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Edited by

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Editors' letter

Dear Readers,

We are delighted to present Issue 3 of Sentio on the theme of 'Transformations'. *Sentio* is an online interdisciplinary journal led by doctoral researchers that are part of the ESRC-funded South East Network for Social Sciences (SeNSS) Doctoral Training Partnership. The journal was launched in 2018 and is published annually online. *Sentio* – or 'I sense' – aims to bring together interdisciplinary perspectives on a topical issue or interest. To that end each Issue is comprised of three sections, namely Articles, Features, and Reflections. First, the Articles section provides doctoral researchers a space to publish early-stage ideas, theories or emergent findings from empirical research, or summaries of doctoral thesis chapters. Second, the Features section contains interviews, reviews of recent publications, and commentaries on current debates in relation to the Issue's theme. Finally, the third section, Reflections, attends to personal insights derived from all stages of the research process as well as the life and work of a doctoral researcher.

Now, to the Issue's theme. The past year has been defined by transformation of our working practices, our priorities, and our sense of global community. Whilst COVID-19 is the most recent example of transformation it comes in a long line of transformations that have happened at different times, scales and levels of visibility. In response, the *Sentio* editorial team invited authors to submit publications on the theme of 'Transformation'. We welcomed broad interpretations of the theme, recognising that 'Transformation' can have both positive and negative dimensions and, as a concept, can have various uses, meanings, and mobilisations within and across academic discipline sand empirical as well as theoretical research. Examining transformation, including associated changes and impacts on diverse communities, is a key focus of scholarly interest. Whether detrimental, restorative, or one and the same, this Issue offers researchers the opportunity to reflect, explore and analyse a transformation that has particular resonance to them or their research. We hope this Issue of Sentio can serve as a record of diverse interdisciplinary interpretations of transformation and document the positive and negative ramifications that can occur from any transformation.

Articles

In the opening Article of Issue 3, Tragantzopoulou discusses eating habits in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and foresees an associated transformation in mental health practice. In the second Article, Walker draws on risk theory and his preliminary observations in Iceland to explore what non-invasive prenatal testing means for personal identities. In the third Article Lakeridou and Karpasitis discuss the various transformations in graphic signage that have occurred since the start of 2020 and how these transformations are encouraging behavioral change during the pandemic the beyond. In the fourth Article, C. Place offers an informal deliberation and introspection on his personal experiences with Integral and mixed methods and reflects on how synchronicities have shaped his research path and life choices. In the fifth Article Kirabira and Uche draw on qualitative research to look at the interface between the International Criminal Court and justice processes within the context of Northern Uganda.

In the sixth Article Fadel presents the results from semi-structured interviews to investigate the transformation of the destroyed heritage of the Old City of Aleppo. In the seventh and final Article Griffani offers a critique of 'identitarian' studies of class and presents an alternative multidimensional approach.

Features

In the opening Feature Alba Prados interviews Dr Iokiñe Rodriguez and discusses different approaches to achieve transformations of sustainability, particularly considering environmental justice and key issues on just and sustainable transformations. In the second Feature Pomerand Petzoldt considers how the COVID-19 pandemic has transformed how we move and understand our bodies. Finally, in the third Feature Alexander presents a critical, socio-cultural commentary on how COVID-19 has transformed the process of self-consumption through the introduction of measures such as face masks and social distancing.

Reflections

In the opening Reflection Gittins reflects on his own personal transformation into an academic researcher and discusses his journey into the 'ivory tower' and associated misconceptions from a farmer's perspective. In the second Reflection Tomczak reflects on her transformation during her PhD both in terms of how she has changed and also how her approach to research has changed. In the third Reflection Byrne discusses the transformations needed to limit global heating and avoid destructive environmental changes. In the fourth Reflection Kassem reflects on transformations to the focus of his doctoral research, to the topic of anti-Muslim racism, and how conducting this research has impacted his career, activism and concerns. In the fifth Reflection Durcan offers a commentary on the effects of COVID-19 on undertaking ethnographic research. In the sixth Reflection Reynolds offers her personal reflections on how COVID-19 has transformed social science research through a shift from face-to-face to predominantly online research. In the seventh Reflection Bainbridge reflects on some of the apprehensions she had when starting an EdD during the COVID-19 pandemic and considers how future research might be impacted due to associated transformations to the field. In the eighth Reflection Simpson explores his transition from a prisoner to a PhD researcher and draws on his own personal experiences to reflect on the transformative power of education. Finally, in the ninth Reflection Wang reflects on how the COVID-19 has transformed their research proposal and discusses some practical issues related to conducting fieldwork online.

Concluding comments

Every stage involved in the production of this Issue occurred in the context of the COVID-19 global pandemic. All of our editorial team meetings were online, as was our correspondence with authors and peer reviewers. Nevertheless, we as the editorial team are deeply appreciative of the resilience and enthusiasm demonstrated by authors and peer reviewers, who, in particular, volunteered their time to peer review our submissions whilst continuing their own doctoral research.

In closing, we must thank those that have supported this Issue of *Sentio*; members of the Sentio Advisory Board, Professor Alan Pickering (Goldsmiths, University of London), Professor Laura Camfield (University of East Anglia), Dr May Seitanidi (University of Kent) and Professor Ismene Gizelia (University of Essex); Paul Newman, SeNSS Coordinator; and our authors and peer reviewers. Thanks to all involved, your continued support and encouragement have helped to make the publication of this Issue of *Sentio* possible.

Sentio Editorial Team

Harriet Dudley (Managing Editor, University of East Anglia), Alexandra Grolimund (Managing Editor, University of Essex), Samuel Hales (Section Editor, University of Kent), Sofia Loizou (Section Editor, University of Sussex) and James Rowlands (Section Editor, University of Sussex).

Articles

The long-lasting cycle of transformations in eating habits and the emergence of Orthorexia Nervosa: Covid-19 implications and future challenges

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Abstract

The unprecedented outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has altered various aspects of social and everyday life, making individuals at a global level more conscious about wellness and healthy dietary practices. Long before the ongoing health crisis, however, a cultural shift in consumers has taken place, and attitudes towards food strikingly remodelled. Throughout the decades, different eating habits and body shapes have been idolized leading to contrasting standards and a consequent rise in body image disturbance and eating disorders (ED). Obesity spread rapidly across regions and several demographic groups while anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa retained the life-threatening prevalence rates. In more recent years, a novel disordered eating pattern called orthorexia nervosa (ON) that refers to a fixation with healthy eating and unprocessed food has emerged. The newly identified concept of ON has raised several controversies, that to date remain unresolved, but, more notably, the current orthorexic society has radically restructured our symbolic relationship with food. This paper draws on the literature while commenting on the different eating habits and body ideals that have unfolded, the concept of ON and the possible impacts of Covid-19 restrictions on diet. The discussions presented within the paper offer a framework on the perpetual manner of eating habits and ON that is anticipated to persevere and bring transformations in mental health practice.

How have eating habits and body ideals changed throughout the years?

Over the past decades, eating habits and perceptions pertaining the ideal body type has undergone radical changes with clear societal influences. Food was strongly associated with family, symbolizing love rituals and socializing (Conroy, 2014). In the past, food shortages led to stricter rationing, with individuals eating more home-cooked meals and fresh home-grown vegetables. Contrast to our current days, convenience food simply meant food in tins because it allowed people to consume fruits and vegetables out of season. In societies characterized by food scarcity, for instance, fatness and full-figured silhouettes typified signs of prosperity and fertility (Braziel & LeBesco, 2001). In the meantime, agricultural and technological advances increased food availability, as the international trade of food was growing, making countries more reliant on each other so that adequate and varied food supply could be secured (Daviron & Douillet, 2013).

Under those circumstances, the shift to the Western ideal that emphasized on slim body figures accentuated the desire to abide by the promoted beauty standards, with depictions

of self-starvation and purging practices being evident (Pimenta et al., 2009). Additionally, evidence of rampant eating followed by deliberate vomiting and laxative abuse started to grow (Gordon, 2015). The Western aesthetic standards (e.g. lean female bodies and muscular males) heightened weight concerns among individuals who, even though their anthropometric properties were within the average range, developed distorted perceptions related to their shape or weight. It could possibly be argued that the materialistic scourge of contemporary society was significantly projected to our bodies. Whilst in 1990s images of anorexic females flashed across media, between 2005 and 2014 the number of hospital admissions for ED in males aged 10-24 rose by 20% (NHS, 2017). Despite the stereotype that posits ED as a 'female phenomenon', disordered eating is increasingly common in males too. Due to cultural biases, however, they seldom seek treatment (K. Ali et al., 2017) – indicating that the percentage of male sufferers might be bigger- and when they do, they are less responsive and emotionally open (Tragantzopoulou & Giannouli, 2020).

