that all Indian citizens hold and for many is a way out of their circumstances does not hold the same power for manual scavengers and their families.

Ashis Nandy's conceptualisation of the co-existence of the official city and the 'other' city demarcates what the city marks visible and what is kept in the shadows (Nandy, 1998 as cited in Dasgupta, 2017). In these shadows we find the existence of manual scavengers, without whose essential service Mumbai would see horrifying floods (Dubey & Murphy, 2021). Yet the same

manual scavengers are mistreated and barely compensated. Such egregious violations of human rights could not occur without the caste system which has historically marginalised such workers and ensured restricted social mobility for future generations by dehumanising an entire community (Dubey & Murphy, 2021).

Discussion

The accounts presented above make it clear that despite being a city of dreams, Mumbai is also a city of deeply entrenched casteism. The only difference between the urban and the rural setting is in the visibility of caste-based discrimination. Unlike rural areas where demarcations are made solely based on caste, urban areas are able to wrap their discriminatory nature in the garb of neoliberal Truth (Jeffrey, 2001; Dubey & Murphy, 2021). Such self-representations of the city attract thousands of workers in search of a better life. Even here, however, casteism forms the doxa which decides who gets to achieve this dream.

The practice of manual scavenging, especially its occurrence in megacities like Mumbai, exemplifies how caste operates in urban environments (Darokar, 2018). Despite being made illegal through the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act of 2013, the practice is sustained by local government bodies such as the MCGM (The Wire, 2016). The number of manual scavengers employed and identified is grossly underestimated by the government with several organisations estimating the actual number to be three times higher (Dubey & Murphy, 2021). The compensation, rehabilitation, and benefits that are promised to the workers are also hardly provided (Darokar, 2018; Dubey & Murphy, 2021). In Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the field, political institutions operate from a position within the doxa. Their complicit nature, despite de jure measures, favours the dominant and powerful agents who hold more capital because the field is rigged in their favour.

Such a skewed power balance has dangerous consequences for those who experience marginalisation. In the case of Dalit manual scavengers, not only is there historical oppression of the community, but there is also a very bleak vision of the future (Darokar, 2018). When political institutions fail to recognise that human rights violations are being sanctioned by their local bodies, addressing and undoing them are far-off desires at best. In everyday experiences, this

translates into a lack of utility of tools such as education for Dalit communities (ScoopWhoop Unscripted, 2019; Dubey & Murphy, 2021). Recall that even with five degrees and a PhD underway, Sunil holds way less social mobility than someone from a higher caste like me (ScoopWhoop Unscripted, 2019).

A key feature of field theory is the acknowledgement of interactions between various forms of capital (Maton, 2014). The poor economic standing of manual scavengers has consequences for their social and cultural capital as well. Not only does education become somewhat redundant, but perhaps more importantly there is a social stigma attached to the work (Darokar, 2018). Casteist slurs and calling human beings what loosely translates to English as 'person of the gutter' is hugely dehumanising (Darokar, 2018). This dehumanisation is then justified by saying that the government is paying them for this work and is a clear example of how neoliberalism functions in a casteist society (Dubey & Murphy, 2021).

Topper (2001) argues that Bourdieu's conceptualisation of symbolic violence falls under 'the politics of everyday life' whereby the violence that takes place is misrecognized as a naturally occurring phenomenon. By its very nature, then, symbolic violence is invisible and thus subconsciously accepted (Topper, 2001). This violence occurs just as much outside the framework of politics as inside it and can be seen in almost all instances detailed above. Manual scavengers are aware that the work they are doing daily is disgusting and life-threatening yet there seems to be a shared coerced understanding that this is the work that future generations will undertake too (Darokar, 2018). For doing this work, they are further ostracised from society without proper compensation for their labour. Means of social mobility, even if present, do not have the same effects for them.

Dalit voices and demands remain unheard despite years of protesting such conditions and some de jure successes. Furthermore, their plight is seen as acceptable because they are paid for it. The understanding that since workers will receive money (which many do not) it is justified for them to be surrounded by human faeces every day is emblematic of the larger tropes of neoliberal capitalism (Dubey & Murphy, 2021). Furthermore, the confluence of caste and class in the case of manual scavengers puts them in a doubly marginal position in a field where casteism and capitalism are the

norm (Dubey & Murphy, 2021). Consequently, individuals mistakenly perceive their work to not be a result of their caste but of their lack of will to work hard.

Conclusion

This paper sought to understand how structural violence against Dalits can be seen in the practice of manual scavenging in Mumbai. In doing so, it aimed to make visible caste-based discrimination in urban areas and see through a city's self-representation as an utopia for all. The paper employed a framework using Bourdieu's field theory of capital along with regional theoretical understandings of the social reproduction of caste and a critique of neoliberalism from scholars like Srinivas (Jeffrey, 2001) and Dubey & Murphy (2021). Through various personal accounts of manual scavengers, the paper argues that casteist ideologies are at the root of the continuance of the practice despite legal and technological advancements. What it boils down to, as all scholars argue, is a sheer lack of will on the part of the government to recognise and redress the issues faced by manual scavengers (Pradhan & Mittal, 2020). This lack of will persists because of deeply entrenched casteist notions that are pervasive in Indian society. Political lack of will combined with the centuries-old existence of the caste system makes it easier for oppression and violence to continue. Embodied cultural capital towards manual scavengers such as derogatory language towards the work that they do are mere examples of this task.

The question of what can be done to end such structural violence is difficult to answer yet important to address. When traditional pathways of legal successes and the provision of education as a tool of social mobility do not work, answers become more elusive (Darokar, 2018; Dubey & Murphy, 2021). One of the ways to bring about change is perhaps to educate the dominant groups in how they uphold the existence of such conditions well into the 21st century. From my personal experience, the more I researched about the topic the more I realised my own complicity in the subject. Such learning and unlearning are important to change the enforced invisible violence against the Dalit community. Ultimately processes of personal, cultural and structural transformation are needed to overcome the oppression of Dalit people through casteism and capitalism.

Notes

1. In translating words from Hindu, the pejorative meaning attached to them seems to have reduced considerably. It should be noted that when such terms are used for people who are not engaged in such professions, people take grave offense at being degraded.

2. The word scavenger itself sounds dehumanising, however I could not find a better word for the same task and saw scholars in the field use the term without clarifying it so I followed suit. However, from a socio-linguistic point this terminology and its implications are worth exploring in depth.

Bibliography

AHRC (Asian Human Rights Commission). (2009). Caste Based Discrimination: The Continuing Curse of Manual Scavenging. AHRC-SPR-003-2009, 24-33. Retrieved July 15, 2017. http://idsn.org/uploads/media/Caste_based_discrimination_-_the_continuing_curse_of_manual_scavenging__AHRC_2009_.pdf.

Chakravarti, U. (2018). Gendering Caste. SAGE Publications.

Darokar, S. (2018, November 28). Manual Scavengers: A Blind Spot in Urban Development Discourse. *Economic and Political Weekly*. https://www.epw.in/engage/article/manual-scavengers-blind-spot-urban-development-discourse.

Dasgupta, P. (2017). Aamchi Mumbai: The City in the Dalit Imagination. *International Journal of English Language, Literature in Humanities*, 5(7), 566–576. https://www.academia.edu/download/55369699/document_54.pdf.

Dubey, S. Y., & Murphy, J. W. (2020). Manual Scavenging in Mumbai: The Systems of Oppression. *Humanity & Society*, 45(4), 533–555. https://doi.org/10.1177/0160597620964760.

Jeffrey, C. (2001). "A fist is stronger than five fingers": caste and dominance in rural north India. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 26(2), 217–236. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-5661.00016.

Maton, K. (2014). Habitus. In M. J. Grenfell (Ed.), Pierre Bourdieu: *Key Concepts* (2nd ed., pp. 48–64). Routledge.

Morgan, K., & Björkert, S. T. (2006). 'I'd rather you'd lay me on the floor and start kicking me': Understanding symbolic violence in everyday life. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 29(5), 441–452. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2006.07.002.

Pradhan, S., & Mittal, A. (2019). Ethical, health, and technical concerns surrounding manual scavenging in urban India. *Journal of Public Health*, 28(3), 271–276. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10389-019-01039-7.

Raghavan, C. (2021, October 22). Mumbai | India. Encyclopedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/place/Mumbai.

ScoopWhoop Unscripted. (2019, August 23). "**हर दलित सफाई कर्मचारी नहीं है लेकिन हर सफाई कर्मचारी दलित है**" I Manual Scavengers of Mumbai [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCrHVj3MJgc&feature=youtu.be.

Shaikh, Z. (2019, July 28). Explained: Here's what Census data show about migrations to Mumbai. The Indian Express. https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-heres-what-census-data-show-about-migrations-to-mumbai/.

The Wire Staff (2016). What Is Manual Scavenging? The Wire. https://thewire.in/rights/what-is-manual-scavenging.

Topper, K. (2001). Not So Trifling Nuances: Pierre Bourdieu, Symbolic Violence, and the Perversions of Democracy. *Constellations*, 8(1), 30–56. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.00214.

Tribune News Service. (2021, December 1). Of 43,797 identified manual scavengers, 42,594 belong to Scheduled Castes: Govt. Tribuneindia News Service. https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/of-43-797-identified-manual-scavengers-42-594-belong-to-scheduled-castes-govt-345160.

Diaspora en spanningen in de transnationale familiedynamiek

Het leven van Somalische vluchtelingen in Egypte

Tess Tolsma

"Ik ben opgegroeid in een hele multiculturele omgeving en ik weet niet beter dan hoe mooi het is om met zoveel unieke personen samen te leven. Op jonge leeftijd op een school komen waar iedereen een andere achtergrond en cultuur heeft, dat was het begin van een passie die bleef groeien. Nu ben ik hier beland, bij Culturele Antropologie. Als eerstejaarsstudent voelt het schrijven van je eerste antropologische artikel als een sprong in het diepe. Zoveel keuzes om te maken, zoveel kanten om op te gaan. Dus, waarom niet schrijven over iets waar ik eigenlijk heel weinig over weet? Achteraf kan ik zeggen dat mijn horizon zeker verbreed is, en ik ben enthousiast om mijn bevindingen met jullie te delen!"

Ondersteuning van vluchtelingen tijdens het integratieproces is al sinds het begin van de vluchtelingencrisis een aandachtspunt voor overheden en hulporganisaties. Een obstakel hier is het hanteren van een geëssentialiseerde opvatting over vluchtelingen (Malkki 1995, 495-523; Rytter 2018, 12-14). Bij het ondersteunen van vluchtelingen wordt vaak onvoldoende rekening gehouden met de individuele achtergrond van vluchtelingen en wat voor hen belangrijk is, bijvoorbeeld hun transnationale familie (Grace 2019, 125-43; Al-Sharmani 2007, 88-98). Transnationale familieleden zijn op verschillende manieren betrokken bij het integratieproces, waarvan hoofdzakelijk bij de zorg voor familieleden, het sturen van geld en het maken van keuzes omtrent de nieuwe woonsituatie. In dit artikel wordt kritisch onderzocht hoe de transnationale familiedynamiek van vluchtelingen van invloed is op hun integratie. Dit artikel is specifiek gericht op de ervaringen van Somalische vluchtelingen in Egypte.

Het artikel levert een bijdrage aan het in beeld brengen van uitdagingen bij het integratieproces door te onderzoeken op welke manieren transnationale familieleden hierbij betrokken zijn. Dit wordt toegelicht aan de hand van vier deelonderwerpen. In het artikel zal eerst een beeld worden geschetst van het begrip integratie. Vervolgens wordt de rol van transnationale familieleden bij het integratieproces aan het licht gebracht. Daarbij wordt in het bijzonder de rol van Somalische vrouwen in dit proces beschreven. Ten slotte wordt er een toelichting gegeven over veranderingen die plaatsvinden binnen de transnationale familiedynamiek.

Kernwoorden: Somalische vluchtelingen, integratie, transnationalisme, familie, diaspora, Egypte.

Introductie

Vluchtelingen doorstaan vaak gebeurtenissen die hen onderscheiden van vrijwillige migranten. De omstandigheden die leiden tot vluchten zijn gevormd door een verstoring in het thuisland, op persoonlijk dan wel maatschappelijk gebied (Ahmed en Heger Boyle 2010). Anno 2022 is de vluchtelingencrisis nog steeds actueel, waardoor dit een relevant vraagstuk blijft. Bestaande literatuur met betrekking tot vluchtelingen en dan in het bijzonder het integratieproces, is voornamelijk gericht op politieke, economische en sociale integratie (Rytter 2018; Grace 2019; Vrecer 2010). Tevens wordt integratie in dit artikel aan het licht gebracht, maar hierbij wordt een ander aspect betrokken wat zo een verdieping zal bieden. In dit artikel wordt de betrokkenheid van transnationale familieleden bij het integratieproces centraal gesteld, om zo een completer beeld te vormen van deze complexe situatie. Bij het integratieproces speelt de uitgebreide familie van vluchtelingen, tot de derde graad, ook een rol. Vluchtelingen moeten vaak unieke obstakels overwinnen om banden te onderhouden met familieleden verspreid over de wereld. Diaspora en spanningen in de transnationale familiedynamiek zijn verschijnselen die zich vaak voordoen bij vluchtelingen. Voor het verkrijgen van inzicht in de complexiteiten van integratie zal een specifieke casus worden toegelicht, namelijk van Somalische vluchtelingen in Egypte.

De redenen waarom Somaliërs vluchten uit hun thuisland kunnen gedeeltelijk verklaard worden door hun intrinsieke motivatie om een beter leven te

vinden met wettelijk staatsburgerschap, werkgelegenheid, sociale mobiliteit of veiligheid. Anderen zijn genoodzaakt te vluchten vanwege oorlog, hongersnood of andere gevaren die zich voordoen in Somalië (Al-Sharmani 2007; Vrecer 2010). De eerste grootschalige beweging van Somalische immigranten is terug te leiden naar de jaren '70, waar Somaliërs op zoek waren naar betere werkgelegenheid en economische hulpmiddelen. Aan het einde van de jaren '80, met het begin van de burgeroorlog in Somalië en daaropvolgende gewapende conflicten, waren veel Somaliërs genoodzaakt om te vluchten. Naar verwachting leven ongeveer twee miljoen Somaliërs in de diaspora, wat hen een van de meest verspreide migrantengroepen in het huidige tijdperk maakt (Al-Sharmani 2010). Een deel van deze gevluchte Somaliërs bevindt zich in Egypte. Velen kwamen naar Egypte omdat zij in de veronderstelling waren dat the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) de Somaliërs zou herplaatsen in westerse landen (Al-Sharmani 2007). Egypte werd dus voornamelijk gezien als een tussenstation. Naast Syriërs, Soedanezen, Eritreeërs en Ethiopiërs vormen Somaliërs één van de grootste migrantengroepen in Egypte (Pascucci 2016). De meest recente data van UNHCR, van 30 juni 2021, tonen aan dat er 6771 geregistreerde Somalische vluchtelingen zijn in Egypte (UNHCR Egypt z.d.). Een probleem dat zich hier voordoet, is dat Egypte nooit een actief asielbeleid heeft gehad. De behandeling van asielaanvragen en het verlenen van hulp wordt volledig afgeschoven op het VN-kantoor. Dit kantoor kampt vaak met uitdagende omstandigheden, wat resulteert in een hoog afwijzingspercentage waardoor Somaliërs afhankelijker worden van hun transnationale netwerken (Al-Sharmani 2010; Pascucci 2016). Het doel van dit artikel is om de integratieprocessen van Somalische gedwongen migranten in Egypte te analyseren en te interpreteren. Dit wordt toegelicht aan de hand van vier deelonderwerpen. In de eerstvolgende paragraaf wordt een beeld geschetst van het bestaande theoretisch kader voor het verklaren van de familiedynamiek binnen vluchtelingen gemeenschappen. Vervolgens wordt de rol van transnationale familieleden bij het integratieproces aan het licht gebracht. Daarbij wordt in het bijzonder de rol van Somalische vrouwen in dit proces beschreven. Ten slotte wordt er een toelichting gegeven over veranderingen die

plaatsvinden binnen de transnationale familiedynamiek.

Theoretisch kader

De term vluchteling verwijst in dit artikel naar mensen die een gewelddadige scheiding hebben ondergaan. Zij bevinden zich in een transitie of in een staat van liminaliteit (Harrell-Bond en Voutira 1992). In het land van aankomst krijgen vluchtelingen te maken met integratie in de nieuwe samenleving. De definities van integratie verschillen van wetenschapper tot wetenschapper, maar verschilt ook door de tijd heen (Rytter 2018). Vrecer (2010) stelt dat een multidisciplinaire benadering nodig is om integratie in zijn volledigheid te onderzoeken. Hierbij maakt zij het onderscheid tussen drie dimensies: politiek, economisch en psychologisch. Hierdoor worden de verschillende fasen van het integratieproces gedekt, zoals aankomst, incorporatie, permanent verblijf en staatsburgerschap. De economische dimensie van integratie is gericht op de arbeidsmarkt, uitkeringen die verstrekt worden vanuit de overheid en het feit of vluchtelingen legaal of illegaal werken. Daarnaast gaat het politieke aspect van integratie over de erkenning als vluchteling op het gebied van (permanent) staatsburgerschap. Dit gaat samen met een langdurig proces, en vaak zonder succes. Hier komt ook nog bij kijken dat er onvoldoende aandacht is voor de trauma's van vluchtelingen, wat verwijst naar de psychologische dimensie van integratie. Het psychologische aspect van integratie gaat ook over het gevoel of vluchtelingen zich wel of niet geïntegreerd voelen. Dit is van invloed op hun psychologische behoeften, zoals het verwerken van het verlies van familieleden of het opbouwen van een sociaal netwerk. Tevens stelt Vrecer dat integratie een tweerichtings proces is. Vluchtelingen leren van de heersende cultuur in de nieuwe samenleving, maar tegelijkertijd leert die cultuur ook van de cultuur van vluchtelingen. Hier is dus sprake van culturele uitwisseling, wat gekenmerkt wordt door het begrip acculturatie. Assimilatie daarentegen spreekt over het overnemen van de dominante cultuur, wat bij het integratieproces van vluchtelingen niet het geval is.

Integratie brengt verschillende gevolgen met zich mee, namelijk het transformeren van identiteit, cultuur en culturele tradities. Vluchtelingen krijgen vervolgens te maken met adaptatie en acculturatie. Hun aanpassingsvermogen wordt op de proef gesteld en dit verloopt

niet altijd even gemakkelijk. Integratie wordt belemmerd door het essentialiseren van vluchtelingen, wat onder andere is terug te zien bij de psychologische dimensie van integratie. Dit geëssentialiseerde beeld omvat de gedachte dat vluchtelingen allemaal hetzelfde proces doorstaan, terwijl ieder zijn of haar eigen verhaal heeft. Dit zorgt ervoor dat er weinig rekening wordt gehouden met de individuele achtergrond van vluchtelingen. Vaak worden de begrippen 'torn loose' en 'uprooted' gebruikt om over vluchtelingen te schrijven. Deze begrippen geven echter het idee dat de achtergebleven plek niet langer bevolkt is, terwijl daar nog veel kan spelen (Malkki 1995). Hiertoe behoort ook de achtergebleven familie, aangezien er geregeld maar een deel van de familie vlucht en het overige deel achterblijft. Degenen die wel vluchten blijven in contact met hun familie, waardoor zij in verbinding blijven met hun thuisland.

Betrokkenheid van transnationale familieleden bij integratie

Tijdens de diaspora die zich voordoet in vluchtelingen gemeenschappen, staan Somalische vluchtelingen in nauw contact met hun transnationale familie. In deze verscheurde gemeenschap blijven familiale verplichten bestaan, maar vanwege de diaspora ontbreekt een groot deel van de ondersteuning van uitgebreide familie. Transnationale relaties met familieleden vereisen emotionele arbeid of tijdsinvestering om banden over afstand te onderhouden. Het onderhouden van relaties is niet alleen belangrijk voor het financiële aspect van levensonderhoud, maar ook voor de sociale en culturele overleving van families en gemeenschappen (Al-Sharmani 2007). Binnen deze relaties verschuiven de machtsverhoudingen en deze worden geconstrueerd en gereconstrueerd in nieuwe plaatsen (Grace 2019). Familieleden met de meeste macht hebben ook de meeste inbreng bij het maken van keuzes omtrent de woonsituatie van familieleden die zullen vluchten. Somalische vluchtelingen gaan namelijk bij andere familieleden in Egypte wonen, maar dit moet goed georganiseerd worden. De familieleden die vluchten zijn dankbaar voor de kansen die hun familie biedt en bovendien zorgen transnationale relaties voor mogelijkheden om veiligheid te zoeken, risico's te minimaliseren en hulpmiddelen van de familie te maximaliseren (Al-Sharmani 2010).

Binnen de familie zelf leidt het onderhouden van deze relaties ook tot meer

respect en aanzien. Echter, er is ook een keerzijde. Deze transnationale relaties brengen vereisten en tegenprestaties met zich mee. Degenen die vluchten naar een ander land kunnen bijvoorbeeld verantwoordelijk zijn voor het vinden van een baan en vervolgens het sturen van geld naar familieleden in Somalië. Dit wordt gekenmerkt door het begrip xawalaad, Somali voor 'transacties' (Pascucci 2016). Anderen die zijn gevlucht, krijgen de verantwoordelijkheid om kinderen op te voeden of ouderen en zieken te verzorgen. Hierbij komen ook huishoudelijke verantwoordelijkheden kijken. Deze tegenprestaties zorgen ervoor dat vluchtelingen gefocust zijn op hun familie en minder op hun persoonlijke integratieproces. Nuriya is een voorbeeld van een Somalische vluchteling die met deze problemen kampt. Zij zegt hierover tegen Al-Sharmani (2007):

> *I do not see future for myself. When I go to English or Arabic class I think of my life. I don't work. I have no money. I have no future, no husband. I am stuck here (p.90).*

De betrokkenheid van familieleden zorgt ervoor dat het integratieproces niet altijd gemakkelijk verloopt. Voorafgaand aan de vlucht discussiëren familieleden over wie er vlucht, waar naartoe en hoe zij verder moeten in het nieuwe land. Hierbij wordt dus al het hele plan uitgedacht. Zo wordt er een verwachting geschept binnen de familie dat het integratieproces snel verloopt, waardoor er weinig rekening wordt gehouden met onverwachte situaties waar Somalische vluchtelingen mee te maken krijgen in Egypte. Dit doet zich bijvoorbeeld voor op het economische gebied van integratie. Familieleden in Somalië verwachten dat vluchtelingen in Egypte van $50 per maand kunnen leven en bekritiseren de vluchtelingen wanneer zij hier niet in slagen (Al-Sharmani 2007).

Uit deze informatie blijkt dus dat de transnationale familiedynamiek het integratieproces belemmert door onder andere het maken van keuzes over de nieuwe woonsituatie en familiale verplichtingen, zoals de xawalaad (Pascucci 2016). Onvoldoende financiële ondersteuning beperkt de economische dimensie van integratie (Vrecer 2010). Daarnaast zorgen familiale verplichtingen ervoor dat vluchtelingen gefocust zijn op hun transnationale familie en minder op hun persoonlijke integratieproces. Kortom, de

betrokkenheid van transnationale familieleden heeft hier een negatieve invloed op het integratieproces en met name op economisch gebied.

Rol van Somalische vrouwen

Uit onderzoek van Al-Sharmani (2010) is gebleken dat jonge, alleenstaande Somalische vrouwen vaak degenen zijn die vluchten. Hier kunnen twee redenen aan ten grondslag liggen. Ten eerste, ter bescherming tegen gevaren van oorlog en seksueel geweld en ten tweede, als aanwinst voor de familie in de toekomst. Met dit laatste wordt voornamelijk rekening gehouden met andere familieleden die op een later moment zullen vluchten. Vrouwen die nu al vertrekken, kunnen een basis leggen voor familieleden die later arriveren. Zij kunnen namelijk makkelijker aan een baan en asiel komen ten opzichte van mannen. Vrouwen zonder kinderen bieden nog meer mogelijkheden. Zij hebben meer tijd beschikbaar en zijn dus volledig inzetbaar voor het belang van de familie. Aangezien het voornamelijk vrouwen zijn die vluchten naar een nieuw land, zijn zij ook degenen die verantwoordelijk worden voor het onderhouden van de transnationale familiebanden. Dit zal verder toegelicht worden aan de hand van een voorbeeld, namelijk het gebruik van digitale middelen. Dit voorbeeld is met name relevant omdat digitale middelen bepalend waren voor het verloop van de communicatie tijdens de diaspora en dus het onderhouden van transnationale banden. De verantwoordelijkheden die vrouwen op zich nemen leiden tot het vormen van banden van verplichtingen en wederkerigheid met haar familieleden. Dit is ook van invloed op het individuele bestaan. Hoe meer de vrouwen voor hun familie zorgen, hoe meer zij een gevoel van waarde en respect krijgen. Dit kan uiteindelijk leiden tot een hogere positie binnen machtsverhoudingen.

