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Our goals

SCAJ strives to be an *inclusive* platform for showcasing work written by students for students from the department of Cultural Anthropology at Utrecht University. We encourage students from all backgrounds to submit their work, the only criterion being that it was written for an anthropology course. SCAJ aims to *represent* all anthropology students as such. In accordance, SCAJ strongly believes in the power of knowledge-sharing. Students hold the ability to *educate and inspire* fellow students by displaying their work.

Our values

SCAJ aspires to be *transparent* when it comes to methods and processes regarding the creating and publishing of the journal. Holding into account that SCAJ is an undergraduate/graduate journal, we have no intention of pretending to know more than our fellow students in the academic field. *Equality* between the core team, reviewers, authors, and readers is therefore strongly emphasized. SCAJ aims to be an accessible platform for both writers and readers

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Introduction

Writing can be a paradoxically lonely process. Transferring words onto a page is a largely solitary endeavour, yet the expectation of those words being read and interpreted by another human being is why we put them there in the first place. I, for example, am presently writing this introduction in nobody's company. The imagined attention of you, the reader, is what drives me to entrust you with my words. For students there is the additional element of learning: through the practice of writing we gain knowledge about how to become part of that intellectual imaginary in which thoughts and ideas are verbalized, so to speak. As close-knit and devoted as many members of Utrecht's students of anthropology community might be, this practice of intellectual exchange more often than not remains limited to the exchange between the student and the teacher. We are asked to write a paper and are subsequently told whether or not we have done so successfully. In other words, our work is graded and then forced to live out its life at the bottom of a drawer, never to be spoken about again.

The Students of Cultural Anthropology Journal aims to change that. It is our core belief that transparency and visibility among students of the discipline will not only give us the confidence boost that is long overdue, but will in fact enhance our learning process. For there are so many different ways to go about writing an academic paper, yet most students usually follow the same format for every piece without knowing about other creative possibilities. Through this journal we wish to make a start in providing an overview of the incredible diversity of students' writing. Similarly, the variety of topics and case-studies outlined in this journal might provide insight into the variety of themes in which students are interested, and might inspire others to look beyond their personal archives as well."

The beautiful thing about being editor-in-chief is that there are only so many ideas that you can implement yourself: what people are willing to share is completely up to them. I feel proud to announce that this first edition contains nine wonderful papers, all elegantly written in their own unique way. You will find a broad range of topics covered by authors from different years and fields of study within anthropology.

Before I give them the floor, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the board for their endless enthusiasm and persistent dedication. The same goes for the team of reviewers who were brave enough to join and lend us their critical minds for the selection process. Thank you, also, to everybody else who invested their time, effort and ideas to help create this first edition.

Lastly, my sincerest gratitude goes out to *all* of the authors who sent in their papers. They make this journal possible more than anyone else. It takes courage to share your work. I feel safe in saying that I speak for all students of anthropology when I say that, more often than not, we have some kind of personal attachment to the people about whom we write. It is the reason we pick up the pen and start writing, however tentatively, however close to the deadline. Let us cherish this together!

Machteld Nuiver
Editor-in-Chief

Before reading

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

First off, the core team of SCAJ would like to emphasize that the papers are entirely written by the authors themselves; the core team of SCAJ left their substance completely untouched. Furthermore, we have asked all authors to write a few words about why they are proud of their work or why they think it is worth reading. These motivations can be found below the author's name. Please note that these are not words from our core team or reviewers.

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 mainly built on theory of other scholars and are not (yet) considered credible sources themselves. If you are in doubt whether to refer to a certain article or essay published here, we advise you to consult your professor.

The order in which the articles 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 articles with similar topics next to each other. Other than that, the arrangement of articles is completely random.

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

Intercommunal violence in Northern Ireland

Sectarian spatial demarcation and the performance of masculinity

Anna-Lea van Ooijen

"The subject of my paper: the sectarian violence in Northern Ireland, instantly caught my interest. Because of this, I really enjoyed writing this paper. Moreover, I am truly proud of the final result. With that in mind, I am enthusiastic that my paper can now be read by a larger audience."

"*Where I live is a peace wall to keep Catholics and Protestants apart. There's always rioting and bricks and golf balls coming over the walls (...).*"

- Interview (Harland 2011, 421)

Introduction

Marching through the streets of Dublin, a small group of 30 boys called Na Fianna Éireann ("Warriors of Ireland" in English), consider themselves to be hardline Republican dissidents. They believe in a renewed armed struggle necessary to free Ireland from British occupation in the North (Vice News, published July 23, 2015). These young boys are marching within a contested sectarian space. This is due to the long standing ethno-nationalist and religious conflict between the 'Protestant-Unionist/Loyalist-British', who want Northern Ireland to remain a part of the United Kingdom and the 'Catholic-Irish-Nationalist/Republican', who want to reunite Northern Ireland with The Republic of Ireland (Cairns and Darby 1998).

The Marching Season in Northern Ireland is associated with significant controversy and street disturbance linked to the sectarian demarcation of social space (Lysaght and Basten 2003). This is because, by marching through the streets, the members of communities lay claim over their territory; marching from the center of

their community to the boundaries that demarcate the adjacent community composed of the 'other' group (Feldman 1991). The boundary is then a confrontational space, between predominantly Protestant and predominantly Catholic communities, often called the 'interface' (Feldman 1991). It is here that the possibility of a sectarian violence arises.

What the example above here illustrates is that the Northern Ireland conflict is rooted in demarcations on ethno-nationalist and religious grounds. But the marches of the Na Fianna Éireann also show that the violent acts are mainly generated by men. Nonetheless, as sociologists Harland and Ashe (2014, 747) explain, *"…due to the primacy of ethno-nationalist frameworks of analysis in research on the conflict, the relationships between gender and men's violence have been under-theorized."* Therefore in this paper I want to put focus on this, by analyzing how the interrelationship between sectarian spatial practices and the performance of masculinity can be seen when looking at intercommunal violence in Northern Ireland. In light of the recent announcement of the Brexit in 2016 it is important to shed light on the intercommunal violence as it is feared that the Brexit will reignite prior conflict. More insight on where the violent acts are taking place and who is generating them will hopefully prevent this.

In this paper I will briefly look at the segregated social space and the state in Northern Ireland. Secondly, I will look at the sectarian violence in Northern Ireland. Thirdly, I will give an understanding of ideal hegemonic masculinity during the conflict. After which, I will elaborate on the workings and performance of this idealized version of hegemonic masculinity within the context of demarcated sectarian space. Lastly, I will conclude this paper by linking the spatial demarcations in society and the performance of masculinity to the sectarian violence.

Segregated social space; the building of peace walls

The Northern Irish conflict, also called the Troubles, officially ended with the singing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 (Cairns and Dabry 1998). This started the peacemaking-progress, which went hand in hand with the constructions of peace-walls between the Protestant and Catholic communities, enhancing the segregation of the already divided communities in Northern Ireland. Boulton

(2014, 8) explains that peace walls were imposed by the state as formal separation of the Protestant and the Catholic communities to define and bureaucratize violent space by making it safe. It can be said that the Northern Irish state is trying to undertake a project of territorialization, by bringing the sectarian demarcated space under state logic. The concept of territorialization by the state is talked about by Hoffman (2011) in his book on the Kamajors in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Hoffman explains that: "*States undertake projects of distinguishing the legal from the illegal, the legitimate from the illegitimate [...]. States territorialize*." (2011, 9). The peace walls are a way for the state to code its citizenry in easily understandable categories and then assign them a place as belonging to one (ethnic) community.

While the peace walls were built to decrease the violence between the communities, one could argue that instead of decreasing violent acts, the walls only enhance the violence between the Protestant and Catholic communities, as the peace walls merely reinforce the distinction between the two communities. This contradiction should be further researched in another paper. For now it is important to note, that according to research on this topic, Northern Ireland still struggles with outbreaks of sectarian violence at the boundary of the communities. I will now look at this boundary between the communities and the sectarian violence that follows, to later pose wider questions about the performance of masculinity.

Sectarian Violence at the interface

The sectarian violence can best be understood by looking at the interface areas. Feldman (1991) explains that the interface is synonymous for the boundary between a predominantly Protestant/Unionist and a predominantly Catholic/ Nationalist area. According to Feldman, the boundary space is a contested space: "*…the 'interface' is a spatial construct preeminently linked to the performance of violence''* (1991, 28). This is because both factions want to have control over the social space they inhabit, as this space offers them security and opportunities. Feldman (1991) goes on to say that with this in mind violence becomes a deliberate tool of social engineering; to define space against invasions from the 'other' group and to gain new territory. Rioting at the interface is seen as a means to set and even

extend territorial boundaries between Catholic and Protestant communities (Feldman 1991). It is then at the interface that violent acts, such as rioting, occur.

Jarman and O'Halloran (2001) look at this interface rioting. They explain how this rioting is generated by young people in a community. Within some communities there is a lack of essential social facilities, therefore the interface zones have become popular meeting point for young people. To relieve the boredom, the youths have established a routine pattern of behavior, something that Jarman and O'Halloran call 'recreational rioting'. *''It* [the recreational rioting] *has no obvious political inspiration, requires no spark (besides boredom) and is seen as exciting and enjoyable for the young people involved.*'' (Jarman and O'Halloran 2001, 7). As further noted by the authors, this recreational rioting is also a part of a wider experience of behavior surrounding the violent acts. Namely, as a tool for expressing one's identity by defining space against the 'other' group.

Lysaght and Basten (2003) look at violence and this expression of (ethnic) identity in relation to the sectarian spatial demarcations in society. They explain that due to fear of sectarian violence, residents in Belfast have 'invisible' spatial practices when crossing the 'enemy's territory'. The people they interviewed overall aimed to "... use space 'intelligently' and thereby [...] achieve an 'unremarkable', near 'invisible' presence.'' (Lysaght and Basten 2003, 16). Examples of such coping mechanisms are: not wearing specific items of clothing (e.g. taking off school uniforms when walking in the shopping centers); not using certain language and change their names, as they may be easily associated with one ethnic group. These sectarian coping mechanisms can also be seen beyond the segregated residential areas, when people cross the 'no man's land'. Even these spaces become sectarianized. Here, specific behavior of negotiation one's (ethnic) identity as a defensive strategy comes to the fore, in order to reduce to likelihood of a violent assault taking place. In the next part of this paper I want to focus on how violent acts and the fear surrounding this at the interface zones, are interrelated to the fluidity of what constructs masculinity. First, however, I will give an understanding of the narrative on the ideal hegemonic masculinity in Northern Ireland.

Masculinity and the Northern Ireland conflict

Universally, gendered division of labor in war or conflict tends to be constituted as normative for men as opposed to women (Ashe 2012). This is echoed by Hutchings (2007), who explains that the gendered division of labor in war is an assumption that is often taken for granted. She furthermore explains that within the context of a conflict, hegemonic ideals of masculinity became apparent. Hutchings uses the definition of hegemonic masculinity given by Barret (2001): "*The term hegemonic masculinity refers to a particular idealized image of masculinity in relation to which images of femininity and other masculinities are marginalized and subordinated. The hegemonic ideal* […] *is a man who is independent, risk- taking, aggressive, heterosexual and rational''* (as cited in Hutchings 2007, 393).

During the Northern Ireland conflict an hegemonic ideal of masculinity can be seen. In an earlier published article, Ashe (2012) talks about the Northern Irish conflict and the ideals of masculinity that circled the Northern Irish society. She explains that the conflict was not only a call to arm, but also a call to manhood. In order to protect the respective ethnic group against the 'other group', men had to embrace ideal traits of masculinity, namely bravery, physical strength and violence. Ashe goes on to say that these traits are associated with nationhood, as term like honor, patriotism, and duty led to men joining the fight (2012). On top of that, the men feared being associated with cowardice and femininity if they did not join the conflict (Ashe 2012). In sum, it can be argued that the men in the Northern Irish conflict embrace a hegemonic ideal masculinity as described by Barret (2001) in Hutchings (2007). Nonetheless, the hegemonic ideal of masculinity is a site of contestation, as what constitutes masculinity is being reworked within a certain context, in this case within the sectarian demarcations of social space. I will focus on this now.

Masculinity and sectarian spatial practices

Roche (2012) focuses on the process of becoming 'hard' or the 'hardening' of man within the sectarian demarcated spaces of the communities. 'Hardness' and 'being hard' is described as a state that encompasses a masculine sense of self, of both being physical prowess and displaying a lack of vulnerability (Roche 2012). Being physically prowess is

something the young lads learn when growing up in the segregated residential areas. This is because fighting is seen as something you just do; it is ingrained in their way of life. One interviewee explains that if you don't want to be a wee lad, you have to learn how to be a hard one. In order to do so you have to be harder than those from the 'other' community; violence then becomes just the way to show this (Roche 2012). Displaying a lack of vulnerability is a recurring theme amongst youth in Northern Ireland, which is also being mentioned by Harland (2009). He explains that by showing emotions, young man fear to appear feminine, instead of masculine. In order for the young men to be 'hard man', the men have been taught to negotiate and use the sectarian cues. These cues can be used to align oneself with a particular side, which helps a man to position himself in an oncoming clash and provide him with backup from his own community – both physically and emotionally. In the words of an informant in Roche's research, the sectarian cues are used to give the situation a "w*ee bit more pow"* (2012, 201).

But who among the men in a community are the "hard men"? In her article Lysaght (2002) talks about hegemonic and subordinate masculinities in the Northern Irish communities. Lysaght explains that the combatant (paramilitary) men are mostly seen as belonging to the dominant hegemonic category of masculinity, whereas the non-combatant men belong to the subordinate category. Notwithstanding, the non-combatant men do think their manhood is superior as they are autonomous, holding their own and fighting one on one, unlike the combatant men who apparently need backup from the respective community (Lysaght 2002). This lack of independence, as mentioned before, is not in line with the ideal hegemonic masculinity, as explained by Hutchings (2007).

Besides these personal differences in opinion on who holds the hegemonic masculinity, the ideal of what constitutes masculinity also become blurred within the constraints of the sectarian social demarcations. This is because here, all men from one community are seen as a possible threat to the 'other' community. In order to defend oneself against possible sectarian violence or threats, the categories of masculinity are illuminated, as both men embrace a masculine sense of self as being 'hard men'.

Drawn upon work by Judith Butler (1990) on performativity of gender, Lysaght (2002) concludes that masculinity becomes a performance at the interface and beyond. Butler indicates that gender ideals are illusions, as "...bodies are compelled to approximate, but never can" (1990, 146). With this in mind, Butler explains that gender is always a process of becoming. Gender is thus constructed in given locational and positional change, which can be seen at the boundary of the community, for here the construct of the idea and ideals of masculinity are relatively fluid. The fluidity of masculinity at the interface and beyond is echoed by Harland (2009). On the one hand men should be powerful and brave, while on the other hand feel powerless, due to the fear surrounding the threat of sectarian violence (Harland 2009). The question as to who among the men are then 'hard men' and conform to the hegemonic ideal of masculinity, is thus merely a social construct linked to spatial negotiations in Northern Ireland.

Conclusion

To conclude this paper, I would like to go back to where I started: the Marching Season. Because it is here that intercommunal violence takes place and the interrelationship between the sectarian spatial divide and masculinity can be draw. During the Marching Season, groups such as Na Fianna Éireann, march from the center of the their respective community to the edge of the community and beyond the interface areas. These interfaces are then preeminently linked to the performance of violence, as it is here that a confrontation with the 'other' community takes place. As I have shown, the violence at the interface is generated by a process of social engineering; whereby space is defined against the 'other' group. The boundaries of the communities then become places to define one's territory and to express one's ethnic identity in light of the 'other'. The cues of the sectarian spatial division are taken up by men in the communities and are used to harden themselves. Being a 'hard man' becomes a performance at the interface and beyond. As here, the possibility of violence leads to a blurring of the lines between dominant and

subordinate masculinities and the ideal hegemonic masculinity becomes that of being ‘hard men’.

The violent acts generated by the men at the community’s edge are thus deeply ingrained in the sectarian spatial demarcations in the Northern Irish society. Therefore, I argue, much like Harland (2011), that when looking at the intercommunal violence in Northern Ireland, it can be said that the sectarian spatial divisions continue to be an integral and complex aspect of male identity formation in Northern Ireland. It is crucial to keep this in mind because the performance of the hegemonic ideal masculinity, that of being ‘hard men’, at the interface and beyond may lead to future outbreaks of sectarian violence.

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The New Gods

The Depiction of Religion in the Works of H. P. Lovecraft

Ivan Dimitrov

"I am proud of this paper because it is about Lovecraft and Lovecraft is a very interesting and influential author. I furthermore believe that I have succeeded in incorporating the theories. Above all, I am very pleased with the title (a reference to The Old Gods by Lovecraft)."