In parallel, obesity spread rapidly, reaching epidemic proportions across a range of socio-demographic groups (World Health Organization, 2020a). As a consequence of the fast-paced and sedentary life, ready-made meals, nutritionally chaotic and high in fat, were widely marketed. Food industry annually channel multibillion-dollar expenditures on advertising in order to raise product awareness, enhance preferential attitudes and increase profits (Kelly et al., 2015). Through clearly language-stated promotions and virtually captivating environments, food low in nutritional value and high in fat is largely promoted (M. Ali et al., 2009). Children and adolescents, who are believed to be susceptible to the persuasive intent of the disseminated information, are the main targets (M. Ali et al., 2009). This strategic marketing has the capacity to shape eating behaviours and it is thought to be a catalyst for childhood obesity (Lobstein et al., 2015).

The stark divide in body representations, where thin figures reflect beauty standards whereas overweight/obese figures mirror individuals with lack of self-control, fuelled societal pressure to conform to a specific beauty ideal. The concept of healthism that posits individuals as solely responsible for their health and the consumption of biological products amplified food dichotomy ('bad' and 'good' food). Accordingly, the surge of mixed messages regarding the 'correct' diet in conjunction with the unlimited availability of food and the growing health-consciousness, developed a significantly anxiety-inducing stance towards food (Ryman et al., 2019). Nicolosi (2006) introduces the notion of the 'orthorexic society' where alimentary fears have captured our symbolic relationship with food, claiming that the advent of the industrial globalized society are main contributing factors. More specifically, the diffusion of alimentary fears is a social response induced by the uncertainty and the development of capitalist societies where food has become a mere commodity (Nicolosi, 2006). Therefore, in a neoliberal society with infinite choices, a reign of unconstrained consumption has been established that instead of prolonging the indisputable right of freedom of choice, entraps humans in a distressing environment of the 'right' option.

Orthorexia Nervosa

The relative emphasis on healthy eating and the induced alimentary fears are thought to have contributed to the emergence of ON, a pathological fixation with healthy and 'clean' food that

emphasizes on the quality rather than the quantity of food (Bratman, 2017). The avoidance or the treatment of modern diseases – the medicalization of food has become an integral part of medical and social discourses – and the desire to achieve optimum physical health are usually the most prevailing reasons for adhering to a restrictive diet (Varga et al., 2013). While there is little doubt that healthy eating is the pillar of good health, a well-balanced nutrition absolved of extreme behaviours is equally important.

The gradual avoidance of the perceived 'impure' products is believed to result to the elimination of entire food groups with significant impairments in functionality (Moroze et al., 2015). Although ON has not yet been recognized as a new ED, anecdotal evidence highlight that serious health conditions may be attributable for this rigid avoidance of food. For instance, the absence of a well-balanced intake with adequate nutrients could be followed by hormonal imbalances, bradycardia, anaemia or malnutrition (Koven & Abry, 2015; Moroze et al., 2015). From a psychosocial standpoint, orthorexics are perceived to struggle with guilt and self-loathing, especially when their ritualized eating habits are being disrupted, while their strong focus on self-imposed dietary rules socially isolate them (Varga et al., 2013). Both physical and psychosocial impacts reflect an arguably dangerous eating pathology that eventually may lead to a lower quality of life and a series of other mental health problems.

Increased demand for transparency in food has even led food industries to reformulate their products, the economic driver is profound, and restaurants to offer health-conscious menus featuring calories. Could these tactics conduce to healthier choices or could these act as deteriorating factors for vulnerable individuals? The lack of consensus over diagnostic criteria and the existing debate within the scientific community on whether ON is a distinct ED or merely a lifestyle syndrome complicates the clarification of such contributing factors. Provided that ON is a disruptive obsession cultivated by an array of mediators, research should thoroughly explore this newly identified condition so that early intervention could be attained.

Although individuals get consistently bombarded by adverts and campaigns that promote the socially approved practice of healthy eating (Eriksson & Machin, 2020; Mazzocchi et al., 2015), the widespread understanding of ON is minimal. On the contrary, the prevalence rates of ON are believed to be rising. In 2011, more than 100 Dutch-speaking ED professionals reported having encountered individuals with extreme healthy eating practices in their private practice (Vandereycken, 2011). Further, a recent qualitative study remarked the growing number of clients with ON tendencies and the rigidity in their thought process (black and white thinkers) (Cheshire et al., 2020). These findings suggest that there is a potentially serious issue developing in current society but the clinical world is still trying to understand the etiology of this phenomenon or how best to treat it.

Covid-19: Has the pandemic influenced our relationship with food?

On March 11, 2020, the novel Covid-19 disease was declared a global pandemic following the implementation of a plethora of preventative measures and restrictions, with the scope to limit the spread of the infectious virus (World Health Organization, 2020b). Undoubtedly,

social distancing and limitations in physical activity, which were some of the primary implemented measures, deeply disrupted our daily lives. Amid this global context, the pandemic was considered accountable for profound mental health difficulties (Holmes et al., 2020). For instance, high prevalence of psychological distress, irritability, increased anger, depression and emotional exhaustion, as a response to the uncertainty of the quarantine's duration and the adjustment to the new lifestyle, were observed (Wilder-Smith & Freedman, 2020). In the same vein, health concerns and anxiety-provoking media exacerbated the risk of disordered eating symptomatology either in those with pre-existing vulnerabilities in ED or in the general population (Phillipou et al., 2020). Despite the fear of contamination, grocery shopping was the only freedom allowed; thus, exposure to food was enhanced.

Poor mental health and prolonged staying at home significantly impacted eating habits, as distinct groups of individuals with heterogeneous responses, in terms of eating, started to surface. Some individuals developed hypercaloric diets leading to weight gain, others were spending more time to prepare and cook their dinners and others were regularly buying fully-prepared meals (Gallo et al., 2020; Sidor & Rzymski, 2020). The lack of a clear routine in combination with social restrictions amplified the relationship between food intake and emotions in an attempt to counteract emotional dysregulations and strengthen the perception of self-control (Castellini et al., 2020; Rodgers et al., 2020), a feeling that is rather provisional and highly deceptive.

In this wider context of eating patterns, a particular cohort became more vigilant of its food intake adopting restrictive diets that were thought to minimize the danger of contamination and maximize immunity (Rodgers et al., 2020). In light of the widespread clean eating trend, the fear of contamination might have exacerbated individuals' tendency to be excessively obsessed and meticulous with their food intake. Further, individuals with orthorexic tendencies could possibly have found a solid ground for additional restrictions in their daily diet, justifying their food choices under the veil of Covid-19. During the pandemic, the risk of overlooking dietary restrictions and orthorexic behaviours is high, since healthy diet has been considered crucial in strengthening immune functions and combating Covid-19. Could Covid-19 trigger an outbreak of ON or transformations to future eating habits? The answer to this question can only be based on hypothetical scenarios since studies are absent. Therefore, the impact of Covid-19 and its influences on eating habits requires further analysis in populations either with no history of disordered eating or with a presence of an ED. Since the possibility of establishing eating behaviours or developing disordered eating habits that may last for a lifetime is high, research aiming early detection is considered paramount.

Conclusion

The shift to the Western society significantly impacted eating habits and body ideals. Fresh home-cooked meals were replaced by ready-made meals high in fat whereas slenderness and masculinity were highly promoted. Further, the increased focus on outward appearance and the continuous encouragement to conform to a preconfigured ideal that was primarily unrealistic and unattainable, led to a long-lasting cycle of eating pathology in both genders. Amid the global spread of ED and obesity, healthy eating practices were widely endorsed, paving the way for a novel disordered eating pattern. ON, the outcome of modern societal

depictions, is the most representative example of the unceasing perpetuation of ED that is expected to be further unfolded. During the unexpected Covid-19 outbreak, clear impacts on mental health and eating habits were observed due to restrictions and unpredictability. As a result, a specific group of individuals became more obsessed with food quality, raising the question if orthorexic symptoms have been increased due to the rise in concerns about healthy eating and immunity. Could the pandemic be part of the ongoing, long-lasting cycle of transformations around eating habits? Although conclusions cannot be drawn, future research will be able to enlighten the long-term consequences of Covid-19 on eating habits, and more specifically on the course of ON.

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From Invasive to Non-invasive and Back Again: Exploring the Changing Conceptions of Disability and NIPT

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Abstract

We often hear that genomics and biotechnology drive humanity forward; unlocking the molecular secrets of life and gifting us with the tools to know more of who we are and what we want future generations to look like. Yet, genetic technologies are mired by sharp ethical and political debates. Individuals, families, and epistemic communities have reservations about their potential to overdetermine identities of disability and difference. Non-invasive prenatal testing (NIPT) detects with greater clinical accuracy certain genetic conditions during pregnancy, but this too begins to further nuance identities of disability. Indeed, as discoveries are made and boundaries change, these technologies demand scholarly analysis.

This paper investigates how NIPT shapes the changing notions of disability identities. Using reflections of risk theory and the authors' preliminary observations of NIPT in Iceland, it is argued that this method of prenatal screening exhibits invasive concepts of personhood and newfound ideas about disability.