Voor het onderhouden van transnationale familiebanden moeten keuzes worden gemaakt over het gebruik van hulpmiddelen en de individuele wensen en doelen van familieleden. Deze banden moeten ook tijdens de diaspora worden onderhouden. Vrouwen namen de rol op zich om een nieuwe realiteit te ontwikkelen waarin het familieleven in stand wordt gehouden ondanks de afstand tussen hen. Hier komt veel creativiteit bij kijken, omdat een goedlopende communicatie niet van het ene op het andere moment is geregeld. In het afgelopen decennium biedt technologie

veel mogelijkheden, maar dit was lang niet altijd het geval. Somaliërs zijn al vanaf de burgeroorlog van eind jaren '80 op de vlucht, een periode waarin internet net geïntroduceerd werd. In deze periode, en de jaren die volgde, werd er veel gebruik gemaakt van internetcafés. Internet biedt een goedkoop en effectief audiovisueel mechanisme waarmee Somalische vluchtelingen in Egypte communiceren met andere familieleden verspreid over de wereld. Zo kunnen zij nieuws met elkaar uitwisselen, discussies voeren, conflicten oplossen en beslissingen nemen over het gebruik van familiale hulpmiddelen (Al-Sharmani 2007, 2010).

Desalniettemin bestaan Somalische families ook uit een aantal (semi)analfabeten en zijn er familieleden die moeite hebben met het gebruiken van een toetsenbord. Vrouwen moesten wederom naar oplossingen zoeken om transnationale banden te onderhouden. Dit werd uitgebreid van alleen chatten op het internet naar andere digitale middelen, zoals het gebruik van audiodiensten op het internet en het sturen van videotapes. Zo worden videotapes bijvoorbeeld gebruikt om een potentiële huwelijkspartner voor te stellen of een woning te laten zien waar iemand komt te wonen. Mohamed, een 40-jarige getrouwde Somalische man, verhuisde met zijn vrouw en kinderen van Zweden naar Caïro. Hij gebruikte een videocamera om drie weken lang het leven in de stad vast te leggen. Al-Sharmani (2007) schrijft hierover:

> *I was informed by Mohamed's wife, who moved to Cairo six months later, that the tape was viewed by herself and a wide circle of relatives on both her side and Mohamed's side of the family as well as friends and neighbours living in Sweden, Denmark and the US. Mohamed's wife pointed out that the video was useful in giving her a vivid picture of life in Cairo (p.96).*

Kortom, de transnationale familiedynamiek heeft hier een positieve invloed op de integratie van Somalische vluchtelingen in Egypte. Vrouwen krijgen de kans op een veiliger leven en krijgen een belangrijke rol in het familieleven waar zij ook dankbaar voor zijn. Hierdoor raken zij gemotiveerd een baan te zoeken en asiel te verkrijgen, wat hun economische integratie bespoedigt. Bovendien leidt hun rol binnen de familiedynamiek er onder andere voor dat

meer familieleden in de toekomst vluchten naar Egypte, of het leidt tot het vinden van een potentiële huwelijkspartner. Zoals in het theoretisch kader naar voren is gekomen, gaat psychologische integratie ook om het gevoel of vluchtelingen zich geïntegreerd voelen en of zij kunnen voorzien in psychologische behoeften. Doordat vrouwen trouwen met iemand in het nieuwe land en hun familie vlakbij woont, bevinden zij zich in een omgeving met dierbaren. Vluchtelingen voelen zich hierdoor sneller op hun gemak en bouwen een sociaal netwerk op, wat de integratie op psychologische gebied bevordert (Vrecer 2010).

Veranderingen in familiedynamiek na spanningen

In een verscheurde wereld waarin Somalische vluchtelingen opnieuw hun leven moeten opbouwen, vinden zij steun bij hun familie. Familieleden bieden namelijk een oude, vertrouwde omgeving. Echter, de participatie van transnationale familieleden in het integratieproces zorgt ervoor dat vluchtelingen betrokken blijven bij hun land van herkomst, in dit geval Somalië. Dit betekent tevens dat problemen uit het thuisland doorwerken in het nieuwe land. Verschillende auteurs stellen dat dit nadelige gevolgen met zich meebrengt (Al-Sharmani 2010; Ahmed en Heger Boyle 2010; Grace 2019). Enerzijds leiden familiale verplichtingen tot respect en een gevoel van waardigheid tussen familieleden. Anderzijds komen uit familiale verplichtingen veel spanning voort.

De familiedynamiek van Somalische vluchtelingen wordt georganiseerd via een gezagsstructuur. Dit is gebaseerd op leeftijd, geslacht, het feit of iemand in bezit is van westers staatsburgerschap, de mate van ouderlijke autoriteit en de toegang tot kennis of middelen die de vlucht zullen faciliteren. Deze kwaliteiten stellen een persoon in staat een sterke band van familiale verplichtingen, dankbaarheid en wederkerigheid op te bouwen. In het geval van Somalische vluchtelingen in Egypte hebben vrouwen in eerste instantie weinig macht, maar dit verandert wanneer zij meer verantwoordelijkheden op zich nemen voor het onderhouden van het familieleven. Echter, zoals eerder in dit artikel al is vermeld, heeft het onderhouden van transnationale familiebanden ook een keerzijde. De tegenprestaties die hierbij komen kijken, zorgen ervoor dat individuele dromen en ambities aan de kant worden gezet. Somalische vrouwen offeren vaak hun

opleiding op, hun droombaan, of een romantische relatie wanneer familie hier geen goedkeuring voor geeft. Deze vrouwen hebben geen andere keuze, omdat familie een hogere prioriteit heeft. Desondanks leidt dit tot frustraties en spanningen. Spanningen ontstaan vooral bij degenen die zich het meest gemarginaliseerd voelen binnen hun familie (Al-Sharmani 2007). Spanningen kunnen ontstaan door verschillende verwachtingen van diverse familieleden, het opofferen van eigen dromen of het feit dat niet iedereen inspraak heeft in het maken van keuzes. Bovendien kan het voorkomen dat Somalische vrouwen in Egypte dubbele taken moeten uitvoeren. Zij hebben hun eigen kerngezin om te onderhouden, maar moeten tegelijkertijd zorgen voor hun uitgebreide familie. Dit zorgt niet alleen voor spanningen binnen de uitgebreide familie, maar ook tussen de vrouw en haar man. Echter, Somalische vrouwen zijn erg dankbaar voor de kansen die hun familie bieden. Als hun familie er niet was geweest, waren zij nu niet in een veiliger land geweest. Om niet ondankbaar over te komen blijven veel vluchtelingen hun familiale verplichtingen nakomen. Ikram, een Somalische vrouw die op 18-jarige leeftijd naar Egypte vluchtte, vertelt in een interview met Al-Sharmani (2010) dat zij dit ook heeft meegemaakt:

> *Alhamduliah [Thank God] my family took me out of there. Now I have an opportunity to help them and myself. It is my responsibility to my family to support them … I am doing something for my family and it makes me happy (p. 506).*

Sommige vrouwen maken zich los van hun familiale verplichtingen en vinden een manier om op zichzelf te wonen. Hieruit ontstaan nieuwe gezinsvormen, zoals vrienden die samenwonen in plaats van familieleden. Dit kan dus een gevolg van spanningen zijn, maar het kan ook leiden tot nog meer spanningen (Ahmed en Heger Boyle 2010; Pascucci 2016). Somalische families staan er namelijk niet achter als vrouwen op zichzelf gaan wonen en zich losmaken van hun familie. Het komt dan ook in uitzonderlijke gevallen voor dat er nieuwe gezinsvormen ontstaan, vaak blijven Somalische vrouwen bij haar familie wonen. Hieruit blijkt wel dat Somalische vluchtelingen zoeken naar een weg tussen 'belonging' en 'not-belonging' (Malkki 1995). Dit sluit aan bij de opvatting van Vrecer

(2010) dat integratie een tweezijdig proces is. Vluchtelingen integreren in een nieuw land en leren een nieuwe cultuur kennen, maar behouden tegelijkertijd hun eigen culturele identiteit. Er wordt contact gehouden met het thuisland, familie en de eigen cultuur, waardoor zij hun eigen culturele identiteit behouden. Tegelijkertijd kan dit niet in zijn volledigheid worden gecontinueerd in het nieuwe land, omdat er plaats wordt gemaakt voor de cultuur van het nieuwe land. Tijdens het integreren worden culturen dus uitgewisseld en vindt er een proces van acculturatie plaats. Hierbij moet een balans worden gevonden tussen 'belonging' en 'not-belonging'. Na de vlucht moeten Somalische vluchtelingen een nieuwe manier van leven ontdekken, waardoor zij zich in een 'rite of passage' bevinden (Chatty 2014). In deze overgangsfase moeten zij een weg zien te vinden tussen hun achtergebleven familie in Somalië, en hun eigen integratieproces in Egypte.

Kortom, de transnationale familie dynamiek is hier van negatieve invloed op hun integratie in Egypte, aangezien er spanningen tot stand komen. Deze spanningen ontstaan door verschillende opvattingen over keuzes die gemaakt moeten worden, waardoor vluchtelingen in hun mogelijkheden worden beperkt. De focus van de vluchteling is eerder gericht op de transnationale familie dan op het individuele integratieproces, waardoor vooral het psychologische aspect van integratie wordt belemmerd (Vrecer 2010).

Conclusie

Kortom, de transnationale familiedynamiek van Somalische vluchtelingen beïnvloedt hun integratie in Egypte. Integratie van vluchtelingen ofwel gedwongen migranten vindt plaats in verschillende dimensies: politiek, economisch en psychologisch (Vrecer 2010). Transnationale familieleden zijn op al deze gebieden van integratie betrokken, door het bieden van financiële ondersteuning, het zorgen voor familieleden of het maken van keuzes wie er vlucht en waar naartoe. In tijden van diaspora en transnationalisme namen vrouwen de verantwoordelijkheid op zich om te zoeken naar manieren om familiebanden te onderhouden. Internet en videotapes gingen een belangrijke rol spelen om met elkaar in contact te blijven (Al-Sharmani 2010). Hierdoor kreeg familie de hoogste prioriteit en werden eigen dromen en wensen aan de kant gezet. Zodoende wordt het eigen belang van vluchtelingen door hun

transnationale familieleden gemarginaliseerd. Hier zijn vooral jonge, alleenstaande vrouwen slachtoffer van. Echter, uit respect voor de familie blijven vluchtelingen zich houden aan familiale verplichtingen. Vluchtelingen zijn dankbaar voor de kansen die zij aangereikt krijgen door hun familie en accepteren dat hierbij een tegenprestatie wordt verwacht (Al-Sharmani 2010). Hun focus ligt hierdoor op hun familie en niet op hun eigen ontwikkeling, wat de integratie in het nieuwe land belemmert. Dit is een vicieuze cirkel die zich blijft herhalen.

Bibliography

Ahmed, Ali, and Heger Boyle, Elizabeth. 2010. 'Culture, Structure, and the Refugee Experience in Somali Immigrant Family Transformation'. *International Migration* 48(1): 47-79.

Al-Sharmani, Mulki. 2007. 'Transnational Somali Families in Cairo'. *Refuge* 24(1):88-98.

Al-Sharmani, Mulki. 2010. 'Transnational Family Networks in the Somali Diaspora in Egypt: Women's Roles and Differentiated Experiences'. *Gender, Place & Culture* 17(4): 499-518.

Chatty, D. 2014. "Anthropology and Forced Migration." In *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*. Oxford University Press.

Grace, Breanne Leigh. 2019. "Family from Afar? Transnationalism and Refugee Extended Families after Resettlement." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 32(1): 125-43.

Harrell-Bond, B.E. and Voutira, E. 1992. "Anthropology and the Study of Refugees." *Anthropology Today* 8(4): 6-10.

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

Pascucci, Elisa. 2016. 'Transnational Disruptions: Materialities and Temporalities of Transnational Citizenship among Somali Refugees in Cairo'. *Global Networks* 16(3): 326-43.

'Refugee Context in Egypt.' z.d. UNHCR Egypt. Geraadpleegd 20 januari 2022. https://www.unhcr.org/eg/about-us/refugee-context-in-egypt.

Rytter, Mikkel. 2018. "Made in Denmark: Refugees, Integration and the Self-Dependent Society." *Anthropology Today* 34(3):12-14.

Vrecer, Natalja. 2010. "Living in Limbo: Integration of Forced Migrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina in Slovenia." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23(4):484-502.

A step back to move forward

Grassroots practices of energy in rural Sicily

Giulio Maria Panettiere & Camilla Pietrini

"This text is the result of a small ethnographic research conducted over the Christmas period in our hometowns. We interviewed our grandparents, bearers of traditional values and knowledge, in search of resource management practices that could somehow inspire diversified approaches to the discourse of sustainability. The data collected soon took on an emotional value that would be nice to share on a wider scale and with a wider audience. If it is true that certain lifestyles "of the past" are destined to disappear in the clash with contemporaneity, ethnographic research has allowed us to become new custodians of this cultural heritage, in order to contribute to its survival in the times to come."

Fig. 1: Olive and almond trees in a typical hilly landscape of central Sicily.

1.1 Introduction

The discourse about renewable energy and sustainability represents a key debate in the field of anthropology today. Through the use of the ethnographic method, we explored the diverse types of traditional techniques and strategies for providing energy that have been employed in the past and handed down from generation to generation until today. The

context of the research is that of mainland Sicilia which is in itself an oxymoron, being the largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. While idealized and known as a popular tourist destination during the summer season for its coastline, the inland area of the island has remained more authentic and tied to agricultural traditions. The hilly landscape characterizes this area of the island as well as the cultivation of wheat and sheep farming. The scarce infrastructural development and the difficult viability typical of rural peripheries have meant that traditional practices and techniques of rural life have remained here more alive than elsewhere in Sicily.

From fossil fuel extraction to green energy, energy production has been physically disconnected from places of consumption. Several anthropologists have noticed the various negative aspects of the disconnection (Winther and Wilhite 2015) and have problematised the Western concept of sustainability, which often involves the exploitation of indigenous lands for green energy production, thus causing negative effects on both the local population and the ecosystem (see Dunlap 2017; Howe 2019; Jerez et. al 2021). In the light of these recent critiques about green energy, in our research, we are going to explore energy and resources management techniques by following the bottom-up approach suggested by Laura Nader (1981). Taking into account a few local practices of energy production in rural central Sicily, we aim to offer a bottom-up perspective on energy that could possibly dismantle "hegemonic" conceptualisations which link energy to the idea of economic growth (Mitchell). Specifically, we are going to look at the techniques used and learned from our grandparents' generation. Most of these techniques are indeed produced within the family sphere and consequently used for family consumption. By collecting and preserving a cultural and local heritage that is in danger of disappearing, we suggest a localized approach to think about energy.

1.2 Methodology and research population

The research population has taken into account perspectives from different elders of two different provinces in central Sicily, named Enna and Caltanissetta. Among them, Nonno Giovanni, Nonna Filippa, Aunt Angela, and Nonno Primo all aged between 85 and 93 years old. Although sharing the same peasant background, the subjects differ substantially in family and work context,

providing the research of different ethnographic insights about the rural traditions between the 20s and the 50s of the twentieth century. The main research question driving the ethnography will be:

How can traditional knowledge and practices of resources and energy management emerging from the Sicilian rural context inspire future orientation in studying energy?

Among the methods chosen to conduct this ethnographic research is the semi-structured interview. Orality falls among the archetypes of storytelling and transmission of culture and knowledge (O'Reilly, 2012) and becomes even more essential in the context of our research. Surely, the insider's positionality and the use of a common language have facilitated the process of the interviews as well as has helped in the discovery of more specific information regarding our participants' lifestyles. The use of semi-structured interviews has offered us the possibility to track specific questions on energy management, furthermore, they allowed us to navigate broader topics that were nonetheless particularly inspiring and added new insights to our research. The use of flexibility during the research has also allowed us to reshape the questions when needed. Sometimes a strict and formal approach may not be functional during the interview process, in fact, in this case, a more flexible and informal approach was more effective in making the questions clearer to our participants and in making the whole interview process more enjoyable for them.

The question initially posed to Angela, "What traditional practices from your rural past, before the electric connection came along, might constitute examples of sustainable forms of energy?" I received confused, ironic, and even somewhat irritated reactions: "Chiè ca vu da mì?" (the Sicilian for "what are you asking for?").

Fig. 2: The face of perplexity at the interviewer's question, Screenshot, Interview n.1 Mrs. Angela Savarino, 93 years old, Caltanissetta, Sicily.

Fear and apprehension that we would come back empty-handed assailed our self-esteem and our confidence as young ethnographers.

At that point, we immediately understood we had to change the research question to make it more comprehensible. Hence, we decided to try another and more effective question such as: "How was food preserved during the summer? And that's how the idea of being inspired by all those small daily actions in the household was born. Actions that modern Western societies have taken for granted for several decades. The free flow of the story stimulated by that simple question allowed us to receive more information about the oldest techniques and then allowed us to draw a connection with the main research question. What replaced the refrigerator and how were dishes stored? How did people warm themselves in winter? How were rooms lit at night? How were clothes washed?

The result is a real research methodology born from a self-reflection about simple and automated actions, based on the generational comparison between a "digital native" and over eighty, often more than ninety years old, elders born well before the arrival and spread of electricity.

We choose to make videos rather than audio recordings as the main tool for data collection because they allowed us to record not only the discussion with our participants but also their voices and gestures. The presence of the video camera, in agreement with the participants, could also instill a certain formality in the discourse by encouraging the interviewee and convincing them of the importance of their testimony. When viable, visual methods indeed have the potential to enrich the narrative of an ethnographic interview that is both stimulated and collected through the camera (Pink 2013). In this way, photo-elicitation and photo collection have been used to provide the reader with additional tools which would help both the researcher in "making the field" through data collection and the reader in "feeling the field".

Theoretical Framework

Within the energy debate scholars working on sustainability have exposed the various social issues caused by energy displacement (Winther and Wilhite 2015). In a similar vein, Kirsch (2010) pointed out that the idea of sustainability is often more associated with economic growth than with a real concern for the environment. By looking at localized energy practices that have no purpose other than to provide energy for household consumption, our ethnography will instead suggest a more localized, degrowth perspective as a possible new direction for

the future of energy. Using what Pereirano (1998) called "Anthropology at Home", we will investigate the traditional techniques of energy management that have been passed down from generation to generation through the retelling of common narratives and practices. Most of these techniques are indeed produced within the family sphere and consequently used for family consumption. This approach can illuminate alternative ways of thinking about energy from a "bottom-up perspective" (Nader 1981) which can indeed include a wider range of voices and world-views.

Thinking about energy in association with the concept of a subsistence economy can offer a different meaning to energy and it goes in the opposite direction of understanding energy only as a profitable resource. Rethinking energy from below, therefore, also means embracing the idea of degrowth. Especially in the rural context defined in ethnography, energy management, such as firewood, is mainly managed by people in local communities. In defining traditional ways of providing energy, we can still recognise the local and cultural systems that are embedded in the way people in a given community may deal with energy resources. Less tied to the conceptual hegemony of 'energy transition', the traditional cultural heritage of what Antonio Gramsci (1948-1951) called 'subaltern societies' (peasant and working-class populations judged backward by the elite) has the potential to provide and inspire new practices of circular economy. The use of local knowledge may indeed reveal new insights about energy management. This vision stands in stark contrast to fossil fuels and the means of providing energy in mass society. Energy is power, as Boyerin has defined the notion of energopolitics: "power over (and through) energy" (2011,5). To research and think about energy through more than a unified and standardized understanding of energy, can provide a new mean of empowerment for different communities.

Since the beginning of time, various types of energy, like food and fire, have provided humans with the opportunity to transform their societies (White 1943). In particular, White (1943) argues that culture has developed according to the evolution of energy and that society itself has also been shaped by the type of energy used. Indeed, the deployment of fossil fuels was instrumental in the emergence of modern capitalist societies (White1943). Similarly,

Mitchell (2009) argued that the deployment of fossil fuel energy has changed both society and the idea of development. Importantly, Mitchell (2009) argued that since the emergence of fossil fuels, both economics and energy were constantly linked to the idea of growth. Viewed from this perspective, energy was seen as an infinite and ever-expanding resource, just like the capitalist economy. This idea of growth accompanied the formation of the modern capitalist state and during the Third Industrial revolution contributed to what Polanyi (1944) called the 'Great Transformation' in which the subsistence economy was largely replaced by the global capitalist economy. The idea of growth and the mass use of energy of fossil fuels have nevertheless for one side allowed the expansion of energy and the technological means we use nowadays whereas, on the other side, they undermined traditional techniques of energy. Our research does not intend to idealize the past as a "belle epoque", instead we argue how traditional and indigenous techniques of energy are a valid source of energy heritage that, analysed through the ethnographic method, may stimulate new considerations when it also comes to thinking about green energy and circular economy.

While not denying the innovative potential of renewable energy, in some cases the place of production of renewable energy resources is disconnected from the place of consumption. As Winther and Wilhite (2015) explained in the case of electricity, this disconnection can often be problematic as people may not recognise the possible environmental damage, as well as may not be fully aware of and in control of resource management. Western green energy projects often perpetuate the unequal distribution of resources and contribute to the already existing unequal power relations between "North and South". As shown by Dunlap (2017), although green energy production may have noble aims, these often clash with local indigenous worldviews and common land use. This is particularly problematic when green energy is financed by privatized companies that produce energy in places considered 'cheap' by exploiting local natural resources. In his ethnography Dunlap (2017) described how the construction of a wind farm in Osaka represented a case of land grabbing by Western investors on indigenous land. Land grabbing is only one of the consequences of the dislocation of green energy. Howe (2019) also reported some of the negative

consequences of the installation of wind turbines in Mexico's Isthmus of Tehuantepec for the local fauna, arguing that not only can the installation of infrastructure used for green energy create additional disruptions to the way of life of the local population, but can also pose a threat to living beings in the area.

In the optic of economic growth, any kind of energy can be problematized. The much-vaunted energy transition rhetoric of moving away from dependence on fossil fuels such as oil, coal and natural gas in favour of "green, clean and sustainable" energy often fails to account for the real social and environmental implications inextricably linked to the extraction of the resources needed to develop solar panels, wind turbines, electric cars and batteries. Lithium, which is part of a group of difficult to extract minerals called "rare earth," is an essential resource for assembling the batteries needed for the energy transition. Present in abundance in the Atacama Desert in Chile, its extraction has led to land-grabbing and the destruction of ancestral lands belonging to indigenous peoples who suffer the environmental consequences of what has been called "green extractivism" (Jerez et.al 2021) as it reproduces the same colonial-style power relations applied in the extraction of fossil fuels, justified this time by the need for "sustainability" pursued by the policies of Western governments. The idea that the energy transition will be a zero-sum game, therefore, implies the reproduction of inequalities that will impact the most vulnerable and expendable lives. As argued by Kirsch (2010), the rhetoric of "sustainable mining", according to which there is a way to extract resources from the subsoil ethically and with respect for local populations, is suitable for the legitimization of the green transition obtained on the shoulders of the global south when instead the effort of the challenge against climate change could also be supported by Western societies at the price of downsizing of their current lifestyle inspired by the study of historically recent practices of resource and energy management. For this reason, it is essential to consider the functioning of the local environment, as well as the way of life and habits of the people. Hence, we have filled our database mainly by observing local practices. In the course of ethnography, by bringing in local techniques from the past and present, we aim to demonstrate how energy can be used as a means of cultural reaffirmation of the community and how localized ways of thinking about energy can

benefit both society and the surrounding environment.

Fig. 3: The course of the interviews may bring the focus away from the original question, but sometimes it is also necessary to go along with the flow of anecdotes. Interview n.3, Giovanni Petix, 92 years old, Serradifalco, Sicily.

2.1 Presentation of the findings

In this section, we will present and discuss the most relevant and interesting ethnographic outcomes from the semi-structured interviews. Each contribution has provided valuable insights into life in the Sicilian hinterland before the arrival of the electricity grid, around the 1950s, which completely revolutionized the way of life in the Sicilian countryside as well as in the rest of Europe. Washing machines, refrigerators, lighting and running water became at that point the prerogative of larger and larger strata of the population, eventually changing and replacing the peasant way of life, its resource management techniques, its traditional practices and rituals (Barone, 2018). During the interview, one of the most interesting findings was to discover how clothes were washed before the arrival of any chemical detergent. It was certainly a much more complex process than today, starting with the water needed. Surprisingly, however, the detergent was replaced by ash which acted as a bleaching agent. The laundry was covered with ash and left to soak in a basin (a' pila) from where it would come out completely clean. This technique was once widespread throughout the Sicilian countryside and it would be interesting to investigate its use in other Mediterranean contexts and its reproducibility nowadays.

Fig. 4: Practical demonstration of how to wash clothes with ash, Screenshot, Interview n.2, Mrs. Filippa Caruso, 85 years old, Enna, Sicily.