Introduction

The nature of religion has changed a lot in the 21st century. Most developed countries now have a majority, or at least a significant atheist population. This development has been accompanied by a much greater freedom in religious belief as well. No one is required to adhere to a single religion, but in many countries people have the freedom to choose from a diverse palette of religions and religious beliefs. Despite these developments, depictions of religion and depictions associated with religion remain very widespread throughout popular culture. Rather than seeing this as a decline of religion, many scholars have argued that there has been a change of religion (Hjarvard 2008, Klassen 2014, Taylor 2007). Klassen has pointed out that religion and popular culture are in a constant dialogue. Hjarvard poses that the media, as a separately developed institution, plays a big role in the changing and dissemination of religion into popular culture. Taylor has distinguished three grand phases in religion, which uniquely interact with and influence popular culture. I will elaborate on all of these later on. The question

that comes up is: how do religion and popular culture influence and change each other? This is a tricky question that is too broad to be comprehensively answered in this paper. Instead, I want to contribute a small amount to the existing ongoing discussion about the dialogue between religion and popular culture. I will focus on one piece of popular culture and attempt to thoroughly analyse its depiction of religion. Through the works of Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937), his story *Call of Cthulhu* in particular, and the wider extended universe known as the *Cthulhu Mythos*, I wish to illustrate the dynamic between religion and popular culture. The central research question is thus: how are religion and popular culture in dialogue in H. P. Lovecraft's works?

To answer this question, I will first argue that in Taylor's "post-Durkheimian dispensation," the mediatization of religion and ubiquity of "banal religion" in popular culture has allowed for a novel, individual construing of religious experience, which is not necessarily tied to traditional religious institutions (Hjarvard 2008, Klassen 2014). Afterwards I will elaborate on Lovecraft's genre: its use (or rather subversion) of the Burkean "sublime" (Ralickas 2008), tying it to religious experience, and thus religion. I will pull examples directly from Lovecraft's stories to examine the ways in which they depict religion, and how they contribute to the dialogue between religion and popular culture. Finally I will relate Lovecraft's depictions to the individualization of religious experience and reiterate my main argument.

Individualization of Religious Experience

The theoretical framework that I will be arguing for is the, what I will call, individualization of religious experience. Building off of the work of Charles Taylor (2007) and Stig Hjarvard (2008), I employ their various insights and connect their theoretical frameworks to construct a novel way of looking at the state of religion and popular culture in Western countries today, which I will elaborate upon below.

Radical Individualism

As I mentioned earlier, Taylor (2007) distinguishes three phases, or what he calls dispensations, of religion in various societies today. He takes the work of Durkheim a step further and categorizes societies into either a paleo-

Durkheimian, neo-Durkheimian, or post-Durkheimian dispensation. Under the paleo-Durkheimian dispensation, there is only one dominant religion in a society. All citizens are thus required to follow this religion, and it can be imposed by law. Under the neo-Durkheimian dispensation, multiple religions exist alongside each other in a society. The people have considerably more freedom and are free to choose which religion they wish to belong to, however, they are still bound by the existing institutions. Under the post-Durkheimian dispensation, people are not bound by any existing religion. The post-Durkheimian dispensation is one of "expressive individualism" (Taylor 2007). People do not have to choose to adhere to any established religion, but are free to construct their own, unique religious experience and understanding.

I propose that most countries in the developed Western world are under the post-Durkheimian dispensation. Multiple institutionalized religions coexist alongside each other, but people are not obliged to adhere to any of them. This is characteristic of the highly individualized Western culture, resulting in an individualization of religion as well. People are free to express themselves in any way they see fit, and this includes a freedom to express their religious experience. The higher rates of atheists and nonbelievers in the world are a reflection of this. According to a 2010 poll, only half of the people in the European Union definitively believe there is a god, with 20% believing there is no god or supernatural force at all (Eurobarometer 2010). This does not necessarily mean a decline of religious feeling, but rather that individuals don't fit into the conceptions and practices of institutionalized religions. In fact, a more recent poll noted that many who described themselves as religiously unaffiliated, "still have various religious beliefs and practices" (Pew Forum 2012). This points to the individualization of religion under the post-Durkheimian dispensation of expressive individualism. Religion is constructed individually, differing from person to person, and many times differing from the constructions of established religions. I argue that the way this has happened is, at least in part, due to and closely intertwined with Hjarvard's (2008) *mediatization of religion*, which I will explain further below.

However, it is still important to keep in mind the caveats to Taylor's framework. Although it does a good job of broadly interpreting religious development, it generalizes diverse sets of experiences and glosses over details to fit them into just the three categories. The dispensations may in fact be occurring in the same society, at the same time, but on a local scale. Furthermore, it has to be acknowledged that the three dispensations are by no means a universal social fact. The same Pew Forum poll also showed that the vast majority of atheists reside in Asia (Pew Forum 2012). It is by no means evident that Taylor's framework can be applied to other parts of the world, such as Asia, where there is a much longer tradition of non-religious spirituality, such as Buddhism or Confucianism. And even these are interpreted differently (as religious) in different societies in different times.

Mediatization of Religion

Hjarvard (2008) argues that institutionalized religions are no longer the sole actors in creating and distributing religious messages, morals, and narratives. He explores three dimensions of the media as an institution and its influence on religion. He calls this development the "mediatization of religion." To substantiate this view, Hjarvard proposes the idea of "banal religious elements." Building off of Billig's *banal nationalism* (1995), Hjarvard argues that to understand religion, one has to look beyond the ideas, depictions and products of institutionalized religions, but to look at all those everyday symbols and conceptions that inform our religious imaginary. These banal elements are very broad and do not necessarily have to be linked to religion explicitly. Just like banal nationalism, many banal religious elements are not religious in nature, but can be mobilized for religious purposes and acquire a new set of meanings (Hjarvard 2008).

During the development of society, Hjarvard continues, religion became institutionalized, and religious professionals created religious narratives that selectively included and excluded certain banal religious elements (Hjarvard 2008). That is to say, even though some elements, such as vampires, or witchcraft, are deemed heresy and not part of actual religion by religious institutions, they nevertheless inform our religious imaginary of what is "right" and what is "wrong" religion. Nowadays, due to the

mediatization of religion, religious institutions are no longer the sole creator of religious narratives. Media can, in various forms, include or exclude certain banal religious elements in their new narratives, and can mobilize them for religious purposes, among others.

Here as well it is important to keep in mind the shortcomings of Hjarvard's framework. I contend that banal religious elements may be so broad a category, that it becomes meaningless as an analytical distinction. As Hjarvard says, anything can become a banal religious symbol, even if it has no historical or otherwise connection to religion. Then every symbol in existence becomes a banal religious symbol. Furthermore, if it is not connected to religion, then why call it a religious symbol?

Convergence

These two theoretical frameworks complement each other really well. The convergence of these two theorists' ideas is an individualization of religion and religious experience. The mediatization of religion is characteristic of the post-Durkheimian dispensation, allowing for novel constructions of religious experience. It points to a decoupling of religion from religious institutions. This means that religion is no longer bounded by the narratives of institutionalized religion, allowing to people to form their own, individual, personalized religious narratives, making use of the wide array of banal religious elements, or creating new ones.

One may argue that the mediatization of religion does not empower the individual, but merely shifts the power to construct narratives from one institution to another. It is now bounded not by religious institutions, but by the media institutions. I contend however, that the great variety within media, and the lack of an overarching set of rules governing them (at least, for now), still allows individuals greater freedom to construct their own narratives. Indeed, as popular culture is a site of contestation (Klassen 2014), and popular culture is mainly the domain of the media, religious narratives created and transformed by the media are also constantly being contested. This only further proves the fallibility of traditional religious narratives, and the feasibility of alternative ways of construing religious experience, moving us closer to the post-Durkheimian dispensation.

Lovecraft and Cosmic Horror

Having grown up around the turn of the 20th century, Howard Phillips Lovecraft lived a very peculiar life. Lovecraft may be described as the most overlooked (and underpaid) writer of the past century. He remains in obscurity, in his own time never having garnered any popularity or significant audience. Today still, he is not widely known or heard of, his infamy only being carried by a cult-like following around his stories. Yet despite this, Lovecraft has left a clear mark on literary history. His writings have had great influence and continue to greatly influence many writers and genres (Smith 2011). From fandoms to books to video games to movies, his influence has been undeniable, although he is rarely ever mentioned by name.

Lovecraft's work can only be described as *eldritch horror*. One characteristic of his works was his usage of really difficult, obscure words to give rich, vivid descriptions of the scenes he was painting. The word 'eldritch' (meaning unearthly, uncanny, weird) itself was only popularized because of Lovecraft. He used such rich language in often very long, complicated, but beautiful sentences. However, first and foremost Lovecraft's works were horror, but of a different kind than was used to in his time. Lovecraft's horror often had a couple specific overarching themes. It sought to convey an existential fear of the size and unknowability of the universe. Humans and the human world are always portrayed as small and insignificant in comparison to the giant, *cosmic* horrors that they faced in his stories. What was scary was not simply the unknown, but the forever *unknowable* (Will 2002). This is reflected in passages such as "we live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far" (Lovecraft 2007, 34). Often in his stories, the insignificance of man, and his inability to grasp the terrifying truth is stressed. "Some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the light into the peace and safety of a new dark age" (Lovecraft 2007, 34). Characteristic of his stories is a first-person narration, in which often the narrator themselves are terrified or even insane, as if something is coming to get them because of the terrifying truth that they have come to know. *Dagon* ends with "The end is near. I

hear a noise at the door, as of some immense slippery body lumbering against it. It shall not find me. God, *that hand!* The window! The window!" (Lovecraft 2007, 7; emphasis in original). Lovecraft is sometimes seen as a pioneer of the 'unreliable narrator' trope, but I find that more often than not such themes are employed to enhance the horror and the narrator is meant to be reliable. Lastly, the defining feature of Lovecraft's work is human confrontation with incomprehensible monstrosities, that are cosmic in scale. "These Great Old Ones were not composed altogether of flesh and blood" (Lovecraft 2007, 47) tells us about otherworldly (eldritch one might say) creatures with a significantly longer lifespan than that of a human.

Lovecraft's writings have sparked the creation of a new genre, specifically for his works, called *cosmic horror*. Cosmic horror is "that fear and awe we feel when confronted by phenomena beyond our comprehension, whose scope extends beyond the narrow field of human affairs and boasts of cosmic significance" (Ralickas 2008, 364). Due to this, cosmic horror has many times been related to Edmund Burke's "sublime" (Nelson 1991, Will 2002). The Burkean sublime is also a sense of awe at something that cannot be entirely comprehended when confronted by it, something transcendent in nature. If we are to see Lovecraft's work as conveying a sense of the sublime – something transcendent – onto its readers, then we can easily make the connection to religion – as God is also transcendent, and the sublime was often used in relation to Him.

Ralickas (2008) however, points out the flaw in this direct comparison. The sublime is not only a sense of awe at something incomprehensible, but also carries with it an appreciation of some higher morality. Cosmic horror is rather a modernist mutation of sublimity, as all higher morality or beauty is thrown out the window. The incomprehensible horrors that Lovecraft writes of are monstrous, hideous, dangerous and devoid of any morality. "The time [for Cthulhu's rule of Earth] would be easy to know, for then mankind would have become as the Great Old Ones; free and wild and beyond good and evil, with laws and morals thrown aside and all men shouting and killing and revelling in joy. Then the liberated Old Ones would teach them new ways to shout and kill and revel and enjoy themselves, and all the earth would flame with a

holocaust of ecstasy and freedom" (Lovecraft 2007, 48; emphasis added).

Another interesting point is Lovecraft's relation to existentialism, specifically Camus' "absurd" (1955). Camus posits that there is a reality that we live in, but human representations can never fully encompass it. The absurd comes from the contradiction between these two. Lovecraft has clearly been concerned with this fact for a while before Camus, seeing that his stories are often characterized by the human inability to fully grasp reality: "The most merciful thing in the world, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all of its contents" (Lovecraft 2007, 34). Much is to be said about the gradual development of literary and philosophical movements, and about their often loose and diverse origins. Perhaps Lovecraft was a visionary slightly ahead of his time, but perhaps he contributed to a gradual development towards existentialism that was budding in his time. Regardless, this relation is a curious one.

Religion in Lovecraft

Having established what Lovecraft is about, it is time to more closely examine its dialogue with religion. Firstly, it is important to note that Lovecraft was a known atheist (Lovecraft 2010). This much is evident from his writings, subverting the idea of a merciful, anthropocentric God. Instead of conveying a sense of empowerment through God, readers are left feeling helpless and afraid. Superhuman forces in Lovecraft's work are not meant to serve humans or a human morality, but completely disregard them. Lovecraft employs, what Klassen (2014) calls, an oppositional reading of traditional religious messages, portraying something antithetical to what the catholic church might want people to think.

Lovecraft frequently uses cults in his stories and they are never described positively. In *The Call of Cthulhu*, the "Great Old Ones" need help from the outside to reawaken, so since the dawn of mankind have used their influence to maintain a cult that is devoted to them. These cults hold rituals that are described as "hellish," "diabolic" and often accompanied by otherworldly demons. The relation to religion and religious practices here is clear. What is interesting to note is their association with race. In the story the cult is (negatively) described as being "voodoo," which is a highly racialized Western construction (McGee 2012),

and the region that the ritual is held in is peculiarly enough described as “unknown and untraversed by white men” (Lovecraft 2007, 44).

Cults are an example of the banal religion that informs our religious imaginary. While cults are definitely not seen as religious by religious institutions, they are nevertheless associated with religion, but in a negative way. Besides cults, Lovecraft often uses biblical, religiously laden words (diabolic, hellish) words to describe some of the monstrosities in his stories. Furthermore, monsters and religion are inextricable (Beal 2014). As monsters are part of religious texts and traditions worldwide, so religion is part of the modern horror genre. Lastly, Lovecraft often makes use of the mythopoetic idea of “Lost Worlds.” This idea can be found throughout religions and myths, linking religion and popular culture (Taylor 2006).

Conclusion

We see how Lovecraft has taken elements of religion and transformed, subverted (sublimity of God), or kept (demons and monsters) them in his representations. We also see the use of diverse banal religious elements, which are not explicitly linked to religion, used in the portrayal of religion in his works. By employing (banal) religion inside popular culture in this way, Lovecraft has contributed a novel way of viewing religion, albeit a terrifying, pessimistic view. Contrary to the belief that religion is declining, we see that popular culture is riddled with religious elements. What’s more, these productions of popular culture in turn inform our religious imaginary, transforming religious conceptions and creating new elements. This perfectly mirrors Klassen’s “religion and popular culture in dialogue” (2014).

In conclusion, I have argued that expressive individualism under the post-Durkheimian dispensation has given way for an individualization of religion and religious experience, due to the mediatization of religion. Traditional religious institutions have lost their complete authority over construction of religious narratives, and now individuals have the ability to construct their own, personalized religious narratives, utilizing all banal religious elements available to them. Lovecraft is a good example of these banal religious elements being employed in a different, novel way. Religion is still well and alive in popular culture

today, but has changed form into something less distinct and unified.

Before I end, it is important to note possible points of discussion about my proposed framework. I have argued for an individualization of religious experience, but we can't ignore the nevertheless enduring power of collective religious imagining. It is not even entirely clear that religion is possible individualistically, as the power of religion has always been in its specifically collective function. Perhaps we see only a deterioration of old institutions and the forming of new ones. Only time can tell.

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“Are you *really* this highly educated?”

Confronting My Own Prejudice: An Exploration of Racism and the Dutch Cultural Archive

Ellen Hobelman

“It's one of the first papers I am very proud of and it concerns a subject which I think is very important in today's society. It's a very personal paper and one I think (hope) could relate to many other people.”

January 2018, Greece.

The winter cold is still tangible as I start my work for a Dutch NGO. Reluctantly I get up early, take a quick hot shower and get myself ready for another day in Greece’s largest refugee camp Moria. Every day my task differs. Today I will be running the obviously improvised library, which is situated outside. For this specific shift I was asked to train one of the new librarians, a 22-year old man from Somalia – I will refer to him as G. I am genuinely anything but excited to be working outside in the cold. Feeling guilty, I get over myself, dress up warmly and as a finishing touch I add the obligatory NGO-vest to distinguish myself from Them.

Nearly simultaneously, G. and I arrive outside the walls of Moria right beside the rather confronting graffiti which reads ‘Welcome to Prison’. He seems particularly amiable and as we start talking we get along immediately. Communication goes naturally as his English is above average - he tells me he recently finished his Master’s degree at the University of Somalia. Surprisingly my initial response was a bit *too* startled (‘Wow! Really?’). Gripped by shame about this prejudiced reflex I quickly continue the conversation trying to come across as open and neutral as possible, despite my flushed face.