Introduction

The social sciences provide us with a range of tools to understand the world and what it means to be human. This is extremely valuable given the monumental changes taking place in modern society, with technoscientific innovations visibly shaping how we as a species contemplate their effects. Genomics and biotechnology in particular are ongoing reminders that science and society invariably transform highly politicised concepts such as kinship (Franklin, 2003), the body (Lock, 2015, 2017), and even how we define our own history as a species (Palsson, 2015; Zwart, 2009).

NIPT is a new kind of prenatal genetic testing, said to have the potential to revolutionise prenatal care, foetal diagnostics and enhance autonomous reproductive decision-making. Whereas until recently prenatal genetic testing was only possible from invasive tests such as amniocentesis and chorionic villus sampling, NIPT stands to offer earlier and more accurate genetic testing with no risk of miscarriage and results available in a couple of weeks. While initially developed to detect extra foetal chromosomes in maternal blood using next-generation sequencing (NGS), other clinical applications have been developed and researchers speculate on its potential to screen beyond this function. However, as an 'innovative technology in transition' (Thomas et al., 2020), we need to match the speed of NIPT's rollout with research that critically investigates the manifold sociological implications and how it shapes cultural constructions of disability. To date, such a focus is lacking in the literature which tends to falsely ascribe disability as a fixed unchanging category.

This paper is a conceptual analysis of how NIPT triggers changing cultural conceptions of disability articulated through elevated discourses of genetic risk. After defining NIPT, I then reflect on the epistemic inroads afforded by risk theory to analyse changing disability identities. Finally, I draw on these insights to explicate my preliminary observations of NIPT and disability in Iceland.

Bringing NIPT into view

NIPT is "a [non-invasive] strategy of prenatal testing for analyses [of] cell-free DNA" (Vanstone et al., 2015, p.54), used primarily to detect trisomy 13 (Patau syndrome), 18 (Edwards syndrome), and 21 (Down syndrome). The test derives from a 1997 discovery that fragments of cell-free foetal DNA (cffDNA) circulates within a pregnant woman's blood around 4 weeks (Lo et al., 1997). However, for accurate analysis a small maternal blood sample is taken between 8 to 10 weeks (de Wert et al., 2015).

Compared with other techniques – which are more readily available, widely used, and arguably regarded as a 'normalised' part of pregnancy – NIPT is still relatively novel, and the limits of its screening and diagnostic capabilities remain to be seen. Yet, many worldwide continue urging for its incorporation into antenatal healthcare (Brady et al., 2016; Tamminga et al., 2015; Verweij et al., 2013), with studies citing earlier and safer testing, the ability to yield significantly higher sensitivity and false positive rates for trisomy 13, 18 and 21 (Gadsbøll et al., 2020), and the potential to acquire infinite amounts of bio-information as an indication of the perceived self-evident benefits of NIPT. However, these studies are mainly conducted in fields such as medicine and bioethics, and their cultural ramifications are underwritten.

Meanwhile, the number of targeted diseases that are seemingly possible to detect with NIPT is expanding; researchers and rare genetic disease advocacy groups push to include more chromosomal conditions, monogenic disorders and microdeletions (Butler, 2017). Already, NIPT has been used to test for genetic diseases caused by single gene mutations such as cystic fibrosis (Jeppesen et al., 2021), and in the UK, NIPT recently became available on the NHS to be used alongside other tests for sex-linked conditions like Duchenne muscular dystrophy ('Genomics Education Programme', 2017). Some studies are also testing whether NIPT provides additional or discrepant diagnostic information for patients who conceived with PGT-A (pre-implantation genetic testing for aneuploidy) screened embryos (Harjee et al., 2020, p.156). Yet, as Navon cautions, while individually these conditions are extremely rare, cumulatively they are not and are hitherto forcing researchers to re-evaluate existing categories of disease and disability (Navon, 2019).

Many private companies have also begun to offer additional results based on sex chromosome abnormalities, while a handful of smaller companies are offering "whole genome sequencing (WGS)-based NIPT tests, promising to analyse every chromosome of a baby" (Thomas et al., 2020, p.89). In the absence of clear-cut regulatory governance, consumer companies give the illusion of full control, downplay the gap between screening and diagnosis, and can exploit pre-existing cultural anxieties of disability. This confronts scientists, prospective parents and inevitably biosocial stakeholders, with having to make sense of potentially overwhelming amounts of bio-information and how this could classify different 'kinds' of persons (Hacking, 2007).

Understandably, this question of governance has sparked debates about who will be responsible for overseeing the construction of appropriate regulations and what might be considered responsible innovation (Shakespeare & Hull, 2018). Currently, NIPT is only offered to all women in Belgium and the Netherlands for detecting trisomy 13, 18 and 21 (Gadsbøll et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the abilities of NIPT to screen more efficiently, have potential to enhance other biotechnologies including IVF, and the economic incentives to reduce the need for expensive invasive procedures, mean that barriers are likely to diminish, notions of disability increasingly blur, and we are left to see NIPT become further incorporated into the 'moral economies of prenatal testing' (Zeng et al., 2016)

As researchers, we should be attentive to the ways that NIPT shifts boundaries and shape identities. Even the ability to discover familiar conditions like down syndrome in utero (Löwy, 2014), complicates how technology and reproductive decision-making dialectically determine distinct embodiments. By bringing these embodiments forward, prospective parents and medical professionals will be confronted with having to make difficult decisions. While genetic counselling is designed to help facilitate people's reproductive decision-making, the presence of the medical practitioner is always a temporary one (Atkinson et al., 2013, p.1223), and the cultivation of disability identities accelerates outside the clinic. Indeed, they emerge through what Ginsburg and Rapp call 'kinship imaginaries', which refers to complex acts of cultural imaginations that occur in families trying to encompass the 'fact of disability' in the family (Ginsburg & Rapp, 2013).

Risk theory

NIPT clearly presents new and familiar theoretical challenges for developing scholarship on prenatal screening and disability identities. There are opportunities to analyse NIPT and changing disability identities by drawing influence from risk theory. While risk has a particular affinity with Foucauldian theory, this is by no means the only framework available.

For example, Landsman uses feminist theory to show how risk and prenatal screening dialectically intertwine with notions of stigma and responsible motherhood, appearing most egregious for those families with children whose conditions were undetected (Landsman, 2009). Furthermore, because screening results have an interpretive label (i.e., either negative or positive) rather than a numerical score, this leads to changes in risk perceptions and what prospective parents can expect from screening (Krimsky & Gruber, 2013, p.206).

Alternatively, Kelly found that prenatal screening technologies themselves became inherently risky for some parents with experience of raising a child with disabilities (Kelly, 2009). As Felicity Boardman has illustrated in various works, families of children with genetic disabilities contain 'experiential knowledge' about screening for different genetic conditions (Boardman, 2014, 2017), which may redirect internalised embodiments of risk towards different identities forming. Taking their contributions seriously, we learn that notions of risk and how that affects people's identities are particularly complex for those with embodied familial experiences of genetic conditions. However, this complexity does not feature in current studies of NIPT and parents of children with disabilities.

For example, a study with some Dutch parents of children with down syndrome found them expressing difficulties reconciling their gratefulness for obtaining an earlier diagnosis with a sense that NIPT also represents predetermined pathways to termination (How et al., 2019). Similarly, some Dutch parents of children with down syndrome were in favour of expanding the conditions screened for to 'divert the spotlight away from down syndrome' (van Schendel et al., 2017, p.529). In Germany, Reinsch et al learned that for some women who previously declined prenatal screening in earlier pregnancies, they struggle to justify their decisions not to test now that NIPT is presented as completely risk free (Reinsch et al., 2020). While together insightful for risk theory, these studies are few and they tend to treat disability identities in the NIPT literature as fixed and unchanging.

Before concluding, the final section attempts to synthesise these insights into the author's preliminary ethnographic fieldwork. It should be noted therefore, that these are not foregone conclusions, but are instead guiding principles that are being used to investigate changing notions of disability.

Iceland

While NIPT is strictly reserved for 'high risk' pregnancies, all women have the option to have the combined test between 11 and 14 weeks in addition to routine ultrasound (Halle & Fjose, 2016). Despite incurring a small fee and not regarded as a standard part of antenatal care (Halle et al., 2018), this has not dissuaded individuals from requesting the combined test (ibid). Rather, prenatal screening appears regarded by prospective parents and healthcare professionals as a 'normal' and 'expected' part of pregnancy (Gottfreðsdóttir & Björnsdóttir, 2010).

NIPT is however, likely to become implemented as part of the targeted screening approaches in all of Scandinavia in the near future (Juvet et al., 2016), and since 2019, a private IVF clinic began offering NIPT for 79,500 ISK (Livio Reykjavík, n.d). A survey conducted among those who received false-positive and true-negative first trimester screening results demonstrated that 77% of an 101 sample wanted NIPT in their next pregnancy if it were an option, despite only 21% knowing what NIPT was (Thorolfsdottir et al., 2020). Similarly, for many healthcare professionals and pregnant women, NIPT and the broader objective of prenatal screening appears valued, even for those who decline testing (Ingvarsdottir et al., 2016). However, there is no existing research which has taken to question the truisms of these conclusions, nor studies attempting to understanding how NIPT or prenatal screening has implications for changing disability identities. This is somewhat understandable, given how invisible NIPT is at this stage. However, given the pace at which these developments are unfolding, NIPT may become a focal point in national debates.