The rediscovery of a cultural and human heritage that risks being forgotten is the beauty of ethnographic research. In this way,

the following interview with Nonno Giovanni revealed the importance of the circular component of the peasant economy of the past. From the question "How did you warm up during the winter?" came a valuable conversation about the central role of the almond.

2.2 *Scorcia di Minnuli* (Almond husks) - The circular economy of almonds

The almond tree is one of the most widespread and well-known species in the hilly hinterland of the island, where it has always constituted a very present food resource in the local diet. However, the role of the almond tree has primary importance in Sicilian life, which goes far beyond food consumption. Indeed, besides the consumption of the fruit and its use in the local culinary tradition and pastry, almond skins were carefully separated from the fruit after the harvest (which takes place at the end of August) and dried in the sun. After some days, the peels were kept in order to be sold. The characteristic of almond peel, very hard and woody, is its high level of combustibility which made it a valid and economical alternative to wood to be used in the fireplace as a source of heat. And this is exactly how almonds were involved as fuel in every house instead of coal and wood. The braziers (a conca) were fed by the combustion of almond skins, providing energy useful not only for heating but also for cooking. The bedrooms, which were smaller and usually warmer, were heated with "i tancina", small cast iron baskets that were filled with almond husk embers and hung near the bed.

Fig. 5: U tancinu, a cast-iron warmer, fueled by the braziers of almond husks and leftover wood once common in rural Sicily.

Once consumed, the ashes were not thrown away but used in the cleaning of clothes or in the production of soap together with olive oil and some chopped almonds. According to the participants, the clothes washed in this way gave off an exceptional fragrance, (nu xhiauru beddissimu). This step concludes the "Cycle of the Almond". Starting from what

today is considered a useless waste and without potential, the peasant society had developed a system of circular economy nature-based through which to create energy. The scarcity of resources has thus contributed to the creation of a technique based on the inventive reuse of waste products, exploiting their hidden peculiarities. The great diffusion of almonds made the peels an affordable product for everyone. Nowadays, some families in the farms still save almond skins during the collection in order to use them in winter as fuel for boilers.

Moreover, as told by Nonno Giovanni, cane sugar as we know it was considered a luxury product and also difficult to find. However, similarly to almonds, the fruit of Carob was used in the production of sweeteners. The Carob, a fruit similar in shape to the banana commonly found Mediterranean basin, has a very sweet taste reminiscent of chocolate and a consistency that lends itself to shredding. In Sicily, many small family-owned companies transformed carobs into sweeteners but almost all of them disappeared over time. Even if it survived only in a small part of Sicily, the cultivation of carob (it is a fruit and as such completely natural) would be replicable throughout the Mediterranean basin and represents an effective alternative to the industrial production of cane sugar. Both in the "almond cycle" and in the case of carob, it is possible to find the traces of a sustainable lifestyle that, by exploiting the surrounding environment to produce energy, would otherwise save resources. They represent a heritage of nature-based techniques that leave room for future developments on a large scale, also thanks to today's greater scientific knowledge.

Fig. 6: Scricchiulata ri' minnuli, The opening of almonds, Caltanissetta, Sicily.

2.3 The community wells, food supply and storage

In the years following World War II, the economic boom progressively changed lifestyles by introducing comfort and well-being. If up to that time the consumption of

meat had been very limited and mainly destined to festive occasions such as Christmas, in the '50s the business of cattle breeding had an upsurge which justified the transformation of the almond groves in wide pastures. As a result, almond cultivation has been drastically reduced due to intensive breeding which limited the relevance of the sector. The food consumption used to involve nothing but locally grown products, mainly vegetables and legumes, that did not require energy expenses for conservation. In this research, we argue that the Mediterranean diet, as it was before the arrival of cheap meat, required a low expenditure of energy both for transport (locally produced) and for the preservation of food that was consumed fresh.

However, during the muggy Mediterranean summers, some foods needed cooler temperatures to be stored. While we had previously heard about this, it was Aunt Angelina who confirmed the existence of a very ingenious methodology common in all rural areas, that took advantage of the coolness of the subsoil. Starting from June, the foods most sensitive to high temperatures were stocked inside the "histerna", large and deep wells essential for water supply. The temperature inside the wells, indeed, remains cool thanks to the humidity and the shade, making it possible to preserve the food through a system of pulleys. It was not uncommon to have wells for community use, that all the families of the same district could use them independently. In addition to representing an example of energy management through natural resources, the wells were also spaces in which to experience sociality.

The type of alimentation, therefore, made it possible not to have particular needs in terms of conservation. The meat was eaten directly and only on rare occasions and cheese was wrapped in a damp cloth, which was enough to prolong its life. Much more common in medium-sized towns than in villages, during the spring and even summer months it was possible to buy "fresh" ice. The profession of "nivalora" (literally "snowmen" in Sicilian) was one of the most tiring and exhausting jobs that involved the creation of shelters high in the mountains or on the volcano Etna where humidity, altitude and shade would preserve the snow and ice stored until summer. As told by Nonno Giovanni, who grew up in a small town (Caltanissetta), the nivalora would come down from the mountains insulating the ice with a special coating and selling it by the

piece. The trade of the nivalora demonstrates how by ingeniously exploiting nature, even ice can be wisely used without the involvement of energy processes.

Still today, in many rural areas in Italy it is common practice to have one's garden and to consume fresh vegetables. With the changes and economic revolution brought by mass society, this practice was also rejected and classified as backward (Pasolini 1976). However, these practices are still in use and the techniques for cultivation such as the plan for resting the soil are passed down from generation to generation. And besides that, when the crops are destined for family use the use of pesticides is limited as opposed to intensive agriculture.

Fig. 7: Large community well, used for the water needs of an entire rural district and the storage of food during the summer period.

2.4 Wood Management and the fireplace

As for the winter periods, fire and firewood are also based on local resources. During the winter, sitting in front of the fire and enjoying conviviality is common practice in the villages of rural Italy. Although the technique of fire does not categorize itself as a sustainable practice, it is important to consider that there are various and different methods of collecting and cutting wood. Nonno Primo, for instance, used the woods of his land without the need to buy them from outside investors. Like many villagers, they are used to working on their piece of land and using their resources. During the interview, he recounted that the cutting of wood is not done on the whole piece of land but is done from year to year in different areas. Thus the land, in this case, the family land, is divided into several small plots. Each year, pieces of trees are cut in one of the plots and the next year they are cut in another plot, this rotation allows the branches to grow again. After the wood has been gathered, the land in that plot is set aside and not touched again for seven years. Tree trunks are rarely cut because this would mean waiting years for them to grow back. Therefore, cutting more than necessary would not only be

detrimental to the environment itself but also unproductive for humans.

This topic was also addressed by Carlowitz (1713) in the original definition of sustainability. Sustainable techniques were initially used precisely to safeguard forests, which provided an energy resource for mankind and therefore needed to be safeguarded as much as possible. For the same reason, there are still specific techniques to be followed when cutting trees and branches. In addition, branches are not always cut, sometimes it is also necessary to take already fallen trees to clear the ground to make wood people working in the fields use to clean their land by burning unnecessary bushes and dry sticks. The fire, however, has also an important ritualistic and social relevance to be considered. Raponi (1955) argued about the cyclical fiers accompanying the peasant's life.

Conclusion

In this paper, we critically discussed the green energy discourses by looking at different practices of energy and resource management within the context of rural Sicily. Throughout the writing, we also emphasized the role of narratives coming from the past as a form of knowledge that could possibly be reused and inspire future strategies to face the challenge of sustainability. However, we are conscious that as shown in the case of firewood, not all the traditional practices could be applicable on a greater scale today. On the other hand, this research may offer some new insights in the study of energy.

Fig. 8: A Look at the Backstage, Translator from the ancient to a more contemporary Sicilian. The Sicilian language, a real language different from Italian, experiences today a condition of marginality that condemns it to a slow decline among the younger generations.

In conclusion, the intent of our research is to suggest how a different approach to energy that takes into account local-based practices can introduce new thinking in the discourse of sustainability. Ethnographic research as a tool for understanding traditional practices of resource and energy management has indeed the potential to challenge the paradigm of sustainability. This deserves deeper and further research, not only for a

comprehensive collection of techniques across the Mediterranean area (and beyond) but also to test the validity of such bottom-up approaches in the context of climate change. Our main goal was to suggest a localized approach for the green energy transition which could take into account the surrounding environment as well as people's local customs and knowledge. In this research, we thus suggest how an ethnographic approach may be enriched and enrich looking at the past, before moving forward to the future of sustainability.

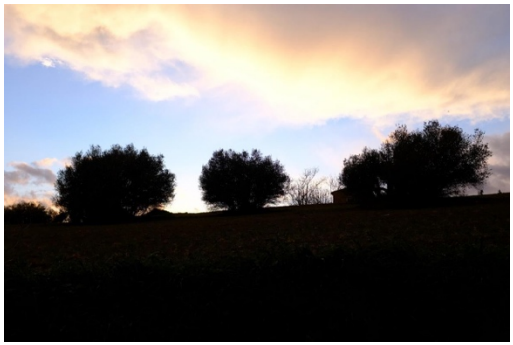

Fig. 9: Profile of almond trees in a winter sunset.

Bibliography

Barone, Giuseppe. 2018. Storia Mondiale Della Sicilia. [Global History of Sicily] Rome: Editori GLF Laterza.

Boyer, Dominic. 2011. "Energopolitics and the Anthropology of Energy." *Anthropology News* 52(5): 5-7.

Carlowitz, Hans Carl von. 1713. Sylvicultura oeconomica, oder haußwirthliche Nachricht und Naturmäßige Anweisung zur wildenBaum-Zucht. Leipzig: Braun

Dunlap, Alexander. 2017. "Counterinsurgency for wind energy: the Bíi Hioxo wind park in Juchitán, Mexico." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 45(3): 630-652.

Gramsci, Antonio. 1975. Quaderni del carcere. *Edizione critica dell'Istituto Gramsci*. Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore.

Howe, Cymene. 2019. "Greater Goods: Ethics, energy and other-than-human speech." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 25(S1): 160-176.

Jerez, Bárbara, Ingrid Garcés, and Robinson Torres. 2021. "Lithium Extractivism and Water Injustices in the Salar de Atacama, Chile: The colonial shadow of green electromobility." *Political Geography* 87: 1-11.

Kirsch, Stuart. 2010. "Sustainable Mining." *Dialectical Anthropology* 34(1): 87-93.

Mitchell, Timothy. 2009. "Carbon Democracy." *Economy and Society* 38(3): 399-432.

Nader, Laura. 1981. "Barriers to thinking new about energy." *Physics Today* 34(9).

O'Reilly, Karen. 2012. "Interviews: Asking questions of individuals and groups." In *Ethnographic Methods* (second edition), 116-141. New York: Routledge

O'Reilly, Karen. 2012. "Practical Issues in Interviewing." In *Ethnographic Methods* (second edition), 141-159. New York: Routledge.

Pasolini, Pier Paolo. 1976. Scritti corsari. Gli interventi più discussi di un testimone Provocatorio. Milano: Garzanti

Peirano, Mariza. 1998. "When Anthropology is at Home: The different contexts of a single discipline." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 27(1): 105-128.

Pink, Sarah. 2013. "Planning and Practicing Visual Ethnography." In *Doing Visual Anthropology*, 49-69. London: Sage Publishers.

Polanyi, Karl. 1944. *The Great Transformation*. Boston: Beacon press.

Raponi, Tullia Coppola. 1995. "I fuochi di carnevale in Italia." *Lares* 21(3/4): 20-32.

White, Leslie. 1943. "Energy and the Evolution of Culture." *American Anthropologist* 45(3): 335-357.

Winther, Tanja, and Harold Wilhite. 2015. "Tentacles of Modernity: Why electricity needs anthropology." *Cultural Anthropology* 30(4): 569-577.

Fig. 9: A' Cuccia, Typical dish obtained from the remains of the wheat harvest consumed during the winter in absence of other food. Here is a sweet version, flavoured with sugar and cinnamon.

Mount Everest: the stairway to heaven

On the dialogue between religion and popular culture in the context of mountaineering in the Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest) region in Nepal

Jana Ravenhorst

"Though I often struggle with coming up with paper topics, this time I didn't. It's about how Mt. Everest mountaineering is almost religion-like, and I incorporate my interest in visual anthropology by analyzing the role of media in this. The topic is near to my heart, as I've always been passionate about mountaineering and nature in general. However, mountaineering gets very romanticized in the media, hence I wanted to shed some light on its less glorious aspects, like the implications for the native Sherpa population. I learned that having a topic you are passionate about helps. I wrote something I'm very proud of, I even sent it to my mom, but she still hasn't read it. So hopefully others will!"

Introduction

Humans have always seemed inherently determined to reach for the most, the biggest and the highest. Why else would the Guinness Book of Records be so popular? According to Driscoll (2020, 46-47), people often strive for the 'sublime', a state of ecstatic transcendency (Driscoll 2020, 46-47). This becomes evidently clear when looking at mountaineering culture, specifically within the context of Sagarmatha (Mount Everest) National Park in Nepal. Here, the highest mountain on earth attracts tens of thousands of people on an annual basis. Some only lay their gaze on this impressive mass of rock and ice, others attempt to climb it while risking their lives in a harsh and hazardous landscape. With its origins in the colonial enterprise of leisure travel in the Victorian era, Western mountaineers started searching for symbolic meaning in the Himalayas, ascribing a sacred value to

climbing mountains (Berner 2020, 25; Driscoll 2020). This new religion of mountaineering is deeply intertwined with the process of mediatization, which is stimulating the romanticization and popularization of Western mountaineering (Hjarvard 2008). Yet, these developments have had some serious implications for the Sherpa, the indigenous population of the region, for whom the landscape is sacred but who also benefit economically from the influx of outsiders (Mu et al. 2019).

In this paper, I will analyze what the significance of mountaineering is in the Sagarmatha region for Western mountaineers. I will do this by exploring how mountaineering can be considered as a religious phenomenon, fueled by media and popular culture. By doing this, I hope to shed some light on how popular culture and religion are in dialogue with each other (Klassen 2014, 25).

The academic relevance of this paper is its contribution to theoretical discussions on the relation between religion and popular culture. This paper will contribute to scientific theory on the intertwinement of religion and popular culture in society, using a case study to depict this.

In order to answer the research question, I will start by explaining how Western mountaineering culture came to be. Then, I will examine what the nature of mountaineering is, focusing on religious aspects of mountaineering. Following, I will analyze the role of media and popular culture in stimulating mountaineering culture and religion. Finally, I will shed some light onto what societal tensions arise from this phenomenon.

It is clear that what is happing on Mt. Everest is worth taking a closer look at. With people waiting in line for their turn on the summit, it raises the question if a human traffic jam on the top of Mt. Everest is just the visualization of a popular craze gotten out of control, or if there is more to it than that.

1. The origins of mountaineering culture

In an effort to thoroughly analyze the nature of mountaineering culture, it's useful to first look into how our present-day notion of mountaineering came to be. I will not engage in the question of when mountaineering itself began, as it's almost impossible to know given the fact that mountains and humans have been on this earth together for far longer than we can grasp. What we do know is that mountaineering started as a Western-

European enterprise (Driscoll and Atwood 2020, 3).

The origins of mountaineering culture lie in the Victorian era of the 19th century, when Europeans first engaged in popular tourism. In this period traveling for leisure purposes became a common practice for white people from higher socioeconomic statuses. Westerners set out to explore unfamiliar places, where they came into contact with an 'exotic Other', imposing a racial hierarchy (Driscoll 2020, 44; Driscoll and Atwood 2020, 11). The Victorian notion of exploration is deeply rooted in European colonialism. In the Himalayas in Nepal, this produced a racial dichotomy between Sherpa, the Nepalese indigenous population of the Sagarmatha region, and Sahibs, white Western climbers coming to the region (Driscoll 2020, 43-44; Mu et al. 2019, 442). This I will explore further in section 4.

The surge in outward exploration was stimulated by the Zeitgeist of the Victorian period, characterized by a longing for the 'sublime', which people found in places like the Himalayas. Romantic thinkers of the time explored this Victorian preoccupation with attaining a mental state of blissfulness and transcendency, building an academic framework for thinking about the significance of mountaineering. (Driscoll 2020, 46)

The notion of sublime was important for mountaineering theory, because it became clear to Romantic thinkers like Rousseau that the concept implied that mountaineering was more than just a leisure activity. He explained with the term 'nature-sentimentalism' how nature, and mountains in particular, could be something with an almost religious significance. (Driscoll and Atwood 2020, 8)

Mountaineering in the Himalayas is still dominated by Westerners, however the area nowadays attracts people from all over the world (Mu et al. 2019, 447). Regarding the rest of this paper, it's important to note that when speaking about mountaineering culture, I'm often actually referring to Western mountaineering culture as this is where the focus of this paper lies.

2. The nature of mountaineering culture in Nepal

As said before, Romantic thinkers began regarding mountaineering as something 'more' than just leisure, ascribing a bigger significance to it. Whether mountaineering can be seen as a type of new religion, depends on how we look at it. In this section

I will examine the nature of mountaineering culture in Nepal, in order to explore whether Rousseau was right about the relation between nature and religion.

Tourism and pilgrimage

There are anthropologists who concern themselves with the difference between tourism and pilgrimage, and this debate can serve as a tool in understanding what mountaineering is actually about. Badone and Roseman (2004, 2) argue that there can be no clear distinction between tourism and pilgrimage, because this supposed dichotomy is based upon assumptions about the motivations of different types of travelers (Badone and Roseman 2004, 2). For example, it is often presumed that tourists would not engage in religious activity, while pilgrims would exclusively do so.

However, traveling in the postmodern world is defined by shifting definitions and hybridity, blurring the lines between types of travel (Badone and Roseman 2004, 2). Since the Victorian era a lot has changed, and more people than ever before engage in travel, not just the upper class (2004, 8-9). All these people do so for different reasons, voluntary or forced, for economic or cultural purposes, which makes it impossible to draw rigid lines between types of travelers (2004, 8-9). For example, some tourists might engage in spiritual practices on their travels in some way, as well as pilgrims might not only have pious motives while traveling (2004, 2). Hence, if you call someone a tourist, that doesn't say their motivations for travel can't be religious.

In addition, underlying this distinction between pilgrimage and tourism is the distinction between the sacred and secular (Badone and Roseman 2004, 2). Yet like Klassen (2014, 11) makes clear, both of these terms are difficult to define, and exist in more of a grey area than often appears at face level (Klassen 2014, 11).

In sum, there is no rigid dichotomy between the concepts of tourism and pilgrimage. Because these two are deeply intertwined, concerning ourselves too much with questioning whether Sahibs are tourists or pilgrims is not worthwhile. However, this is exactly what provides insight into the significance of mountaineering in the Sagarmatha region, because it shows that the nature of mountaineering is multi-faceted.

The symbolic meaning of mountaineering

In the search for the significance of Western mountaineering, it's important to take a closer look at the Sahib's lived experience. So: why do Western mountaineers climb? According to Driscoll (2020, 44), while Sherpa climb to acquire economic capital, which I will discuss further in section 4, Sahibs climb for symbolic capital (Driscoll 2020, 44). Their motivation for climbing isn't tangible. Rather, what they're looking for might be in line with Driscoll's notion of the sublime (2020, 46).

Diving deeper into the meaning of this term, it is an experience of transcendence that is also prevalent in the idea that tourists are searching for a break out of their ordinary life (Badone and Roseman 2004, 6). They want to experience something out of the ordinary, thus they travel to places that might be extraordinary compared to what they're used to. According to Mu et al. (2019, 444), this gives a place symbolic meaning, making it a sacred site (Mu et al. 2019, 444). Badone and Roseman (2004, 5-6) argue that the reason for this desired break from the routine or ordinary, is that individuals have a periodic need for spiritual renewal, and this need is best fulfilled by traveling to someplace new (Badone and Roseman 2004, 5-6). For a Western tourist, the Himalayas might just be the place to go.

The reaching of a renewing, transcendent state can also be compared to a 'rite of passage'. This is a type of ritual where subjects are separated from mundane life, to symbolically move from one state of being to another (Badone and Roseman 2004, 3; Echtler 2020, 66). The ritual takes place in a setting distanced from daily life, establishing a feeling of collectivity called 'communitas' (Badone and Roseman 2004, 3; Durkheim 1912, 38). According to Durkheim, this feeling of collectivity is sacred because religion is an inherently social thing, something that becomes of higher significance when experienced in relation to others (Durkheim 1912, 38). In between these two states of being one finds themselves in a middle phase: a state of liminality (Echtler 2020, 66). In mountaineering, one could even visualize this liminal phase with the image of literally being 'in between' earth and heaven.

Liminality, thus, is something that makes mountaineering a religious enterprise (Badone and Roseman 2004, 3). Within this liminal phase, mountaineers are "facing the 'asocial powers of life and death'" because of the extraordinary circumstances that they're in while climbing (Echtler 2020, 66). A central

part of mountaineering is risk: people fall subject to the mountain, that decides between life and death. With this high level of risk comes fear, and counter-intuitively this feeling of fear is exactly what attracts people to mountains (Echtler 2020, 60). This idea is also supported by Berner (2020, 25), who argues that when mountains succeed in conveying this ambivalence between attraction and fear, they become sacred spaces (Berner 2020, 25). This way, the Sahib can be considered as a pilgrim, going on a climb on Mt. Everest as a ritual in order to reach a kind of spiritual, liminal, or higher state.

Piety in mountaineering

While mountaineering as religion might not be as obvious as other more institutionalized religions (e.g. Islam), as it doesn't have a rule-book which to go by or established credo's on how to behave, mountaineers do have discussions about what the 'proper' way of climbing is (Driscoll 2020, 52-53). For example, some people prefer climbing with an oxygen mask for safety measures, while other believe climbing without it is a more 'pure' way of approaching the mountain. This is a phenomenon that Soares and Osella (2009, S12) capture in the notion of piety. The term entails how people think they can be 'good' practitioners of their religion (Soares and Osella 2019, S12). When regarding mountaineering as a religion, one could compare the discussion about the 'right' way of climbing to the 'right' way of practicing religion.

In conclusion, Sahibs are more often than not both tourists and pilgrims. As it turns out, these terms are often in dialogue with each other, just as the concepts of the secular and sacred are more intertwined than is often assumed. The significance of mountaineering for Sahibs lies in a search for symbolic capital, in the form of a transcendent state of sublime. This kind of state can be achieved through a liminal phase where one experiences both attraction and fear while climbing. It is in this context that the Himalayan mountains become sacred spaces for Western mountaineers. It turns out Rousseau was right: mountains are a form of nature deeply intertwined with religion.

Section 3: The role of media and popular culture

In this section I will analyze what the role of the media and popular culture is in the development of mountaineering culture and religion. Media and religion work together in

complex ways, providing us an answer to this question.

Mediatization

Hjarvard's concept of 'mediatization' might be useful here to clarify how media and religion relate to one another. This term encapsulates how media are nowadays an independent institution in society, exerting influence on social life and ensuring that the whole of society now communicates through the use of media (Hjarvard 2008, 3-4). The mediatization of religion, then, is the development of religion as a societal institution becoming increasingly dependent on media in order to communicate its practices and imagery with the rest of society (2008, 19). Media influence religion in multileveled and complex ways, for example through secularization (2008, 3). However, media can also go hand-in-hand with religion.

Visual representation and commodification of mountaineering

Media are producers of narratives that people find enchanting (Hjarvard 2008, 10). While they can be factual, they're often not. Still, they can supply fantasies and emotional experiences, even conveying a feeling of transcendence (2008, 10). This happens in mountaineering culture too, with media conveying an enchanting, often romanticized narrative to society and giving it more spiritual significance.

In mountaineering, different forms of media are used to produce an enchanting narrative, like news and literature, but especially visual media like film (Driscoll 2020; Echtler 2020). One can uncover how filmmakers try to achieve this narrative by looking at the form of this visual content. Visual representations of mountaineering often include an account of a specific individual or group taking on a challenging climbing project (Echtler 2020). In mountaineering films, there is a great emphasis on the elements of risk and fear (2020, 60). These central elements are conveyed through the screen using special cinematographic techniques to exaggerate the experience, in order to grip the audience (2020, 66). For example, the verticality of walls of rock is accentuated, making clear that the climber might fall to their death at any moment (2020, 60). Echtler (2020, 68) argues that when audiences are carried away enough, it's as if they're undergoing it for themselves, experiencing their own rites of passage through the screen (Echtler 2020,

68). Following Berner (2020, 25), if a film succeeds in creating a feeling of both attraction and fear while watching, it's possible for the audience to be enchanted by the narrative through mediatization, maybe even reaching a state of liminality or transcendent sublime, without actually being on a mountain themselves (Berner 2020, 25; Driscoll 2020, 25; Echtler 2020, 66). This shows how visual representations of mountaineering in media can stimulate its religious aspects.