This alleged intellectually inferior position of G. is an example of one the surprising and confrontational encounters with my racism. I assumed to know what G.'s educational background was based solely on the fact the he is not only a refugee, but more specifically a black refugee from Somalia. This illustrates an unconscious bias, which equates learnedness instinctively with whiteness. In this essay I am going to analyze this inherently innocent attitude when it comes to race and racism, and the denial thereof. I am going to do this based on Gloria Wekker's work on Dutch racism (2016), more specifically on her notions of the cultural archive and white innocence. Furthermore, I will use Francio Guadeloupe's discussion of the mentality of the islanders of Saint Martin/Sint Maarten to illustrate how institutionalized and systemic racism is (Guadeloupe 2009). I will finish by putting these two works next to each other and discussing their link to Dutch and, more specifically, my racism.

White Innocence and The Cultural Archive

The surprised reaction to my own racism illustrated above can be explained by Wekker's notion of the cultural archive and white innocence. Firstly, the cultural archive concerns "the memories, the knowledge, and affect with regard to race that were deposited within metropolitan populations and the power relations embedded within them" (Wekker 2016, 19). It is a literal, physical archive but more importantly it furthermore concerns an immaterial repository of documentation on 400 years of the Dutch imperial past (Stoler 2009 in Wekker 2016). It could be seen as a heritage of patterns and the way we see the world – our frames of reference based on our imperial history, or as quoted by Wekker as something "between our ears and in our hearts and souls" (2016, 19). Wekker emphasizes throughout her book that, due to the history of imperialism, race and racism are inherently embedded in the Dutch cultural archive.

Secondly, however paradoxically, race and racism seem to continuously lead to explicit and/or implicit denial and avoidance referred to as 'white innocence'. Innocence in this sense is associated with soft, harmless and childlike qualities and describes a dominant way of being in the world (Wekker 2016). Based on Wekker's understanding of the cultural archive I would argue that it is constructed and thus not set in stone. This could perhaps be related to Benedict

Anderson's idea of how there can solely be one story of the nation – and for this story to be 'comfortable', some histories must be actively remembered and, in the case of imperialism, some must be actively forgotten or denied (Anderson 2006). In the case of the Netherlands a large part of its history has been whitewashed. It has put on a 'coat of colorblindness' and views itself as small, innocent and tolerant (Wekker 2016). "The Dutch do not relate to race, they simply do not do race" (Wekker in Jaffa 2018, 9) and they continue to deeply cherish an innocent antiracist self-representation (Wekker 2016). Wekker emphasizes white innocence as concerning both not-knowing and not attempting to know the world as being racist, resulting in white people profiting from the world's racial hierarchies (Wekker 2016; Sullivan and Tuana 2005 in Wekker 2016). White innocence is strongly defended by the Dutch to such a degree that race is, despite of and due to the Dutch cultural archive, not part of the prominent aspects of Dutch self-identification.

In my case, as illustrated by my encounter with G., apparently somewhere embedded in my white Dutch mentality is the assumption that a black refugee is more likely to be uneducated than well-educated, or at least this is worth some amazement. This could be explained due to the host of assumptions nested in the Dutch cultural archive. For example, being black is often associated with being uneducated and with naturally occupying a place lowest in society, also referred to as a 'natural order' (Van Sterkenburg 2011 in Wekker 2016). It exposes 'sufficient built-in racialized ordering principles' or 'conceptual maps' that provoke rejection of and aversion to a supposedly inferior someone (Wekker 2016, 63; Guadeloupe 2009, 221). This ordering seems part of the Dutch common-sense and illustrates a strong hierarchical, asymmetrical Us versus Them dichotomy.

The Perpetuation of The System

To further illustrate this unequal world order I will shortly turn to Guadeloupe who shows that white people, but black people too perpetuate this order. He illustrates among other things how prejudiced Western media is easily accessible on the island of Saint Martin/Sint Maarten and that it became well known how Westerners used to reduce black people to the stereotyping image of their bodies (Gilroy 2000; Hall 1997; Rony 1996; Wynter 1992 in Guadeloupe 2009). Race

remains an important structuring principle (Guadeloupe 2009). The islanders are well aware of the fact that they are thought of as unequal to the Westerners, but also that the West considers itself as superior and Western capitalists do dominate the island's economy. Confronting the Westerners with their racism would be disadvantageous and consequently the islanders place their pragmatism above their principles by engaging in social performances of Western-tourist friendly narratives to keep them satisfied (Guadeloupe 2009). Also supported by Wekker (2016, 39), it concerns a situation where white people as well as black people keep each other in a balance of denying and disavowing racism. Black people are obviously dealing with the white people profiting from the still existing racial hierarchies in the world. Not only Western nations like the Netherlands are implicated in the perpetuation of this system, but inevitably non-white people are as well. I am not arguing that black people themselves are responsible for racism, but that this natural world ordering sometimes leaves them with no other option than to play along.

A Synthesis

The world is suffering from a circular effect which keeps the asymmetrical, racialized world order intact. As exemplified by both works above, black people have been subordinated by Western imperialism and still have to live up to this unequal world order. Firstly, the Dutch cultural archive (and thus race and racism) is still evidently denied and/or (un)consciously ignored as the Netherlands positions itself as an inherently innocent antiracist nation (Wekker 2016). Secondly, the black, supposedly inferior Other should refrain from confrontation with white Westerners concerning racism (Guadeloupe 2009). I would argue that, by doing so, the white Westerners are in the privileged position of perpetuating certain racist assumptions with an attitude of white innocence, despite the history captured in the cultural archive. This results in a wide gap between Dutch self-representation and the presence of race and racism, which in turn seems to maintain the existence of racism up until today.

I am racist

I realized that due to my white ethnocentrism I am privileged not to touch this uncomfortable Dutch cultural archive too often, and thus I am not confronted frequently with my own racist assumptions. The Netherlands strongly thinks of itself as being inherently color-blind. *I* am supposedly color-blind and I most certainly do not engage in racism: I am white and privileged, but more importantly I am an activist, a feminist and politically left. However, due to numerous confrontations much like my encounter with G., and through the work of Wekker as well as Guadeloupe, I was and still am affectively forced to transform my innocent nonracist self-image into one that accepts that I inherently am racist, and that I cannot deny or ignore the Dutch cultural archive.

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Fast or Fashionable

An Analysis of the Global, Local and Individual Scale of the Fast Fashion Industry

Guusje Weeber

"I believe that fast fashion is a relevant and currently important research subject that concerns many different people from different places. I hope to provide an anthropological perspective and awareness of the enormous complication that is the fast fashion industry, to shed some light on the multiple dimensions involved and affected, and to propose a few potential actions we (as consumers) can undertake."

"My generation will save the planet. Reduce – Reuse – Recycle. #joinlife #pull&bear."

(Pull&Bear 2019)

Introduction

Abovementioned quote and picture were found on the online store of young clothing retailer Pull&Bear, owned by Inditex, a Spanish clothing multinational. Other brands associated with Inditex include Zara and Bershka (Inditex, n.d.). The t-shirt is a piece of the 'Join Life' collection, which 'marks a new stage in the company's green communication strategy and sustainable development philosophy' (Fashion Network 2018, paragraph 3). Similar texts, such as 'Keep our oceans clean' and 'Defender of this world', are printed on other items of the collection.

Directed at youth, Pull&Bear wants to send its consumers a message regarding their sustainability policy and the manners in which both the company and its clientele can have a positive impact on the environmental problems that are related to the fashion industry. Despite the empowering message and the fact that Inditex' website provides us with an elaborate and seemingly transparent sustainability report, the multinational has been exposed as

contributor to various scandals in production cycles: accusations of employing slave labor (Forbes 2011), buying from highly polluting factories (The Independent 2017) and being otherwise 'socially irresponsible' (United Explanations 2014) have appeared in the news.

The contrast between these stories and the text being promoted on the t-shirt outstandingly illustrates one of many paradoxes existent in today's' fast fashion industry. This paper will draw attention to multiple of these contradictories in the fast fashion world with reference to debates on sustainability, consumerism, and several social and political aspects. The aim of this analysis to demonstrate both the foreseen and unforeseen consequences of the accelerated pace in which people buy and waste clothing. Subsequently, numerous scales will be examined in order to answer the following research question: What are relevant scales and dimensions of the modern fast fashion industry, and what are some contemporary fault lines?

The remainder of this paper will be organized as follows: first of all, the paper will be positioned within the academic debate, after which general definitions will be established in order to be consistently maintained throughout the argumentation. In the core of the article, different scales will be discussed: the global, the local and the individual. In each of these scales, the political and social dimension will be addressed. Finally, the findings on the research question will be summarized in the conclusion.

Anthropological Relevance

Various anthropologists and other scholars have analyzed phenomena within fast fashion and the social, political and environmental aspects that are related to this industry. To position this article in the academic debate, a number of studies will briefly be presented, derived from respectively the anthropological field, gender studies, and consumer studies.

Eriksen (2018) locates fast industries within the context of globalization and its effects on the social and economic lives of people. He writes: "to some, change offers job opportunities, peace, and improved infrastructure; to others, it means pollution, eviction and a loss of livelihood." (Eriksen 2018, paragraph 9). The diversity within meanings and perceptions of globalization is shown: once again, one of countless paradoxes.

In consonance with arguments presented later, Tokatli (2008) and Moisander (2007) analyze retailer- and consumer behavior in a context of a "global economy of socially and politically constructed competitive advantages" (Tokatli 2008, 36), its influence on consumers, and the question whether 'green consumerism' is a sensible lifestyle. Haug and Busch, too, argue that consumers are overseen actors (2016) in social and financial processes.

On a different note, as described by Siddiqi (2009), anthropologist Aihwa Ong contributed to a shift in studies with regards to third world workers, who play an instrumental role in keeping the fast fashion economy running. Moving beyond the endless considerations of contradictions generated by industries, she pleads for "[...]a greater emphasis on the lived experiences, cultural practices and modes of consent and resistance in the workplace and outside" (Siddiqi 2009, 157). The significance of individual aspects and particularity, which will be discussed further, is introduced here.

General Definitions

To avoid confusion between the definitions used in this paper and other meanings, two main concepts will be clarified in the following paragraph. First of all, Byun and Sternquist's definition of 'fast fashion' will be maintained: "the rapid delivery of latest fashion with a short renewal cycle and a deliberately limited supply" (2008, 145). Secondly, Haug and Busch define "ethical consumption" as the "avoidance of practices that are detrimental to other people, animals or the environment" (2016, 5).

It is understandable that there is no absolute opposition between the two abovementioned concepts. However, fast fashion remains a consequence of globalization, as well as the negligence of workers' rights (Ahmed and Peerlings 2009) and uncertainties in people's lives and in natural landscapes (Knowles 2015), which are correspondingly components of the fast fashion industry.

The Global

The first scale of the fast fashion industry that will be discussed is 'the global'. Within this broad term, globalized systems, big corporations and economic structures will be

covered. Acknowledging the fact that ‘global’ means much more than merely these aspects and that many inquiries on the global scale are far beyond our capacities to deal with or to solve, the needed attention will be given to the local and individual scale afterwards.

Politics and economy are inherently interconnected and subsequently interdependent of each other and of power structures. Especially in today’s globalized context, industrial structures, such as the fast fashion industry, are transnational, corporate and complex. This complexity makes economies and related politics harder to control, understand and approach (Eriksen 2018). In the fast fashion industry, management, production and distribution hubs are located and relocated all across the globe. As industrial competition is characterized by speed and low costs, a risk of financial loss causes the appeal of prioritizing environmentally conscious options above cost-effective ones to decline (De Brito, Carbone and Blanquart 2008).

This risk is vastly shaped by the fact that the global economy is driven by the most universally accepted motivation in the world: economic growth (Fletcher 2010). An example of this extreme importance is that environmental and social problems are often not or hardly tackled in the fashion industry, primarily because of the costs that come with it. With support from governments and companies, these costs could be reduced substantially (Ahmed and Peerlings 2009). Paradoxically, the people who have the power (i.e. financial means) to change, do not impose this idea of improvement upon power structures. It is overseen that improving the physical working conditions could improve the productivity of an economic system, which would ultimately cause an increase in production, employment and welfare (ibid.). On the other hand, there is the question whether economic growth will make us richer, or whether it will undermine social wealth and ultimately make us poorer (Fletcher 2010). Are these arguments just two sides of the same coin or do they contradict each other?

The interconnectedness of the global economy and global political power relations have large impact on the social aspect of global life. The focus will shift to individuals in one of the next paragraphs, yet let it be clear that connected peoples, social structures and terrains of everyday lives are globally powerful, too, in the sense that they are placed at the forefront in economic processes and

commodity chains (Knowles 2015). Transnational legislation shapes, restricts and mobilizes people and economic and corporate systems have direct influence on the availability of jobs and labor, resources, capital and ownership (Partridge and Burda 2011). Partridge and Burda even argue that "transnationally active corporate entities are working out new modes for governing their global supply chains, which I argue are resulting in new forms of citizenship" (2011, 98). On top of that, global production is "producing them as different types of subjects, [...] reifying, if not augmenting, local and global social hierarchies" (ibid., 106).

On a concluding note, it remains a major challenge to oversee all ambiguities and contradictions present in today's globalized fashion world. The two main approaches that are described by De Brito to analyze economic trouble – the 'normative ('what should be done?') or instrumental ('which are the gains?') approach' (De Brito, Carbone and Blanquart 2008, 538) – sketch the ambiguous narratives that are constantly and simultaneously shaping the global discourse.

The Local

Under 'local', discussions that revolve around retailers, firms and brands will be categorized, as this is the location where paradoxes become visible firsthand. Inditex, the corporation discussed in the introduction, will be used as case study and as line of sight. Some contemporary contradictions will be presented, followed by examples of (social) countermovements.

Deriving from global policies and international competition, the main reason for refraining from improving the fast fashion industry (from within the industry retailers) is that 'increasing choice increases the competition for sales among retailers. The end result is gradually decreasing prices' (Anguelov 2015, 22). Competition among producers is based on price: For instance, the shelf life of clothing in stores is strategically shortened in order to replace older, less trendy items with new fashion quickly. This stimulates consumers to buy new products continuously (Byun and Sternquist 2008, 136). On top of that, the fashion industry is a sensitive business, as natural resources are exploited excessively and labor conditions are often unacceptable (De Brito, Carbone and Blanquart 2008, 537). What was

described as ‘risk’ in the last paragraph, transforms within the local scale into a competitive, strategic and uncontrollable mobilization of retailers. Even sustainable regulations are mined for profit: some firms ‘anticipate such legislative changes, in order to gain some competitive advantage from acting as first movers, and thus transforming a constraint into an opportunity’ (ibid.) and others ‘go beyond legal obligation to then encourage regulators to set higher standards, thereby increasing competitors’ costs and barriers to entry’ (ibid.).

To put things in perspective, retail store Zara, part of Inditex, once was set apart from its counterparts due to its manufacturers in Spain. Going against the mainstream, globalized patterns in the fashion world, they were supposedly ‘demonstrating that market flexibility and lean inventories may be more important than cheap labor’ (Tokatli 2008, 24). However, ‘today Zara stores are full of garments made in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Indonesia’ (ibid., 34). The promising ideals and successes of ‘being contrarian’ to industry norms seem abandoned. It should be noted that these findings are based on research conducted in 2008. In a more recent publication Inditex is put in a different light: the company demonstrates transparency, is described by Greenpeace as ‘exemplary’ (Rutter, Armstrong and Cano 2017, 21) and distances itself ‘from the notion of fast fashion, preferring instead to be considered as a ‘thoughtful’ manufacturer of fashion’ (ibid., 24).

Awareness and an ‘optimistic trend towards sustainable practices’ (Rutter, Armstrong and Cano 2017, 24) are growing, and with people ‘recognizing that in order to change fashion, economic and social practices that shape, limit and give meaning to the sector have to be part of the debate’ (Fletcher 2010, 264), several sustainability initiatives or even countermovements are arising. One instance is the Slow Fashion movement, driven by changing consumer wants and opinions, suggesting retailers embrace a more ‘consumer-centered approach to sustainability’ (Pookulangara and Shephard 2013, 204). However, since it is challenging for retailers to preserve both low costs and high-quality and sustainable fashion (ibid., 200), and since the movement goes beyond the prevailing growth-focused fashion system (Fletcher 2010, 263), ‘slow’ is extremely paradoxically and regrettably ‘understood not for how it can

transform the sector at root, but for how it can increase sales' (ibid.).

Other sustainable initiatives might neither be perfectly foolproof but are worth mentioning. H&M, for instance, has realized a sustainable, 'conscious' program, in which eco-material is used and promoted, sustainable manufacturing is adopted, green distribution and retailing, and educating consumers are promoted (Shen 2014, 6246). More systematically, Haug and Busch mention an initiative that they suggest might provide a partial solution. 'High fashion providers should be highly aware that they to some extent set the standard for fast fashion in the sense that this fashion mimics the trends defined by high fashion' (2016, 15). The ultimate goal is to make 'ethics' an 'indispensable part of what is fashionable' (ibid., 16).