Iceland has a turbulent history of genomics, mainly associated with deCODE genetics which triggered many biopolitical debates in recent years about biodata and ownership (Palsson, 2008). Despite only being in existence for less than 30 years, deCODE has been key to shaping the public image and perception of Icelandic genes, linked with constructing ideas of citizenship and the 'Nordic body' (Winickoff, 2006). However, this raises further questions about how these developments are driving changing conceptions of disability, and how do

they take shape for those deemed genetically 'at risk'? Understanding disability in Iceland goes back to the development of the Nordic welfare states and the principles of normalisation in the 1970s (Björnsdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2009, p.436). Given that transformations in genomics and biotechnology have taken place in such a short space of time, research can be conducted with different generations and social actors to capture how notions of genetic risk impact societal concepts of disability and how this effects the category of disability itself.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated how NIPT shapes the changing conceptions of disability through the augmentation of what it means to be 'at risk'. The most obvious takeaway is a timely need for further research. It is likewise a limitation of this paper that the authors observations have only just begun. However, the hope is that the conceptual discussion developed here helps to encourage readers and future researchers to respond in kind.

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Graphic signage through the lens of COVID-19: The superhero in changing social behaviour

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Abstract

Since the start of 2020, the world has undergone a series of drastic transformations – COVID-19 has forced us to make significant lifestyle changes and shift our social behaviour to ensure our safety and that of others. These transformations have been helped by developments in the signage industry; specifically, by giving a visual identity to COVID-19, new graphic signage has provided greater social awareness of coronavirus and helped governments and public agencies to disseminate and reinforce health-related messaging. In this article, we discuss the various transformations of graphic signage since the start of 2020 and explain how transformed creative visual signage elements are currently being used to encourage behavioural change and assist individuals to navigate through the pandemic. We conclude by discussing the role that these transformations can have in the post-pandemic world.

Introduction

Dabner et al. (2013) defines graphic signage as the use of visual graphics, including signs and symbols, to convey a message. Taylor et al. (2005) notes that signs in communication are fundamental and that "next to the human voice, signage is the most available and ubiquitous form of speech" (p.15). Signage navigates the public through an environment by integrating graphic elements such as typography, colour, pictograms, and icons (Victionary, 2014). Oftentimes, graphic signage is a universal language that replaces words; for example, see Figure 1.

According to the International Sign Alliance (n.d.), as societies are becoming more diverse, universal symbol signage has become increasingly important. The inclusion of symbols on signage has the ability to cross language barriers; thus, graphic signs can successfully communicate basic messages and information to broad audiences in a more accessible and direct manner.

A study by Houts et al. (2006) demonstrated that visual communication is an important tool when communicating health messages, as images and symbols can be comprehended easily and thus increase individuals' adherence to health instructions. The COVID-19 pandemic has exemplified this well. For example, through the use of visual communication in signage design – termed "visual corona communication" by Raff (2020) – COVID-19 has been transformed into a universal visual language.

Figure 1. Examples of broadly understood International symbols used to represent basic facilities, amenities, or instructions (International Sign Alliance, n.d.).

Several researchers have examined the use of visual signage during the pandemic. For example, Saraiva and Ferreira (2020) conducted a content analysis of 264 visual and graphical materials related to COVID-19 prevention and risk mitigation. Their findings highlighted how specific graphic combinations in design materials (e.g., the use of engaging text styles and vibrant pictures) can improve the communication and comprehension of government health messaging, while also persuading individuals to act in a responsible and safe manner.

In our article, we explore the transformation of the graphic signage industry during the COVID-19 crisis. We do this by drawing on key examples of graphic signs and symbols that have been developed to help shift social behaviours and increase adherence to health instructions, as well as discussing recent advances in academic understanding pertaining to visual corona communication. In doing so, we aim to advance previous research focusing on the transformative effects of graphic signage by suggesting how recent evolutions in the industry can be used to promote more positive social and health behaviours in the future.

It is important to emphasise at this stage that, due to the novelty and ever-changing nature of COVID-19, there is very limited empirical data available on this subject. We endeavour, though, to draw on recent academic literature throughout our article to provide readers with a good overview of current academic understanding of visual corona communication.

Signage at the Start of COVID-19

At the start of the pandemic, the visual language used on coronavirus signage assisted governments and public health authorities to build an emergency response to COVID-19; for example, by conveying to individuals the need for safer health-related behaviours (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2020). Figure 2 is an example of COVID-19 signage created in the early days of the pandemic by international wayfinding company, Applied, whose 'COVID-19 Design Toolkit' was created to give a visual identity to the virus (McDougall, 2020). The signs included as part of their toolkit incorporated well-understood elements from traditional warning signs (e.g., the yellow-black-white-red colour scheme, bold typefaces, black borders, and monochrome symbols) which, according to Creative Director, Tim Fendley, helped the public to navigate through the ever-changing landscape of COVID-19 (Fendley, 2020).

Figure 2. The COVID-19 Design Toolkit (Applied, 2021).

Numerous other organisations, designers, and visual communicators also formed their own catalogue of COVID-19-related signage and symbols at the start of the pandemic. However, they soon started to recognise that behavioural change would not be possible unless they moved away from traditional design approaches (e.g., where signs were created to instruct people to act in a certain way) and instead developed new visuals that helped the public to navigate through the pandemic and made them feel more at ease (Bixler et al., 2020).

The Head of Wayfinding at CCD Design, Chris Girling, stated that a key issue with early visual corona communication was that designers used a mixture of styles, colours, text, and placement strategies when creating COVID-19 signage (Girling, 2020). This meant that every time a member of the public entered a different commercial or public space, they needed to reprocess graphic designs and learn context-specific rules. Moreover, designers tended to use abrupt wording – such as "stop" and "go" – in their designs, which are associated with hazards and prohibitive signage. These words create a tone of danger and can induce public fear – the opposite intention of visual corona communication.

Interestingly, the academic literature pertaining to the wording used on graphic signs provided mixed findings at the time. For example, in their assessment of the effectiveness of sign communication during COVID-19, Kellaris et al. (2020) found that framing health messages as 'demands' rather than 'requests' significantly increased the likelihood that individuals would display desired behaviours. Specifically, participants in their study were more likely to wear a facemask when they believed that they were required to do so (94.0% adherence) versus when they were invited to do so (86.7% adherence). Their findings highlighted that visual communicators had to find ways of presenting health-related messaging as demands for compliance, not requests, but in a non-hostile or provocative manner.

Signage During the Pandemic: The Transformation of Graphic Design Elements and Style on Visual Corona Communication

Even though designers did not form a standard code of practice for the design of COVID-19 signage during the pandemic, they integrated creativity to emotionally engage with the public. This was particularly important during times of public uncertainty (e.g., following an increase in restrictions or new lockdowns), at which point signage needed to adjust to public mood. International design and architecture firm Gensler recommended that designers implement the following four design strategies when creating new signage communication and wayfinding graphics during these difficult periods (see Bixler et al., 2020):

1. Signs should convey messages in a friendly tone. Signs that are too demanding can induce stress, whilst those with red or yellow colour palettes and bold typography can make a space feel dangerous. Messaging should also be paraphrased so that it is more polite and inviting; for example, instead of "put on a mask", text could be changed to "let's wear mask".

2. Signage often helps people to navigate through public, commercial, and social spaces; therefore, during periods of lockdown, it is particularly important to tailor designs to

those people who are leaving their safe spaces (e.g., their homes). Similarly, more posters and visual designs should be made available in public spaces (e.g., offices or travel hubs), which see high footfall and where specific rules are likely to be in place. Visuals should also incorporate words of encouragement, such as "Welcome back!", to indicate positivity within a community and induce feelings of hope and inclusion.

3. New signage should be integrated as part of communication campaigns, as instructional signage, positive messages, and iconography can enhance user experience.

4. Businesses should reflect their brand in the design of their signs; for example, by integrating elements which align with their trademark 'personality'. This may include brand colours, relevant creative illustrations, and impactful visuals that can boost morale.

Furthermore, Gensler created their own set of signs which demonstrates how these four approaches can be incorporated in graphic visual signage (see Tucker, 2020). According to Gensler, the standard design format for instructional graphics – which rely on red and yellow colour schemes and bold capital letters – are too hostile for visual corona communication and need to be transformed into a more friendly and communicative design (Bixler et al., 2020). Gensler's Design Director, Beth Novitsky, stated that these traditional designs were appropriate only at the early stages of the pandemic and in spaces which attract large audiences (Tucker, 2020).