In addition, during the last few decades mountaineering filmmaking has turned into a separate industry altogether, marketing it for a wider public (Echtler 2020, 67-68). While films become more focused on single individual dare-devils and their projects become ever-more risky, the outdoor industry benefits from the growing popularity. This is how mountaineering gets commodified and eventually incorporated into the neo-liberal entertainment industry, making these types of films more mainstream (2020, 67-68). This enforces the creation of an enchanting narrative for even more people, bringing more people to mountaineering culture, thus stimulating mountaineering as both a popular culture phenomenon and a new kind of religion.

In sum, one could say that mountaineering as a religious institution is subject to the process of mediatization. As forms of mediatization, both the visual representation and the commodification of mountaineering contribute in producing enchanting narratives about mountaineering, romanticizing and popularizing it (Berner 2020, Driscoll 2020; Echtler 2020; Hjarvard 2008). Thus, the media stimulate both the popularization and the religionization of mountaineering. It is clear, then, that in this phenomenon popular culture and religion are intertwined with each other.

Section 4: Implications for the Sherpa population

Unsurprisingly, the process of the simultaneous popularization and religionization of Western mountaineering in Nepal has a deep impact on the Sagarmatha region and the people that inhabit it. Out of the intertwinement between religion and popular culture flow societal tensions that I will discuss briefly in this section.

Economic, ecologic and religious implications

As discussed in section 1, the rise of tourism in the Victorian period was deeply rooted in

European colonialism. Westerners set out to explore places like the Himalayas, and came into contact with an exotic Other, in this case the indigenous Sherpa population (Driscoll and Atwood 2020, 11). Driscoll (2020, 48) uses the term 'contact zone' to describe what happens when Westerners come into colonial contact with an Other (Driscoll 2020, 48). Within this contact zone, a process of othering ensues, where the Westerners distance themselves from the Sherpa, creating a dichotomous relationship. Here, power relations are at play that enforce a racial hierarchy, based upon supposed categories of skin color (Driscoll 2020, 44-45; Driscoll and Atwood 2020, 11).

The Sherpa are a kind of Buddhists and consider the area, including mountains like Mt. Everest, sacred land, calling it a beyul, which means 'hidden valley' (Mu et al. 2019, 442 and 447). Today however, the place is everything but hidden. Due to the popularization and religionization of mountaineering, the Sagarmatha region is now an attraction for people from all around the world, many of them Westerners (2019, 445-446). This has increased the pressure on the Sagarmatha region in a number of ways, putting the economic, ecologic and religious interests of the Sherpa at stake (2019, 453).

First, the growing mountaineering culture in the Himalayas has had economic effects on the Sherpa. Because of rising tourism, Sherpa generally switched from working in farming to working in the outdoor leisure industry, for example by making climbing as a guide for groups their profession, in order to gain economic capital (Driscoll 2020, 44 and 48). This made them increasingly dependent on foreigners coming to the region. On a national level too, the tourism branch is the most important economic asset for Nepal (Mu et al. 2019, 447).

Next, with more and more people trekking in the area, tourism also has ecological effects on the land. Sherpa consider the land sacred and their values are deeply connected to the natural landscape (Mu et al. 2019, 447). They regard the mountains as inhabited by their gods, thus treating the environment with respect is important to them (Driscoll 2020, 48). However, tourists may behave inappropriately towards the sacred landscape, overcrowding it and disrupting local values (2019, 455). This way, tensions arise from the growing economic dependence on tourism on the one hand,

and the desire for conservation of the sacred land on the other hand.

Lastly, the mass influx of foreigners flowing into their sacred land has a significant influence on the way Sherpa consider and practice their religion. Mu et al. (2019, 442) argue that while Sherpa are actively trying to preserve their religious values and identity, religious practice becomes less of a priority as they become more independent on tourism (Mu et al. 2019, 442). The Sherpa's spiritual values often clash with local need for income, and they try to resolve this by commercializing their culture and religion, by opening up certain practices for tourist consumption (2019, 444-445). As a result, the landscape becomes a hybrid place shared by Sherpa and tourists alike. However, this makes it hard for Sherpa to maintain their practice's traditional and authentic values and to sustain a sense of sacredness while also profiting from it economically (2019, 445).

In sum, the increase in tourism results in different kinds of implications for the Sherpa community. It changed the way Sherpa look at their land, shifting from the home of their gods to a workplace (Driscoll 2020, 48). Overall, the Sherpa seem to cope with these changes in a hybrid and resilient way, however I will not engage in the question whether these changes are for better or for worse (Mu et al. 2019, 448). What is certain is that the way Sherpa look at their land has changed.

Comparing the religious value of the Sagarmatha region for the Sherpa with the Sahibs', it becomes clear that for both groups, the area is of religious significance. Yet, as power relations are still at play within this hybrid contact zone, it seems as though the religious association of the Sherpa with the land diminishes, pushed out by Western mountaineering religion.

Conclusion

To conclude, Western mountaineers seem to consider mountaineering in the Sagarmatha region of religious significance.

Western mountaineering culture in the Sagarmatha region of Nepal originated from the Victorian era, when people began traveling for leisure in search for a state of sublime. They found this in places like the Himalayas, suggesting that mountains might carry a spiritual kind of significance.

In order to find out what the nature of mountaineering is, there's no use in trying to draw definitive lines between concepts like tourism and pilgrimage, and secular and

sacred, as their intertwinement is inherent to travel in the modern age. Rather, the significance of Western mountaineering is found in symbolic capital, which takes the form of an experience of the sublime, bringing this notion from the Victorian era into a present-day context. This search transcendency is ritualized in the form of a rite of passage. In the liminal phase of this mountaineering ritual, the Sahib experiences a combination of both fear and attraction, due to high risk. This experience of something out of the mundane is what makes the mountain become a sacred space, revealing the multi-faceted nature of mountaineering.

This development does not come from nowhere. Through mediatization in the forms of visual representation and commodification, enchanting narratives are produced that romanticize and popularize mountaineering. Media stimulate the popularization and religionization of mountaineering, bringing to life a new religion of mountaineering in which popular culture and religion are intertwined with each other.

This does produce economic, ecologic and religious implications for the native Sherpa inhabitants of the Sagarmatha region. In addition, the area is of religious significance to both Sherpa and Sahib in different ways which is a source of social contestation. Because of the power relations set up through a racial hierarchy, it seems as though Western mountaineering religion is enforcing itself, making use of media and popular culture in its favor.

As it turns out, Western mountaineers have found a Stairway into Heaven, and they found it in the Himalayas. As they're waiting in line in between earth and heaven, they have no choice but to agree with Rousseau: these mountains are sacred.

Bibliography

Badone, Ellen, and Sharon R. Roseman. 2004. "Approaches to the Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism." In *Intersecting Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism*, Ellen Badone and Sharon R. Roseman, 1-23. Urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Berner, Ulrich. 2020. "Mountains as Sacred Spaces." *Culture and Religion* 21, no.1:18-30.

Driscoll, Christopher M. 2020. "Sublime Sahib: White Masculine Identity Formation in Big Mountain Climbing." *Culture and Religion* 21, no.1:43-57.

Driscoll, Christopher M., and David Atwood. 2020. "Mountaineering religion: A Critical Introduction." *Culture and Religion* 21, no.1:1-17.

Durkheim, Emile. 1912. Excerpts from: "The Elementary Form of Religious Life." In *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, Michael Lambek, 34-49. Malden: Blackwell Publishers.

Echtler, Magnus. 2020. "Call of the Mountain: Modern Enchantment On and Off the Screen." *Culture and Religion* 21, no.1:58-71.

Hjarvard, Stig. 2008. "The Mediatization of Religion: A Theory of the Media as Agents or Religious Change." *Nordic Journal of Media Studies* 6, no.1:9-26.

Klassen, Chris. 2014. "Religion and Popular Culture." In *Religion and Popular Culture: A Cultural Studies Approach*, 7-28. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mu, Yang, Sanjay K. Nepal and Po-Hsin Lai. 2019. "Tourism and Sacred Landscape in Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest) National Park, Nepal." *Tourism Geographies* 21, no.3:442-459.

Soares, Benjamin, and Filippo Osella. 2009. "Islam, Politics, Anthropology." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15, no.1: S1-23.

“I don’t feel safe in the streets”

Street harassment viewed in the continuum of violence in relation to symbolic and everyday violence

Nienke Verbaan

“Street harassment is more the rule than the exception in the streets of the Netherlands, including in Utrecht. I frustrated myself about the amount of experiences that I heard from friends and the encounters that I have had myself. For many this is a very relevant topic and street harassment influences the way they feel in public spaces. I channeled this frustration into an analysis of street harassment as a form of violence and I am proud of how it turned out.”

Introduction

Utrecht, June 2021. “We were getting the groceries out of the car and taking them inside, so we kept coming back to the car. Two guys were in a car doing laughing gas and driving around, at first on the opposite side of the parking area. They were honking and obviously looking at us, three women. We repeatedly came back to our car and eventually they parked their car next to ours. They lowered the window and shouted at us and started asking us stuff: if they could have some of the food we had, they commented on our skirts, said that we were pretty and asked if we wanted to come with them. We told them no and after that we didn’t react anymore. When we wanted to get in the car and leave, one of them prevented me from closing the door of the car. He did not get out of his own car. I remember that I felt really unsafe. The moment he would have come out of the car, I would not have known what to do.[1,2]

Stories of street harassment, like this, are not the exception but the rule in the Netherlands. Different cities have

tried to map the experiences of street harassment. In these researches street harassment contained of wolf-whistling, cat-calling, following someone, making offending comments, and asking for sex (Slachtofferwijzer.nl). In Amsterdam and Rotterdam more than eighty percent of the women have experiences like this, and in Utrecht it is more than sixty percent of the women (Beek and Smeets 2019; Fischer and Sprado 2017; Gemeente Utrecht). There has not been a national research into an estimated number of women experiencing street harassment yet. Worldwide, the estimated number of women who experienced street harassment is somewhere between ninety and hundred percent (Fileborn 2018). This paper will focus on street harassment in the Netherlands. Even though there has not been much academic research into street harassment in the Netherlands, this paper will focus on the Netherlands through the use of numbers and examples of street harassment from the Netherlands only. An important note, before going on, is that street harassment can have many natures; this paper will focus on sexual street harassment, since this is the most common form experienced by women. When writing about street harassment in this paper, it is always meant as sexual street harassment. The central question of this paper will be: how can street harassment be viewed in the continuum of violence in relation to symbolic and everyday violence in the Netherlands? First, the concept of street harassment will be introduced. Second the continuum of violence and sexual violence will be discussed. With that lens the paper will turn to the concepts of symbolic and everyday violence in relation to street harassment before wrapping up in a conclusion.

Street harassment: Objectification and Embodiment

As mentioned earlier, lots of women have experienced street harassment. However, in the Netherlands there has not been a national research into the phenomenon yet. There is no general or widespread accepted definition of street harassment. However, there are some typologies that overlap in different definitions of street harassment. Almost each definition contains a description of the kind of behaviour street harassment exists of. In this paper the definition of street harassment given by Del Greco and Christensen will be adhered: street harassment is "unwanted sexual attention, harassment, or objectification by a stranger

in the public space, such as the streets, parks or public transportation (2019, 474). Actions of street harassment can include but are not limited to staring, leering, wolf-whistling, following someone, gesturing, sexual comments, car-honking, unwanted conversation, kissing noises, unwanted touching and public masturbation (El Moghrabi 2015; Fileborn 2018; Fileborn and O'Neill 2021 Fileborn and Vera-Grey 2017; Slachtofferwijzer.nl). A few examples of comments are: "Whore!" "Come and fuck me!" "Can I eat your pussy?" "I would love for you to call me daddy." "Hot bitch."[3] This kind of behaviour is often carried out by men targeting women in the public sphere. However, it is important to note that not everyone experiences street harassment in the same way. Street harassment can also include racism, homophobia, Islamophobia and so on. Fileborn and O'Neill write that black women often have difficulty untangling racist and sexist comments since they often overlap (2021, 2).

When men target women, street harassment has to do with sexual objectification of women. Sexual objectification is, according to Henry (2017) one of the motivations that led perpetrators to harass women in public spaces. Frederickson and Roberts (1997) argue in their article on objectification, that bodies are constructed from more than alone its biological components. It is also constructed through "sociocultural practices and discourses" (1997, 174). They propose an (sexual) objectification theory wherein objectification is defined as "being treated *as a body* (or collection of body parts) valued predominantly for its use to (or consumption by) others" (Frederickson and Roberts 1997, 174). Others explain it as how a woman's body is separated from her person and is viewed as an object of men's sexual desire that is to be used for the pleasure of others, this practice is dehumanizing since it rips woman from their personality by focusing solely on their bodies (Carr, et al. 2011). Sexual objectification is played out in different arenas such as visual media wherein males are looking at their female partner and visual media that spotlight female bodies, such as pornography but also mainstream films, visual arts and music videos (Frederickson and Roberts 1997). Objectification of the female body is also played out in social and interpersonal encounters in public space, which is street harassment.

Research has shown that women, in different degrees, internalize this objectifying outsiders view which leads to self-objectification (Frederickson and Roberts 1997). This can cause women to treat themselves as an object which can increase anxiety about their physical appearance, body shame and anxiety about their physical safety. Women who experience this are at risk of mental health issues such as eating disorders, depression and sexual disfunction (Carr et al. 2011). A second consequence of street harassment is increasing fear of other gender-based violence, such as rape, intimate partner violence and human sex trafficking. Street harassment socializes women into being more fearful of this other gender-based violence (Harris & Miller 2000). This experience influences how women use and enjoy public space. They feel generally more uncomfortable in it, even when there is no negative encounter (Bastomski and Smith 2017). In their research Bastomski and Smith show that women in are 3.6 times more fearful in the public space (2017). In reaction to feelings of fear, women also take measures to gain a feeling of safety. Harriet Johnson tweeted in March 2021 the following wherein she summarizes a few of the actions women undertake to enhance their feeling of safety: "Every woman you know has taken the longer route. Has doubled back on herself. Has pretended to dawdle by a shop window. Has held her keys in her hand. Has made a fake phone call. Has rounded a corner and run. Every woman you know has walked home scared. Every woman you know.[4] The measures that women take have become habits, which shows that these actions are normalized. The experiences of women, concerning street harassment, are often labelled 'low-key' and 'minor intrusions' (Vera-Grey 2016). Vera-Grey argues that actions that women undertake to feel more safe are the embodiment of men's unwanted intrusions and harassment. It defines the behaviour of women in public space, even though it is not always actively recognized as such (Vera-Grey 2016).

Violence as a continuum

Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes (2004) proposed a violence continuum in the introduction of the anthology 'Violence in War and Peace.' Under the violence continuum they include "all expressions of radical social exclusion, dehumanization, depersonalization, pseudospeciation, and reification which normalize atrocious behavior and violence towards others"

(Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes 2004, 21). Violence is not always direct, more often it is an implicit, symbolic and systematic force that is a part of everyday life. The violences that are encountered in everyday life are all different, but exist alongside each other and are given meaning by social and cultural values in a society (Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes 2004).

Kelly (1987) conceptualized sexual violence in a continuum model. In legal studies and legislation in general this continuum is seen as having two poles between which forms of sexual violence are ranked and hierarchized according to seriousness (Fileborn 2013). However, when thinking about a continuum of (sexual) violence there is a possibility to see how experiences of sexual violence exist alongside each other and how they are interlocked (Fileborn and O'Neill 2021). These experiences can exist of but are not limited to for example rape, sexual assault, street harassment, sexual homicide and femicide (Fileborn and O'Neill 2021; Grzyb, Naudi and Marcuello-Servós 2018; Kelly 1988). Sexual violence, thus, is not always direct. It is more often an indirect and symbolic force that is given meaning by cultural and social values. Street harassment fits into this continuum of (sexual violence) since different kind of violences interlock and overlap each other in the structure of everyday life in the Netherlands.

Symbolic violence

According to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) symbolic violence is, in its most simplistic form, defined as "the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (in Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes 2004, 272). They argue that the mind of the dominated is shaped in certain structures and forms that come from this same dominance that is taken for granted and viewed as natural. It is in this structure that the dominated agrees and is complicit with this domination. A classic example of symbolic violence is gendered oppression: wherein men are the dominant and women the dominated (Bourdieu 2001). Men and women are socialized into and act according to this taken for granted hierarchy which is naturalized in social life. Because of this naturalization it is often misrecognized or not recognized as violence at all. Symbolic domination is engraved in the minds and bodies of the dominant and the dominated, of men and women (Bourdieu 2001). Symbolic violence, thus, is internalized and

legitimises patriarchal societies. Therefore, it can lead to the dehumanization, objectification and violence against female and feminized male bodies.

Street harassment is mainly targeted at women and perpetrated by men. Therefore, street harassment has a relation to gender and sexual violence. In street harassment the man who is objectifying a woman's body, the woman is defined as a being that exists simply for a male's desire. Street harassment has been conceptualized by Margaret Crouch as a means to keep gender relations in their place: "Sexual harassment is a means of maintaining women's status as subordinate in society; it is also a means of keeping women in certain physical spaces and out [of] others, or, at least, of controlling women's behaviour in those spaces (Crouch 2009, 137). Street harassment is thus argued to control women through actual and implying violence (Fileborn and O'Neill 2021). Which keeps the symbolic domination of men in place and therefore is symbolic violence. Therefore, street harassment can be placed in the continuum of sexual violence as proposed by Kelly (1987). Street harassment coexists alongside other sexual violences such as rape and femicide, these kinds of violences are all motivated from the same cultural and social values that gives power to this kind violence. These motivations exist of normalization of street harassment, the sexual objectification of women, their position in society and punishment (Henry 2017). Another study shows that when men are in a group they are more likely to harass, especially when it is seen as normal and standard behaviour (Wesselman and Kelly 2010).

The Istanbul Convention in 2011 stated that as long as women experience gender-based violence on a large scale without governments actively acting on it, equality between men and women cannot be reached (Grzyb, Naudi and Marcuello-Servós 2018). The actions that are included in street harassment, such as whistling, staring and calling out to women, are normalized behaviour in the Netherlands and not recognized as violence by the law. Street harassment is not illegal in the Netherlands. Municipalities have tried to criminalize it but cases of street harassment were untenable in court. This is because a municipality cannot criminalize something that is in conflict with fundamental rights, in this case that fundamental right is freedom of speech (NOS nieuws 2019). Whistling, staring, calling out to women, and other behaviour concerning

street harassment thus is legal in the Netherlands. Therefore, street harassment is a form of symbolic violence since it is an expression of the gender-based hierarchy and at the same time it keeps the gender-based hierarchy in place. It is part of a vicious circle of long existing structures that is hard to break through.

Everyday violence

The anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1996) started using the term everyday violence to describe the normalized and institutionalized 'little' violences, which she calls "small wars", that are all around. Everyday violence is mostly not direct violence but more often implicit and not recognized as such. An important aspect of everyday violence is that it is engraved in everyday life: it is part of a daily and ordinary routine and therefore legitimized (Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes 2004). These forms of violence are "inherent in particular social, economic and political formations" (Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes 2004, 21). Because these violences are a part of everyday life, and familiar to the people experiencing them, they are often not recognized as violence (Bourdieu 1997). Part of everyday violence is the fear of those violences happening on a micro-interactional level. The routine-ness of everyday violence creates, next to the 'small wars', a routinized state of fear of these violences in everyday life (Green in Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes 2004).

Street harassment is a form of everyday violence for multiple reasons. The amount of women that experience street harassment in the Netherlands, as mentioned earlier, is very high. The amounts differ in different cities; in Amsterdam it concerns more than eighty percent of the women between 18 and 45, this is more than sixty percent in Utrecht. Some women, thus, have no experience with street harassment whilst for other women it is a regular event. As a woman said in an interview: "Almost every week people whistle or call out to me in the street and after that I almost always feel uncomfortable" (De Jong and Wiegerinck 2017). For this woman, street harassment is a regular event. Different researches have shown that street harassment has a considerable influence on women's life's because it makes them alter their behaviour in public spaces (Carr et al. 2011; Bastomski and Smith 2017; Harris and Miller 2000; Frederickson and Roberts 1997; Vera-Grey 2016). This altering of behaviour flows from

fear: "I don't feel safe in the streets anymore" (NOS Stories, 2021). This woman is not alone in her experience of fear in public spaces. As mentioned earlier, women feel 3.6 times more fearful in public spaces (Bastomski and Smith 2017). This fear is expressed in altering their behaviour in public spaces, such as the street and public transportation, to guarantee their own safety (Harris and Miller 2000). Examples of this are women asking men to bring them home in the evenings, women walking with their keys between their fingers, they take the longer route home because it is better lit and dress in a way that they look like a man (Trouw Redactie 2021). Such behaviour is motivated by a fear for other gender-based violence, such as rape. This behaviour is an example of the embodiment of street harassment and its consequences (Vera-Grey 2016). Coming back to the numbers that are published about how many women have experienced street harassment it is important to note that everyday violence is not always recognized, therefore there is a possibility that not all street harassment encounters are recognized as such violence and therefore are not shown in the statistics. Street harassment is an ordinary and everyday experience for many women. The harm and fear it causes is normalized and embodied in altering everyday behaviour in public spaces to gain a feeling of safety. This is often misrecognized. Therefore, street harassment is a form of everyday violence.

Conclusion

This paper has shown how street harassment fits into a continuum of (sexual) violence and is therefore lived alongside other forms of violence. Even though there is not always direct violence with obvious harm as with other forms of sexual violence, such as rape and femicide, street harassment causes harm on women through different dynamics. For example through self-objectification which can cause eating disorders, depression and anxiety about physical appearance and physical safety. Street harassment is a way wherein symbolic violence is expressed. In this case of symbolic violence men are the dominant and women the dominated. Street harassment, in this way, is used by men to keep women in their subordinate place by objectifying and controlling them and their behaviour in public spaces. Because women have engraved this kind of violence in their minds and bodies it does affect how they behave in public space. Women are 3.6 times more fearful in public spaces then men and

undertake actions to enhance their feeling of safety. These actors are often embodied and an integral part of everyday life in such a way that it often goes unnoticed and misrecognized. Because it is interwoven in the daily lives of women, it is a form of everyday violence. Street harassment, thus, is a form of symbolic violence and everyday violence. It takes place in the continuum of sexual violence where it coexists with other forms of sexual violence that all flow from the same motivations such as normalization and 'keeping women in their place.' This shows a fundamental problem in Dutch society, since the Istanbul Convention stated how important countering gender-based violence by state agencies is for gender-equality in this state. However, street harassment is still not illegal in the Netherlands and there has been no national research into street harassment yet.

The recent attention for this subject in the Netherlands creates more awareness among men and women which is promising. However, the numbers are still high and there are still many steps to be taken before women will feel entirely safe in the streets again.

Endnotes

1. An experience of street harassment in Utrecht, narrated by a woman, 20 years old.
2. Different nations and municipalities try to counter street harassment in different ways. In the Netherlands different municipalities set up hotlines where you can report your experience. Amsterdam: www.amsterdam.nl/overlast. Utrecht: https://www.utrecht.nl/wonen-en-leven/veiligheid/wat-doet-de-gemeente/straatintimidatie/. Tilburg: https://www.tilburg.nl/stad-bestuur/stad/straatintimidatie/. There are more cities that have set up these hot lines, if you experience street harassment, look up where you can report it in your city or nation.
3. These examples are taken from the Instagram account of @catcallsofams, this Instagram account collects experiences of street harassment in Amsterdam and chalks it on the sidewalk of where the harassment happened. The goal is to raise awareness for experiences of street harassment. Other examples are taken from an item of NOS Stories "Je ziet eruit als een Slet, mag ik mee naar huis?' De Waarheid over Straatintimidatie." Published 4 August 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLjgA68Zck4.
4. Harriet Johnson's tweet after the death of Sarah Everard in the United Kingdom. March 2021. https://twitter.com/harrietejohnson/status/1369717799841595396.

Bibliography

Bastomski, Sara and Philip Smith. 2017. "Gender, Fear, and Public Places: How Negative Encounters with Strangers Harm Women." *Sex Roles* 76: 73-88.

Beek, Eliza van der and Harry Smeets. 2019. "Straatintimidatie Amsterdam, Factsheet 2018." Directie Openbare Orde en Veiligheid.

Bourdieu, Pierre and Loïs Wacquant. 1992. "Symbolic Violence." In *Violence in War and Peace: an Anthology*, edited by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, 272-274. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 2001. "Gender and Symbolic Violence." In *Violence in War and Peace: an Anthology*, edited by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, 339-342. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Bourgois, Philippe and Nancy Scheper-Hughes. 2004. *Violence in War and Peace: an Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Carr, Erika R., Lauren B. Moffitt, Dawn M. Szymanski. 2011. "Sexual Objectification of Women: Advances to Theory and Research." *The Counseling Psychologist* 39(1): 6-38.

Crouch, M. (2009). "Sexual harassment in public places." *Social Philosophy Today* 25:137–148.