Concluding this paragraph, although small-scale initiatives might be beneficial to some extent, Fletcher argues that 'big' movements such as Slow Fashion offer a 'changed set of power relations between fashion creators and consumers', and invites us 'to think about systems change in the fashion sector and to question the role of economic growth, underlying values, and worldviews in fashion' (2010, 264). This is in line with the first section of 'the local': where common emphasis is consistently put on profit and maximization, De Brito proposes a comparable option in the form of the 'corporate responsibility' movement: 'firms are to serve the needs of all those affected or affecting the firm, and not only maximize profit' (De Brito, Carbone and Blanquart 2008, 537).

The Individual

In the previous paragraphs, global paradoxes and large-scale debates were presented in line with the research question. However, in a manner befitting an anthropological paper, the following focus will lay upon the individual, for both the worker and the consumer are significant actors in the process of fast fashion. Obviously, '*the* worker' and '*the* consumer' do not solely exist within this identification, and they certainly are not the only individuals relevant to fast fashion: the Inditex CEO, the Pull&Bear employee and the Slow Fashion activist are not forgotten, however neither are they highlighted in this paragraph.

The competitive nature of industries, depicted in 'the local', results in unpleasant situations for factory workers,

such as ‘poor physical working conditions, low wages, and use of child labor’ (Ahmed and Peerlings 2009, 661). By this means, a crucial human right is violated: certain standards for “decent work” include ‘conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity’ (ibid., 662). The concept of risk once again returns as explanation for the underinvestment in working conditions. Many of the earlier remarked paradoxes come together: ‘costs must be made before the benefits can be reaped, [...] it is uncertain whether the benefits will actually occur, [...] [there are] low entrance levels in the industry, making competition strong.’ (ibid., 668). Although ‘questions about ethics have been raised and workers’ rights are addressed more extensively than before’, (ibid., 661), another fault line is presented by Siddiqi (2009). Due to globalization, the poor working conditions in factories receive more attention and support than, for example, the agricultural sector: their part in the production cycle ‘is less visible or concrete while the products of ‘sweatshops’ [...] were everyday items to which consumers could relate more readily’ (Kabeer in Siddiqi 2009, 156).

Siddiqi goes on describing relations between the worker and the consumer. ‘Particularities of place, people and the specificity of localized power structures disappeared in such globalizing frameworks’ (2009, 157). And, in line with the notion that the consumer is an overseen actor (see introduction), most of the activism and actual change that is happening in the fashion world is initiated and inspired by the consumer, as will become clear in the following examples. However, on this scale too, many fault lines still hinder the progress.

By monitoring their consumption and by being confronted with unfair wages, slavery and child labor, ‘consumers in rich nations are increasingly savvy activists’ (Partridge and Burda 2011, 101). Corporations try to conform to the demands of consumers, NGOs, factory- and agricultural workers, and activists, which are all increasingly visible through media representations (ibid., 102). However, a large gap still exists between the ‘ethical claims of corporate agendas and the lives of the actual people who work in factories’ (ibid.). This is the result of three issues concerning fast fashion in relation to consumers, as elaborated by Haug and Busch (2016).

The first issue is the difficulties that come with the communication between production and consumer (Haug

and Busch 2016, 5). For example, not all brands succeed in conveying the relevant ethical information to consumers without them needing to be experts on ethical consumption (ibid., 6). It can be hard for consumers to 'identify the brands that are truly environmentally friendly (ibid.). Besides, not all consumers possess adequate knowledge to make informed purchases. This ultimately amplifies the challenge for producers, 'since consumer demand for sustainable fashion, such as slow fashion, depends on a knowledge and understanding of the issues impacting sustainability' (Pookulangara and Shephard 2013, 204).

The second addressed issue is that 'consumers do not always act in accordance with their values' (Haug and Busch 2016, 6; Joy et al. 2012, 280). Fast, inexpensive fashions continue to be preferred over sustainable options (Pookulangara and Shephard 2013, 200).

The third issue is the process of individualization in society, which supports short-term and self-expressive consumption (Haug and Busch 2016, 7). This focus on the individual consumer is not in line with the emphasis on responsibility and long-term benefits that apply to ethical consumption (ibid.). This is partly due to the marketing strategies of brands to create an image or identity belonging to the brand and to individual consumers (Anguelov 2015, 22). Especially young people are easily influenced by materialistic values to define who they are and to belong to certain groups (Haug and Busch 2016, 12). Even improvements in the fast fashion industry often start with feelings of guilt of the consumer, instead of a desire for global equality (Partridge and Burda 2011, 98). Another consequence of individualization is that some consumers take up too large a responsibility to bear. The idea of 'green consumerism' as a private lifestyle of a single individual needs to be problematized (Moisander 2007, 404). It takes collective action: 'there is a need to create opportunities for co-operation and collective action at the grassroots level' (ibid., 408).

So, why is it important to take the individual into account? According to Eriksen, 'the scalar gaps between decisions-makers and those who are affected by their decisions are growing' (2018, paragraph 5), thus new measures must look at *all* scales. The conclusion of this paragraph can be phrased as following. Consumers can have an influence on fast fashion; unfortunately, their motivations

are diminished as the ‘effects of choosing non-ethically produced products are too abstract by virtue of being too far removed in space from the consumer’ (Haug and Busch 2016, 13). More paradoxes arise: for example, are consumers the (only) ones responsible for a transition to more ethical fashion?

Conclusion

After analyzing and demonstrating a considerable amount of fault lines in the fast fashion industry, some conclusions can be deduced. Unsurprisingly, while many cited authors offer solutions for these fault lines, none seem to be concrete or all-encompassing. However, a common suggestion is a grand shift in the fast fashion culture, on all of the scales discussed. The most prominent contradictions can be summarized as ‘a new global culture [that] is based on the dominance of a few transnational corporations that manufacture and market the majority of consumer goods around the world (Anguelov 2015, 33). But, since the labor market is embedded in social relations (Siddiqi 2009, 157) and since ‘cultural change must precede market change’ (Anguelov 2015, 31), a different worldview must be promoted (Fletcher 2010, 262). The needed shift in ‘the global’ has to start with ‘the local’: globalized power has to be challenged by ‘local community groups and transnational organizations that are capable of putting pressure on governments, public opinion, and corporations’ (Eriksen 2018, paragraph 14). These scales, as well as ‘the individual’ should strive towards sustainable fashion (Joy et al. 2012, 291), so that ‘the words ethical, sustainable and green become obsolete, as they are predictably accepted as industry standards’ (Rutter, Armstrong and Cano 2017, 25). Although there is a long way to go, ‘this view is not so utopian as it once was, as the industry is being assisted by Government legislation, consumer pressure, stakeholders and internal influences’ (ibid.). Perhaps the Pull&Bear t-shirt was right: this generation might save the planet, as ‘new fashion brands view them as ingrained standards entrenched into their attitudes and expectations, socialised by education and the time in which they were born into’ (ibid., 25).

Although many paradoxes are still omnipresent in the fashion industry, some scholars take on a hopeful position regarding these problems. The question remains, whether all contradictions can be solved and whether an entirely ethical

and sustainable fashion industry is feasible. Until then, as has become clear, plenty of research must be conducted, taking into account many different dimensions, scales, and academic fields.

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The workings of Foucauldian power within occupied Palestine

Mick Spaas

"My reason for submitting is that I am proud of how I used a philosophical concept to explain a problem in an anthropological way."

Introduction

Following the atrocities committed upon the Jews during the Holocaust, the desire for a Jewish state increased. The United Kingdom and the UN crafted the two-state solution, which would incorporate a Jewish State combined with an Arab-Palestinian State. Israel seized control over the majority of Palestinian territories after multiple armed conflicts with Palestinian and other Arab forces between 1948 and 1967. This strengthened Israel's hold on both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Euphemistic terms such as 'disputed territories' or even 'liberated territories' were used to disguise what it really was, a military occupation (Gregory 2004, Bishara 2014). Settlements were erected on fertile, disputed land, for the explicit purpose of reclaiming land, believed to be their ancestral right, based upon biblical interpretations (Penslar 2008). As of 2008, over 440,000 individuals (Allen 2008) have moved into these settlements, clearly violating the Fourth Geneva Convention, which forbids an occupying actor to move civilians into occupied territory (Galchinsky 2004, Penslar 2008, Allen 2008). Outrage over the occupation and treatment resulted in violent protests among the occupied civilians.

The Second Palestinian Intifada caused a shift in the position of Israel concerning the conflict. Where once the aim was to resolve the conflict it changed to an attempt to manage it, which produced eerie resemblances to apartheid (Yiftachel 2005). Multiple tools for surveillance and control are inflicted upon Palestinians: checkpoints, curfews, unclear residency, unclear legal status and frequent military incursions increasingly permeate their lives (Allen 2008,

Wick 2011, Kelly 2004, Gregory 2004). Not only do these policies affect militarised groups, civilians are on the receiving end as well. Restrictions such as those on mobility and space, these forms of structural violence, among physical violence, become a regular and normal occurrence within Palestinian territory. The control that is enforced upon the occupied is a result of Israeli governmentality (Lemke 2001, Parsons and Salter 2008) used to manage the Palestinians and, in extension, the conflict. This paper will dive into the Foucauldian mechanisms that govern Palestinian daily lives.

Foucault (1977) distinguishes three modalities of power: sovereignty, discipline and biopower. Each of these will be subject to analysis within the Palestinian context, where these modalities will be defined and used to analyse how the manifestations of governmentality, the way in which an actor governs, such as curfews and checkpoints, cooperate in the disputed territories.

Sovereignty

Despite the fact that Palestine is recognized by 193 countries as a legitimate state, it has a remarkable lack of sovereignty, defined as the power to decide over life and death (Mbembe 2003, Parsons and Salter 2008, Foucault 1977-178). In addition to the lack of a legitimized use of violence (Weber 1918) Palestine lacks the currency and control over its own borders to exercise sovereign power over its territory (Bishara 2014). As barriers, checkpoints and settlements fragment Palestinian communities, it becomes apparent that today Israel is acting sovereign over the disputed territories and as such rules over life and death outside Israeli borders, thus this paper concludes that a point is created where the two powers, discipline and sovereignty, overlap.

Use of checkpoints poses significant risk to Palestinians, as multiple have been killed while waiting in line, due to gestures such as moving a car or grabbing a handkerchief. Investigations often concluded that such unlawful killings are a result of negligent or nervous soldiers (Amnesty 2001). Fatima Jamal Abu Jish for example was killed while in a car, waiting in line at a checkpoint. At first IDF soldiers claimed it was in response to shooting. Later this was retracted and the incident investigated. No reason was produced as to why Fatima or the specific car were targeted.

An investigation took place that lasted three days, after which disciplinary measures were taken against the soldier that fired the fatal round (Amnesty 2001, 22). This incident shows firstly, the power to decide over life and death is wielded by a foreign individual, instead of native state apparatuses or representatives. Secondly, the foreign sovereign is exercising punishment. In this example the lack of Palestinian sovereignty is apparent, as both the power to decide and the power to punish are withheld. To elaborate further, incidents such as these only emphasize the lack of justice residents can expect from the occupiers, but also that their sovereignty resides not by themselves but rather is being held by a foreign state actor.

Israel's power over the disputed areas are reminiscent of territoriality, a process where an area is transformed into a territory through the exercise of power, thus claiming power and sovereignty over the space and inhabitants (Robben 2018). Territoriality thus becomes entwined with the Foucauldian power mechanisms. Even if observed in isolation rather than entwined, territoriality, as seen in Palestinian enclaves, is present in the way physical barriers are constructed to limit space for residents and increase power for those in control of the territory. The barriers themselves are a way for Israeli actors to mark the space over which they exercise control. Mbembe argues that space becomes the primal matter through which sovereignty is formed (Mbembe 2003, 26).

Amnesty International reports the creation of no-go areas. Delegates noted in January 2001 that areas visited in October 2000 were now abandoned by the population and they were advised to avoid that area. Townsfolk feared the approximately 200 metres between them and the border as IDF soldiers were known to fire both lethal and non-lethal rounds at Palestinians within that area (Amnesty 2001). The conclusion this paper draws here is that an encroachment of IDF controlled space into Palestinian terrain is both literal and symbolic for the shrinking space and slowly increasing control that is being projected over the disputed territories and its inhabitants.

Palestinian land is transformed through a network of checkpoints, physical barriers and byroads, ever increasing IDF presence within the region and with it, tightening the net of mobility around communities, seizing sovereignty,

repressing means of mobility and ultimately increasing Israeli hold over the occupied.

Discipline

Discipline must be seen as the surveillance and corrections imposed on a subject and dictated by the disciplinary powers, in order to increase control over them (Parsons and Salter 2008). Through rigorous corrections and surveillance the subject internalizes conditions set by the power apparatuses. This internalization increases the normativity of the rules and expectations set by the apparatuses which in turn causes the subject to self-regulate their behaviour (Foucault 1977). This paper argues that the processes of disciplinary measures cannot be studied in isolation and must be observed within the appropriate context. The no-go areas mentioned in the previous paragraph are a prime example of discipline. Residents are taught entering a certain area will be met with, possibly violent, corrections and through surveillance, the possibility that IDF forces could be watching the area, thus creating a self-imposed tendency to avoid it. Space becomes interpreted by subjects through the apparatus .

The presence of checkpoints, IDF controlled entrances and exits of an area, become yet another disciplinary device. They should be seen as nodes in a network that generates territoriality. Residents must wait in line for hours, wait for permits, wait to be checked (Allen 2008, Wick 2011). The harassment at these checkpoints becomes mandatory and punishes dissidents. Inhabitants are at the mercy of IDF personal as well as the regulations, unavoidable as these checkpoints are, they normalize such a treatment and recreate these spaces in a controlling and disciplinary manner.

On the subject of space, Wick (2011) states that "Much of the literature on space, taking a cue from Michel Foucault, emphasizes mechanisms (dispositives) which reorganize the functioning of power, making space into a theatre of forms of discipline (surveillance). This approach privileges the apparatus producing discipline—not the apparatus exercising power as in the state and legal institutions, but the actually functioning system of discipline" (25-26). Following this argument, space must be seen as the abstract border in which mechanisms operate and thus create discipline. Discipline as a tool is used within the

Palestinian context to control a populace, already cut off from the world, through barriers and checkpoints, into a manageable whole. The aim of discipline is to create a social panopticon, where the uncertainty of being observed or breaking rules dictated by discipline generates internal self-management regarding said rules. Unlike the panoptic effects Foucault (1977) uses as the punishing force, dissidents within the Palestinian context are punished with disproportionate violence. To return to Fatima Jamal Abu Jish, who was killed while in a car, waiting in line at a checkpoint. Amnesty reports no dissent, or other reason as to why the car was attacked. The disciplinary apparatus is met by sovereign power, where conforming or dissenting matters not in the context of personal safety.

Biopower

According to Foucault biopower concerns "the problems presented to governmental practice by the phenomena characteristic of a group of living human beings constituted as a population: health, sanitation, birth rate, longevity, race" (Foucault 1977). In essence, biopower concerns the way power controls human bodies and their movement. The Israeli barrier and the corresponding checkpoints, the politics that come with it cannot be adequately explained using only an order to build or the fact that it encloses Palestinian territory, it does not function as a tool of incarceration but rather as a mechanism to narrow the flow of people or goods that pass through it. The predetermined points of entry and exit, the checkpoints, not only grant the operators of this mechanism information through passports or identification cards, but rather the power to control the flow and mobility of those trapped within the mechanism. The control this generates does not end at the checkpoint but rather permeates Israeli and Palestinian space (Parsons and Salter 2008).

Residents eager to work, visit family or perform other activities found their movement restricted as mobile and immobile checkpoints were constructed within the occupied territories (Allen 2008, Kelly 2004, Wick 2011). Palestinians were effectively cut off from the rest of the world through the combination of checkpoints and physical barriers. Intent on continuing with their lives, roads were found or created outside the regular infrastructure. However, IDF forces hindered this through mobile or 'flying'

checkpoints, which appeared and vanished unpredictably and thus creating substantial uncertainty for the occupied people within their daily routines as well as their ability to visit family or go to work (Allen 2008, Kelly 2004, Wick 2011).

The legal status of residents only increases the fear of checkpoints. Palestinians find themselves in a legal vacuum of statelessness, often designated as 'foreign non-residents' resulting in a permanent uncertainty regarding their legal status. The goal of legal statuses is to determine where people can and cannot go. As a result of the uncertainty of the law and different ascribed statuses, residents find themselves without solid ground regarding their legal position, which in turn creates uncertainty over whether or not they are able to pass a checkpoint. (Kelly 2004). With their freedom of movement never guaranteed, family life and economic independence through work is seldom a given. Factions from Israeli military and business have argued for the inclusion of Palestinians of the Westbank within the local economy. The economic dependence created through this would not only confine the occupied population economically to an area, the lack of mobility would create a structure that becomes increasingly hard to escape, further landlocking the populace (Kelly 2004).