Figure 3 shows an applied example of Gensler's four design strategies, as used in the Charlotte Douglas International Airport. Here, designers used a calming colour palette and gentle font styles to help minimise passengers' anxiety whilst travelling through the airport, whilst also communicating in a simple, yet effective, way relevant pandemic protocols (see Ready & Osbaugh, 2020).

Figure 3. Floor signage at Charlotte Douglas International Airport (2020).

Several US companies adopted Gensler's approach to visual graphic design during the pandemic to help navigate individuals through public spaces and comply with health-related rules. These include companies which attract international clients and service users. Figure 4 shows a multilingual poster campaign – called the Neighbors Now campaign – created by design firm Pentagram for local businesses in New York City. Their posters and graphic signs displayed COVID-19 requirements in a fun and inviting way by integrating colourful cartoon characters, bright graphics, and aesthetically-pleasing typography.

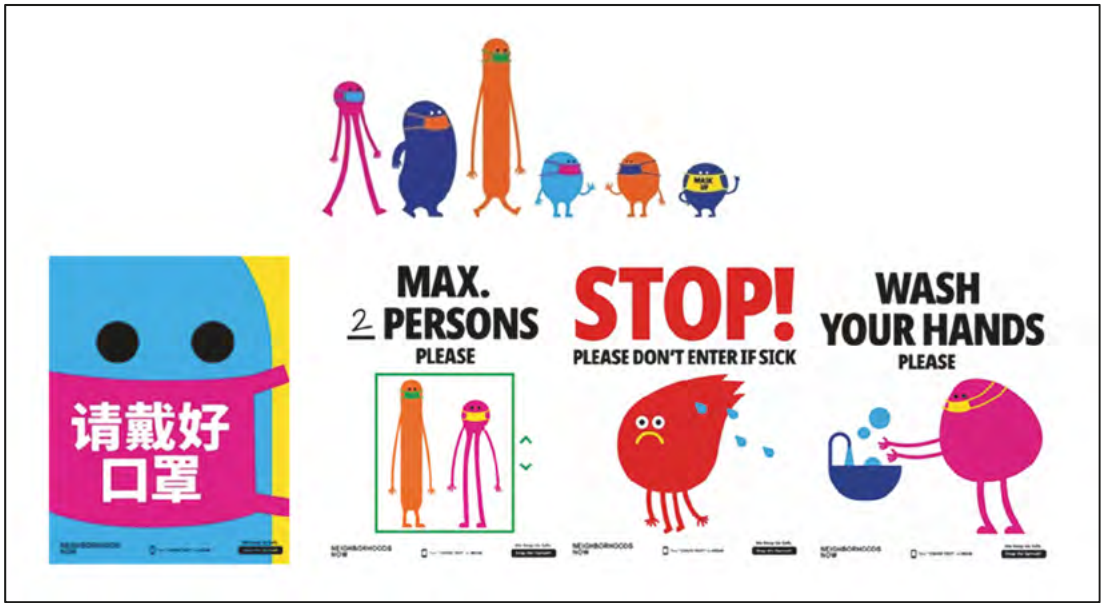

Figure 4: The Neighbors Now campaign created by design firm, Pentagram (2020).

As more US companies and public health authorities began to adopt Gensler's creative approach to effective visual corona communication, a new graphic design system emerged. Subsequently, other nations adapted their visual messaging to include more colourful and friendly design elements and styles. Now, we can see examples of Gensler's design strategies worldwide, such as the floor sticker sign placed at the Emirates Mall in Dubai (see Reuters, 2020). The sign uses complementary language ("Hey there beautiful! Don't forget to keep a safe distance!") alongside a striking colour palette to engage audiences and remind them to adhere to social distancing regulations.

The Future of COVID-19 Signage

COVID-19 has transformed the graphic signage industry in many ways, with researchers believing that recent changes in graphic design are likely to remain popular well beyond the pandemic (Cruise-McGrath, 2020). Designers and visual communicators continue to work collaboratively to help solve a range of accessibility issues, including print affordability, the problem of language barriers, and differences in cultural meanings of icons. There are also

efforts to create a distinctive colour palette for COVID-19 signage internationally (Cruise-McGrath, 2020) – an indication that a universal code of graphic design practice may soon be developed. Some designers are also preempting the next stages of graphic design, in which pandemic behaviours are integrated as part of current graphic signs and symbols. For example, CannonDesign – a global architecture, engineering, and consulting firm – have started to embed modern-day behavioural practices into popular US street and pavement signs (see Smith, 2020).

According to Bloomberg CityLab (as cited in Poon, 2020), social norms and behaviours change routinely following large-scale events such as global pandemics. Subsequently, given predictions that the effects of COVID-19 will continue for several years (British Academy, 2021), many individuals in the future will likely continue to display behavioural patterns learnt during the pandemic. Graphic designers may find this a useful point to consider when developing visual communication campaigns going forward.

Given the novelty of COVID-19, we would also encourage more research into visual corona communication to help inform the development of graphic design practices. One key area that requires attention is digital signage; specifically, how individuals digest digital visual media and how it impacts behavioural change. Targeted research assessing graphic signage use across the retail, commercial, and healthcare industries would also be of value and help inform marketing and public health strategies. The current approaches to graphic design are likely to act as sources of public reassurance in the future, as they are now easily understood as part of a universal visual vocabulary; therefore, evaluations of their efficacy would also propel forward academic understanding.

Conclusion

COVID-19 has reshaped graphic design and the design of visual signage. By helping governments and public agencies to communicate vital health and safety information, graphic design has formed an important part of infection management and control protocols internationally. At the start of the pandemic, designers relied on traditional design systems to deliver pandemic messaging and urge shifts in social and health-related behaviours. However, as the pandemic progressed and COVID-19 preventative measures became integrated within individuals' daily lives, signage transitioned towards a more creative and informative style, and multiple new examples of effective visual graphic designs emerged. The universal graphic designs created during the pandemic have brought about a new era of design across commercial and graphic industries, such to the extent that it is likely that a universal code of graphic design practice will soon be developed to help visual communicators respond to the fast-moving changes in society.

Academically, COVID-19 is still a novel topic and there is dearth of available empirical data on visual corona communication. However, emerging research seems to suggest that graphic design constitutes an effective mechanism for encouraging behavioural change and individual compliance to health regulations (e.g., Kellaris et al., 2020; Saraiva & Ferreira, 2020). We would encourage more targeted follow-up research to assess the micro and macro-level impact of visual graphic designs on individuals' health and social behaviours. This is

particularly important given the effects of COVID-19 are likely to be felt for several decades (British Academy, 2021).

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Transformation of an Integral Research(er) through Synchronicities and Mixed Methods

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Abstract

This reflection explores how multiple changes in academic career, driven by curiosity and guided by the providence of life, led the researcher to discover not only the challenges of sustainable development and currency innovation, but also Integral and mixed methods research approaches. By applying these approaches to a specific sustainability and currency innovation, both the object and the methods of inquiry have transformed the subjects of inquiry – including the researcher himself. The latter has been particularly transformed by two introspective experiences relating to mind and body – meditation and fasting, respectively.

This informal deliberation about this unique researcher's story aims to: highlight the transformational junctures uncovered by meaningful encounters or synchronicities; reveal the transformative catalyst of Integral and mixed methods research approaches on participants; and reflect on the transforming experiences and personal insights provided by meditation and fasting. Career and life choices; demystification of money and methods of investigation; meditation and fasting are all sources of transformation for an Integral researcher and practitioner – who is ready and open to embrace a meta-approach of integration beyond in-depth specialisation. Taking routes off the beaten track is sometimes necessary but not sufficient to evolve, yet it is still required to carry them out and complete them for the metamorphosis to take place. Most significantly, taking a meta-level on the appreciation of relative detrimental or restorative transformation allows one to finally embrace the absolute non-dual transformation of Integral life, methods, and experiences.

Keywords

Integral research, mixed methods, impact assessment, currency innovation, complementary currency, fasting, meditation, non-duality, synchronicity.

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Introduction: transformative story, methods and experiences of an Integral practitioner

As a practitioner in sustainable development (through the academic disciplines of engineering and management) and as an empirical and theoretical researcher in monetary innovation (through the academic disciplines of economics and anthropology), I finally embraced Integral research that encompasses the three philosophical ideals (i.e. beautiful aesthetic or art; good ethic or religion; true logic or science) as well as the three philosophy of sciences (i.e. natural science of body or sensation; social science of mind or interpretation; spiritual science of essence or contemplation) (Visser, 2003).

First, I will tell the story of my transformational junctions that led me to discover Integral research. Next, I will explain how certain mixed methods of Integral research have changed or impacted a specific monetary community – as much as the currency itself. Finally, I will present how two specific experiential practices directly transformed me. Indeed, such Integral and mixed methods research approaches have been proposed but not yet applied in the fields of economics and anthropology for the impact assessment of monetary innovation (Arnsperger, 2009). This research aims to fill this gap. Through an interdisciplinary exploration of my overall path as an Integral researcher and practitioner (Esbjörn-Hargens, 2010a), I will argue my interpretation of the concept of detrimental or restorative transformation through the prisms of Integral life, methods, and experiences – as a philosophical, theoretical, and methodological discussion about the concept of transformation as it manifests in empirical, quantitative, and qualitative research practice.