De Jong, Carleen and Roos Wiegerinck. "We spraken vrouwen over hun ervaringen met straatintimidatie." VICE, 23 August, 2017. https://www.vice.com/nl/article/ne58m8/we-spraken-vrouwen-over-hun-ervaringen-met-straatintimidatie.

DelGreco, Maria and John Christensen. 2019. "Effects of Street harassment on Anxiety, Depression, and Sleep Quality of College Women." *Sex Roles*, 82: 473-481.

Donnelly, L. C., & Calogero, R. M. 2018. "The role of stranger harassment experiences in college women's perceived possibility of gender crimes happening to them." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 48(3): 165–173.

Fairchild, Kimberly and Laurie A. Rudman. 2008. "Everyday Harassment and Women's objectification." *Social Justice Research* 21: 338-357.

Fileborn, Bianca and F. Vera-Grey. 2017. "I Want to be Able to Walk the Street Without Fear: Transforming Justice for Street Harassment." Feminist Legal Studies 25: 203-227.

Fileborn, Bianca. 2018. "Naming the Unspeakable Harm of Street Harassment: A Survey-Based Examination of Disclosure Practices." *Violence Against Women* 25: 223-248.

Fischer, Tamar, Natascha Sprado. 2017. "Seksuele straatintimidatie in Rotterdam." Directie Veiligheid gemeente Rotterdam and Erasmus University Rotterdam. https://www.eur.nl/nieuws/seksuele-straatintimidatie-rotterdam-onderzocht-0.

Frederickson, Barbara L., Tomi-Ann Roberts. 1997. "Objectification Theory: Toward understanding Women's Lived Experiences and Mental Health Risks." *Psychology of Women* 21: 173-206.

Gemeente Utrecht. "Veiligheid Straatintimidatie." https://www.utrecht.nl/wonen-en leven/veiligheid/wat-doet-de-gemeente/straatintimidatie/.

Green, Linda. 1998. "Living in a State of Fear." In *Violence in War and Peace: an Anthology* edited by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, 186-195. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Grzyb, Magdalena, Marcelini Naudi and Chaime Marcuello-Servós. "Femicide definitions." In *Femicide Across Europe: Theory, research and prevention*. Edited by Shalva Weil, Consuelo Corradi and Marcelini Naudi. Bristol: Policy Press.

Harris, M.B. and K.C. Miller. 2000. "Gender and perceptions of danger." *Sex Roles* 43: 843-863.

Henry, Hani M. 2016. "Sexual Harassment in the Egyptian Streets: Feminist Theory Revisited." *Sexuality and Culture* 21:270-286.

Kelly, Janice R. Eric D. Wesselman. 2010. "Cat-Calls and Culpability: Invetigating the Frequency and Functions of Stranger Harassment." *Sex Roles* 63: 451-462.

NOS Nieuws. 2019. "Sisverbod' Rotterdam in strijd met vrijheid van meningsuiting." NOS, 19 December 2021. https://nos.nl/artikel/2315425-sisverbod-rotterdam-in-strijd-met vrijheid-van-meningsuiting.

NOS Stories. 2021. "Je ziet eruit als een Slet, mag ik mee naar huis?' De Waarheid over Straatintimidatie." NOS Stories, 4 August 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLjgA68Zck4.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 1996. "Small Wars and Invisible Genocides. *Social Science & Medicine* 43 (5): 889-900.

Slachtofferwijzer.nl "Wat valt er onder straatintimidatie?"

Trouw Redactie. 2021. "Straatintimidatie tegengaan? Mannen opvoeden, daar begint het mee." Trouw, 19 March 2021. https://www.trouw.nl/opinie/straatintimidatie-tegengaan-mannen opvoeden-daar-begint-het-mee~bdeb6443/.

Vera-Gray, Fiona. 2016. "Men's intrusion, women's embodiment: a critical analysis of street harassment." Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. Routledge research in gender and society.

Watched, judged, and examined

Experiences of asylum seekers in the direct provision panopticon in Ireland

Tara Neary

"The direct provision system for asylum seekers in the Republic of Ireland has been in place for as long as I've been alive. Despite this, it is still a minority topic in Irish media. It resurfaces every few months in political or public debates but ultimately it is kept in place by an unjust and racist system. By writing this paper I wanted to learn more about the experiences of people living in the residential centres, and also explore how the system can be seen as a model of disciplinary power."

Introduction

Globalisation has been complicit in creating a world where the flow of goods is the freest it has ever been, but the movement of people has been ultimately constricted. Detention, a form of "internment…of others" is one method that is utilised to constrict movement, and its use has increased considerably in the past few decades (Fassin 2011, p. 219). Strictly speaking, the Republic of Ireland has no policy of detaining migrants unlike other EU states (Lentin, 2016). However, it does have a system for accommodating asylum seekers that strongly resembles detention policies, called the direct provision system. First set up as a temporary solution to house incoming migrants in 2000, direct provision places asylum seekers in 'accommodation centres' where they are provided board and meals (Conlon & Gill, 2013). However, this system has been widely criticised for its lack of respect for the dignity and rights of asylum seekers, leading to public outcry and calls for direct provision to be dismantled. Direct provision forces us to think

about mechanisms of power, and how asylum seekers are coerced and controlled by various power relations in Irish society and politics. Using a Foucauldian lens, theories of disciplinary power and Agamben's concept of 'bare life', this paper will ask the question: can the direct provision system be viewed as a model of disciplinary power? Can the role of sovereign power be included in this? And does disciplinary power actually help describe the experiences of asylum seekers? It will first discuss a selection of Foucault's theories on power, before extending it to theories of necropolitics. The social and historical context of direct provision will be described, followed by a discussion of how the system can be viewed as a panopticon. Finally, Agamben's 'Bare Life' theory will be applied and critically discussed in relation to the governance of asylum seekers. It is hoped through this analysis, a deeper understanding will be provided of the power relations that influence and shape the experiences of asylum seekers in the Republic of Ireland.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Disciplinary Power

When discussing Foucault's theories in this essay, power will be understood as a "complex mesh" made up of relations, as opposed to something merely physical and violent (Revel, 2014, p. 377; Havis, 2014). Disciplinary power concerns what Foucault calls the positive aspects of power. 'Positive aspects' refers to the ways in which people are persuaded or coerced by invisible forces into accepting standards that they come to view as a norm. This greatly contrasts the more traditional notion of sovereign power, which is a very publicly-visible form of domination (Havis, 2014).

Disciplinary power can be characterised by three primary mechanisms: hierarchical observation (or surveillance), examination, and judgement. Hierarchical observation allows the observer to view the subjects from a place of hypervisibility: they can see the subjects but are hidden from the subjects' view. The subjects therefore act as if they are constantly being watched. Judgement refers to the normalising of judgement, or in other words, how disciplinary power determines ideas about what is correct, normal, and natural and thus moulds our behaviour in response to these notions. These two processes culminate in examination, in which individuals are ranked against the standardised norm. Those who meet the requirements are rewarded, while

those who do not are disciplined further. Altogether, these three mechanisms allow for subjects to be trained and influenced by an invisible force (Havis, 2014).

Disciplinary power can also be effectively visualised using Foucault's example of the panopticon prison, which he describes in *Discipline and Punish* (2008). Using Jeremy Bentham's original model, Foucault reimagines the panopticon as a model of disciplinary power in which the hidden guard in the circular prison represents the hierarchical observer who can see all the subjects simultaneously (Foucault, 2008). The panopticon theory can be applied to several aspects of society, such as in schools and workplaces. In the Discussion section, I will argue that this model can also be applied to the direct provision system.

Agamben's 'bare life'

This paper will extend the Foucauldian lens by also briefly using a necropolitics framework, particularly focusing on how Agamben's theory of 'bare life' can be applied to the direct provision system. Necropolitics and bare life try to explain the gaps left in biopolitics theory by arguing that biopolitics does not account for death (Lentin, 2016). If necropolitics is the dictation of life and death (Mbembe, 2003), then 'bare life' refers to figures who are excluded and left outside of the law (Darling, 2009). These figures are described by Agamben as living in a "camp" that is an "impassable biopolitical space" (2017, p.102). Unlike disciplinary power, bare life is concerned with sovereign power: in other words, how the subjects are at the mercy of the sovereign state. Sovereign powers eventually dispose of the people relegated to bare life as they are deemed superfluous, dangerous, or dirty (Lentin, 2016). Agamben uses bare life to describe certain historical examples of internment, such as concentration camps of World War II (2017). This essay will therefore use the concept of bare life to explore how residents of direct provision are treated as surplus bodies and are essentially rendered invisible by the Irish state. However, it will also highlight certain weaknesses of the theory, namely the lack of agency it attributes to asylum seekers.

Description

Direct Provision

The direct provision system was originally established two decades ago as an emergency tactic to reduce the number of migrants benefitting from the Irish social

welfare system. It has violated its 'emergency' status by persisting as the official system for processing asylum seekers (O'Reilly, 2018), even though the number of people seeking asylum has steadily decreased almost linearly since 2002 (Fernando, 2017). There are no accurate statistics available of the number of people currently living in direct provision, but in April 2020 there were approximately 7,400 people housed in direct provision and similar emergency accommodation facilities (Irish Refugee Council, 2021). The average amount of time that asylum seekers stay in direct provision is two years, although some are stuck there for over a decade (Doras, 2021). The majority of the accommodation centres that are used for housing asylum seekers are private for-profit companies that are supervised by the Department of Justice and Equality (Lentin, 2016). These centres are mostly buildings that were built for other purposes, such as former nursing homes, hotels, convents, hostels, and caravan parks (Conlon & Gill, 2013).

The system has been criticised nationally and internationally, including by prominent actors such as Human Rights Watch (2020) and Amnesty International (2021). Similarities have been drawn between direct provision and the infamous Magdalene Laundries, which saw the State and Church-controlled incarceration of unmarried pregnant women in Ireland up until 1996 (Lentin, 2016). Common criticisms include the isolated locations of the accommodation centres (Conlon & Gill, 2013), residents not having sufficient privacy, and poor quality food (Hewson, 2020). There is also substantial evidence to suggest that living in direct provision has profound negative consequences on child development and well-being, which violates the UN Rights of the Child obligations (Fanning & Veale, 2010).

In February 2021, the Irish government announced a plan to replace the direct provision model by 2024 with an alternative system. This ambitious alternative would consist of six State-run reception centres that would act as short-term shelters for asylum seekers before they would move into independent housing in local communities (Pollak, 2021). However, this plan has also been attacked by some critics such as Coakley, who argues that the new system would only serve to rearticulate state control rather than diminish it (Coakley, 2021).

Feeling watched

Residents in direct provision centres are subject to varying amounts of surveillance, depending on the centre's management and adherence to Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) guidelines. There are complaints in some centres about the excessive use of CCTV cameras (which are placed for 'safety' reasons), and also about staff secretly looking through personal and private belongings, such as letters. Some residents therefore say that they feel watched all the time and raised serious concerns about privacy (Hewson, 2020; AkiDwA, 2010). In addition to observation, the residents' whereabouts are also tracked through daily signing-in (although adherence to this rule by centres varies). Failure to sign in can lead to being reprimanded, or even relocated to another centre (Conlon & Gill, 2013), On a bigger scale, the location of asylum seekers is also monitored by taking fingerprint information when the asylum seekers first arrive at the centres. This information is fed into a European database that authorities can monitor to ensure that asylum claims are processed in the first safe country (Hewson, 2020).

Feeling constantly watched in direct provision centres can make asylum seekers feel that they cannot speak against the system for fear of being punished. In a project entitled 'Lives in Limbo', the Irish Times (2014) interviewed people living in the centres about their experiences of the system. One participant interviewed wished to remain anonymous, explaining that:

> *I'm afraid that if I'm identified, I may be transferred [to another centre] … I don't want to be sent out of the system for speaking against the system (Irish Times, 2014).*

Food management in Direct Provision

Analysing the management of food and catering in the direct provision centres reveals multiple conflicts. Although the food provided in centres can vary a lot in quality, one aspect is consistent throughout all of them: the manner in which the food is distributed. Residents have to queue to receive food, canteen-style, at strictly managed times. They therefore often have little to no agency in food preparation and deciding when and what to eat.

> *…all the meals are at a certain time. Like if you miss the breakfast, it's gone. Although recently where I live,*

they've put cookers for us to cook. It's very depressing, I don't have money to buy food, to cook for my family (Irish Times, 2014).

People are made to queue at allocated times and are mostly denied food outside of these periods. In 2018 this issue made headlines when a mother living in the Knockalisheen Accommodation Centre was denied a slice of bread to give to her sick child during the night (MASI, 2018). Even if they have separate cooking facilities, asylum seekers often cannot afford to buy substantial food for themselves as they are only provided €38.80 per week by the State. As only a few meet the requirements to work legally in Ireland while living in direct provision, this weekly allowance is the only source of income for many people.

Being a 'good' asylum seeker

Asylum seekers staying in direct provision are sometimes led to believe that if their behaviour does not comply with the centre's rules, they will be branded as troublesome and therefore might increase their risk of deportation. Being a 'nice' resident can lead to perks, such as getting better food and not being harassed about the daily signing-in rule. However, not being compliant could encourage threats of deportation from staff members. One resident interviewed by Hewson (2020) claimed that the management of the centre he was staying at would threaten residents with deportation or transfer if they raised issues or did not follow the centre's rules. In reality, deportations are relatively infrequent due to the high cost and Ireland's commitments to certain international conventions (Lentin, 2016).

Residents are also encouraged to prove their willingness to integrate by taking part in various courses and activities. Some of the courses offered by centres are redundant and do not meet the needs of the residents. In one centre, a group of women who were dissatisfied with the meagre sewing and crochet classes offered by their centre successfully petitioned to gain access to computer and secretarial courses (Conlon & Gill, 2013). During Hewson's research, interviewees sometimes requested certificates to show they had participated in the study (2020). The certificates would be used as evidence to show that asylum seekers had made concrete attempts to integrate into Irish society.

Boredom

The waiting and uncertainty that people face in direct provision can lead to severe emotional strain. As well as experiencing feelings such as panic and depression, many asylum seekers also have to cope with extreme boredom while waiting for the Irish government to deliberate their appeal. As most residents cannot work legally in the country while living in direct provision, many adults do not have the opportunity to be busy. Depending on the centre, they may have the opportunity to partake in courses and engage with the local community. However, some centres lack these options, and residents are forced to pass the day by sleeping, waiting, and watching television (O'Reilly, 2018). The inability to work can cause significant strain on mental health, as explained by one resident:

> *Yeah, we are scared that we end up getting mad, like we just eat and sleep, that's all we do, we're not allowed to work or study, you know? The worst fear is that you end up, you get to a breaking point, where you go like, mentally wrong (McSavage & Miller, 2017, 0:11:18).*

Limited access to higher-level education is also a cause for feelings of boredom. Free primary and secondary school is provided to children living in direct provision, but until recently, the government did not fund third-level education for asylum seekers. Now, there is a funding scheme available but is only open to asylum seekers who have been living in the country for three or more years (Citizen's Information, 2021). This therefore still excludes a lot of applicants who want to study at third-level education.

Discussion

Direct Provision as a panopticon

Several aspects of living in direct provision mimic the panopticon phenomenon. Of course, conditions vary from centre to centre, but common themes of surveillance, judgement, and examination have emerged in much of the literature reviewed in this paper.

Residents are subject to various levels of surveillance while staying in direct provision. This can vary from CCTV cameras to daily registrations to international tracking in massive databases. It is too simplistic to say that 'the government is watching you': rather, there is an extensive web of people who are involved in the observation process that all

culminate into the figure of the hidden guard in the centre of the panopticon. This continuous, multi-source, observation makes the subjects extremely vulnerable, or as Foucault effectively summarises: "visibility is a trap" (2008, p. 5). Residents are subconsciously coached to avoid any form of dissent, however minor it may be, for fear of their actions being seen and reported.

In addition to living in surveillance, asylum seekers have to live up to certain standards and conform to provided norms. They are either penalised or rewarded depending on their behaviour in relation to these standards and norms. This is very clearly seen in the manner in which food is provided in the centres. By only having meals available at strictly allocated times, residents are taught that they have to adhere to a timetable in order to get food. Failure to show up to meals, or wanting food outside of these times, is clearly discouraged in many centres and residents are therefore punished (i.e., by hunger) if they do not obey these rules. This not only sends a message of conformity but also amplifies the underlying feeling of surveillance, as residents are discouraged from taking food outside of the canteen in some centres (Hewson, 2020). However, residents are not only punished but also rewarded for their behaviour: for example, extra food could also be given to people who were especially friendly with staff members. This highlights what Hewson terms "the positive economy" practised in direct provision (Hewson, 2020, p. 9). Hewson says a positive economy based on gratification and punishment is less likely to attract critique than an exclusive punitive one (2020). Therefore, since direct provision is not strictly punitive, it discourages further inspection than other harsher forms of detainment.

The collection of information of residents' behaviour, together with the use of deportation as a threat is evocative of the mechanism of examination used in the panopticon (Hewson, 2020). Information is collected and constructed into a "case" for each individual asylum seeker and is used to "classify, correct, train and exclude" (Hewson, 2020, p.12). The asylum seekers are compared to the norm, and as illustrated earlier, are threatened with deportation or transferral if they do not conform to the image of the good asylum seeker. The decision on the asylum appeal is the ultimate examination in the direct provision system, but the threat of transferal can also be viewed as one.

This intrinsic complexity of the panopticon is explained by Foucault, who says that:

> *The Panopticon … has a role of amplification; although it arranges power, although it is intended to make it more economic and more effective, it does so not for power itself, nor for the immediate salvation of a threatened society: its aim is to strengthen the social forces—to increase production, to develop the economy, spread education, raise the level of public morality; to increase and multiply (2008, p.11).*

Although maybe counter-intuitive at first, these ideas are apparent in the direct provision system. The government may argue that they are salvaging asylum seekers but using Foucault's view we can see that the system mostly furthers private investors' wealth: In 2018, one private contractor made over €2 million in profit (RTE News, 2020). Therefore, the system may not benefit asylum seekers and the rest of society, but it does benefit certain people involved in the business. In terms of spreading education, we can interpret the direct provision system as teaching asylum seekers certain norms; whether this can be termed as 'education' is dubious. Finally, the system also portrays itself as spreading morality saving refugees and helping them integrate into a welcoming Irish society.

Therefore, since the three mechanisms of disciplinary power and the above characteristics are evident in direct provision, I argue that the system is a functioning model of disciplinary power that is used to watch, judge, and examine refugees. It mimics several characteristics of Bentham's panopticon, such as the invisible observer and the threat of visibility. Moreover, residents are not only disciplined by other forces but begin to self-discipline, and reinforce the control exacted onto them by behaving in certain ways (O'Reilly, 2018). In other words, they become "the front-line agents of their own repression" (Havis, 2014, p. 114). This raises several questions about the agency of residents, which is not covered in this essay but is tackled by Lentin (2016).

Homo sacer and the refugee

Agamben theorises bare life as "the life of *homo sacer*", a figure in Ancient Rome who is excluded from society (2017, p. 10-11). In some ways, homo *sacer* symbolises the refugee: a person who is marginalised,

placed outside of the law and is at the mercy of the sovereign state (Lentin, 2016). In relation to direct provision, we can see that the system fits the description of the camp that Agamben describes: a place that physically isolates people who are not protected by the law (Lentin, 2016). The consequences of isolation can be clearly in the frustration residents face on a day to day basis: the inability to cook their own food, the barriers they face to work or study, and lack of activities provided at centres. They have limited rights and cannot escape the camp as they would forfeit the accommodation provided by the State.

However, in other ways, the theory of bare life does not sufficiently fit the direct provision model. Firstly, Agamben's eurocentric perspective does not include race in his analysis. Lentin argues that the difference between citizen and non-citizen in Ireland is a racialised one, which is also reflected in Ireland's constitution (2016). Therefore, the system that houses asylum seekers is also racialised. However, despite race being absent from Agamben's focus, his theories are still considered useful in critical race and migration studies (Lentin, 2016). Secondly, bare life overlooks the agency of subjects living in the camp. This, according to Lentin, is a shortcoming as it ignores the various protests and other forms of agency that asylum seekers undertake against direct provision (2016). Asylum seekers are therefore not considered political agents in their own right by Agamben (Lentin, 2016).

Despite some weaknesses, Agamben's bare life theory is still a useful tool to look at issues of marginalised life and death within the Foucauldian panopticon. It allows for a more in-depth analysis of the conditions in direct provision, and how residents are treated and restricted by the government. Although in some ways it differs greatly from Foucault's ideas of discipline, I argue that these two theories can complement each other in the context of direct provision.

Conclusion

This essay has shown how the direct provision system in the Republic of Ireland can be viewed as a model of disciplinary power, or indeed as a panopticon. This can be seen by the excessive forms of surveillance, the management of the centres, and the use of various threats by staff against the residents. However, this model, while very effective for analysing mechanisms of power,

does not fully consider the experiences of the asylum seekers themselves. Agamben's theory of bare life can help us understand this aspect while also showing us that the power of the sovereign state cannot be fully dismissed. The exclusion of asylum seekers from Irish society and law results in mental strain, as the State makes it more difficult for residents to exercise their agency. However, asylum seekers can still exercise agency in multiple ways, from protests to politics to hunger strikes. Therefore, direct provision is a system that not only disciplines asylum seekers but pushes them outside of the Irish law, in an attempt to render them and their experiences invisible. These tactics are becoming more and more scrutinised as the criticism of the system continues to grow. Hopefully the planned reforms of the direct provision system will not lead to another form of discipline, but rather a system that respects the dignity and rights of asylum seekers in the Republic of Ireland.

Bibliography

Agamben, G. (2017). The Omnibus Homo Sacer. Stanford University Press.

AkiDwA. (2010). 'Am only saying it now': Experiences of women seeking asylum in Ireland. https://akidwa.ie/wpcontent/uploads/2019/10/p_20121218090700AmOnlySayingItNowAkiDwA.pdf.

Citizen's Information. (2021, August 30). Direct provision system. Retrieved December 21, 2021, From: https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving_country/asylum_seekers_and_refugeesservices_for_asylum_seekers_in_ireland/direct_provision.html.

Coakley, L. (2021). Ireland's White Paper to End Direct Provision and Establish a New International Support Service (2021) and the 'sticky' discourse of control. *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 079160352110461. https://doi.org/10.1177/07916035211046143.

Conlon, D., & Gill, N. (2013). Gagging orders: asylum seekers and paradoxes of freedom and protest in liberal society. *Citizenship studies*, 17(2), 241-259. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2013.780748.

Fanning, B., & Veale, A. (2004). Child poverty as public policy: Direct provision and asylum seeker children in the Republic of Ireland. *Child Care in Practice*, 10(3), 241-251. https://doi.org/10.1080/1357527042000244374.

Fassin, D. (2011). Policing Borders, Producing Boundaries. The Governmentality of Immigration in Dark Times. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 40, 213–226. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41287729.

Fernando, N. (2016). The discursive violence of postcolonial asylum in the Irish republic. *Postcolonial Studies*, 19(4), 393-408. https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2016.1317390.

Foucault, M. (2008). "Panopticism" from Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison. *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*, 2(1), 1–12. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/252435.

Darling, J. (2009). Becoming bare life: Asylum, hospitality, and the politics of encampment. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 27(4), 649-665.

Direct Provision. (2021, June 14). Irish Refugee Council. https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/listing/category/direct-provision.

Doras. (2021). Direct Provision – Doras. https://doras.org/direct-provision/.

Havis, D.N. (2014). Discipline. In L. Lawlor & J. Nale (Ed.), *The Cambridge Foucault Lexicon* (p.110-119). Cambridge University Press.

Hewson, D. (2020). 'All the time watched': an analysis of disciplinary power within the Irish Direct

Provision system. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2020.1844001.
Human Rights Watch. (2020, October 28). Ireland: Asylum Seekers' Right to Work Overdue. https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/07/13/ireland-asylum-seekers-right-work-overdue.
Lentin, R. (2016). Asylum seekers, Ireland, and the return of the repressed. *Irish Studies Review*, 24(1), 21-34. https://doi.org/10.1080/09670882.2015.1113009.
Lives in Limbo. (2014). The Irish Times. https://www.irishtimes.com/news/lives-in-limbo.
MASI. (2018, November 4). Inside Ireland's direct provision: A slice of bread and the bureaucracy. Retrieved December 21, 2021, from https://www.masi.ie/2018/11/04/inside-irelandsdirect-provision-a-slice-of-bread-and-the-bureaucracy/.
Mbembe, A. (2003). Necropolitics. (L. Meintjes, Trans). *Public Culture*, 15(1), 11–40. https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-15-1-11.
McSavage, D., & Miller, L. (Directors). (2017). Direct Provision – Ireland's Asylum Seekers [Documentary].
O'M, S. (2021, February 23). Direct Provision: 20 years too long. Amnesty International Ireland. https://www.amnesty.ie/direct-provision/.
O'Reilly, Z. (2018). 'Living Liminality': everyday experiences of asylum seekers in the 'Direct Provision'system in Ireland. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 25(6), 821-842. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2018.1473345.
Pollak, S. (2021, February 26). No easy task as Government plans to end decades of direct provision. The Irish Times. https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/no-easy-task-as-government-plans-to-end-decades-of-direct-provision-1.4495417.
Revel, J. (2014). Power. In L. Lawlor & J. Nale (Ed.), *The Cambridge Foucault Lexicon* (p.110-119). Cambridge University Press.
RTÉ News. (2020, February 13). Direct provision provider made €2.36m profit in 2018. RTE. Retrieved December 21, 2021, from https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2020/0213/1115129-direct-provision-profit/.