The infrastructure of checkpoints operates in two distinct ways outside of the control of bodily movement. One is that it helps reshape the infrastructure and its users. It creates the conditions necessary to connect Israeli settlements and state property to each other while simultaneously excluding the Palestinians from that infrastructure. The 180 miles of Israeli exclusive bypass roads constructed between 1994 and 1997 alone only emphasizes the scale of the restructuring (Galchinsky 2004). The second is to generate an undermaintained, rundown infrastructure for Palestinian use, complicating their movement even when able to move beyond the confines of their community (Parsons and Salter 2008)

Given all the apparatuses and mechanisms, used by Israeli governmentality, that subjectify, control and govern Palestinian lives, the argument could be made that there are repressive powers at play. To the contrary, according to Foucault, power does not repress or exclude. Power produces domains of objects and rituals of truth, it produces

reality itself (Foucault 1977) . The author therefore argues that any notion that Palestinians were first subjected to the occupation and later enclosed within the mechanisms of power is false. The powers themselves came into existence, thus creating the conditions that not only subjectify, control, govern, survey or punish, but entrenches and enhances each separate modality even further.

Conclusion

In the wake of the armed conflicts that shaped the Israel-Palestine that we know today, a shift came in the policies dictating the management of the so-called disputed territories. Palestinian areas that came under IDF occupation felt themselves sink deeper into a complex relationship with measures imposed upon them by the occupiers. Physical barriers, checkpoints and no-go areas came into being and brought with them mechanism of power. These have been subject to analysis using Foucault's modalities of power, specifically sovereignty, discipline and biopower. While each of these mechanics can be analysed separately, they often coincide and overlap.

Sovereignty over Palestinian territory is becoming entrenched in these mechanics and in hands of the state of Israel. The physical means with which IDF forces contain disputed areas are a form of territoriality, gripping the power to control who lives in an area, while simultaneously claiming the space that is the foundation of sovereign power.

Inhabitants are subject to disciplinary mechanisms which normalize behaviours and routines, essentially conditioning them to create behaviour favourable to the IDF. Discipline and the associated tools, surveillance, normalisation and punishment are used by the state of Israel to force self-regulating behaviour upon the Palestinian population. The effects of this can be witnessed in the way no-go areas are created and sustained, in the way civilians have to put up with the insecurity of checkpoints.

These same checkpoints are used to control the flow of residents as well as goods into and out of an territorialized area. Combined with the mandatory identity papers and permits, this mechanism generates a flow of information and movement that does not end at the borders between Palestinian and Israeli areas, but rather permeates through all of Palestinian-Israeli space.

In conclusion a biopolitical chokehold was erected on the occupied territories, effectively controlling the flow of individuals and goods, while simultaneously gaining intelligence on the subjects. The effects of the Foucauldian mechanics is unlikely to fade soon, as the conflict is yet to show any significant signs of improving. With this in mind, it is more likely that measures of this nature will proliferate and strengthen their grip on the Palestinian population.

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A Modern Fairytale

Robin Ravestein

"In my opinion, this article offers a good example of a contemporary "mediated event", in which something traditional like a wedding is almost treated as a consumption product. This is made possible by the (social) media, allowing millions of spectators to follow the wedding of two famous people."

"[…] weddings do not belong only to brides and grooms but to all who attend, watch and fantasize"

(Grimes 2000: 161).

Keywords: Popular culture, religion, mediatization, authenticity, performativity.

Introduction

On December 1st and 2nd 2018, the wedding of Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas took place. She is an Indian actress, feminist and philanthropist; he is an American singer (Hindustan Times 2019). To stay true to their origin, they explicitly chose to have two wedding ceremonies: one traditional Hindu Mehndi ceremony and one Christian ceremony. This decision did not only symbolize the merging of their faiths, but also of both their families. After the wedding many pictures, videos and interviews appeared in popular media sources like 'People Magazine' and social media platforms as Instagram. These insights into their wedding showed a highly romanticized image of their love story.

This paper will analyse how a wedding, due to among others the widespread sharing and display on social media, can be seen as a mediatized event, that illustrates the inextricable link between religion and popular culture. Therefore, this paper will try to answer the following

question:: “How can the wedding of Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas be characterized as a prime example of the interaction between religion and popular culture”.?” To answer this question the approach of Chris Klassen (2014) will be used as the main theoretical frame, complemented by concepts such as mediatization, performativity and the role of new media. Through the use of these concepts, this paper will show how a seemingly traditional and religious wedding ceremony, nowadays can be transformed into a highly popular and influential event.

First, the approach of Klassen (2014) will be discussed. Second, the concept of mediatization will be explained as well as its influence on society. Third, the concept of authenticity will be used to explain why this specific event, a wedding between cultures, is such a striking example of Klassen’s approach of popular culture and religion in dialogue. In the end, this paper will conclude by explaining how this wedding is arguably not only a wedding between individuals, but can also be seen as a wedding between religion and popular culture.

Klassen’s approach of popular culture and religion in dialogue

Chris Klassen (2016) provides us with a point of view through which this mediatized event can be seen. She argues that religion and popular culture are in dialogue. With this she is referring to the constant discussion in which religion and popular culture are intertwined, influencing each other. (Klassen 2016). This approach connects to their wedding in the way their marriage and the attached ceremonies can no longer be seen separately from the influence of modernity. In a similar way, popular culture cannot be considered completely separated from religion, rather they are in dialogue. As both popular culture and religion are permeable to several aspects of society, they should not be treated as separate entities.

What is popular culture? This concept has no clear definition. It constantly changes over time (Klassen 2014). In the late 18th and early 19th century the term was used to refer to mass and folk culture. These linked to a romanticized and idealized culture that was visible due to modernization (Klassen 2014). Popular culture is likely to be connected to religion in the way it is integrated in the

political realms of religion, gender, class, globalization and post-colonialism (Klassen 2014).

Religion, according to Klassen is also hard to define. There are several ways to treat this phenomenon. One of them is the non-static state of religions. Thomas Tweed (2006) emphasizes "religions flux between individual and communal practice, between organic mindbrain activity and cultural constructions, between the movements of migrations and the groundedness of home". (Klassen 2014: 16). This so-called "lived approach" bases the elements of cultural production and activity on people's lived experiences, whether professed high culture of mass mediated popular culture. This approach emphasizes the hybrid character of religion and therefore applicable to this case.

Mediatization: the key concept to explain the influence of media on culture

According to Hjarvard (2008) *mediatization* is the process which follows the making of media into an independent institution. This independent media provides an alternative interpretation of everyday life. He emphasizes that most of the religious issues represented in the media, do not originate from the institutionalized religions, "but are delivered through genres like news, documentaries, drama, comedy, entertainment and so on. Through these genres, the media provide a constant fare of religious representations that mixes institutionalized religion and other spiritual elements in new ways" (Hjarvard 2008:12). The media provides us a experience we can share together (Hjarvard 2008).

In sum, looking at Hjarvards definition, one can state that this specific wedding can be characterized as mediatized and is therefore an interesting case for the analysis of the dialogue between religion and popular culture.

Mediatization as a way to make religion more popular

The article of Mankekar (2002) is a good example of mediatization. It is important to note that even though this article is about Hinduism and India, the aspect I want to cover is the one of mediatization of religion, through an example of a serial. 'Ramayan' is a serial based on an important Hindu epic. The serial is about gods, family and

Indian values like honor. It attracts especially Hindu viewers because, as they say it themselves, watching Ramayan made them relate to their Hinduism, going back to the authentic idea of being Hindu. Is also made them feel like they engaged in a religious ritual, touching the divine. Even though their *bhakti*, meaning the subject of worship, was electronically mediated, this did not lessen its authenticity. It actually increased the viewers' devotion to Hinduism, as the tv serial spoke to people's imagination and therefore helped building *darshan*, which represents an active relationship with the sacred. It can be seen as a form of interaction. The popularity of the serial is due to the important moral lessons to guide its viewers in everyday life (Mankekar 2002). Mankekar shows us people have the need to grasp a sense of belonging and can easily do so by watching a serial. He emphasizes that religion can be idealised, as seen in the serial. Therefore media cannot be seen as only fictional. It can also create new feelings of belonging to, for example, a certain nation state. Drawing the line to the case of the wedding of Chopra and Jonas, this wedding also spoke to people's imagination. With their wedding event the couple provided the world a highly romanticized spectacle, honoring the Hindu religion at the *Mehndi* ceremony. In here the media played an important role fueling the people's imagination of a romantic marriage, especially because the couple received a lot of criticism. He was accused marrying her solely for her money and the fact the age difference is 11 years, made it more special to celebrate their love in such an unique way (Hindustan times 2019). What a traditional Hindu ceremony entails and how this is applicable to Priyanka and Nick is outlined in the next paragraph.

Traditional Hindu wedding

As Priyanka was born and raised in India, it was very important to her and her family to have a traditional Hindu wedding (Hindustan Times 2019). The traditional Hindu wedding ceremony consists of the following customs, *Mangal Snan*: both young man and woman do this ritual. Mangal is auspicious, snan denotes bath. It is customary to apply turmeric and sandalwood to the face and the body. This is because it should work healing and has medicinal qualities. The symbolic idea behind this is that it prepares the two to look attractive to each other. Nowadays a beauty

parlour does the required work. The girls adorn their hands and feet with *mehndi*, or henna paste. Mostly all the women of the family apply the henna. At the Hindustan wedding ceremony of Chopra and Jonas they also included the mehndi ritual.

At the ceremony it is customary for the maternal uncle and maternal grandfather to give gifts to the bride, parents and other family members. This is called the *Bhath* ceremony. This originates from the idea that women could derive wealth from their parents. In ancient times girls got married at a very young age and were dependent on the support of their husband's family. Now there are equal rights for man and woman (Bhalla 2002), as seen by the case of Priyanka and Nick. She is the most famous woman in India, who makes her own money and who is very independent. She is equal to her husband as he also earns a lot of money with his profession. This paragraph showed how the newlyweds integrated the traditional Hindu ceremony in their wedding, as part of the celebration and relating to Priyanka's origin. To have this ceremony at one day, and a Catholic the other day was a very conscious decision. In here we see the more traditional aspect of a marriage, unfolding in the rituals the Hindu ceremony contained. How both these ceremonies contributed to the mediatization of their marriage becomes clear in the next paragraph, but first we will zoom in on the specific event of a wedding to explain why the concept of marriage can be seen as more grasping and popular. To address this the concept of authenticity will be used.

There's nothing more authentic than a wedding

Taylor (2007) takes up the notion of *authenticity* as the need of humans to grasp some sort of purity of human life. Everyone wants to find their own humanity, apart from conformity imposed on them from outside by society, religious or political authority. Besides a 'social imaginary' in which people seize themselves and others as existing and acting simultaneously, (Taylor 2007) at events as Lady Di's funeral or a rock concert, people are touched because they feel connected to something greater. It can be deeply moving or admirable that those who have the power to create some common feeling can take us out of everyday life, and make us grasp something exceptional (Taylor 2007).

Priyanka and Nick created their own fairytale wedding and moved their spectators. Not only the guests who attended physically, but also anyone who had access to the media platforms became spectators. A wedding can be seen as highly emotional event, in which the personal touch of those who are getting married seems very important. The authenticity of this particular wedding is not only to be found in the two wedding ceremonies. Also the wedding gown of Priyanka was filled with symbols, for example the date she had met Nick Jonas, all referring to their relationship (Hindustan Times 2019). Attending a wedding is an experience en sich, contemplating the rituals a wedding ceremony consists of. If rituals make us feel connected to each other, weddings definitely qualify as rituals (Otnes and Pleck 2003). “People seek to escape a world laden with bureaucracy and technology for a romantic utopia and actively employ goods and services that have been accorded a sacred aura in order to fill their lives with romantic overtones. We inhabit a world where romanticization of commodities and the commodification of romance go hand in hand” (Otnes and Pleck 2003, 11). Wedding magic is shielded from cynical interpretation by its association with religious symbolism and its status as a once-in-a-lifetime occasion (Otnes and Pleck 2003, 14). In here we see people do associate weddings with a certain symbolism, which is in line with religion. These authors also emphasize the need of people to grasp something as romance, to feel moved. Ironically they name people want to escape technology, even though we will see in the case of Priyanka and Nick, technology can actually contribute to feelings of romance. So while one can state that a wedding is emotional and authentic, it is also highly planned and intentional. When looking at the wedding of Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas, it was certain that nothing was left to chance. Therefore, the concept of performativity will be used in the next paragraph to define this wedding as being influential.

Their marriage: an act of performance?

What is contributing to turning the wedding into a mediatized event is the way it is performed to the world. A groundbreaking scholar on the notion of *performativity* is Judith Butler. She argues among others that gender is constructed and thus not a natural given. It is performed, and can therefore be seen as performativity. Not only gender, but

many other aspects of human life can be expressed in different ways (Klassen 2014:45). Popular culture holds a strong power of representation (Klassen 2014). This becomes also visible regarding the Instagram followers of Priyanka and Nick and readers of People Magazine and other media. The pictures and videos shared on their accounts are picked out by the celebrities themselves. With posting pictures and videos of their wedding ceremonies, they are in a way *performing* their marriage to the outside world. The way they portray themselves is a very conscious one. By social media the lives of otherwise unreachable celebrities, become more tangible (Wheeler 2014). Chopra chose to put pictures of her wedding on social media chanel Instagram, with which she reaches the large amount of 34,4 million followers. As she says herself about her wedding photos: “one of the most special things that our relationship has given us is a merging of families who love and respect each other’s faith and cultures. And so planning our wedding with an amalgamation of both was so amazing. An important part of the pe wedding rituals for the girl in an Indian wedding is the *Mehendi*. Once again we made it our own and it was an afternoon that kicked off the celebrations in the way we both dreamed” (Chopra 2018). Nick Jonas also posted many pictures of the wedding on his Instagram account, with captions emphasizing it was the happiest day of his life.

Grimes (2006) argues there is no other ritual conditioned to an iconized visuality, as getting married is. The visual documentation of the event validates it, instead of disrupting it. In his eyes weddings are quite clearly performative events (Grimes 2000). If we look specifically at American weddings, they can be seen as a direct result of the connection between ritual and consumption (Otnes and Pleck 2003). Nick Jonas and Priyanka Chopra showed their wedding did contain a high level of richness. As red before, the ritual part was very present in their ceremonies, as also the consumption. “[Modern] weddings evoke romance, allure, fashion, style, and glamour”, states Lieu about Asian-American weddings (Lieu 2014: 133). They flew in all their family and friends, celebrated the whole week and held their wedding at a castle. This all shows they had the money to tackle it so big (Hindustan Times 2019).

It could not be defined as influential without the exposure that this event generated. Therefore, the aspect of

new media (e.g instagram) was decisive in making this specific event so popular.

A wedding with more than 50 million 'witnesses'

Marshall (2006) speaks of *new media,* for example social networking sites, SNSs, who are now taking over mass media in the production and circulation of celebrity discourse. They facilitate permeation of celebrity culture to the general population. This new media, which used to be the exclusive domain of celebrities and was managed by traditional media, is now encouraging regular people to show and promote the self in the public world. In this culture of presentation celebrities remain reinforcing cultural significance as they continue in constructing images and their public self via new media (Marshall 2006). "Over the years SNSs have become the major communication tool by which people develop their personal online network. Even though Facebook is still most popular, Instagram has exceeded Twitter and other social media platforms in terms of users" (Lee et al. 2015).

Instagram is a mobile photo-sharing application launched in 2010. As it markets itself: "a medium that allows users ''to transform an image into a memory to keep around forever." Instagram users tell their stories through photographs and short videos. Text-only content cannot be created here, whereas on Facebook and Twitter this is possible. A strong visual-oriented culture is created by this "image first, text second" rule of Instagram (Lee et al. 2015: 552). As mentioned before, Priyanka has a lot of Instagram followers. Her husband is also doing not so bad, with 20.3 million followers (Jonas 2018). By sharing their wedding on this social media platform they eternalized their marriage.

"The text and images of celebrities propagated by mass media typically highlight celebrities' successful, happy, and glamorous lives" (Seo and Hyun 2018: 3480).

Marshall and the other authors above showed that by the help of media the wedding can be seen outside the boundaries of the traditional religious phenomenon, a wedding normally would be located.

Conclusion

So after this amazing and fairytale wedding the main question of course is: will they live happily ever after? While this remains to be seen, the article did argue that their

wedding was much more than a wedding between two individuals. It can be defined as a perfect and influential illustration of the interplay between religion and popular culture.

By using the approach of Klassen (2014), this wedding can be used as a very apt case study of how different religions interact with popular aspects of culture and how they inextricably influence each other. Due to the fact that this wedding was not an isolated event, but on the contrary, highly mediatized - the mediatization effect is essential in stating that this wedding is a good illustration of the dialogue and its influence on society. According to Klassen, popular culture and religion are in constant dialogue, influencing each other.