1. Transformational junctures through synchronicities in the researcher's autobiographical journey

Like five members of my family – fervent advocates of expatriation to discover the Old and New Worlds – I became a general and polytechnic engineer (i.e. M.Ing. Magister ars Ingeniaria) while being specialised in environment and energy as I was interested in these issues of our century. Though a dual degree in sustainability management (i.e. M.Sc. Magister Scientiae, M.A. Magister Artium), I then discovered that sustainable development was not limited to water, waste, and energy management; but encompassed environmental, social, and economic issues – as well as culture and governance. However, I also uncovered that trying to achieve Sustainable Development Goals without challenging the paradigm of unlimited economic growth was an illusion (e.g. accumulation of fictitious capital, growth imperative of interest-bearing debt, technological and psychological planned obsolescence, resource decoupling and the rebound effect, weak versus strong sustainability, planetary boundaries versus ecological footprint, post-scarcity economy versus steady-state economy or degrowth

movement) (Jackson, 2009). Therefore, I delved deeper into the question of Money (as a concept with a capital M; cf. Bindewald, 2018), and the providence of life (i.e. synchronicities; see explanation below) brought me to meet the movement/field of complementary and community currency systems during the Great Recession.

By debunking the Money myth, by rethinking the status quo of monetary creation, and by reconsidering the mainstream theories of monetary economics, this movement of grassroots and currency innovations aim to transition to low-carbon societies through the self-determined creation of more sustainable communities (e.g. Money as a common good, monetary plurality and resiliency, solidarity neighbourhood, localism beyond regionalism or municipalism, rewarding eco-friendly behaviours, demurrage to encourage non-accumulation but redistribution of wealth) (Lietaer et al., 2012). As a result, by opening the Pandora's box of the dogma of Money, I not only discovered its incredible power of alienation and emancipation, but also reconsidered all my daily activities of valuing, exchanging, producing, and consuming wealth in a more ethical and responsible way. Hence, I began a long and profound journey of personal development and search for well-being as an ecological then spiritual "Cultural Creative" of "Integral Culture" (Ray & Anderson, 2000). Indeed, providential encounters – or synchronicities – on monetary issues led me to explore the notions of deep ecology, consciousness, and spirituality, until I came across Ken Wilber's Integral theory – also known as the "Einstein of Consciousness" (Visser, 2003, p. 25).

Beginning my research career as an engineer and manager in sustainable development, then driven by my insatiable curiosity (i.e. trying to understand the whys and wherefores of things from my precocious childhood) and guided by some meaningful encounters (i.e. synchronicities that magically answered these existential questions while carving a path to my most cherished dreams), I finally turned to economics and anthropology as a transdisciplinary prism for the study of Money – being myself the distant offspring of blacksmiths and goldsmiths. These transformational junctions not only changed my academic orientation, but also affected my deep beliefs and everyday behaviours (e.g. from atheism to theism, sustainable consumption or diet and transport, meaningful and impactful vocation, daily ritual for body and mind, etc.). This cosmopolitan personal enrichment – living/studying/working in France, Netherlands, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Equatorial Guinea, Switzerland, Czechia, Azerbaijan, and the United Kingdom – and this interdisciplinary background ranging from the formal and natural sciences to the social and paranormal sciences have provided the ideal groundwork for becoming an Integral practitioner (Bhaskar et al., 2016).

All of us standing on the shoulder of giants, the path of the researcher resembles that of the detective seeking solid evidence; the lawyer building a good legal case; the adventurous hero's journey receiving the revelation in the abyss; the alchemist striving to cross the magnum opus towards the philosophical quintessence; the artist, the priest, and the scientist pursuing their respective quests for beauty, goodness, and truth. Indeed, all our contributions to knowledge – critically arguing new insights, perspectives or viewpoints through artistic, spiritual or scientific discoveries and/or paradigm shifts – are supported by existing theories and/or methodologies of reference that are critically acclaimed and praised by peers – as long as we recognise the distortion of reality by the lens of our worldview through reflexivity and

the limitation or bias of our research path through reflectivity (Bhaskar et al., 2016; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Throughout my entire academic and professional career, what some might have seen as single-option life choices were in fact much more like synchronicities (i.e. luck factor, twist of fate, serendipity, meaningful coincidence) in the sense that these circumstances or encounters were significantly related, but without a conventional causal connection – as a consequence of the future rather than the past (Jung, 1960). Finally, in a predominantly modern society that favours in-depth expertise and specialisation of discipline-based categorisation over the meta-level complexity and pluralism of transdisciplinary-driven integration of a post-postmodern minority (Bhaskar et al., 2016), such frequency and breadth of disciplinary change and exploration is too often perceived as a lack of stability or normality rather than an asset of multiple skills and intelligences – and therefore a detrimental transformation for the development of society (collective viewpoint) but a restorative transformation for my personal development (individual viewpoint).

2. Integral and mixed methods research approaches as a transformative catalyst

Integral research approach is based on Ken Wilber's Integral theory and has been enhanced by Edgar Morin's Complex thought and Roy Bhaskar's Critical realism to be merged into Sean Esbjörn-Hargens's Complex Integral Realism research approach (Bhaskar et al., 2016). It has its own integrated mixed methods research approach to validate knowledge, which uses up to eight methodological families – and called Integral Methodological Pluralism (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Esbjörn-Hargens, 2010a). Because Money is interdisciplinary by nature (Bindewald, 2018) – as a system of rules and values influencing our behaviours and beliefs – the impact assessment and improvement of a currency needs to be holistic (beyond macro/microeconomics alone), by using an integrative methodological framework (Place et al. 2021). In the specific case of the impact assessment of a complementary currency issued from May 2018 to January 2020 in the Lake District – a world premiere in a National Park and World Heritage Site – I conducted six mixed methods as chronologically interconnected research studies, defined as follows with their respective findings. Birthplace of Romanticism with the Lake Poets, the Lake District is the most visited and richest National Park in one of the poorest counties in the country – creating a tension between agricultural or tourism development and culture or nature conversation – which the Lake District Pound (LD£) aimed to resolve in part by targeting visitors with local leading figures, supporting local independent businesses, and giving its profits to local charities (Place et al. 2021).

- Hermeneutics: participatory action research (19 stakeholders' mapping to analyse its business model).

  By considering 10 stakeholders (i.e. Independent Money Alliance, Lake District National Park Authority, Lake District Foundation, Cumbria Community Foundation, University of Cumbria, project leader, impact investors, bureaux de change, stores, residents/visitors) the revenue model was based on a numismatic currency to be kept/collected rather than an economic currency to be spent/saved.

- Systems theory: econometrics accounting (7 months' ledger to estimate its circulation and leakage).

  This pioneering revenue model has been validated (2/3 kept, 1/3 spent) after a year of operation, but only represented less than a 10th of their projected target – not enough to generate any profit for two charities (environmental conservation, community support).

- Structuralism: autoethnography (8 relatives' experiential feedback to study its value proposition).

  Its value proposition was in line with related experiences: having a fun and unique experience on holiday – although having received too little change back in the complementary currency from participating stores.

- Empiricism: case study (269 participants' surveys to assess their behaviours and collaborations).

  The lack of commercial incentive, the inconvenience of exchanging cash in some bureaux de change, and the restrictive annual expiration date caused his premature end – despite the success of the marketing strategy.

- Ethnomethodology: ethnography (49 participants' interviews to investigate their beliefs and values).

  Targeting residents as much as visitors, extending the network of participating stores, developing a digital currency, and pedagogically address the money taboo in a bottom-up approach could improve this monetary scheme – which has nonetheless promoted the region.

- Phenomenology: meditation and fasting (7 practitioners' interviews and 1 practitioner's description to evaluate the root of expenditure).

  These practices can help balance the cravings and aversions of our minds and bodies – including spending and consumption.

As a result, the interaction with this complementary currency moderately impacted the local spending but reasonably raised awareness of localism and monetary economics among participants (i.e. bureaux de change, stores, residents/visitors). To a certain extent, they defined Money as an evolutive concept and rule which activates values and collaborations, while encouraging behaviours and beliefs (i.e. an Integral object of inquiry). Since ½ of surveyed and ¼ of interviewed participants changed their awareness and perception of the Lake District Pound thanks to the research process itself, these data collections participated in the awareness-raising (Place et al. 2021).

Therefore, not only the various methods of inquiry (i.e. data collections), but also the object of inquiry (i.e. Money/currency) were a transformative catalyst for the subjects of inquiry (i.e. researcher and participants). Directly involved in an applied research project (that aims to co-create a common value among stakeholders through an innovative currency circulating in a unique National Park and World Heritage Site with its ground-breaking collector-based revenue model), these Integral and mixed methods research approaches were at the

crossroads of action, activism, and transformative research – by actively promoting some paradigm shifts in impact assessment, mixed methods, monetary economics, and sustainable development. Finally, by ending after 20 months of operation, this currency project has had a detrimental transformation on the reputation of currency innovation to support the local economy (collective viewpoint), but a restorative transformation as an educational tool for better understanding the nature of Money (individual viewpoint).