Ethical dimensions of nuclear energy

Exploring fusion and fission, and the perspectives of residents and scientists

Borbála Jáger, Nanna Sandager Kisby & Nina de Waard

"Have you heard about nuclear energy? We guess so. Do you know the difference between nuclear fusion and fission energy? And how do the various actors consider the ethical dimensions of such energy sources? We had some ideas but aimed to know more by conducting research about the ethics of nuclear energy. Since knowledge sharing was a key point in our findings, we also aim to promote discussions about fusion and fission energy by publishing this paper. Moreover, we hope that our methodology – combining participant observation, online interviews, visual and sensory ethnography –, inspires students to always explore their opportunities and conduct ethnographies that may shape their perspectives as well."

Introduction

Nuclear power is not only a source of energy, but a source of controversy regarding its ethical dimensions, benefits, and consequences. Alternatives to fossil fuels are greatly needed if humanity is to ensure climate and planetary sustainability, while maintaining current levels of energy consumption. However, while nuclear power could solve these issues, it is opposed by many because of the dreadful consequences it has caused in the past (Brooks 2012).

But what does nuclear power mean? While generally this term is associated with power plants like in Chernobyl or Fukushima, nuclear energy has two types: fission and fusion. Scientifically speaking, nuclear power means power generated using a nucleus, the core of an atom. Splitting one nucleus is called nuclear fission energy, mostly known for generating "nuclear energy", but also risk and fear. However, fusing two nuclei is a source of energy too. Fusion needs very little material and is much more controlled than fission energy – an advantage to avoid explosions, and thereby fear and

resistance. It has been explored and promoted by scientists for several decades now, who believe that it is the solution for the energy problems of the 21st century (Harms 2005).

Energy transition comes with various ethical questions and dilemmas (see Argenti and Knight 2015; Rasch and Köhne 2017; Howe 2019; High 2019). The narratives and imaginaries that accompany certain energy sources play an important role. In our research, we have found scientific relevance in exploring the energy ethics of two groups of people: 1) the residents who live close to a nuclear fission power plant in the Netherlands, a town called Vlissingen and 2) the scientists who work on nuclear fusion energy in Max Planck Institute for Plasma Physics in Germany. Our research focuses on how fission and fusion nuclear energy are connected, and how the two groups of people experience the ethical dimensions of nuclear energy. We further draw on Taylor's (2004) definition of *social imaginaries* to describe the ways in which people make sense of the world, based on social exchanges. In this case, how people possess certain "imaginaries" associated with nuclear energy, based on shared narratives and past events. This leads to our research question: *What social imaginaries are produced by nuclear energy, and how do they compare between 1) residents living in the proximity of a nuclear fission power plant in the Netherlands and 2) nuclear fusion scientists in Germany?*

To answer this question, our research was conducted in two parts. First, a two-day field trip to Vlissingen, where we used participant observation and informal interviews as methods to explore the perspectives of the residents. In addition, we used sensory and visual ethnography (see Pink 2015; Pink 2021) to gain a deeper understanding of being in the proximity of a nuclear fission power plant. We also used our own sensory impressions, diary writing, and photography. Secondly, we conducted online interviews with physicists working on a nuclear fusion experimental device called Wendelstein 7-X (W7X) in Greifswald, Germany, to explore their ethical perspectives, focusing on their experience as scientists and the role of nuclear energy in contemporary societies.

First, the theoretical framework regarding nuclear energy and energy ethics is presented. Then the methodology reflection is followed by our main findings. Concluding, we aim to answer the research

question with reflection on limitations and opportunities for further research.

Theoretical framework and debate

Energy transition bring numerous questions in the 21st century, from considering the economic, environmental dimensions about the sources, to the fair and equal distribution of the generated energy. This section provides a theoretical framework and scientific debates regarding the ethical dimensions of nuclear energy.

Energy, culture, and politics

Energy is a key factor to understand how a culture and society operates. White (1943) was one of the first who studied energy from an anthropological perspective to explore its influential effects on societal systems. "Everything in the universe may be described in terms of energy." (White 1943, 335). He connects cultural changes primarily with the changes of energy usage. Similarly, but more than 60 years later, Mitchell (2009) argues that different types of energy use create different social structures. His term *Carbon Democracy* describes that the usage of coal and oil affected democracies. From the late 19th century coal made the rise of mass politics possible by the need for cooperation of the workers that affected socio-political sides. However, the use of oil sets limits to this democracy from the middle of the 20th century as everyday workers play less of a role and international corporations achieve greater centralized power.

Boyer (2011) uses the term *energopolitics*, arguing how power dynamics are governed by energy. It is fundamental to the function of the state and determines its governance. Nuclear fusion energy might transform governance due to its promised safe and unlimited energy. We elaborate more on this in our findings.

Due to its historical events, like Chernobyl and Fukushima, the use of fission energy is considered as a dangerous source, linked with the narratives of nuclear power (Brooks 2012). However, fusion energy creates safer and more stable ways to generate energy but is lesser known by the public. While further research is needed, it has been promoted by scientists for several decades. To generate adequate circumstances for the fusion of the two nuclei, one needs extremely high temperatures (100 million °C), as it creates a higher chance for the two nuclei to fuse when they meet (Harms 2005). Today there are only experimental fusion devices: Further

research may lead to experimental fusion reactors, later to fusion reactors that could be used to supply the world with the needed energy.

Energy justice and energy ethics

As a consumer product, energy is a limited resource. Energy access on a global scale is highly unequal, favoring the rich and privileged countries – and citizens – that dominate the global market. Thus, "global inequalities are [...] produced through forms of energy, their extraction, and their uneven distribution" (Howe 2019, 164). Furthermore, methods of energy production are often environmentally and socially unsustainable, as most countries are currently dependent on fossil fuels to maintain contemporary standards of living.

This produces social, environmental contestations, leading to debates regarding energy ethics. Taking a Kantian (1996) approach to the question of morality, we define it as an action one should do only if one judges that it would be acceptable for all others to commit that same action. In this sense, current levels of energy production and distribution are neither ethical nor just. Thus, it should be a priority for those in power to develop socially and environmentally sustainable access to energy. However, while renewable energy is promoted in this manner, current technologies are unable to supply the entire world. As Argenti and Knight (2015) illustrate, renewable technologies are often built in places where they do not benefit local communities and instead extract resources abroad, financed by international investors. Thus, these initiatives "raise questions of environmental sustainability, land rights, and the relative weakness of local governments faced with multinational corporate interests" (Argenti and Knight 2015, 782) – as they are dependent on a global energy injustice.

While energy transitions from fossil fuels to renewable energy are often taken as the necessary step towards sustainable energy production, they produce new issues and contestations. According to Rasch and Köhne (2017), studies show that renewable energy is unevenly distributed, based on discrimination and unfair recognition of rights (Rasch and Köhne 2017, 608). On the other hand, they claim that the meaning of energy justice is non-static, as it is made and remade by different actors through their "practices and imaginations" (Rasch and Köhne 2017, 608). In the same way, meanings of justice and ethical conduct are created in

relation to other energy sources, such as nuclear energy.

Scientists are exploring nuclear fusion energy as an alternative way of energy production. However, past experiences and associations with nuclear energy make for current disputes, and many deem it unethical to pursue as an energy source. As Howe (2019) argues, the other-than-human has a kind of agency that cannot be ignored in debates concerning energy ethics – and in the case of nuclear energy, it is exactly the agency of the other-than-human (i.e., nuclear fission energy) that is feared. However, there is a crucial distinction between nuclear fission and fusion, which is often missed in public debate. This is essential to the ethics of nuclear energy, moving it beyond past fears and associations with trauma.

Nonetheless, as High (2019) argues, ethical intentions do not necessarily exist in accordance with the total consequences of one's actions. Her fieldwork shows how individuals evaluate the ethical dimensions of their engagements with the US oil and gas industry, as they, driven by moral ambition, support environmentally damaging energy extractions to create better lives for themselves and others. High shows that questions of ethical behavior are essentially subjective, as individuals navigate and make sense of the world in which they are situated, with the options they are given. While anyone's motives may be questioned, High essentially highlights the ambiguity of energy ethics, as actions cannot merely be considered "good" or "bad" - although people often do consider energy sources in such terms. During our fieldwork, this tension has been researched to uncover how people discuss different energy sources.

The experts and the citizens

Our research approaches two different groups of actors: experts and citizens. For the experts we interviewed physicists who are currently working at an experimental nuclear fusion device in Greifswald, Germany. For the citizens we visited Vlissingen and conducted informal interviews with residents in the surrounding area of a fission nuclear power plant.

Like Nader (1981, 199), we wonder "how the work organization affects how scientists [...] think," and how the environment of the laboratory influences the view of scientists on nuclear energy. As her approach makes clear, it is valuable for anthropologists to engage in conversation

with scientists who are otherwise not conducting work with humans. She explains that "perceptions of the past, the future, and the present are intimately tied to what one feels is possible, and what one is optimistic or pessimistic about" (Nader 1981, 200). These perceptions, and how they may differ from the perspective of citizens regarding the ethical considerations (High 2019) of nuclear power production, were researched.

Similarly, Winther and Wilhite (2015) explain how perception of consumers is influenced by their surroundings. "In principle, the closer consumers are to the production end (whether physically or mentally), the more significant the source of production is in terms of how they perceive" (Winther and Wilhite 2015, 574) – the source of energy. Awareness of where the energy comes from and how it is produced influences people's perspectives on certain characteristics of the energy source: whether it is cheap or expensive, clean or polluting, risky or safe. Therefore, we questioned in what ways this awareness shapes the perspectives of residents on nuclear energy.

Methodological reflection

In Vlissingen, participant observation and informal interviews provided us with data sufficient for the scope of this paper. People seemed open to share their opinions; however, due to the length of the research period, there was no chance to conduct in-depth follow-up interviews. Therefore, sensory and visual ethnography added deeper layers of understanding.

The scientists in Greifswald were eager to share their knowledge and seemed to have already considered the ethical perspectives of nuclear energy in general. However, their explanations were at times complicated to follow as a non-physicist. Furthermore, this part of the research lacked some dimension, as it was not possible for us to conduct participant observation in Germany.

We highlight that we gained access to both field sites through family connections; the father of Boysenberry, one of the authors is a resident in Vlissingen, and the sister of Blackberry, another is a physicist in Greifswald. While we are aware that these connections influence our positionality, we believe that the presence of a third researcher (Blueberry) helped gain a more distanced perspective. Nonetheless, we see these connections as advantageous, due to 1) the access to our field sites and 2) the established trust with our main interlocutors.

Findings

We present our findings related to the social imaginaries of both residents and scientists, based on the conducted interviews, our own reflections, and the collected sensory and visual ethnographic material.

Imaginaries of us – reflections on our fieldwork

During the field trip to Vlissingen, both the authors Boysenberry and Blueberry kept a diary of their experiences at the nuclear fission plant, that offer a bit of a context of the field. As most pictures show, it was an extremely foggy morning on that day. First, we wondered if we could see anything but luckily there was a small window of opportunity to take pictures with barely any fog.

When we drove to the power plant, we were surprised at the size of the building. Instead of the familiar shape and expected intimidating size of the power plant, it was rather small and did not stand out much among the other energy sources present: a coal central right next to the power plant, rows of white windmills, clusters of solar panels, and electricity wires running through the landscape.

Fig. 1: The nuclear fission power plant in Borsele, near Vlissingen, pictured from a distance (11.01.2022).

Our own imaginaries of the power plant can be characterized as a juxtaposition between the good and the bad, the transparency of access to information and the secrecy of the fog and the fence. The air smelled like burned fuel combined with the salty smell of the nearby sea. It was telling how the security measures became visible through the cameras, the fences, and the guards, while at the same time we could walk around to the beach right up to the pipe system where the cooling water for the power plant is sucked in and pushed out. We felt cold from the fog, but our hands and feet could touch the warm water flowing from the pipes leading away from the power plant back into the sea. As we drove home, we shared reflections about

how the nuclear power plant did not seem so intimidating, after all.

A few days later, as the authors Blackberry and Blueberry called the scientists via zoom, meeting smiling faces. Even through the screen, the passion and excitement of the scientists regarding their work could clearly be felt. Their perspectives involved discussions about their personal involvement in conducting research about fusion energy. Motivation and commitment emerged as highlighted topics: all aimed to work on something they considered useful for humanity and the planet. To them, fusion offers a clear goal by supplying safe and clean energy. Despite all the critiques and uncertainty, they truly believe the success of fusion: the slow puzzle-way of research may result in frustration sometimes, but in the long-term, they have strong enthusiasm towards their work, which was evident through the hardly finished, detailed and supportive interviews. We left the interview feeling a bit overwhelmed with information, but hopeful and inspired towards the future of nuclear fusion.

Imaginaries of the residents – fear and security

We conducted three informal interviews: first and second with two women in their seventies and a thirty-year-old man whom we met on the beach behind the power plant, and lastly with Marcel, the father of one of the authors, Boysenberry.

Interestingly, all of them described their feelings about the nuclear fission plant in relation to fear and security, unprovoked by us. The first woman, Annie, explained how she did not like living near the nuclear plant at all, while the second woman, Bep, agreed she emphasized how she was more afraid of the chemical factory on the other side of the river that she lives close to. Although, she explained, if something happened to that factory, it would probably impact the power plant as well leading to catastrophic consequences.

While the two women emphasized their feelings of fear, the man, Dylan, was quick to highlight his feelings of security. Although he explained that as a child, he was very afraid that the power plant would explode, he now said: "[...] it's so well secured that I'm not really afraid of it anymore." He elaborated on his knowledge of the security measures at the power plant, such as the

multiple layers of thick concrete and the forty concrete sliding doors one must pass before getting to the nuclear waste that is stored in the yellow building on the other side of the dunes. Marcel also described feelings of fear and security. However, he described a rather telling lack of fear, saying: "[...] the good thing about living so close is that when it erupts, in a split second I am not here anymore. [...]

Fig. 2: The fission power plant in Borsele, near Vlissingen (11.01.2022).

Fig. 3: Power lines in the surrounding area of the nuclear fission plant in Borsele (11.01.2022).

Fig. 4: Area behind the power plant where the cooling water is led back into the sea (11.01.2022).

So there is actually no time to be fearful [...]." This lack of fear, he says, may have something to do with his own father who used to be an engineer of similar power plants, his friend who used to work at the power plant, and his own time as a quality manager in the air freight industry. These connections gave him more knowledge

about "the standards for checking for security and safety", he explains, and how these standards are "so high in this industry, in this part of the world, that if you worry, it's a waste of time."

Energy preferences

Annie and Bep were brief when asked about their opinion on nuclear energy. Annie said she did not have an opinion on the matter, while Bep highlighted that nuclear energy can be nice if used in a good way, but bad if used for war and things like that. Before we could ask them to elaborate on these opinions, the two women started walking to continue their beachcombing activities.

Dylan also said he did not have a preference, although he did explain that he does think nuclear energy is necessary; "otherwise it would not be here". Furthermore, he emphasized that he thinks solar energy and windmills are very good, but that it is often not beneficial for private residents, since most of the energy is used by companies and industry. Marcel agreed with this point when he explained where most of the energy from the power plant goes, and how only a small part ends up in the electricity net to be used by residents. He emphasized how he thinks that all the good energy sources should be used, saying "I think that we should still use nuclear energy, and also wind and solar". The latter should be used more "on the spot", in his opinion, and in a more efficient manner using available space such as the roofs of apartment buildings. Marcel further explained how he believes we should consume less energy where possible and make appliances as energy efficient as possible while remaining affordable for everyone.

Imaginaries of the experts – what is fusion?

To explore the multiple perspectives on the ethics of nuclear energy, we interviewed three scientists who work on fusion energy in the experimental device of Wendelstein 7-X (W7X) at the Max Planck Institute for Plasma Physics (IPP), in Greifswald, Germany. The findings of this magnetic fusion experimental device, among many others worldwide, contribute to build other experimental power plants. In the long term, this may develop to building actual fusion power plants that can be used for clean and safe energy sources to all. This is how the three interviewed physicists presented the future of fusion. Lilla, Kschmimis, and Albert are between 27-35 years old, working in the experimental and

operating department of IPP; two of them are finishing their PhD studies.

Imagine a situation where three physicists working on fusion energy pick up a hitchhiker, who asks them 'what do you work?' Everyone starts summarizing fusion in a few sentences, taking a different approach, but it ends in a funny chaos and confusion how to start explaining fusion. This happened with Albert, and we also learned through the discussions how hard it is to give a brief yet fruitful summary of fusion energy. However, we give it a try – just as our interviewees did for us.

Their patient explanations always included fission energy at the start; both fission and fusion start with nuclei, the core of an atom, therefore, both are considered as nuclear energy. Fission energy is generated by the split of one nucleus, while the meeting and fusion of two nuclei results in fusion energy. Energy in the Sun is generated by fusion as we learned. "Fusion is easy, happening all the time", said Kschmimis and emphasized that its usage as a stable energy source causes scientific challenges.

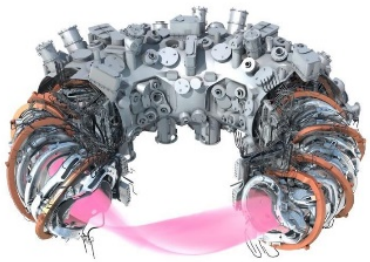

Fig. 5: Schematic structure of the Wendelstein 7-X (W7X) magnetic fusion experimental device. The experiments take place inside where the pink area is. (Source: Max Planck Institute for Plasma Physics).

He shared his "lighter metaphor": it is known how to light a candle with a lighter – meaning how to have fusion. The tricky part comes when the candle should sustain its light without the lighter – meaning to use fusion as a stable source of energy. For the usage as an energy source, one needs the appropriate combination of 1) temperature, 2) density, and 3) energy confinement. Understanding these details requires research and researchers, like in the W7X experimental device.

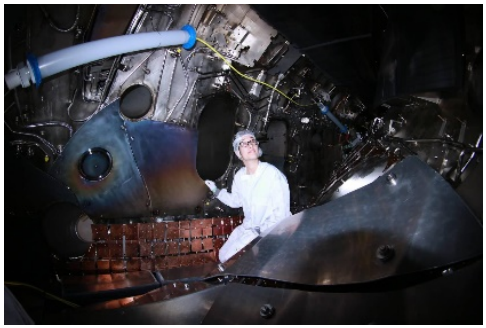

Fig. 6: Lilla, one of the interviewed scientists is inside of the experimental nuclear fusion device in Greifswald, Germany (17.01.2019).

Discussing ethics – Researching, knowing, and using fusion

Many benefits of fusion energy were highlighted by the scientists: it is a safe and clean energy source with full potential to supply the world's population. Here, we focus on three challenging themes related to the ethical dimensions of fusion from the scientists' perspectives: who is researching fusion energy; who has knowledge about fusion; and who will use fusion as an energy source in the future?

Due to its huge potential, many actors are interested in researching fusion. Besides the public research institutes like IPP, there are many private research groups. Their work involves less transparency, which mindset was emphasized as an obstacle by Lilla and Kschmimis. Private groups focus on individual winning and profit, while public researchers are engaged in collaborative success. Therefore, fewer chances for cooperation could hinder collective achievements. However, Albert highlighted the different sources of fundings: private groups operate with investors, people who give money based on their beliefs – since fusion will not make profit quickly. The need for funding could however result in unrealistic promises that cause further misunderstandings about fusion. The broken promises result in associating the public image of fusion with an unreachable goal, therefore considered as not fundamental or too expensive research.

In addition, differencing between fusion and fission also causes challenges. Knowledge is essential: to gain votes, politicians usually oppose "nuclear energy" – without distinguishing fission and fusion. Therefore, the scientists explained that institutes like IPP needs to reply with PR promotion and education, such as guided tours to reach wider recognition and help people understand what fusion is.

There are questions about what will happen when fusion is usable as an energy source – even if the famous joke says it

always needs 40 more years of research. Fusion is the most basic energy production, said Albert. However, it would fundamentally change societies: energy would be unlimited and safe. International tensions based on energy dependencies would, in theory, disappear. However, it is still a question how fusion energy would be implemented. Private, governmental, or international actors, who has the power to decide? Or could Mitchell's (2009) Carbon Democracy perhaps change to Fusion Democracy? The fundamental connection of science and the energy source could also create new patterns in these power relations.

Discussion

So, what are the ethical dimensions of nuclear energy? Overall – as with other types of energy production – these dimensions are concerned with distribution, risk, and transparency. But nuclear energy ethics further expose broader power structures, as described by Boyer's (2011) term energopolitics. As discussed, politicians have a great influence to decide who is put at risk (by e.g., choosing the location of the power plant), which forms of energy production is prioritized, who benefit from it, and how much information is shared with the public. Questions of nuclear energy ethics are therefore linked to governance. However, private research is influential too by promising development but may building misunderstandings. Therefore, those in political and economic power who essentially make the ethical or unethical decisions.

The ethics of nuclear energy are exactly what was expressed as concerns by our interlocutors in Vlissingen. While none were directly opposed to nuclear energy – as they were aware that alternative energy sources are needed to supply current standards of living – several expressed concerns regarding risk from potential accidents at the power plant, as well as from the long-term storage of nuclear waste near their homes.

However, as explained by the scientists in Greifswald, there are crucial differences between nuclear fission and fusion energy that would make the latter more ethical as a long-term solution. While there is always some risk involved with any source of energy production (the same counts for coal, gas, and oil), the risk concerning nuclear fusion is relatively small. Furthermore, according to the scientists, nuclear fusion produces significant less waste than nuclear fission.

Our data shows that there is an important link between knowledge and feelings of security and fear. While the residents of Vlissingen were aware of potential risks regarding nuclear energy, they all possessed knowledge of the happenings and security measures at the power plant, and it seemed as though this knowledge reduced feelings of fear. In the same sense, the scientists in Greifswald expressed no fear at all towards nuclear energy. Rather, they seemed passionate and excited about their research, believing that it will solve energy issues. This shows that social imaginaries regarding nuclear energy are not only products of shared narratives, but also dynamic, changing over time, based on new kinds of knowledge and scientific discoveries.

Perhaps this explains why guided tours at the nuclear facilities were important for both the residents and the scientists. Several residents in Vlissingen had been on a guided tour at the nuclear power plant. In Greifswald, the scientists also offer guided tours, expressing that they see this as an opportunity to share their research and promote feelings of security regarding nuclear fusion energy.

While the scientists believe that nuclear fusion energy is both the most environmentally sustainable energy source, and an ethical way of producing energy, the residents were more ambiguous regarding energy ethics. Overall, the residents did not believe that one energy source is necessarily better than others – however, some of them felt uncomfortable living near a nuclear fission power plant. This links to High's (2019) argument that it is up to individual actors to navigate between imaginaries of "good" and "bad."

As discussed by Howe (2019), global inequality is enlarged through energy production and distribution, and the same is the case for nuclear energy. It is costly to build and maintain a nuclear power plant and conduct the scientific research to develop these technologies. Nuclear power plants are therefore mainly built by and support energy for rich countries. Thus, while nuclear energy can be a solution to the issue of energy transition, further action is needed to ensure better living standards for the residents of the rest of the planet.

Therefore, as discussed by Rasch and Köhne (2017), it should be questioned whether an energy transition is the most ethical way forward. Nuclear fusion energy does seem like an ethical solution to current energy issues – however, societal structures

could also be changed. Perhaps the issue is not how to maintain current standards of living in rich parts of the world, but how to make structural changes that take global ethics into account.

Conclusion

We aimed to answer the question: *what social imaginaries are produced by nuclear energy, and how do they compare between 1) residents living in the proximity of a nuclear fission power plant in the Netherlands and 2) nuclear fusion scientists in Germany?* We understand the concept of social imaginaries through Taylor's definition (2004), describing how people make sense of the world through social exchanges, based on shared narratives and past events.

The residents living near a nuclear power plant in the Netherlands, mainly describe narratives of fear and security. These seem to exist on a continuum, with perspectives sometimes leaning more towards one or other. While the residents whom we spoke to seem to be ambiguous in their preferences for energy sources, many of them did mention a combination of different sources as a possible solution to current energy needs in the Netherlands. Herein they recognized how different energy sources carry different advantages and disadvantages.