The portrayal of their wedding can in one way be seen as very religious and traditional, while it at the same time also portrays aspects as consumerism, fashion and other aspects of modernity. In not many events, this interplay was made so obvious than in their wedding. Their deliberate choice to perform their marriage in a certain way contributed to this continuous interplay and dialogue. One could even say that the theme of their wedding was to bring together religions and cultures and to turn this combination into one of the most popular wedding themes. Without the use of new media, in this case specifically Instagram, it was shared with more than 50 million people all over the world. This influence and outreach cannot be underestimated.

In sum, this article analysed why this event is such a striking example of the different ways religion and popular culture are intertwined and interacting with each other and the important role of mediatization. So while one can argue that religion in itself is becoming less popular, this wedding could not have been so popular without religion.

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The chain of Hydro-treated Vegetable Oil

Contemporary fault lines in the Roundtable Sustainable Palm Oil Certification Scheme

Dineke Verkleij

"In this essay I tried to capture fault lines within a discourse of a Global Voluntary Certificate Scheme. Hegemonic discourses of sustainability such as Fairtrade, the SDG's and RSPO, which are so often blindly followed, can consist of fault lines we should not ignore. A framework is provided by analysing such schemes on several scales; local, national and international. Although schemes such as RSPO should be critically analyzed, we cannot forget that they are a good attempt at creating a better future."

Introduction

The word sustainability seems to attract people to buy products presenting a promise for a better world. The Neste My Renewable Diesel (NMRD) is such a product that promises sustainable energy based on Hydro-treated Vegetable Oil (HVO). However, within academic circles sustainability is considered contested (Stuart 2010). Even though sustainability is not monolithically, there are Global Voluntary Certification Schemes promising to govern the idea of sustainability. These schemes have become a proxy for globalization, connecting a trans-locally connected world creating hegemonic versions of globalization (Sassen 2007; Giddens 2002).

Hydro-treated vegetable oil (**HVO**) is a plant based renewable resource, in this case based on palm oil, which can be converted into a biofuel or diesel as a source of energy. However, it is only considered a renewable resource if the rate of harvesting is consistent with the rate in which nature can replenish it.

Neste My Renewable Diesel (**NMRD**) is the product of the company Neste. It is a biodiesel based on hydro-treated vegetable oil and can be found at most gas stations. It is a relatively expensive biodiesel.

Roundtable Sustainable Palm Oil (**RSPO**) is a global voluntary certificate scheme. It is a non-profit organization that governs their idea of a sustainable production of palm oil. Their governance of sustainability is captured in eight principles (mentioned in the essay). They are active on a international scale connecting multiple stakeholders, on local, national and international scale, within the production and consumption of palm oil.

Fedepalma, is a Colombian national association of palm oil farmers. They connect and protect cultivators of palm oil on a national scale. Cultivators of palm oil consists of Big Holders, relatively large corporations producing palm oil with a high amount of resources, and Smallholders, relatively small-scale producers of palm oil with low amount of resources. Smallholders are often dependent on Big Holders for resources such as mills.

This trans-locally connected world becomes evident in the commodity chain of NMRD HVO, that has three destinations, its place of origin where the palm fruit is cultivated, the palm oil mills that extract the mesocarp from the palm fruit into crude palm oil and finally the process of converting the crude palm oil into the HVO biodiesel at the Neste company in the Netherlands. From the start of the process at the palm plantation in Middle Magdalena region in Colombia until the conversion into HVO at Neste, the renewable resource is accompanied by the global voluntary certification scheme Roundtable Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO).

In this paper the chain of NMRD HVO is followed by analysing the relationship between RSPO and stakeholders involved on a local and national scale in Colombia, and on a national and international scale in the Netherlands. While analysing the social and political dynamics in the hunt of RSPO for sustainable palm oil, I argue that three fault lines can be discovered in its discourse.

In this paper I have tried to provide a critical outline through which Global Voluntary Certificate Schemes could be understood. In specific I outline the fault lines that can be discovered in the discourse of RSPO that tries to ensure the sustainability of their products. Although this paper suggests that these schemes should be critically analyzed, we cannot deny that they are a good step towards a better future.

From palm fruit to palm oil in Colombia

In Colombia the RSPO is intertwined on different scales within the chain of palm oil production. To analyse the involvement of RSPO in the production process of palm oil I have divided its interaction with actors on a local and national scale. At a local scale the palm oil cultivation company Daabon is analyzed in relation to RSPO. The trail of crude palm oil used for producing the HVO in NMRD start at the Daabon company as a member of the RSPO, and a Big Holder that connects over hundred Smallholders in the Middle Magdalena region. This region is located in north-central Colombia between the central and eastern ranges of the Andes. Big Holders and Smallholders are actors who cooperate in the process of palm oil production within the national borders of Colombia. On the national scale the stakeholders Fedepalma, a national association of

palm farmer and millers, and the government of Colombia are analyzed in relation to RSPO.

Even though I have divided the involvement of RSPO on a local and national scale, this does not mean the actors do not interact. The reason for the division is based on two contesting categories in literature concerning the development of palm oil expansion in Colombia that have led to conflicts. Sankey (2018) has captured this complexity and described the first category to be the resistance of politics to palm oil expansion in Colombia that advocates against the negative social and geopolitical consequences of the neoliberal politics implemented by the Colombian government. The second is provided by Sankey (2018) arguing for a more nuanced side of the politics of resistance showing that conflict also arise from contestation within the interpretation and meaning of sustainability. I argue that RSPO plays a role in both trends of literature uncovering two fault lines within their self-proclaimed governmental responsibility in Colombia.

Local scale

On the local scale RSPO plays a role in the politics of resistance to palm oil expansion because it is a contributor to this expansion. RSPO needs the palm oil cultivation to expand to meet the demands of its customers. The rise of political resistance started since the implementation of neo-liberal policies by the government of Colombia that had negative social and geopolitical consequences. Opening its borders and creating an attractive business climate for foreign investors resulted in violent land grabbing throughout the history of Colombia. Forced displacement for large mono-crop farms during the nacro-driven land grab of the 1980s-1990s, and again between 2001 and 2011 has led to an estimated 6.7 million hectares of land being abandoned and seized for capitalist development and commercial purposes, mostly by armed actors and paramilitary in the absence of the state. Especially palm oil as commercial crop has benefitted from the neo-liberal policies and during the displacement many land was seized for the cultivation of this crop. (Maher 2015).

In Middle Magdalena region, the place where the chain starts, such conflicts have arisen as well. The land

grabbing between 2001 and 2011 that took place in Middle Magdalena was driven by the expansion of palm oil because the price of oil increased above six hundred percent (Sankey 2018). Daabon was established in 1914 and today its headquarters and farms are located in Santa Maria. Today, the company owns a total of 6,787 hectares of RSPO certified plantations where aside from palm oil, bananas, coffee and cacao are produced. Within a context where coercive land grabbing has taken place, advocating for expansion of palm oil cultivation has led RSPO into conflict with local political resistance that place RSPO within a neo-liberal discourse. RSPO, that can arguably be similar to transnational non-governmental certifiers such as Fair Trade, has emphasized universal notions of social wellbeing and human rights protection. Besky (2008) argued for a critical analysis of certifiers such as Fair Trade that uphold a neoliberal ideology. Marin-Burgos et al. (2014) argue that RSPO is a non-state market-driven governance system. This means: "deliberative and adaptive governance institution designed to embed social and environmental norms in the global market that derive authority directly from interested audiences, including those who seek to regulate, not from sovereign state" (Bernstein and Cashhore 2007, 348). As a market-driven organization RSPO may prioritize the consumers and commercial needs before that of its proclaimed protection of human rights. This is evident in the socio-economic conflicts that have arisen between RSPO and people living in rural areas, such as peasants and Afro-Colombian communities resisting integration into the palm oil cultivation on the basis of values that oppose market-driven logic. This political resistance wants to keep their authority over their territories which they value as their identity. Moreover they want to protect their established kinship-based relations as a form of social capital against corporate organization who want to use their lands for profit (Marin-Burgos et al. 2014). Although RSPO is a non-profit organization, its consumers: the 'interested audiences', including NMRR, are very much so. RSPO tries to meet their demands for more crude palm oil through expanding its plantation which has resulted, among other events, in a conflict with the community of Afro-Colombian territories in the *jiguamiandó* and *curvaradó* rivers basins.

There seems to exist a fault line between their advocating the importance of social well-being and human

rights and their local socio-environmental conflicts, as if their values of social well-being is limited to membership holders only. Moreover the promotion of economic growth by RSPO and being sustainable seems to be a fault line as well. It is hard to imagine that people will consume less to be more sustainable, so they consume the same or more with RSPO providing a more sustainable way to do so. What seems to be a more logically discourse of sustainability is advocating to consume less. Perhaps this has more to do with the debate surrounding the definition of sustainability which will be elaborated in the following paragraph.

National scale

On a broader national scale, RSPO plays a role in the more nuanced side of the political resistance. Sankey (2018) argues that conflicts also arise in Middle Magdalena from contestation within the meaning of sustainability. She argues that palm oil cultivation has in many cases not been coercively imposed, but voluntarily by 'peasant palm' contract schemes. Peasants in Middle Magdalena are a part of the palm oil industry that has provided job opportunities and improved social wellbeing in rural areas which is supported by the Colombian government. This not only contradicts the framework of 'peasant logic' against the 'capitalist' as described in the prior paragraph, but also the idea that international governance structure such as RSPO can overrule national governments. Hereby we enter into a broader national scale of conflict in which RSPO is intertwined with actors beyond the local level. This includes national associations organizations and the government of Colombia who influence RSPO by connecting and protecting palm oil cultivation.

Boons and Mendoza (2010) support Sankeys (2018) argument by concluding that there are uncertainties surrounding the economic, social and ecological impact of the criteria that actors use to evaluate the sustainability, referring especially to the Colombian palm oil production used as for renewable resource (Boons and Mendoza 2010). Using a social constructive approach they argue that the value of sustainability added to products, combining ecological, social and economic value, are not independently given nor objectively defined: "... definitions of sustainability are the result of activities of the involved actors which over time construe criteria of what are relevant

ecological impacts to consider, what social issues need to be addressed, and in what way economic value is to be measured" (Boons and Mendoza 2010, 1687-8). This consists with Stuart Kirsch (2010) argument that the word sustainability is an example of what Urciuoli (2003) has called a strategically deployable shifter (Kirsch 2010). This means in the case of the eight principles created by RSPO as an effort to objectively define sustainability is easily dependent on the context and influences by stakeholders who interpret the definition for their own benefit. This is the second fault line within the RSPO certification scheme, sustainability is a controversial concept that can be used strategically to cover up harm to people and environment.

Thus the eight principles; 1) Commitment to transparency; 2) Compliance with applicable laws and regulations; 3) Commitment to long-term economic and financial viability; 4) Use of appropriate best practices by growers and millers; 5) Environmental responsibility and conservation of natural resources and biodiversity; 6) Responsible consideration of employees and of individuals and communities affected by growers and mills and; 7) Responsible development of new plantings and; 8) Commitment to continuous improvement in key areas of activity, are subjected to the interpretation of several actors in Colombia. Most criteria remain underdeveloped, especially the criteria concerning the social wellbeing, because RSPO is strongly influenced by local regulations, laws and policies (Boons and Mendoza 2010). The complexity of the social and political dynamics is evident at the first two destinations in the chain.

After harvesting the palm fruit from the palm plantation by Smallholders it needs to be conserved and converted into palm oil within 24 hours. Smallholders are depended on Big Holders because they often cannot afford the technology of mills needed to extract mesocarp from the fruit. In return the Big Holders, such as Daabon, are depended on Smallholders to meet the supply demand by their customers, including the demands made by RSPO. Fedepalma is the national association of palm farmers and millers that works parallel with the government to achieve a sustainable worldwide position within the global market. Fedepalma influences the certification schemes uphold by the RSPO by regulating national policy. Fedepalma and the government works towards a sector's culture that

internalizes sustainable practices, not due to market requirements, as voluntary certificate schemes have been convicted with, but due to benefits brought to rural areas benefiting local companies. (Boons and Mendoza 2010). A concrete project of Fedepalma is the 'model of development in solidarity'(Oosterkamp and Cordaid 2007). For Daabon this project created alliances between Smallholders to increase production and meet the international demands (Daboon Report 2009). Daabon also cooperate with Fedepalma to regulate the compliance with RSPO in 2009, since 2010 they have successfully earned their RSPO certificate (RSPO Annual Communications of Progress Report 2017).

Although the successes of the implementation of the certificate, RSPO has little influence on the implementation of their criteria. As described above Fedepalma helps Big Holders to comply with RSPO criteria. Big holders thus do not directly conform to international RSPO, for the most part this is shaped by the context of dependencies of Smallholders to Big Holders and vice versa, in which Fedepalma constitute as a regulator. For example RSPO is against the use of chemical fertilizers. However, interaction between Smallholders, Big Holders and international corporations have resulted in sustainable palm oil production that included the use of chemical fertilizers. This is possible because Smallholders are left with choices, they can use chemical fertilizers that are financial more feasible or they can choose to cooperate with Big Holders who have the knowledge and financial capacity to use alternatives to chemical fertilizers. But Smallholders do not always comply with criteria infused by RSPO because they want to keep a certain degree of autonomy. (Boons and Mendoza 2010). Smallholders can still be a part of 'sustainable' palm oil cultivation whilst still harming people and environment.

From crude palm oil to HVO in the Netherlands

From the palm plantations in the Middle Magdalena region to mills owned by Daboon that converted the fruits into oil, we have now arrived at the shipping of crude palm oil to the Netherlands. To be more specific, the shipping to the harbour of Rotterdam. Rotterdam is the center for the European market for Palm oil all over the world, including Colombia that received a total of 223 million euros for their export to the Netherlands in 2017 (CBS 2018). Moreover

Rotterdam is the transfer point of biomass from Colombia to many European countries. As NEA (NEA Report 2015) reported, there is only a marginal consumption of palm-based HVO biomass in the Netherlands, most of this biofuel is assumed to be transported. The company Neste is a supplier of biofuel in Europe. For this, the company uses a large portion of the imported palm oil to make the HVO used in their product NMRR. HVO stands for hydro-treated vegetable oils, a member of the biomass renewable resource family. In the process of converting crude palm oil into biofuel the process is still accompanied by RSPO certification. The relationship between the Neste and the RSPO in analyzed combined on a national and international scale. Moreover another fault line is discovered and described within the production chain of palm oil converted into HVO.

In the Netherlands RSPO provides Dutch companies with a model for implementing sustainability in their company. The Dutch parliament and several environmental groups have advocated for stronger policies that force companies to become more sustainable. In 2004, for example, the Court of Audit concluded that there was a lack of transparency concerning the definition of 'green electricity', again a strategically deployable shifter. The Dutch government installed the expert group *sustainable production of biomass* consistent of government officials, financial institutions and NGO's. They evaluated the sustainable biomass production and translated sustainable criteria into policies, for palm oil the RSPO model was used. The idea was that the Dutch government would start a dialogue with producing countries such as Colombia, aiming at responsible producing (Boons & Mendoza, 2010). An example of this planning is presented a research of Oxfam. At the international level, the International Confederation Oxfam is a member of the RSPO Executive Board, represented by the Dutch affiliate Oxfam Novib. They looked into the feasibility of an RSPO initiative in Colombia in 2010 (Seeboldt and Abdala 2010). Considering Daabon, they have concluded a successful opening of a dialogue between the Dutch and Colombian government. Mostly with the help of *Fedepalma.* This increase in dialogue results in increasing interconnectedness of Colombian cultivators and the Dutch government through RSPO.

Neste is a member of the RSPO. The company needs the RSPO so they can meet the government's commitment to import a hundred percent sustainable palm oil in Europe in 2020 (Rijksoverheid 2015). In February 2015 Ms Ploumen, Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, together with Darrel Webber, the Secretary-General of the RSPO, set their goal to increase the amount of responsibility for the sustainability of the Dutch supply chain. Moreover, Neste benefits from their membership of RSPO because they acquire a certain status. In 2013 they were rewarded with the world's first RSPO-RED Supply Chain certificate. RSPO used a system that calculated the greenhouse emissions released over the entire life cycle of the Neste renewable diesel. Neste has patented its producing technology NExBTL for renewable energy making them a powerful supplier. NExBTL is a technology that makes it possible to convert palm oil into HVO used in the Neste product NMRD releasing a minimal amount of Greenhouse gasses.