3. Personal introspection with meditation and fasting as transforming experiences and practices

After studying the use of a complementary currency in relation to conventional money, and to better address the complexity of the study of Money, I decided to explore the deep roots of consumption or expenditure through some introspective practices – that do not involve the use of money and currency – in order to investigate the internal process that occurs in my mind and body. As far as I am concerned, the practices of meditation and fasting – again discovered through meaningful encounters or synchronicities and allowed by an Integral approach and practice – have been incredible transforming experiences for such investigation and beyond – by respectively equilibrating my mental and emotional state (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006) and improving my alertness and well-being (Fond et al., 2013).

Indeed, I had the opportunity to practice the Vipassana meditation technique – one of the most ancient meditation techniques rediscovered by Siddhartha Gautama – during a 10-day residential retreat. By constantly training my mind to observe the subtle or gross sensations of the body linked to my higher/positive or lower/negative thoughts and emotions, I discovered the law of impermanence as everything rises and passes away until reaching a modified state of consciousness of non-duality and timelessness – consistent with my theistic belief. Therefore, I started to stop reacting as often to my craving or aversion to unnecessary needs, such as overconsumption or overspending (Place et al., 2021).

After improving my capacity for commitment with this meditative experience, I also had the opportunity to follow an introspection through a 40-day Rational fasting according to Arnold Ehret's method and a 30-day Intermittent fasting – which have brought me mental and physical rejuvenation. By ingesting the equivalent of a bowl of fresh fruit juice with mineral water everyday, I have not only cleaned my body and mind toxin, but also improved my mood and productivity – while drastically reducing my consumption budget and habit to about £2 a day. I also discovered that my craving or aversion to food and drink consumption was not due to physical hunger or thirst but to mental desire or emotional compensation with moments of pleasure (i.e. sense of taste and smell, caring for others by cooking, socialising by sharing the meal) (Place et al., 2021).

Both meditation and fasting have influenced not only my monetary expenditures and food/drink consumption, but also my relationship with my mind and body by better managing my natural tendency to craving and aversion as well as my ability to focus with greater lucidity – embracing more frequently the law of impermanence and a timeless state of non-duality which reinforced my deeply held beliefs. Finally, these practices had a detrimental transformation on my contribution to the economy by not using money and not consuming

goods and services (collective viewpoint), but a restorative transformation on my mental and physical balance by reducing my stress and emotional compensation through food/drink (individual viewpoint).

Conclusion: Integral life, methods and experiences transformed the research and the researcher

Thanks to a multisectoral professional career and a multidisciplinary academic path led by synchronicities, the curious exploration of various research domains or cultures and the providential discovery of diverse philosophies of science directed me towards an integrative and holistic research approach (i.e. Integral and mixed methods). The conduction of Integral and mixed methods research approaches transformed the prism of investigation, which in turn impacted the participants of the research project (Place et al. 2021). As Integral research fosters the sciences of the body, mind, and spirit, their use has provoked definite transforming experiences for the researcher. By integrating, combining and mixing various methods, I transformed the research analysis of currency impact; and by using creative research methods (i.e. slam, poem, collage, etc.), I also transformed the dissemination of research findings (Place, 2021).

Significantly, all these aspects of transformation are at the core of Complex Integral Realism, that is of scholarly interest (Bhaskar et al., 2016). Indeed, the imprint of Complex thought is the significance of interdisciplinarity, self-reflection and synchronicity in the epistemology of research (just like my Integral life and autobiographical path of discovery of new fields of research and bibliographical references that have enriched my critical literature review; cf. Section 1). The one of Integral theory is to be found in the importance of developmental evolution and methodological perspectives (just like my Integral and mixed methods research approach with critical reflectivity; cf. Section 2). Critical realism insists on a realist ontology of mind-independent objects that cannot be reduced to the empirical experiences of an observing subject (just like my Integral experiences and practices of mind reaction to body sensation and vice versa through meditation and fasting to address a critical reflexivity; cf. Section 3) (Place, 2021). Provided that the researcher and practitioner are ready and open to an integrative meta-approach that goes beyond a specialised disciplinarity-approach, integral and mixed methods research approaches allow a broader investigation of any phenomenon – while respecting the fundamental principles of research, namely critical literature review, reflexivity, and reflection (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Notwithstanding giving prominence to methodological span over depth implies a lack of disciplinary mastery (Bhaskar et al., 2016).

My career change and academic retraining in the impact improvement and development of currency innovation for the information revolution – from conventional money as we know it to exchangeable, measurable and expressible currencies (Bindewald, 2018) – not only metamorphosed the various participants interacting with such currency, but also transmuted my Integral evolution as a researcher and practitioner – according to my own Integral Psychograph Assessment of myself evolving on average over the last decades from modern to post-postmodern perspectives (Esbjörn-Hargens, 2010b; Place, 2021).

That is my interdisciplinary exploration and interpretation of the concept of detrimental or restorative transformation that resonated with my research path and the sense of life – which are in constant evolution – discovering that what could be perceived as a detrimental transformation from a collective viewpoint, could be appreciated as a restorative transformation from an individual viewpoint (cf. Section 1-2-3). As a result, my main contribution has been to highlight and reconfirm the well-known fact that the appreciation of a transformation is always relative (i.e. positive or negative according to the viewpoint). As a reflection, I therefore argue in favour of an Integral approach and practice towards a meta-level step back or overview (i.e. integrative meta-approach) in order to appreciate the absolute non-dual transformation of each step or commitment in thought, in word, by action and omission (i.e. the transformational junctures, catalyst, and experiences which are respectively synchronicities, Integral research, and introspection).

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The International Criminal Court and the transformation of post-war justice in Northern Uganda

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Abstract

This article looks at the interface between the International Criminal Court and transitional justice processes in Northern Uganda. It takes a doctrinal approach, drawing on qualitative work in the fields of international criminal law, human rights, and political science. The Ugandan situation demonstrates that top-down transitional justice has both positive and negative dimensions. This article argues that, while the International Criminal Court has helped transform judicial aspects, it has also contributed towards the decline of traditional justice mechanisms. Overall, the article concludes that there is still a compelling case to be made for the involvement of international criminal tribunals in post-war contexts, but that it needs to be done in such a way that promotes good domestic processes and incorporates bottom-up perspectives.

Transitional justice as a language of social transformation in Uganda

Northern Uganda was engulfed in a two decade civil war from 1987, between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the government, leading to a series of gross violations of human rights such as massacres, mutilations, widespread abductions, and child soldiering (Branch, 2010). A range of transitional justice (TJ) mechanisms were adopted: peace talks in 2008, amnesty, traditional justice and reconciliation, and criminal prosecution (Macdonald, 2017). They also included compensation for harm done through the *mato oput* or "bitter root" ceremony among the Acholi communities. The TJ process is both incomplete and contested, with concerns about the impact of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in Uganda (Macdonald, 2017; Oola, 2015). These scholarly concerns beg an important question: how has the ICC transformed the domestic justice process in Uganda?

This article is doctrinal in nature, divided into four parts. The first part presents an overview of TJ and criticisms associated with it, contextualizing this within the Uganda situation. In the second part, the article makes a substantive contribution to the discussions about the ICC's intervention in Uganda. It pays attention to the legal and social transformations and

concludes with a discussion on the complementarity framework. Next, the article places this ICC complementarity approach within the domestic legal framework, to help situate our understanding and critique of the existing mechanism for the prosecution of international crimes. Finally, it concludes by emphasizing the relevance of bottom-up approaches in ensuring effective and lasting TJ.

In this article, we use the term "transitional justice" to refer to redress for gross violations of human rights following periods of authoritarian rule or armed conflict (see Teitel, 2014). TJ mechanisms include criminal accountability, truth commissions, reforms, and reconciliation. Emerging scholarship within TJ emphasizes their 'transformative' element, suggesting their potential for long term social transformation beyond more orthodox criminal justice processes (Hoddy & Gready, 2020).

Addressing past violations needs to take place alongside a key awareness of the need to enhance positive changes for the future (Robins, 2015). This is because the past plays a role in the future, and change is always future-focussed (Mieth, 2018). As such, for TJ mechanisms to have long term social transformation, the role the past plays in the future must be considered in their composition and mandate. In order to achieve transformation, we need to understand how national TJ institutions work in relation to international justice mechanisms, as much of this transformation takes place at a national level, rather than at an international one. This article therefore aims to examine the presumed impact of TJ within a national context; in this case, post-war justice in Uganda.