As an energy source, nuclear fusion energy is different from fission because 1) it produces less waste and 2) there is no serious risk of accidents. From the interviews with the scientists in Greifswald, their passion toward their work became clear. They believe that fusion energy could be the future energy source to supply a great amount of people, aiding in a potential transition from fossil fuels. They emphasize the need for further transparent research to achieve their goals collaboratively. Gaining wider recognition was promoted by emphasizing knowledge sharing to avoid confusion, fear, and misunderstandings.

Both imaginaries of nuclear energy show different dimensions, both positive and negative. In our own and the perspectives of the interlocutors, this concurrent presence of the good and the bad are visible. These answers show the different evaluations that can be, simultaneously, made regarding the ethics of nuclear energy.

Limitations, future research, and personal reflection

Our biggest limitation was the short amount of time and the small number of people. For

the scope of this research, we believe it was sufficient, but future research may benefit from a larger sample or longer time. A larger perspective might be beneficial on the matter of nuclear energy ethics and the possible future for fusion energy. While the scientists believe it is the future of energy production, the question remains if this is a future for everyone, in regard of distribution and the cost to research, build, and maintain nuclear fusion plants.

Our own social imaginaries have changed to some degree through the information given by our interlocutors. We leave this project feeling hopeful and inspired by the scientists and their passion - even though we know that we still do not understand nuclear fusion energy in-depth. However, we still possess some skepticism regarding nuclear energy in general, as nuclear fusion is not yet fully developed, and nuclear fission is therefore the way of energy production in current nuclear power plants. We feel quite ambiguous towards nuclear fission energy, as a key to solve current issues of energy production, but also a way to create new questions for the future.

Bibliography

Argenti, Nicolas, and Daniel M. Knight. 2015. Sun, wind, and the rebirth of extractive economies: renewable energy investment and metanarratives of crisis in Greece. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 21(4):781-802.

Boyer, Dominic. 2011. "Energopolitics and the anthropology of energy." *Anthropology News*.

Brooks, Andrew. 2012. "Radiating Knowledge: The Public Anthropology of Nuclear Energy." *American Anthropologist* 114(1): 137–40.

Hammersley, M. and P. Atkinson 2019. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London & New York: Routledge.

Harms, A. A. 2005. *Principles of Fusion Energy: An Introduction to Fusion Energy for Students of Science and Engineering*. Singapore: World Scientific.

High, Mette H. 2019. "Projects of devotion: Energy exploration and moral ambition in the cosmoeconomy of oil and gas in the Western United States." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 25(S1): 29-46.

Howe, Cymene. 2019. "Greater goods: Ethics, energy and other-than-human speech." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 25(S1): 160-176.

Kant, Immanuel. 1996. *Practical Philosophy*. Translated and edited by Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mitchell, Timothy. 2009. "Carbon Democracy." *Economy and Society* 38(3): 399-432.

Nader, Laura. 1981. "Barriers to thinking new about energy." *Physics Today* 34(9). Republished in: Laura Nader. 2010. *The Energy Reader*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. 198-204.

Pink, Sarah. 2015. *Doing Sensory Ethnography. Second Edition*. London, California, New Delhi, Singapore: SAGE Publications.

Pink, Sarah. 2021. *Doing Visual Ethnography. Fourth Edition*. London, California, New Delhi, Singapore: SAGE Publications.

Rasch, Elisabet Deuholm, and Michiel Köhne. 2017. "Practices and imaginations of energy justice in transition. A case study of the Noordoostpolder, the Netherlands." *Energy Policy* 107: 607-614.

Taylor, Charles. 2004. *Modern Social Imaginaries*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

White, Leslie. 1943. "Energy and the Evolution of Culture." *American Anthropologist* 45(3): 335-357.

Winther, Tanja and Harold Wilhite. 2015. "Tentacles of modernity: Why electricity needs anthropology." *Cultural Anthropology* 30(4): 569-577.

Framing women

The feminicides of Juárez

Josien Franken

"When it comes to writing papers for anthropology courses, I have experienced that finding a topic is one of the most difficult things. However, when I find a topic that I am interested in and want to learn more about, writing my paper is so much easier. I always knew about feminicides in Mexico, but before writing this paper, I did not know that it is much more than just the murder of women. I learnt so much during the process of writing this piece and I am glad that I get to share this with anyone else who wants to learn more about feminicides in Mexico."

Abstract

Since 1993, up to a thousand female bodies have been found in the area surrounding the Mexican-U.S. border town of Juárez. Even more women have gone missing, their bodies never recovered (Hernández 2018). The victims are often employees of the maquiladoras; factories that allow tax-free import of materials and tax-free export of finished products. These factories are known for their inhumane treatment of employees, where employees are subject to poor working conditions and sexual harassment (Pantaleo 2010, 349). Due to various similarities between the victims, the murders are often referred to as the 'maquiladora murders' or 'femicides of Juárez' (Pantaleo 2010, 350). In 2010, the cosmetics brand MAC Cosmetics collaborated with the Los Angeles-based fashion house Rodarte, creating a collection inspired by the area of Juárez and the women working at the maquiladoras. This collection did not only commodify the death of these women, but also created a beauty standard at the expense of the maquiladora workers (Hernández 2010, 71-72).

In this paper, I will argue that an interplay between capitalism, patriarchal notions of normality (Wright 1999) and structural violence, have resulted in a constant valuing and framing of women in particular ways, both as disposable (Livingston 2004) and as valuable. In addition, I will discuss the role of the state, embedded in the concept of feminicide. The Mexican state fails to extend human rights to women (Fregoso 2000), making feminicide possible and acceptable. I will conceptualize the term feminicide, as well as outline the discourses that frame the value of women in Juárez. Lastly, I will touch upon the collaboration between MAC Cosmetics and Rodarte, to argue that after their deaths, the value of Mexican women becomes something to be consumed (Hernández 2018).

Introduction

On Monday September 20, 2021, Amnesty International released a report stating that, during 2020, at least 10 women were killed every day in Mexico. In the different states, 3,723 killings of women were registered throughout the year, with not a single state registering no killings of women (Amnesty International 2021). The report also documents the failure of the Mexican state to properly investigate or prevent gender-based violence against women, leading to families having to carry out their own detective work to find their missing family members (Agren 2021). The murder of women has plagued Mexico for decades. A report released in 2018 by RFK Human Rights and Center for Women's Hollistic Development, documents that between 1985 and 2014, 47,178 women were killed in Mexico due to gender-based violence (CEDIMAC and RFKHR 2018).

Especially notorious is the border city Ciudad Juárez, which spiked international attention with high rates of violence against women during the 1990s. Between 1993 and 2018, up to a thousand female bodies have been found in the area surrounding the Mexican-U.S. border town, but even more women have gone missing, their bodies never recovered (Hernández 2018). There are various similarities between the victims, who are often slim, petite, dark-skinned and dark-haired and usually between the ages of twelve and twenty-three (Hernández 2018, 74). Many of these women migrated from rural areas of Mexico to the borderlands (Fregoso 2000, 137), where they are employed by the maquiladoras; factories that

allow tax-free import of materials and tax-free export of finished products (Pantaleo 2010, 349). Many scholars have argued that globalization and capitalism have created the conditions for gender-based violence along the Mexican-U.S. border, leading to the high rates of femicides and disappearances of women in this area (Pantaleo 2010, Livingstone 2004).

In this paper, I will explore the connection between capitalism, structural violence and feminicide in Ciudad Juárez. I will argue that capitalistic policies have intensified and disrupted patriarchal notions of normality and framed women as disposable, while constantly redefining their value, making violence against women possible and accepted. For this I will make use of the concepts as Taussig's (1984) and Foucault's (1978) biopolitics. First, I will go into the conceptualization of feminicide. The next two paragraphs will then show how the women of Juárez are subjected to forms of structural violence, by means of what Wright (1999) calls the 'death by culture' narrative. Lastly, I will propose a case that shows the capitalistic valuing of female maquiladora workers, even after their deaths (Hernández 2018). This will give an insight into how Mexican women are framed and valued both during their lives and after their deaths, showing how the Mexican state fails to extend human and civil rights to women (Fregoso 2000).

Conceptualization of feminicide

The conceptualization of the term femicide has developed greatly over the past decades. It was first coined by Diana Russel, at the first International Tribunal on Crimes against Women in 1976. Russel used the term to refer to the "misogynist killing of women by men" (Russel 2012). Grzyb et al. (2018, 20) argue that while the term already existed, Russel placed it within a feminist framework and added a political meaning to the term. Later, Russel's definition developed into "the killing of females by males because they are female" (Russel 2012). However, because some females are also killed by other females, the UN's definition might be more complete. This definition defines femicide as "the killing of women and girls because of their gender" (United Nations 2012). Russel (2012) argues that this definition only applies to the killing of one woman because of her gender. Thus, Russel (2012) defines femicide as "the killing of one or more females by one or more males because they are female". Grzyb et al. (2018) argue that scholars have highlighted

the manifestation of sexual violence when it comes to femicide, seeing it as a form of violence that focuses on the man's desire for power, dominance, and control. Therefore, it should be framed as "an extreme form of violence in the continuum of sexual violence against women" (Grzyb et al. 2018).

The term is very closely related to the concept of feminicidio, commonly used in Latin America (Grzyb et al. 2018, 20). First used by Mexican anthropologist and feminist Marcela Lagarde y de los Ríos, it provides a theoretical framework for the increase in violence against women in Mexico, particularly in Ciudad Juárez. The difference between femicide and feminicide (as translated form of feminicidio), is the role of the state embedded in the latter term (Menjívar and Walsh 2017, 222). This role specifically refers to the impunity and failure of the state to punish perpetrators (Grzyb et al. 2018, 20). Grzyb et al. (2018, 20 – 21) state that this conceptualization makes feminicide a tolerated state crime and acknowledges the accountability of a state for human rights violation. Mexico's General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence (2007) highlights that femicidal violence is "formed by a set of misogynist actions that can lead to the impunity of society" (Grzyb et al. 2018, 21).

Femicide can thus be defined as "the killing of one or more females by one or more males, because they are female" (Russel 2012), and it should be framed as a form of violence in the continuum of sexual violence that women experience (Grzyb at al. 2018). As discussed, the term feminicide is closely related, but includes the role of the state when it comes to the acceptation and impunity of the crime (Grzyb et al. 2018, 21). Because this is an important aspect of the problem in Mexico, I will further on be using the term feminicide.

Structural violence in Juárez

The increase of feminicide in Juárez presumably began in 1993, one year after the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was signed (Fregoso 2000, 140), which opened free trade between Canada, Mexico, and the United States. The agreement meant to help the Mexican economy by bringing more jobs to the country (Pantaleo 2010, 350). Many American companies opened factories in Mexico, increasing their profit by using cheap labor (Pantaleo 2010, 351). Situated just across the border, Ciudad Juárez quickly grew into a big

export processing zone, with American factories settling in the desert areas surrounding the city (Pantaleo 2001, 349). These factories became known as maquiladoras, their workforce consisting mainly of women, who migrate from rural areas to the city to find a job at the maquiladoras, providing them a chance to an independent social life (Livingston 2004, 61). To understand the way that the maquiladoras operate, we can turn to Foucault's (1978) concept of 'bio-power', which states that the sovereign power has a certain power over life, marking a shift away from what Foucault calls the "right of death". On one hand bio-power centers around the disciplining of bodies, while on the other hand it centers around controlling the reproductivity of the population. Foucault (1978) argues that capitalism could not have developed without the appearance of this notion, making possible the controlled insertion of bodies into the system. In addition, it needed certain state structures to ensure the maintenance of bio-power and the docility of the population. In turn, Foucault argues that these structures acted as "factors of segregation and social hierarchization," intensifying positions of dominance and subordination. The intensification of patriarchal notions is apparent in the maquiladoras as well (Hernández 2018).

Maquiladoras are known for the inhumane treatment of employees, who are subject to poor working conditions and sexual harassment (Pantaleo 2010, 349). Women are hired because of their 'natural abilities' to tolerate repetitious work with their hands. Therefore, they are hired for 'unskilled' positions, while men are hired for 'skilled' labor (Livingston 2004, 61 – 62). Female workers are not considered to be a stable workforce, but rather temporary employees (Livingston 2004, 62). Wright (1999) argues that they are considered untrainable, therefore never achieving the positions of male employees. This creates an image of women as disposable (Livingston 2004), making feminicide possible.

When it comes to the maquiladora murders, Fregoso (2000, 138) argues for an approach that draws upon the way that global capitalism reproduces earlier forms of patriarchy. She argues that because other export processing zones do not show the same increase of sexual violence on woman, we need to look at how earlier, more traditional structures within the state created the conditions for sexual violence (Fregoso

2000, 144). Drawing on the concept 'space of death,' proposed by Michael Taussig (1984), Fregoso (2000) argues that these women perhaps inhabit this liminal space where terror is normalized. According to Taussig (1984), this space is crucial in the creation of meaning and consciousness in societies where terror and culture are closely linked together. The space of death then creates acknowledgement concerning the role of the state in the violence that women are subjected to, showing us how the Mexican state fails to extend human and civil rights to women (Fregoso 2000).

The argument outlined above leads to the conclusion that women in Juárez are subjected to structural violence, expressed in the gendered and sexual violence. Structural violence, as proposed by Johan Galtung (1969), can be seen as a result of oppression part of unequal and unjust social structures, including things such as poor working conditions and gender inequality. Through bio-power (Foucault 1978), maquiladoras create an image of the Mexican woman as disposable, which makes conditions for feminicide possible. Bio-power enforces social hierarchization, intensifying earlier form of patriarchy as Fregoso (2000) argues. In turn, space of death, as proposed by Taussig (1984), creates meaning and consciousness concerning the role the state plays in creating structurally violent conditions, making feminicide possible. In the next paragraph, I will argue that feminicide is not just made possible, but also made acceptable, relating to the conditions described above. This extends the effects of structural violence to the realm of impunity, making women even more vulnerable to violence (Menjívar and Walsh 2017, 224).

Death by Culture

In addition to framing women in Juárez as disposable, there are notions of 'doble vida/double life' and 'public women', that make feminicide acceptable. The notion of double life as explanation for the murders was first used by Francisco Barrio, then the governor of the state of Chihuahua in 1995, when he advised parents to always be aware of where their daughters were (Wright 1999, 456). 'Good girls' were not supposed to go out in the dark, thus victims who disappeared in the dark were not good girls (Wright 1999). This explanation makes proper investigations into the disappearances nearly impossible (Wright 1999, 458). Wright (1999, 456) argues that this excuse points to the value of women, who are not valuable enough "to be worth

the worry" (Wright 1999, 457) if they go out at night.

The idea of double lives relates to the image of 'public women,' something the city of Juárez is known for. Wright (2011, 713) argues that because Ciudad Juárez did not confine prostitution to certain zones of the city, it became famous for its "public women" on every street corner. These public women quickly became associated with the women working in the maquiladoras, as walking the streets on way to work became indistinguishable from walking the streets as part of work (Wright 2011, 713). This in contrast to the notion of 'public men,' which is another way of saying 'citizen' in Mexico (Wright 2011, 713). The discourses of double lives and public women normalize violence that women are subjected to (Wright 2011, 713) and uses the well-known tactic of victim-blaming to disregard the committed crime (Hernández 2018, 76).

This is what Wright (1999, 458) calls a 'death by culture' narrative, pointing to the deeply rooted ideas within a culture that are driving and accepting this type of violence. Women are blamed for their own deaths, because of the disturbance of a patriarchal notion of normality. Additionally, Pantaleo (2010) argues that cultural norms regarding gender roles are one of the major factors of violence against women. On the one hand, these roles are intensified by the maquiladoras by qualifying female workers as an unstable workforce, while male workers are seen as a stable workforce (Livingston 2004). On the other hand, these cultural norms are disturbed by the chance for women to take on new roles in the economic and public sphere (Livingston 2004). Both the framing of the maquiladora workers as disposable and the acceptation of their deaths because of their presumed life as 'public women' contribute to the structural violence in the form of gender inequality that women of Juárez are victims of. Feminicide is then a result of the failure of the state to extend human and civil rights to women (Fregoso 2000). In the next paragraph, I will take this one step further by using a case study to show that even after their deaths, these women are exploited for capitalistic gains (Hernández 2018).

Value of death

In 2010, famous beauty brand MAC Cosmetics worked together with Los Angeles-based fashion house Rodarte. When the Mulleavy sisters, who founded Rodarte, took a trip to El Paso and Ciudad Juárez, they

said to be inspired by the hazy, dreamlike landscape, and the maquiladora workers travelling to and from the factories at night (Hernández 2018, 71). They decided to create a collection inspired by the idea of sleepwalking and ghosts (Phelps 2010) and collaborated with MAC Cosmetics on a makeup line complementary to their collection (Hernández 2018, 70). The makeup collection included items such as a sheer white lipstick called 'Ghost Town'; a pale-toned blush called 'Quinceañera'; a mint-green colored nail polish called 'Factory' and a beige called 'Sleepwalker' (Hernández 2018, 71). Many of the pieces from Rodarte's clothing collection were patchworked together from lace, chiffon, and other pieces of fabrics taken from the 'imagined maquiladoras' floors', meant to give a 'deathly romantic' feeling to the collection (Hernández 2018, 72). The models in the runway show were predominantly white-skinned, and make-up was used to give appearances of sunken eyes and pale skin, making them resemble ghosts (Phelps 2010).

Given Juárez' reputation as discussed in the paragraphs above, it is not surprising that this collaboration quickly became the subject of critique. Hernández (2018) argues that finding beauty in the death of these women is a form of exploitation and commodification of the bodies of poor, Mexican women. In addition, it sells a romanticized form of violence and creates a beauty standard based on these women, which simultaneously can never be achieved by these women themselves. In other words, these products were not made for Mexican women, but for the white, Western woman (Hernández 2018).

Again, this points to the value of Mexican women. They are valuable in a sense that they are wanted in the maquiladoras for their 'natural abilities' (Livingston 2004), but at the same time they are seen as a temporary workforce (Wright 1999) and therefore framed as disposable (Livingston 2004). Once they disappear, they are framed as not valuable, or 'worth the worry' (Wright 1999, 457), because of their position in society as 'public women'; disturbing deeply rooted notions of patriarchal normality and gender roles. After their deaths, their value becomes something to sell; commodities that can be consumed, as the violence they are victim of becomes an inspiration for white colored lipstick, pale blushes, and patchwork dresses (Hernández 2018, 77 – 78).

Conclusion

Capitalism, specifically the maquiladora factories, has on the one hand intensified and on the other hand disrupted patriarchal notions of normality. This duality has created conditions for the exploitation of women, making it possible and, to some extent acceptable, to kill them. Within these structures of biopolitics (Foucault 1978), women are constantly valued, leading to particular ways of framing them. In the maquiladoras, they are framed as 'useful', but at the same time they are seen as a temporary workforce and therefore framed as disposable (Livingston 2004). Outside the maquiladoras they are framed as 'public women', as they take on new roles within the economic and public sphere, disturbing traditional gender roles (Wright 2011). This results in failure of investigation into disappearances by state authorities because women are not seen as worthy enough (Wright 1999). After their deaths, women are framed and valued once more, sold as commodities as they became an inspiration for the collaboration between Rodarte and MAC Cosmetics, who created a romanticized version of the violence that the women of Juárez are victims of (Hernández 2018).

Important is to consider these traditional gender roles and what Wright (2011) has called the patriarchal notion of normality when discussing the maquiladora murders – it is not just capitalism on its own that is the cause of the murders (Fregoso 2000). An interplay between existing notions of gender, capitalism, and a failure of the state to extend human rights to women (Fregoso 2000) have resulted in conditions that made feminicide possible and acceptable. Acknowledging that these women inhabit a 'space of death' (Taussig 1978) allows us to look critically at the role that the Mexican state plays in the problem. It fails to extend human and civil rights to women (Fregoso 2000), and this form of structural violence has led to the killings of many women, as well as improper investigations into these murders (Wright 1999). The role of the state is included in the definition of feminicide as well, referring to impunity and failure to punish perpetrators, making feminicide a crime tolerated by the state (Grzyb et al. 2018).

I have argued that an interplay between capitalism, traditional notions of normality and structural violence has created conditions that result in the problem of feminicide in Ciudad Juárez. More research

needs to be done to find a way to prevent it. In addition, we need to realize that it is not just maquiladora workers who are subjected to violence, but every woman in Mexico as long as the state fails to provide them with basic human rights.

Bibliography

Amnesty International. 2021. "Justice on Trial: Failures in Criminal Investigations of Feminicides precede by Disappearance in the State of Mexico." Published on September 20, 2021.

Bayes, Jane H. and Rita M. Kelly. 2001. "Political spaces, gender, and NAFTA." In *Gender, globalization, and democratization*, edited by Rita Mae Kelly, Jane H. Bayes, Mary Hawkesworth and Brigitte Young, 147 – 170. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

CEDIMAC and RFK Human Rights. 2018. "Alternative Report on Violence against Women in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico." Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 17th session, July 2018.

Foucault, Michel. 1978. "Right of Death and Power over Life." In *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, edited by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, 79-82.

Fregoso, Rosa Linda. 2000. "Voices Without Echo: The Global Gendered Apartheid." *Emergences* 10(1): 137 – 155.

Galtung, Johan. 1969. "Violence, peace, and Peace Research." *Journal of Peace Research* 6: 167-191.

Grzyb, Magdalena, Naudi, Marceline and Chaime Marcuello-Servós. 2018. "Femicide definitions." In *Femicide across Europe: Theory, research and prevention*, edited by Shalva Weil, Consuelo Corradi and Marceline Naudi, 17-31. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

Hernández, Bernadine. 2018. "Dying to Be Beautiful: (Re)Membering the Women of Juárez, the Commodification of Death, and the Nonuniversal Standards of Beauty." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 46, no. 1/2 (Spring/Summer): 70-87.

Livingston, Jessica. 2004. "Murder in Juárez: Gender, Sexual Violence, and the Global Assembly Line." *Fronties: A Journal of Women Studies* 25(1): 59-76.

Menjívar, Cecilia and Shannon Drysdale Walsh. 2017. "The Architecture of Feminicide." *Latin American Research Review* 52, no. 2 (Special Issue: Enduring and/or New Forms of Inequality in a Globalizing World): 221-240.

Pantaleo, Katherine. 2010. "Gendered Violence: An Analysis of the Maquiladora Murders." *International Criminal Justice Review* 20(4): 349-365.

Phelps, Nicole. 2010. "Rodarte Fall 2010 Ready-to-Wear." Vogue Runway, February 15, 2010. https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-2010-ready-to-wear/rodarte.

Russel, Diana E.H. 2012. "Defining Femicide." United Nations Symposium on Femicide,

November 26, 2012.
Taussig, Michael. 1984. "Culture of Terror – Space of Death: Roger Casement's Putumayo Report and the Explanation of Torture." In *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, edited by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, 39-53. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
Agren, David. "Ten women and girls killed every day in Mexico, Amnesty report says." The Guardian, September 20, 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/sep/20/mexico-femicide-women-girls-amnesty-international-report.
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2012. "Symposium on Femicide: A Global Issue that Demands Action!" Accessed on October 15, 2021. https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/ngos/DCN5-Symposium-on-femicide-a-global-issue-that-demands-action.html.
Wright, Melissa W. 1999. "The Dialects of Still Life: Murder, Women and Maquiladoras." *Public Culture* 11(3): 453-474.
Wright, Melissa W. 2011. "Narcopolitics, and Femicide: Gendered Violence on the Mexico-U.S. Border." *Signs* 36(3): 707-731.

Preserving indigenous beliefs

Self-determination and decolonisation of media

Claire Pisters

"It is important to acknowledge the power of hegemonic media structures and its oppressive impact on legal and political treatment of minority groups."

Introduction

Inuit activist Sheila Watt-Cloutier described the loss of indigenous cultures as a result of climate change in one statement: 'When the ice goes, so does the wisdom' (Power 2016). The Arctic is one of the areas most affected by the influences of climate change. Melting sea ice, thawing permafrost and decreasing water quality are damaging the livelihoods of its inhabitants. Paradoxically, it is the people who are least responsible for climate change who are finding themselves in the most vulnerable position: the Arctic indigenous peoples. Not only does climate change lead to the decline of basic needs like the availability of food and housing. It as well damages indigenous cultures and beliefs through loss of ancestral land, traditional foods and spiritual connections to nature.

Looking at legal support, there seems to be a lack of political and religious rights for indigenous peoples to preserve the loss of cultures and beliefs. This paper demonstrates how the misrepresentation of indigenous peoples in colonial media has played a role in this current

inadequate representation of religious rights and how this misrepresentation intensifies the loss of indigenous culture and beliefs. In addition, the paper argues how media can function as a tool for indigenous peoples to reclaim their representation and adequate rights through self-determination, in order to fight for the preservation of their ancestral lands, culture, =beliefs and traditions.