The certificate together with the patented technology makes NMRD a highly exclusive product. Exclusive because the product is not only relatively more expensive than fossil fuels, but also because you need a diesel based vehicles to consume the biodiesel. Diesel based vehicles again, are relatively more expensive than vehicles using fossil fuel. This makes the product only affordable for people who have a relatively high economic status. In this situation a fault line within the sustainable certificate scheme RSPO is that it contributes to naturalize or legitimate social inequality and class boundaries. Ethical consumption is not something only elite engage in, for the most part because ethics such as good and bad are not universal. However, niche markets for product certified with Fair Trade or organics often only attract wealthy people because they are relatively more expensive, as is the case of RSPO certified products. Moreover culture shapes food choices, more than financial feasibility, through cultural capital. Cultural capital influences people's choice for consumption that are enjoyed and valued by different social classes, in most cases this cultural capital is a most important trait of upper middle-class creating a way to distinct themselves from other classes (Bourdieu 1984). This however does not mean that lower economic classes do not engage in ethical consumption, they only use a different

discourse, just like people with a higher economic status, creating differentiation (Johnston, Szabo and Rodney 2011).

Conclusion

In this paper the chain of NMRD HVO was followed by analysing the relationship between RSPO and stakeholders involved on a local and national scale in Colombia, and on a national and international scale in the Netherlands. While analysing the social and political dynamics in the hunt of RSPO for sustainable palm oil, three fault lines were discovered in its discourse. The first fault line in the RSPO discourse is found on a local scale. RSPO advocates for social wellbeing and the protection of human right, whilst engaging in socio-environmental conflicts with local communities in Middle Magdalena. This situation makes it seem that the aspiration of RSPO for a better future is limited to membership holders only. The second fault line is discovered on a national scale, showing Colombian stakeholders interpreting the RSPO criteria for their own benefit. In this case sustainability is a controversial concept that can be used strategically to cover up the harm of people and the environment. The third fault line is the contribution of RSPO to naturalizing or legitimizing social inequality and class boundaries by creating a relatively exclusive discourse of sustainability for people with a high economic status through consumerism.

In this paper I have tried to provide a critical outline through which Global Voluntary Certificate Schemes could be understood. This paper addressed RSPO as an international organization, however this paper lacks an extensive analysis on this scale of RSPO itself in comparison to other Global Voluntary Certification Schemes. For this reason the paper is weak in making generalizations about such schemes. Therefore I propose further investigation on comparing several certificate schemes on an international scale. The paper concludes with remarking that even though schemes such as RSPO should be critically analyzed, we cannot forget that they are a good step towards a better future.

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Religion in Bethesda's: Elder Scrolls

Ruben Pfeijffer

"This paper for the course Religion, Media & Popular Culture was perhaps the most enjoyable writing experience I have had so far. I decided to take on a topic that hasn't been covered that much in religion studies before, and was really intrigued by the results. I hope you will enjoy it as much as I did!"

Introduction

The gaming industry is a relatively young but fast developing branch of popular culture. Originally starting in the 80's with the invention of arcade gaming, the first game concepts were very basic, and because video games could only be played in local arcades, their reach was relatively limited. This changed drastically with the invention of gaming consoles. Gaming suddenly became available for every home. Nowadays, more than 2.5 billion people worldwide regularly play video games.

With the further development of gaming technology, not only did gaming consoles became more advanced, but video games themselves also started to become more complex. Just like with books and films, video games became a platform for in-depth storytelling, and this is where religion started to play an important role in the gaming industry. Because religion is such a evident presence in daily society, the inclusion of religious elements is almost unavoidable when game producers try to create an immersive storytelling experience in their games, whether it is set in a fictional universe or that of our own. This is why religion is not only the realm of religious sub-niches in gaming, but are implemented by almost all major game producers and are part of major video game series (Radde-Antweiler et al. 2014). A couple of well-known examples are: 'The Church of the Children of Holy Atom' in

Bethesda's: Fallout series, and 'The Isu' in Ubisoft's: Assassins Creed series. Another example of a very thorough depiction of religion in a major video games series is CD Projekt Red's: The Witcher series. Important to note however, is that the source material for this game series is the eponymous series of books written by the Polish author Andrzej Sapkowski. This paper on the other hand, is a case study of a similarly thorough depiction of religion in a major video game series, where the source material for the story, unlike with the Witcher series, is written by the game producer itself, as is the case with Bethesda's: Elder Scrolls series.

The Elder Scrolls are a major video game series that originally started during the 90's of last century with the introduction of '*The Elder Scrolls I: Arena'* (1994) and '*The Elder Scrolls II: Daggerfall'* (1996). Although these games were very basic in design in comparison with their later successors *'The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind'* (2002)*, 'The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion'* (2006) and '*The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim'* (2011), they were ahead of their time in terms of storytelling and game-world immersion. Bethesda created a universe of: empires, castles, dungeons, monsters, knights, mages, human and non-human races, and of course a variety of religions, unlike that of our own world, but still adapted from it in such a way that they might feel familiar.

This paper will analyse the incorporation of religious elements in Bethesda's: Elder Scrolls video game series, especially as a narrative tool or plot device, based on relevant theories about religion and popular culture, and thereby answer the question: *how can religion be utilized by video game producers in order to create a 'realistic' and 'immersive' game-world?*

Relevant theories

Even though the gaming industry is a relatively young branch of popular culture, the virtual worlds that are created by game producers, and the religious elements that can be found within those virtual worlds, are increasingly becoming subject to academic exploration by both social scientists and theologists alike. Especially the University of Heidelberg's Institute for Religious Studies has made huge strides in putting research into the incorporation of religion in video games on the academic agenda. Nowadays a lot of research is being done around themes such as; religious

identity formation through gaming, the performance of religious rituals in video games, and religion as a narrative tool or plot device in story-based video games. However, this much attention for themes related to religion and the gaming industry has not always been self-evident (Campbell and Grieve 2014).

According to Campbell and Grieve (2014), video games have often been misunderstood in the past as 'shallow childish entertainment', unable to communicate complex messages towards their 'target audience' in comparison with books or films. This is also one of the reasons why the incorporation of 'real world' religions in video games has sparked controversy in the past, and will likely continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Among religious institutions and pious believers, there are those that regard their religion as something that should not be played around with as a form of simplistic entertainment. A recent example of controversy caused by the incorporation of a 'real world' religion in a major video game series, was Ubisoft's: '*Farcry 5'*. In this game, a fictional Christian doomsday cult in Montana known as 'Eden's gate' was used as the main enemy of the player, with their vile practices closely resembling those of the 'real world' terrorist movement Islamic State. The role of the player was to hunt this Christian cult down, and kill them. This resulted in outrage among conservative Christians in rural American states, who regarded this move by Ubisoft as an attempt to vilify them, and depict violence against American Christians as a form of innocent 'entertainment'.

In academic circles however, video games are now beginning to lose their stigma as being forms of 'shallow children's entertainment'. On the one hand because figures show that the audience for video games is much more demographically diverse than initially believed, and on the other because video games are, contrary to the beliefs of some critics, in fact able to communicate complex religious messages to their audience. In recent years, an increasing number of scholars have started delving into subjects as to 'why' and 'how' religion is used in the gaming industry. Campbell and Grieve (2014) explain their interest for this field as follows: " We argue that studying digital gaming is not merely an end in itself, but a means of displaying and unlocking the meaning of religion in contemporary society as a whole. Digital games are not simply mirrors that reflect

culture. Rather, they frequently eschew or alter, like a funhouse mirror, assumptions about religion. This means they have the potential to inform or interpret religious practice as it is reflected back at us, with a selectivity determined by the source. Digital games do not simply mediate religion, but they also "mediatize" it" (60). One of the key concepts that is named in this small excerpt, and that is often being used in the study of religion in relation to the gaming industry is Stig Hjarvard's (2008) 'The Mediatization of Religion' theory. According to Hjarvard (2008), the mediatization of religion could be described as the process wherein popular media have taken over the role of traditional religious institutions in terms of transmitting religious messages to society. Especially in western society, where the media are largely independent, instead of being mere 'mediators' between traditional religious institutions and society, the media have become a prime source in transmitting religious messages themselves. As a result, religion is being 'modified' by the media in order to 'fit' their own logic, instead of the logic of traditional religious institutions. In that sense, religion has become 'mediatized'. However, the media do not only transmit religious messages related to traditional religious institutions: monsters, magic, spirits and other forms of religion that are often deemed fictional or 'untraditional' are also used by the media when transmitting religiously themed messages to society.

A term related to this usage of fictional and untraditional depictions of religion, is what Jean Baudrillard (1981) dubs: hyper-real religion. According to Baudrillard (1981) hyperreality can be described as the simulation of something without any referent in our actual world, but which can be experienced as 'real', sometimes even more real than our actual reality. However, some critics argue that Baudrillard's (1981) definition of hyperreality is too broad, and that as a consequence it can be applied on virtually anything, even on traditional religions, because traditional religions too, are based on ideas and beliefs that do not necessarily refer to objects, persons or events in our actual world. One of those critics, namely Markus Altena Davidsen (2013), has introduced the more straightforward term 'fiction-based religion' to differentiate religions that are based on fictional sources, from traditional religions. Davidsen (2013) argues that unlike traditional religions, sources of fiction-based religions do not claim to refer to

objects, persons or events in our own world, but rather create entirely new fictional worlds, to which they refer instead.

Creators of fictional sources can have a variety of motives for the creation of their content. Some want to apply the personal vision they have on our own world, on a fictional one, by playing with alternative reality. Others want to instil morals that are represented by people in their fictional worlds, into people that our living in our own actual world. And of course there are those that just want to make creative use of their artistic freedom. Regardless, whether it is specifically the intent of the creator , the fictional worlds they create are heavily encoded with all kinds of subliminal and explicit religious and moral messages, that can in turn be decoded by the audience in different ways. It is not unusual different people read very different things in the symbolism of fictional worlds (Klassen 2014). That the mystique of fictional worlds is appealing to a large audience is evident. Some people can completely lose themselves in the fictional worlds created by popular media. Whether it is; the Hogwarts school of Witchcraft and Wizardry in J.K. Rowling's '*Harry Potter'* book series, the seven kingdoms of Westeros in the popular HBO television series '*Game of Thrones',* or the continent of Tamriel in Bethesda's *'Elder Scrolls'* game series. Some only temporarily go up in these fictional worlds, the moment they are reading a '*Harry potter'* book, watch a '*Game of Thrones'* episode on television, or play a '*Elder Scrolls'* game. Others, according to Davidsen (2013), even let these fictional worlds influence their daily lives in the real world, whether it is in the form of subtle changes in values, extreme fandom, or even the adoption of religions depicted in these fictional worlds. This is why according to Adam Possamai (2012) hyper-real or fiction-based religions should be taken seriously, because from an academic perspective, understanding these fictional worlds have become a part of understanding our own world. Especially when it comes to video games, hyper-real religion and its connection to the 'real world' are a very interesting subject, because in video games interaction is key. When gamers perform religious activities in a video game, a connection is being established between the 'simulated world' of the video game, and our own 'real' world. Tuckett and Robertson (2014) even go as far as to argue that video game religions are in many aspects just as real as 'real world' religions, in terms of their functionality.

Just like some people pray for good fortune before performing certain actions in real life, some video games offer gamers the opportunity to perform in-game religious rituals that let them acquire certain divine blessings that will benefit them in their gameplay.

However, religion in video games do not always necessarily feature in a direct interactive function. Often times, religion is primarily included in a video game as a narrative tool or plot device. This can either be done directly, by including religion as a major part of the storyline, or indirectly, by using religion to aesthetically 'dress-up' the game-environment, in order to provoke a sense of realism and game-world immersion in the player (Heidbrink and Knoll 2014). The latter is especially the case in video games that take place in fictional worlds. Cooper (2016) explains this as follows; "The fantasy genre is particularly fruitful for exploration primarily because it is overtly fantastical, depicting itself as providing an alternate reality, whilst simultaneously working hard to make itself feel real by modelling itself on the ideologies and social structures of the real world"(22). In other words, the challenge that many creators of fiction face is to appeal to the fantasy of their audience, while still keeping their alternative reality more or less believable. It is often almost impossible to create a 'realistic' or 'immersive' fictional world without including religion, because religion is simply such an evident presence in our own reality. This is why almost all major games that take place in fictional worlds feature religion to some extent, whether it is purely aesthetical or actively functional. In this paper, the terms 'realism' and 'immersion' refer to the ability of a game producer to create a believable game-environment, in terms of narrative, gameplay and aesthetics, not 'graphics' which is also often used as a measure of 'realism' in game-related reviews.

Case Study analysis – *Bethesda's: Elder Scrolls*

Bethesda Game Studios (henceforward simply called Bethesda) is a major video game producer based in Rockville, Maryland. The studio is well known in the gaming industry for the production of major video game series such as *'Fallout'* and the *'Elder Scrolls'*. At the base for the huge success of these video game series lies Bethesda's ability to breathe life in the fictional worlds they

create. A large part of this is achieved through so called 'lore'. The post-nuclear wasteland of *'Fallout'* and the ancient continent of Tamriel in the '*Elder Scrolls'* series, are littered with: books, objects and characters that can tell the player more about the fictional world they are playing in. Historical accounts, myths and legends, and religious texts all contribute to the creation of an immersive game-world (Cooper 2016). Although Bethesda's *'Fallout'* series only features religion to a small extent, primarily in the form of the cult-like religious group 'The church of the Children of Holy Atom', it is Bethesda's '*Elder Scrolls'* series that really stands out in terms of the incorporation of religious elements. According to Cooper (2016), this can be explained by looking at the historical timeframe Bethesda tries to portray in their '*Elder Scrolls'* series. The world of the *'Elder Scrolls'* is in many aspects a fantasy version of our own medieval era. Cooper (2016) states; "One lore-element that is almost universal within medieval games is the construction of religion. Its ubiquitous nature implies that cultures in historical settings require aspects of religion and spirituality in their societies in order to engender depth." (39). This is interesting, because this suggests that the depiction of religion in the '*Elder Scrolls'* is primarily based on both Bethesda's own understanding of religion in relation to our medieval era, and assumptions about their target audience's expectations about religion in a medieval era video game. Religion in the '*Elder Scrolls'* is thus shaped based on the 'media logic' of Bethesda, meaning it is heavily 'mediatized' (Hjarvard 2008).

So what exactly is the role of religion in the '*Elder Scrolls'* series, and how does it fit in with the game's lore? Given the serious amount of lore related to religion in the series, for the purpose of this paper, only a summarized version will be analysed. The '*Elder Scrolls'* series is set on a fictional planet that goes by the name of 'Nirn'. This is also immediately where religion comes into play, because like our own world, Nirn has its own religious origin story. All the polytheistic religions featured in the '*Elder Scrolls'* hold the believe that the deity Lorkhan (otherwise known as; Shor, Shezarr and Sep) is responsible for the creation of the realm of existence in which the planet Nirn exists, known as the 'mortal plane' or 'Mundus'. Lorkhan convinced the other 'original spirits' known as the et'Ada to help construct the realm of Mundus. However, this would cost them an

enormous amount of their power. Therefore, the deities that wished to retain their full powers, refused to help in the creation. They later became known as the 'Daedra', who are considered 'evil deities' by many, while the creators of Mundus became known as the 'Aedra', who are believed to be the more benevolent deities. The Daedra inhabit the dark and mysterious realm of 'Oblivion', while the Aedra are believed to embody the stars and planets surrounding Nirn. Almost all religious 'pantheons', as they are called in the '*Elder Scrolls',* either worship the Aedra or the Daedra. Only the names of the deities, the pantheon's composition, and the surrounding religious mythology differ from race to race.

Apart from religion's aesthetical role in the video game series, in the form of; temple's, burial crypts and shrines. And its functional role in the form of divine blessings, magical abilities and powerful Daedric artefacts that can benefit the player. Religion also has major implications for the plot line of their more recent games *'The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion'* (2006) and '*The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim'* (2011). As a narrative tool or plot device, religion in the "*Elder Scrolls"* is heavily encoded with messages that, to some extent, refer to religions in our own world, or certain historical events. In *'The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion'* the main story is all about the fight between 'good' and 'evil' spirits. A theme that is very common in 'real world' religions. The plot revolves around a Daedric cult known as 'Mythic Dawn', that manages to remove the magical barrier between the Daedric realm of Oblivion and the mortal realm of Mundus, meaning the Daedra were given the chance to freely interfere in the world of mortals. This event is known as the 'Oblivion crisis'. The role of the player in the video game is to fend of the Daedric hordes, which creatures closely resemble the 'real world' Christian idea of demons, and acquire a 'divine artefact' that would restore the magic boundary between the realms, thereby defeating 'evil' and protecting Nirn. The storyline of '*'The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion'* is in many aspects a simulation of 'real world' religious narratives about the fight between 'good and evil', 'angels and demons' or 'heaven and hell'. This means that even though the story of '*The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion'* is set in an entirely fictional world, with entirely fictional religions, it incorporates religious elements of 'real world' religions in such a way that the player is likely to experience

a sense of 'familiarity, 'realism' and of course, 'immersion'.

In the '*The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion'* successor '*The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim'* (2011), the usage of religion as a narrative tool or plot device features both heavily in the main storyline, as in various sub-plots. The sub-plot that has the most obvious connection to our 'real world' is the one that revolves around the ban on the worship of the 'Ninth Divine' known as 'Talos', imposed by the faction known as the Aldmeri Dominion. Talos is the only divine that was born as a mortal. For the remarkable life he lived, and the fact that he founded the Empire of Tamriel, it was rumoured that upon his death he was welcomed by the 'Eight Divines' as the 'Ninth Divine', and was worshipped as a deity ever since. The Aldmeri Dominion however, the faction of 'High Elves' featuring in the '*Elder Scrolls'* series, and the main rival of the Empire of Tamriel, were not fond of the idea that a 'mortal man' was being worshipped as a god. The 'High Elves' are known for their sense of superiority over other races, claiming they are the direct descendants of the chief deity known as Auriel (or Akatosh). When they managed to defeat the Empire in a gruesome war, they asserted their dominance over the Empire by outlawing the worshipping of Talos in their territories, much to the resentment of the Empire's inhabitants, mainly in the province of Skyrim. Those that did not obey the new religious law were dragged of in the night by the Aldmeri Dominion's secret police, known as the 'Thalmor' and then imprisoned, tortured or even killed. Obviously, this shows a lot of resemblance with our 'real world's' history of religious intolerance, especially historical events like the Spanish inquisition and the persecution of Jews by Nazi-Germany. Just like with Oblivion, a hyper-reality is established, that is supposed to 'immerse' the player into the game-world created by Bethesda.

To conclude this paper. There are multiple ways in which game producers can utilize religion in order to create a 'realistic' and 'immersive' game-world for their players. This is achieved mainly through the use of three dimensions: A functional dimension, wherein the player actively interacts with in-game religion while playing a video game. An aesthetic dimension, wherein the game-world is 'dressed up' in ways that support the religious setting of a video game. And lastly, a narrative dimension, wherein religion

directly features in the plot and ‘lore’ of a video game. Preferably, all three dimensions need to be linked to religion or other elements in our ‘real world’, in order to create an optimal sense of ‘familiarity’, ‘realism’ and ‘immersion’.

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The "Voice of the People"

Solutions on how to tackle climate change by the Guardian commentators

Jasper Steggink

"I'm quite proud of this paper, for it is written in a compelling and original way, making it fun to read."

Abstract

Dissecting online users' reactions on an article by *the Guardian*, this essay examines a variety of written opinions on how to deal with climate change. The online article used for this is titled *Huge reduction in meat-eating 'essential' to avoid climate breakdown*, written by Damian Carrington (2018). Through the examination of the comments, this essay problematizes multiple possible solutions to problems caused by climate change and touches upon academic debates revolving these solutions.

Key Words: *Climate change, the Guardian, meat consumption, population control, responsibility, comment section.*

Introduction

The Internet is a peculiar place. You can share knowledge from all over the world, meet amazing people with a diversity of backgrounds, take all day to browse cat pictures and GIF recipes, or… have an overheated flame war with anonymous others.

Everybody is familiar with both the useful and useless side of the World Wide Web. Personally, I tend to kill most time browsing what for me *feels* useful, but which arguably is not. One thing in particular fuels my curiosity, my guilty pleasure regarding internet culture: the comment sections of online articles published by *the Guardian*.[1]

[1] Website: https://www.theguardian.com/

Lurking over those comments, I get the idea that I'm reading the "voice of the people". Mostly because the site offers users to "vote" for the most insightful comment. Users that deem a written comment informative or agree with what it says, can "recommend" this comment. Comments with the most recommendations appear higher in the thread, thus the ones on top hold what seems to be the popular opinion. This works best with articles that spark massive debate.

Politically laden articles tend to be most commented on, mainly those with Brexit in the title, but also other large debates, like the Israel/Palestine conflict, or on how to battle climate change. The latter got my attention because the comment section seemed very contested and showed a variety of trajectories we, as mankind, can consider to prevent the annihilation of the human race. And since *the Guardian* receives over 50.000 comments per day (The Guardian 2016), the opinions on the matter tend to vary considerably.

Through a limited qualitative analysis on the comments below one article by *the Guardian*, this essay portrays different written opinions on how to deal with climate change. The article used for this is titled *Huge reduction in meat-eating 'essential' to avoid climate breakdown*, written by Damian Carrington (2018). Through the examination of the comments, this essay problematizes multiple possible solutions to problems caused by climate change and, by doing so, touches upon academic debates revolving these intertwined solutions.

Population pressure

The article starts off strong. The first paragraph of the article summarizes; "Huge reductions in meat-eating are essential to avoid dangerous climate change, according to the most comprehensive analysis yet of the food system's impact on the environment. In western countries, beef consumption needs to fall by 90% and be replaced by five times more beans and pulses". The article addresses the predicted population growth and rise in global income, which demands a dietary change: "[f]eeding a world population of 10 billion is possible, but only if we change the way we eat and the way we produce food" (Carrington 2018). It was perhaps this last sentence that inspired user *ianx* to write his or her reaction, which resulted in becoming the most recommended comment:

ianx

Why 10billion people? Once it'd reached that we'll try to fit 15billion on the planet. Control the human population and the environment has a chance.

ianx's statement speaks of fear of the *Malthusian collapse*: uncontrolled population growth that surpasses growth in the food supply, resulting in massive famine (Ebenstein 2010, Malthus 1798). It is noteworthy that the first reply on *ianx*'s comment is a rather simple yet most important "How?" This question is important because although population control can involve policies that improve citizens lives by providing them (better) ways to control their reproduction, more forceful programs, like the one-child policy of the Chinese government, quickly come to mind. This extreme example of population planning restricted families to have more than one child. Although the Chinese policy did reduce the fertility rate, it came with a price, for its inadvertent outcome was a worrisome distortion in the country's sex ratio. According to Avraham Ebenstein, the unintended consequences of the one-child policy were that the policy created a sex ratio at birth reaching 118 boys born for every 100 girls in 2005 (Ebenstein 2010). The lesson that policy makers in family planning can derive from this is that "encouraging or forcing people to change their fertility behavior without addressing their fundamental preferences may have unanticipated consequences" (Ebenstein 2010), Failing to do so will effect succeeding generations, signifying the importance of the "How?".

Anthro-accountability?

Leaving the complexity of the practicalities around population planning aside, another remark can be made out of *ianx*'s comment. By linking the human population to the current state of the environment, the commentator lays bare a fundamental term when it comes to sustainability: the Anthropocene, made popular by Paul J. Crutzen (2002). The term holds the idea that humans have altered the global environment to such a degree that a new geological epoch is introduced to recognize this impact, supplementing the Holocene (2002). This same observation can be seen in the comment of *Mizakov*, who not only adds weight to the problem, but also proposes a contested solution:

Mizakov

30% of greenhouse gases come from farming to feed an ever growing number of humans....
How about we give free contraception to the third world instead of forcing westerners to make all the sacrifices...

The comment is contested for two reasons, firstly because it imposes the accountability on the "Third World". The issue of accountability and responsibility is a much-debated subject within the discourse of the Anthropocene. One side of the debate sees problems caused by human activity as a global problem, implying that "we" are all equally responsible and thus should all participate in taking action, yet others argue against this logic, stating that there is inequality in global consumption patterns. The latter is illustrated by Vaclav Smil, in his book *Energy in Nature and Society: General Energetics of Complex Systems* (2008), in which he looks at annual energy consumption in gigajoule (GJ) per capita, calculated through measuring the total primary energy supply (TPES) of a country, divided by its population. Smil states that in 2003, the Canadian TPES averaged 450 GJ per capita, and 360 GJ per capita for the U.S. Comparing this to Western Europe (160 GJ), Brazil (50 GJ), India (15 GJ) and the poorest African countries (>1 GJ), made Smil conclude that "the difference in modern energy consumption between a subsistence pastoralist in the Sahel and an average Canadian may easily be larger than 1,000-fold" (Smil 2008, 258). Through this reasoning one could argue that since the "West" is the biggest contributor, it too should live up to its responsibilities. Thus, for *Mizakov* to reason that it shouldn't be the "westerners to make all the sacrifices" seems like the world upside down.

Secondly, *Mizakov* talks of "we", yet it remains unclear who *Mizakov* means with "we". The commentator could mean "westerners", as in, the inhabitants of the west, especially of western Europe or North America. If so, then who exactly? The western nation-states? The U.N.? Or western NGO's? Or does the commentator addresses someone else entirely? *Mizakov*'s statement signifies a lack of a global agent that *can* create collective action. The danger is that if it does become a sole western project, environmental colonialism is prone to happen. Like Conrad P. Kottak notes as one of the contesting issues for "the new ecological anthropology" (1999), is that ethnoecological clashes can occur when environmentalists from northern nations "preach ecological morality to the rest of the world". Kottak writes that "Brazilians complain that Northerners talk about global needs and saving the Amazon only after they destroyed their own forests for First World economic growth" (1999, 27). When people are asked to change the

way they live, they usually resist. Ironically, the article indirectly asks citizens of western nations to change, which exemplifies the contesting arguments of the academic discourse and which might explain *Mizakov*'s finger-pointing.

Technology, our savior

A more refreshing approach to solve the climate breakdown comes user *Neutronstar2080*, who points the finger to the "huge multinationals" and the capitalist society they benefit from. A fair point, taking into consideration that "100 [corporate and state producing entities] account for 71% of global industrial GHG emissions" (Griffin 2017, 8).

Neutronstar2080

I'm all up for this, less meat, less consumption, less fucking plastic, to me it's a no brainer. But let's face it, the reason we're in this shit is capitalism and it's need for constant growth. Huge multinationals with deep pockets, lobbyists bribing governments, corrupt governments who have zero interest in the environment and the well being of our fellow human only profit. I'm afraid to say our only hope is technology because you can forget it if you think we're all going to pull together. It would need a disaster where literally billions died for us to sit up and say enough is enough and by then [there] maybe noone left.

As understood from the comment, *Neutronstar2080* sees technology as the only way out of the "shit" created by capitalism. Although it is rather speculative to guess what *Neutronstar2080* means with the word "shit", let us presume the user means the Anthropocene.

Ideas about capitalism as the cause of the Anthropocene, and with technology as the "only hope", is contested. One scholar that problematizes this line of thinking is anthropologist and professor of Human Ecology Alf Hornborg, who understands not human life but specifically modern technology as critically influencing the evolution of money, capitalism, the Industrial Revolution and, as a result, the Anthropocene (2015). Hornborg argues that "our biological capacity for abstract representation (as in language and other semiotic systems) is prerequisite to the very idea of money, and [money] was in turn prerequisite to the Industrial Revolution that inaugurated the Anthropocene. [I]t is precisely through this chain of events that studies of natural and human history, while each reserving its specific arsenal of concepts and methods, can be integrated. Modern technology is the pivot of both, because it implicates both biophysical and socio-cultural dimensions of our increasingly globalised history" (2015, 62). Because of the importance of technology, and to critique post-Cartesian dualism in social science, he

proposes to rename the current epoch the *Technocene* (2015).

Hornborg address technology neither as threat nor solution for the problems that come with living in the Technocene, but rather as a cause. Therefore, if technology caused the current predicament, it almost feels paradoxical to think it will also "save" us from it. That being said, I wouldn't dare to say that technology (with all the vagueness surrounding the term) *can't* help humanity to overcome the problems linked to either the Anthropocene or the Technocene, simply because I'm no futurologist or prophet.

Conscious consumers

All of the highlighted commentators above have put the solution to the problems caused by climate change outside their own range of responsibilities. According to the mentioned users, the problems are caused by either too many people (*ianx*), overpopulation in the "Third World" (*Mizakov*), or capitalism, lack of corporate responsibility and a corrupt government (*Neutronstar2080*). But what about individual responsibility? Why not take matters in one's own hands? According to *LondonRoots*, this is what needs to be done, and probably *is* done by the user itself, judging from the comment:

LondonRoots

Here come the incredulous meat eaters…

LondonRoots doesn't make many friends with this open attack on non-vegetarians. Logically, perhaps, since according to a four year study done by *Public Health England*, a mere 2% of the U.K. population considers themselves to be vegetarian (Beverley et al. 2014, 57). And, if what's written in the article is correct, if a reduction of 90% in meat-eating is needed to avoid a climate crisis, practically all current meat eaters have to reconsider their diet, and have to be willing to lower the amount of meat they consume. Perhaps this social change needs to be initiated politically, perhaps through social movements, ideally through both.

There are numerous movements and initiatives that are striving to achieve social change. Examples are the *Ecological footprint*, which accounts "the proportion of land and water needed to support someone's overall consumption levels and reabsorb the associated waste" (MySTOA 2013), the *Food miles*, which assesses the distance that food

travelled to reach the consumer (Engelhaupt 2008, 3482), and the *Food Emissions*, measuring the life-cycle greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with food production (Popp, Lotze-Campen, and Bodirsky 2010; CGIAR:CCAFS, n.d.). A fundamental idea behind these initiatives is that through the strength of an informed decision, the consumer has the agency to change the structure he or she is living in. Making those who don't believe their behavior has an effect on the world "incredulous", as written by *LondonRoots*. Yet, even those who are trying to be "conscious consumers" might have problems deciding which initiative should function as a guideline for their consumption, for some of them are deemed contested. While many people tend to think that "buying local", consuming that which has the lowest food miles, is most ecologically sustainable, global climate and energy lead scientist Christopher L. Weber and civil and environmental engineer H. Scott Matthews beg to differ. According to them, the amount of greenhouse gasses produced by specific foods have a greater negative impact than the average food miles. A change in diet is thus crucial. "Shifting less than one day per week's [sic] worth of calories from red meat and dairy products to chicken, fish, eggs, or a vegetable-based diet achieves more GHG reduction than buying all locally sourced food" (2008, 3508). Perhaps "buying local" is a way to legitimize the consumption of GHG heavy foods, making *LondonRoots*'s comment sound a bit more like a teasing wakeup call than a direct insult.

Conclusion

By dissecting popular comments in reaction to an article by *the Guardian*, I have tried to playfully problematize the issues around preventing a future climate crisis. By the incorporation of the commentators I aimed not only to touch upon the contesting debates revolving around this topic, but also to bridge the gap between the "voice of the people" and the academic world. Not to create a hierarchy in validity, but to show that contestation is present in both. To show a parallel between debates on open message boards and that within academic discourse.

From examining both the online arguments as well as the academic discourse on the subject of climate change, one can conclude that many of the posed problems and proposed solutions intertwine. Considering the scope of the

problem, every solution has consequences that will impact the livelihoods of large numbers of people, and not one solution further problematizes the issue. This intertwined nature of the debates is something I have tried to underline on a more meta-level within the essay.

Lastly, I have also shown the variety of responsibility claims, ranging from westerners, people in the "Third World" and capitalists onto individuals. Yet, when addressing these actors, questions regarding power and interest arise. Who is to blame for the situation humanity has found itself in? Which groups of people will suffer the most from negative effects caused by climate change? And do they have the means to make a change? Will climate change effect only those who are marginalized and economically poor? Or is Dipesh Chakrabarty right when he writes that there will neither be lifeboats for the rich and privileged (2009), making us all equally vulnerable. Either way, referring to the source of *the Guardian* article, we can make an effort by committing ourselves to eating less meat. Climate change is proven to be a valid threat and the meat industry plays a big part in this, making *BeyondnessOfThings*'s observation spot on, when the user writes:

BeyondnessOfThings

The steaks are high...

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Further information

Article:	Written for the course:
Intercommunal violence in Northern Ireland: Sectarian spatial demarcation and the performance of masculinity *By Anna-Lea van Ooijen*	Culture, Violence, Trauma and Death
The New Gods: The Depiction of Religion in the Works of H. P. Lovecraft *By Ivan Dimitrov*	Religion, Media and Popular Culture
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The "Voice of the People" Solutions on how to tackle climate change by the Guardian commentators *By Jasper Steggink*	Sustainability and Social Contestation

Notes on the selection process

The papers in this edition of SCAJ have been selected by our selection committee from a broader range of submissions. This committee consists of fifteen students of Cultural Anthropology from different years of study, including four members of our core team. During the process of selection, the committee was divided into four subgroups all including one member of our core team. Every group used the same set of reading questions as a guideline for the selection process. These reading questions focused on readability, creativity, originality, structure, grammar, and the use of references. However, every reviewer was given the freedom to deviate from these reading questions. We believe that the ability to freely discuss allows for dynamic analyses, which provides more valuable insights than rigidly conforming to previously set guidelines. Every group read a number of fully anonymized papers, of which they made a selection fit for publication. Afterwards, the four members of the core team discussed the results and considerations of their respective selection groups to make this final selection.

SCAJ is a journal by and for students of cultural anthropology. As such, we aspire to include and represent as many people and ideas as possible. Please feel free to contact us, in person or via email if you have any questions or ideas about ways in which the journal might be improved.

Have you written a paper that you would like to submit for the next publication? Or are you interested in becoming part of the selection committee? Please contact us! You can also leave a message on our website. Our contact information can be found in the colophon.

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