To do so, the paper first introduces a theoretical framework, explaining the concepts of hegemony, popular culture, religion and indigenous beliefs. Secondly, the paper gives insight into the origin of hegemonic structures between colonial settlers and indigenous peoples. It examines how the colonial representation of indigenous peoples has been problematic for self-identification and for getting recognised adequate religous rights. The incompleteness of these religious rights consequently causes that negative climate change impacts on indigenous lands and cultures are not being fully recognised and thus not thoroughly protected. To understand how indigenous cultures are damaged by climate change, the paper thirdly defines the impacts of environmental changes on indigenous ways of living. The study looks at Alaskan indigenous peoples as a case study, with a focus on the Alaskan Inuit culture. Lastly, the paper argues how popular culture can be used as a site of struggle, pointing out how media activism of indigenous peoples can function to shift hegemonic structures and to fight for sufficient religious rights and cultural preservation. The paper concludes by highlighting the importance of indigenous participation in self-representation, as only their participation can change the dialogue and governance mechanisms that have been sustained for a long time.

To research the matters mentioned above, an analysis of academic literature has been used. Little studies have looked at the loss of indigenous cultures and beliefs through climate change impacts, as a result of hegemonic media representation. Therefore, this paper aims to fill that gap. In addition, this paper aims to create awareness for the recognition of adequate indigenous religious rights and for the importance of self-determination of indigenous peoples in media, to protect indigenous cultures and lands from the impacts of climate change.

Restrictions of this paper can be found in the use of academic literature analysis. As this paper has been constructed from an anthropological approach, its main

focus lies on anthropological discourses. The use of more academic sources on the legal representation of indigenous peoples could give a clearer understanding of inadequate religious legal representation. Also, ethnography would be a valuable addition to define how indigenous peoples are influenced by hegemonic representations. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge restrictions as a result of my positionality. Although I strive to respectfully address and be mindful of the great variety and complexity of Indigenous cultures and beliefs, I cannot ignore my position in this research as a white Western-oriented woman, which can affect interpretations and generalisations.

Theoretical framework

Hegemony, popular culture, religion and indigenous beliefs form the four main theoretical concepts of this paper.

Hegemony, a concept developed by Antonio Gramsci, is used to explain power structures within a society. Hegemony refers to a system in which the dominant ideology and worldview are accepted by the masses as natural, universal and as the cultural norm. Within a hegemonic system, dominant beliefs, perceptions and values are presented as the only possible truth, whilst they are actually in the interest of the ruling class (Klassen 2014, 22-23). The concept of hegemony is interwoven in the power structures of popular culture and religion therefore relevant to take into account when speaking of popular culture and religion.

When defining popular culture, this paper applies its anthropological meaning. Popular culture then is an embodiment of the shared meanings of a social system through ideologies or objects, like linguistics, politics, trends, entertainment or media objects (Fabian 1998, 8-17). In turn, these shared meanings form an actor in identity formation and in the creation of new meanings (Klassen 2014, 17). The influence of power on existing and newly created meanings is what forms ongoing discourses in popular culture (Fabian 1998, 8-17). Often, meaning-making in popular culture is perceived as a structure created by those in power (Ginsburg 2002, 23-25). Both Antonio Gramsci and Stuart Hall argue that popular culture should rather be seen as a space for power conflict, stating it is a site in which hegemonic structures are continuously negotiated, maintained or resisted by dominant and minority groups (Klassen 2014, 16-17). This way, popular culture can be seen as an instrument to

challenge power structures and as a way to fight oppression (Fabian 1998, 19).

When defining religion, this paper will differentiate religion and indigenous beliefs, in which religion refers to the Western-oriented forms of religion. Since religion can be defined in many ways, this framework will use the theories of two scholars: Emile Durkheim and Clifford Geertz. Durkheim states religion should be perceived as a system of beliefs and rites, which relates to sacred things (these do not have to be a personification like a god, but could also be found in nature) and unites a community (Durkheim 1912, 40-47). Geertz applies a more cognitive approach, arguing religion is a component of culture, in which culture represents the shared meaning of ideologies and symbols (Klassen 2014, 13-14).

As the concept of religion is not used by indigenous cultures, this theoretical framework will focus on how indigenous beliefs can be addressed rather than further theorising the concept of religion itself. Being aware of the great diversity of indigenous beliefs, this paper builds upon the common interpretation by Pufall et al. (2011), stating that indigenous beliefs can be characterised by the interconnection of people, land, flora and fauna, natural forces, rituals and supernatural beings. The interconnectedness of Indigenous beliefs in their ways of life makes, in comparison to Western-oriented religions, their beliefs not as much perceived as a separate matter, but as their culture (Tomaselli and Xanthaki 2021). Therefore, indigenous beliefs are often unrecognised or misunderstood in Western religious structures and consequently regularly referred to as spirituality. Although, referring to indigenous beliefs this way, again highlights is subordination. Reflecting on Meredith McGuire's theory on religion and spirituality, this would implicate that religion contains acceptable and worthy ideas, in comparison to less acceptable and worthy ideas of spirituality (Tomaselli and Xanthaki 2021). In addition, thinking of indigenous peoples as spiritual reduces indigenous traditions, wisdom and land claims to sacred matters instead of Western acknowledged legal rights and science (Shorter 2016, 442). For these reasons, both the terms religion and spirituality do not completely correspond with indigenous beliefs and viewpoints. This paper will therefore use the terms indigenous culture, beliefs and worldviews, taking in mind the discussion and issues mentioned above.

It is important to acknowledge that referring to indigenous beliefs in this way, does not imply that their culture, beliefs and worldviews should not be recognised as a religion in legal systems. Rather, it demonstrates that the word, perception and concept of religion is largely based on Western interpretations (Tomaselli and Xanthaki 2021).

Hegemonic structures in indigenous representation

Up to the 1960s, indigenous peoples had little control over their representation. Since the beginning of colonialism on indigenous peoples, both their image and identity were (re-)established through the communication of missionaries, explorers and colonial settlers. Many indigenous peoples had to adapt their ways of living due to colonial influences on trading, food, and religions (Pufall et al. 2011). Also, it was the colonial settler's media that showed and interpreted indigenous cultures to non-indigenous people. To define how indigenous peoples and their culture are represented in media, this paragraph will look at the relationship between hegemony and religion. The 'settler colonialism theory' will be introduced to understand the hegemonic relationship between colonial and indigenous peoples.

The 'settler colonialism theory' demonstrates a power structure in which the repression and loss of indigenous peoples and their cultures are sustained and the actions of settlers are normalised. These actions include the occupation of indigenous land and exploitation of their resources, which are often linked to indigenous' culture and identity (Sonza 2018). This normalisation of views and actions of colonial settlers links closely to Gramsci's notion of hegemony. Colonial views and operations are portrayed to populations as 'natural', but are actually historically and economically constructed to hold up and conserve the dominant colonial power structures. As these naturalised meanings are portrayed through media, media becomes an influential platform for the construction and conversion of ideologies (Klassen 2014, 22-23). Media then can be seen as a tool of power as well as a producer of power, in which colonial hegemonic institutions have been able to shape untrue narratives and images of indigenous peoples in the consumers' perception.

The hegemonic colonist image of indigenous peoples has been problematic for

two main reasons. Firstly, the colonial depiction in mainstream media impacts the self-identification of indigenous groups. They are unable to identify with their representation as exotic, fading, dangerous or uncivilised groups with stereotypical, monolithic cultures, and need to justify themselves for the image and codes given to them in the media (Sonza 2018). Secondly, it has been problematic for indigenous peoples in claiming their power and rights. Up to the 1990s, indigenous peoples were portrayed in media indistinct from peasants or marginalised as Fourth World people without political systems, leading to incorrect or no political representation (Coates and Broderstad 2020, 11-23; Tomaselli and Xanthaki 2021).

Like incorrect political representation, the misrepresentation of indigenous cultures has as well been problematic for the acknowledgement of their beliefs. The main reason for this has been the in-distinctiveness of indigenous beliefs to Western-oriented religions. As stated, Indigenous beliefs can be described by its interconnection of people, nature, rituals and supernatural beings. Indigenous peoples do not differentiate culture from sacred, neither do they differentiate it from land, identity and spirituality. In indigenous beliefs, both land and nature have sacred dimensions on which their lives and worldviews depend (Pufall et al. 2011).

For a long time, indigenous beliefs and worldviews were not recognised by colonisers. Developments of indigenous religious rights took form in the 1970s. In 1978, the United States of America enacted the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, which was meant 'to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religions of the American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, and Native Hawaiians, including but not limited to access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonials and traditional rites.' (Harjo 2004). Internationally, article 18 was introduced in International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), stating the protection of everyone's right 'to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching' (Tomaselli and Xanthaki 2021). Article 18 of the ICCPR not only mentions religions, but also beliefs, and

thus includes indigenous beliefs and world-views.

Nevertheless, Tomaselli and Xantaki argue these national and international rights to religion have appeared to be inadequate in protecting indigenous peoples' rights. The Western-oriented rights acknowledge indigenous religions to be practiced and shared, but bypass the acknowledgement of their religions being interwoven in their lands and nature. So far, the right to religion has been of limited use to indigenous peoples in forming one of the possibilities to protect their lands as religious property (Tomaselli and Xanthaki 2021).

This misrepresentation of indigenous peoples and their beliefs has especially been problematic in the scenario of climate change, as climate change has large impacts on indigenous lands and cultures. Due to inadequate recognition of indigenous beliefs and its connection to their lands, indigenous peoples are deprived of their right to claim accurate protection for the consequences of climate change. To understand how indigenous cultures are impacted by climate change, the following paragraph reviews the climate change impact on Alaska's indigenous cultures as a case study, with a focus on the Alaskan Inuit.

The impact of climate change on Alaska's indigenous cultures

Already in 2008, the Arctic Climate Impacts Assessment (ACIA) recognised climate change impacts in the Arctic were more sincere than anywhere else in the world (Martello 2008). Melting sea ice, permafrost thaw and changing water availability are forming threats to the liveability of the lands' inhabitants (Bennett et al. 2014, 298). Looking at the impacts of climate change worldwide, it is the most vulnerable group of people who are influenced fastest and most by its consequences. Alaska is no exception, as climate change is most strongly affecting its indigenous peoples.

The vulnerability of Alaskan indigenous peoples can be found in their political disempowerment, economic disadvantages and cultural heritage, which form barriers to adjusting to climate changes. Analysing their socioeconomic disadvantages, they face - next to historical and institutional policies that incorrectly represent indigenous rights - poverty, insufficient housing, deficient health care, lack of educational systems, poor transportation and infrastructure possibilities and low employment. Reviewing indigenous cultural heritage, culture is closely related to

their environment. The ancestral land and natural resources form the origin of their basic needs, like medicine, shelter and food. In addition, their lands function as spiritual and intellectual relationships, which shape their identities (Bennett et al. 2014, 298-301).

The spiritual significance of the Inuit, one of the Alaskan indigenous peoples, lies in finding harmony in their physical condition, mental state and the spiritual. The Inuit recognise deep connections between their peoples, land, nature and the life in their waterways and seas. (Schramm et al. 2020) Reflected in interviews conducted by Pufall et al., traditional foods and hunting rituals are perceived as significant elements to Inuit physical, mental and spiritual health, serving for healing rituals, medication, economic prosperity and coherence of the community. Simultaneously, illness or natural issues are seen as a disruption of this harmony (Wihak and Merali 2005).

The disruption of Inuit culture and beliefs can be captured in three overarching causes of climate change. Firstly, climate change impacts forests and ecosystems. Loss of biodiversity and decreasing water quality are leading to a scarcity of traditional foods and medicinal resources like wild, fish and cultivated crops (Pufall et al. 2011). Secondly, rising temperatures are leading to health threats and permafrost thaw, which consequently leads to the destruction of infrastructure (Bennett et al. 2014, 302-307). Lastly, melting sea ice is leading to rising sea levels, endangering hunting conditions. In addition, the rise of sea levels and permafrost thaw is causing damage or loss of ancestral land in coastal areas, leading to forced relocation of Inuit groups (Maldonado et al. 2014).

The climate-induced displacement of Inuit groups highlights its paradox: Inuit communities are least accountable for environmental change, though it is their culture, resources and land being threatened (Maldonado et al. 2014). As explained in the previous paragraph, governance mechanisms lack law and funding to support indigenous groups and few indigenous communities are economically able to buy new land. Taken together, this leads to further economic impoverishment of Inuit peoples as well as to the loss of their culture, traditional knowledge and beliefs (Bennett et al. 2014, 297-307). The lack of legal and economic support, and the lack of investment to safeguard indigenous cultures, knowledge and traditions, demonstrates the peoples' systematic impoverishment and

inequality in human rights. For this reason, it is argued that climate change can as well be seen as the latest movement of southern oppression and interference in Alaska's Native lands and cultures (Martello 2008).

Reterritorialising media's hegemonic structures

As demonstrated in paragraphs one and two, both representation and climate change do not take place in a vacuum, but are interwoven in problems of injustice and human rights. These discussions emphasise the importance of indigenous participation in self-representation. Only through their perspective, they can illustrate the actual impacts of climate change on their cultures and beliefs and change the dialogue that has been formed by hegemonic institutions. This paragraph will give insight into how media activism can be used as a tool for self-determination and decolonisation, to protect Alaskan indigenous peoples' culture and beliefs. By doing so, it demonstrates how media is used by the Inuit to create awareness and to find solidarity for these issues (Duarte 2017).

To comprehend how media activism can be used as a tool against repression, this paragraph will first reflect on Stuart Hall's notion of power structures in media. According to Hall, if the media can function as a producer of power, it can as well be used as a tool against repression (Klassen 2016, 16). This way, media can disturb dominant power structures and challenge naturalised ideologies by giving new meanings to images and narratives (Sonza 2018). When these dominant systems are challenged in a social or political context in media objects of popular culture, this can be defined as media activism. Media activism is often used to share information that is not visible in mainstream media and thus it enables disadvantaged groups to share their voices or demand social change (Ginsburg 2002, 3-8). In this sense, the self-determination of indigenous peoples in media can function as a way of media activism to decolonize their image, answer to misrepresentations and revise their identity constructed by mainstream media. Media can thus be seen as a space of reterritorialisation for indigenous peoples of political and cultural matters (Wilson, Carlson and Sciascia 2017).

From the 1960s onwards, indigenous leaders and communities embraced the social and political goals of self-representation, self-determination and cultural revitalisation (Coates and Broderstad

2020, 11-23). They entered the media being actors, rather than being objectified by mainstream media. By claiming agency and gaining control over their representation, they started breaking down set stereotypes and giving new meanings to contemporary narratives of indigenous peoples. Ever since, indigenous groups have appropriated the technology of the settler, dominant, mainstream institutions, and used it to stand up for their own cultural and political needs.

The rise of indigenous movements and media activism came forth out of growing awareness that accurate representation in media and legal systems can offer a base in preserving their cultures and land (Tomaselli and Xanthaki 2021). Getting recognized adequate political and religious rights can back up their claims and provide economic resources to compromise done and expected damage (Sonza 2018). The increasing impacts of climate change have pushed indigenous peoples further to develop awareness among non-indigenous audiences and claim sovereignty.

In the past years, indigenous peoples joined forces to address the dangers of climate damage on their identities, cultures, and ways of living. So have Arctic indigenous groups. Multiple Arctic indigenous groups are trying to create awareness by giving climate change politics a human face and voice (Martello 2008). Alaskan Inuit peoples set a strong example in depicting themselves as humanisation of environmental impacts, being the living proof of the consequences of polluted water and sea-level rise. Their activism goals led to the foundation of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference Alaska (ICC-Alaska) in 1977. The organisation fights to establish long-term policies that protect Alaska's Arctic environment and for improving Inuit rights and power structures on global levels (Martello 2008). It does so by promoting activist campaigns like 'Alaskan Inuit food sovereignty' or' Alaskan Inuit education' through social and popular media channels, which are meant to educate the masses about the loss of food and land in relation to climate change.

Alaskan Inuit peoples are as well regaining their self-determination by creating films that document their cultures, forming YouTube channels to cultivate viewers and setting up Instagram communities that attract global attention. Through self-represented activist media movements, Alaskan Inuit peoples are engaging in mainstream media, telling the narratives from their perspectives. They are

taking away their reliance on the contexts of Western systems and are instead educating global audiences how outmigration of traditional lands, decline of traditional resources and governance ineffectiveness are leading to their cultural losses (Coates and Broderstad 2020, 11-23). This way, they are not only gaining visual sovereignty, but also demanding adequate representation of their religious rights, that acknowledge the connection of their beliefs to their lands.

Conclusion and discussion

The goal of this paper has been to demonstrate how colonial hegemonic media representation of indigenous peoples has influenced the loss of their cultures and beliefs, in relation to climate change impacts.

To do so, the paper explains how colonial settlers have formed an incorrect representation of indigenous peoples in media and shows how hegemonic structures have resulted in the acceptance of this image as 'natural' by the masses. As indigenous peoples were portrayed as uncivilised groups without political systems, they were, and still are, incorrectly recognised political and religious rights. The paper indicates that lacking adequate religious rights has especially been problematic in the case of climate change, as indigenous cultures and beliefs are closely connected to their land and nature. Climate change impacts traditional lands and nature, and thus impacts indigenous cultures and beliefs. The paper looks at Alaskan Inuit peoples, where degraded ecosystems are leading to loss of traditional foods and medicinal resources, permafrost thaw is resulting in destructed infrastructures and rising sea levels are leading to loss of land and forced relocation. The deficiency of religious rights means indigenous peoples are not able to legally claim protection of their land, nature, cultures and beliefs. To fight for the preservation of their cultures and lands, indigenous activist movements have been rising. By being actors rather than objects in mainstream media, indigenous peoples are claiming self-determination and decolonizing their image. This way, the media can function as a tool to challenge naturalised ideologies and disturb dominant power structures. Self-representation in the media offers indigenous peoples a platform to start a dialogue to demand their rights, to create awareness about the way climate change impacts their livelihoods and to find allies to fight for their causes.

Through the above, this paper has demonstrated the importance of self-determination and correct media representation. The participation of indigenous peoples themselves in the media can change the understanding of their culture and beliefs and demand adequate religious representation.

Rather than trying to fit indigenous beliefs and worldviews into the concept of 'religion', we could consider a dialogue to establish a mutual understanding on a more collective notion. Therefore, the discussion remains for future researchers on how inclusivity can be reached in religious representation for non-Western oriented beliefs.

Bibliography

Bennett, T. M., Bull, N. G., Maynard, P. C., Gough, R., Lynn, K., Maldonado, J., Voggesser, G., and S. Wotkyns. 2014. ''Indigenous Peoples, Lands, and Resources.'' In *Climate Change Impacts in the United States: The Third National Climate Assessment* edited by Jerry Michael Melillo, Terese (T.C.) Richmond, and Gary Wynn Yohe, 297-317. Washington: U.S. Global Change Research Program. https://doi.org/10.7930/J09G5JR1.

Coates, K. S., and E. G. Broderstad. 2020. "Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic: Re-taking Control of the Far North." In *The Arctic in International Affairs Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, edited by Ken S. Coates, and Carin Holroyd, 9-25. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Duarte, M. E. 2017. "Connected Activism: Indigenous Uses of Social Media for Shaping Political Change." *Australasian Journal of Information Systems* 21 (July): 1-12. https://doi.org/10.3127/ajis.v21i0.1525.

Durkheim, E. 1912. Excerpts from: The Elementary Form of Religious Life. From: *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, edited by Michael Lambek. Malden: Blackwell.

Fabian, J. 1998. *Moments of Freedom: Anthropology and Popular Culture*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

Ginsburg, Faye D., Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian Larkin. 2002. *Media worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Harjo, Suzan S. 2004. "American Indian Religious Freedom Act after Twenty-Five Years: An Introduction." *Wicazo Sa Review* 19(2): 129–136.

Klassen, C. 2014. *Religion and Popular Culture: a cultural studies approach*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Maldonado, Julie K., C. Shearer, R. Bronen, K. Peterson, and H. Lazrus. 2013. "The Impact of Climate Change on Tribal Communities in the US: Displacement, Relocation, and Human Rights." *Climatic Change* 120(3): 601–614. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-013-0746-z.

Martello, Marybeth Long. 2008. "Arctic Indigenous Peoples as Representations and Representatives of Climate Change." *Social Studies of Science* 38(3): 351–376. https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312707083665.

Muehlebach, A. 2003. "What Self in Self-Determination? Notes from the Frontiers of Transnational Indigenous Activism." *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 10(2): 241–268. https://doi.org/10.1080/10702890304329.

Power, J. 2016. "'When the Ice Goes, so Does the Wisdom,' Says Inuit Activist Sheila Watt-Cloutier." The Sydney Morning Herald. September 1, 2016. https://www.smh.com.au/environment/when-the-ice-goes-so-does-the-wisdom-says- inuit-activist-sheila-wattcloutier-20160826-gr24sn.html.

Pufall, Erica L., Andria Q. Jones, Scott A. McEwen, Charlene Lyall, Andrew S. Peregrine, and Victoria L. Edge. 2011. "Perception of the Importance of Traditional Country Foods to the Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Health of Labrador Inuit." *The Arctic Institute of North America* 64(2): 242–250.

Schramm, Paul J., Angelica L. Al Janabi, Larry W. Campbell, Jamie L. Donatuto, and Shasta C. Gaughen. 2020. "How Indigenous Communities Are Adapting To Climate Change: Insights From The Climate-Ready Tribes Initiative." *Health Affairs* 39(12): 2153-2159. https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.00997.

Shorter, David Delgado. 2016. "Spirituality" In *The Oxford Handbook of American Indian History*, edited by Frederick E. Hoxie, 434-449. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sonza, Lea. 2018. "Decolonizing Vision: Native Americans, Film and Video Activism." *Video Journal of Education and Pedagogy* 3(12): 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40990-018-0022-2.

Tomaselli, Alexandra, and Alexandra Xanthaki. 2021. "The Struggle of Indigenous Peoples to Maintain Their Spirituality in Latin America: Freedom of and from Religion(s), and Other Threats." *Religions* 12 (869): 1-16. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12100869.

Wihak, Christine, and Noorfarah Merali. 2005. "A Narrative Study of Counsellors' Understandings of Inuit Spirituality." *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy* 39 (4): 245-259. https://dev.journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/rcc/article/view/58765.

Wilson, Alex, Bronwyn Lee Carlson, and Acushla Sciascia. 2017. "Reterritorialising Social Media: Indigenous People Rise Up." *Australasian Journal of Information Systems* 21 (July): 1-4. https://doi.org/10.3127/ajis.v21i0.1591.

Further information

Article:

A future underwater
Displacement, resilience and hope on the Marshall Islands

The paradox of the electrification of things
An ethnography of electric bicycles in Amsterdam

Seeking refuge in Fortress Europe
How migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea experience violence due to border control

Casteism in the 21st century
Understanding the structural violence against Dalit manual scavengers in Mumbai

Diaspora en spanningen in de transnationale familiedynamiek
Het leven van Somalische vluchtelingen in Egypte

Written for the course:

Anthropology of conservation & global environmentalisms
University College Utrecht

Energy: politics, infrastructure and change
Utrecht University, Cultural Anthropology: Sustainable Citizenship master's program

Anthropology of violence: actors, repertoires and subjectivities
Utrecht University, bachelor's program

Anthropology of power
University College Utrecht

Wetenschappelijk schrijven
Utrecht University, bachelor's program

A step back to move forward
Grassroots practices of energy in rural Sicily

Energy, politics, infrastructure and change
Utrecht University, Cultural Anthropology: Sustainable Citizenship master's program

Mount Everest: the stairway to heaven
On the dialogue between religion and popular culture in the context of mountaineering in the Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest) region in Nepal

Religion, media and popular culture
Utrecht University, bachelor's program

"I don't feel safe in the streets"
Street harassment viewed in the continuum of violence in relation to symbolic and everyday violence

Anthropology of violence: actors, repertoires and subjectivities
Utrecht University, bachelor's program

Watched, judged, and examined
Experiences of asylum seekers in the direct provision panopticon in Ireland

Anthropology of power
University College Utrecht

Ethical dimensions of nuclear energy
Exploring fusion and fission, and the perspective of residents and scientists

Energy, politics, infrastructure and change
Utrecht University, Cultural Anthropology: Sustainable Citizenship master's program

Framing women
The feminicides of Juárez

Anthropology of violence: actors, repertoires and subjectivities
Utrecht University, bachelor's program

Preserving indigenous beliefs
Self-determination and decolonisation of media

Religion, media and popular culture
Utrecht University, bachelor's program

WE HOPE YOU ENJOYED THIS EDITION OF SCAJ

Inspired to submit your work or interested in becoming a reviewer for the next issue?

Visit our website:

www.studentsofculturalanthropologyjournal.com

CONNECT WITH US ONLINE

Students of Cultural Anthropology Journal

@scajuu

Students of Cultural Anthropology Journal

SPRING 2022

VOLUME 4
ISSUE 1

ISSN:2772-8218