TJ has had considerable success in Northern Uganda; for example, amnesty to ex-combatants and rehabilitation of survivors (Akello, 2019). However, it has been subjected to a range of critiques; most notably, the frequent use of a top-down 'one-size-fits-all' approach with inadequate local participation in its design and implementation (Lundy & McGovern, 2008). Mutua (2015) goes so far as to question whether or not there are any clear-cut cases where transformation can directly be attributed to TJ mechanisms or processes. There are also scholarly concerns about the 'normalization' of TJ through the proliferation of internationalised tribunals (Brett & Gissel, 2020; Gissel, 2017), the engagement of which may be undermined when not carefully implemented alongside other national processes. Therefore, due to the potential for both positive and negative consequences, there are calls for the reconceptualization of the ICC's role as a TJ mechanism in Africa (Okafor & Ngwaba, 2015).

In recent years, the ICC has made some reforms as a way of achieving its goal of fighting impunity, with more efficient strategies. One area of reform relates to its case completion strategy that increases the speed of its proceedings, in line with the demands of the victims (Jones, 2019). The other area relates to the pursuit of a positive complementarity approach, whereby it would serve to complement and support states to undertake domestic prosecutions (Burke-White, 2008). This is also interpreted to mean the capacity-building of the states in order to realise this strategy (Evenson & Smith, 2015). Amidst these developments, this article uses Uganda as a case study to examine how the ICC transforms domestic justice processes.

ICC intervention in Uganda: A role model for justice?

Uganda was the first country to refer a situation to the ICC, leading to formal investigations of the crimes committed in Northern Uganda by the Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) in July 2004. The following year, the court issued warrants of arrest for five senior LRA commanders, including leader Joseph Kony (International Criminal Court, 2005). Kony is believed to be hiding in the Central African Republic; three of the remaining commanders have since died (Musisi, 2017). Dominic Ongwen, the last of the five indictees, was arrested in 2015 and subsequently tried and convicted at the ICC for war crimes and crimes against humanity in February 2021 (Ongwen Trial Judgment, 2021). From a TJ perspective, Ongwen's trial illustrated a disjuncture between a global criminal justice system and the domestic realities. In particular, the peace-justice and victim-perpetrator narratives within the affected communities led to criticism against the ICC intervention (Branch, 2017). Following Ongwen's conviction by the ICC, we can pose pertinent questions regarding the transformational impact of his case and the ICC intervention in general. (It should be noted that, following this trial and criticisms against the ICC, significant contributions to TJ efforts have taken place.)

First, the ICC intervention triggered transformations within the affected communities. One example of this is seen in the ICC Trust Fund for Victims (TFV), which has implemented its assistance mandate within the affected communities since 2008, using local partners to provide both physical and psychological rehabilitation to victims (Dutton & Ni Aolain, 2019). This assistance mandate presents a unique mode of transformation with long term effects as victims and affected communities are able to transform their livelihoods despite the outcome of the court trials.

Second, new categories of actors were formed across the country, ranging from grassroots organizations to victim organizations and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These include local implementing partners of the TFV and international NGOs like REDRESS (see REDRESS, 2020). Due to the nature of their work, some NGOs can be classified as intermediaries of the ICC, with a critical influence in international criminal justice (Ullrich, 2016). In the same vein, these grassroots organizations gained knowledge and some level of capacity was built through these programs.

Third, and most important for this article, there has been a structural transformation through the principle of complementarity. As highlighted in the introduction, the ICC implements a positive complementarity approach, which complements and supports domestic prosecutions instead of serving as the primary option for justice (Burke-White, 2008). According to the ICC's OTP, positive complementarity involves co-operation, encouragement, and facilitation of capacity-building and technical assistance aimed at promoting national proceedings (OTP, 2019). Hence, it is viewed as an avenue for the ICC to exercise a 'role-modelling' function for normative and structural capacity building in situation countries (Shany, 2013). The positive complementarity discourse by the ICC has triggered scholarly debates regarding the role of the ICC in developing domestic capacity for trying international crimes (De Vos et al., 2015). In the next section, we use the ICC complementarity framework to examine how it has transformed the domestic capacity to try international crimes in Uganda.

The International Criminal Division: Domestic transformation of international justice norms

The International Crimes Division (ICD) was created in 2008 and formalized in 2011, following unsuccessful peace talks between the Ugandan government and the LRA in 2008. More importantly, it was also envisioned as Uganda's way of effecting the ICC complementarity through the domestic prosecution of international crimes (Tadeo, 2012). In terms of transformation, it can be argued that this new domestic court preserved and enhanced the state's sovereignty in the polarized spaces of global justice.

The creation of a new court led to the enactment of a new law – the International Criminal Court Act 2010 – which incorporated precepts of the ICC's Rome Statute into Ugandan law (Tadeo, 2012). This can be considered as a normative transformation that created a foundation for the prosecution of a range of crimes – including genocide – that were not originally embedded within the domestic legal framework. It can also be seen as a positive step toward recognizing a wider range of victims' harms beyond what the narrow construct of 'domestic crimes' could cover. Similarly, the creation of an International Crimes Department within the Directorate of Public Prosecution (DPP) has built domestic capacity for the prosecution of complex crimes, like terrorism and trafficking, as staff members were trained on different aspects of international crime investigation and prosecution (Human Rights Watch, 2012).

Thomas Kwoyelo, a mid-ranking LRA commander, was the first person to be tried for war crimes by the ICD in 2011. His case was thus viewed as a way of implementing the complementarity approach (Oola, 2015) and his trial presented critical elements in the transformation of the domestic TJ framework. One key question resulting from his case regards the application of the law of amnesty. Kwoyelo sought to benefit from the amnesty laws in Uganda, but the Supreme Court upheld his trial at the ICD, emphasizing the prosecutorial aspect of TJ (Nakandha, 2015). Despite some criticisms (see Macdonald & Porter, 2016), the trial can be viewed as a notable transformation in Uganda's criminal justice and legal order, as it provided clarity on the application of amnesty as a TJ mechanism.

In terms of legal procedures, the Kwoyelo trial triggered the adoption of Special Rules of Procedure for the ICD in 2016, which have the effect of protecting victims and empowering them to participate in court proceedings (Avocats Sans Frontières, 2019). In practice, these legal developments have not yet created comprehensive transformations, as highlighted by victim-oriented scholars, suggesting a need for more context-specific approaches to complementarity (Moffett, 2016).

One notable concern with regards to the ICC's intervention in Uganda relates to the alienation of traditional justice mechanisms, as attention shifted towards formal criminal justice. This is notwithstanding the vocalized preference of traditional mechanisms by religious leaders who saw the ICC's intervention as a stumbling block to lasting peace (Hovil & Quinn, 2005; Moffett, 2016). According to Hovil, "local mechanisms of justice in Uganda were demoted and written off as not meeting the demands of justice" (Hovil, n.d.). Nonetheless, Kwoyelo's trial is regarded as "a step forward towards the fulfillment of victims' rights to justice" (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2015). Similarly, the legal empowerment of victims can enhance the transformative potential of TJ (Sandoval, 2017).

More generally, the establishment of the ICD presents some notable structural transformations. Asiimwe Tadeo, former Registrar of the ICD, considers it as a long-term investment for domestic accountability mechanisms in Uganda (Tadeo, 2012). Additionally, the ICD is also viewed as a potential model for other TJ contexts beyond Uganda (Nyeko, 2018). It is important to note, though, that the lack of adequate finances and resources limits the potential for meaningful implementation of the ICC complementarity approach (Shany, 2013).

Conclusion

This article has evaluated how the ICC transformed the domestic justice process in Uganda. Overall, three concrete forms of transformation have been highlighted. First, the social transformation within the affected communities and victims' livelihoods. From a victim-oriented perspective, this article has shown how the legal empowerment of victims can play a critical role as formerly marginalised people are now empowered to participate actively in the criminal justice mechanisms. Second, the formation of new categories of NGO actors that have remained pivotal in Uganda's TJ process. Third, this article has highlighted a structural transformation through the principle of complementarity and the domestic prosecution of international crimes. It is recommended that the Ugandan government and development partners should fast-track the implementation of TJ policies and adopt relevant laws for the efficient functioning of the domestic court. These recommendations include the formal adoption of laws on TJ and witness protection.

Beyond the aforenoted points, this article has also shown that, while the ICC has helped transform judicial aspects of law, it has simultaneously contributed towards the decline of traditional justice mechanisms. Crucially, the Ugandan case study highlighted in this paper illuminates the need for bottom-up approaches for effective and lasting TJ.

In an era where international criminal justice mechanisms such as the ICC have been widely promoted as 'the means' of ensuring accountability for human rights violations and justice for victims, there remains a need to ensure that they do not undermine genuine local transitional justice efforts. Rather international mechanisms can co-exist with national efforts in such a way as to create lasting transformations.

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Community-led Transformation Debates: The Relation to the Destroyed Heritage of the Old City of Aleppo

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Abstract

The consequences of armed conflict and physical destruction commonly create a call for transformation of the built environment. This study debated the visual (perceived) and mental (projected) transformation of historical places. This was based on the community of the Old City of Aleppo's perceptions and in the context of the Syrian conflict 2011-18.[1] With semi-structured interviews with eight decision-makers from academia and practice, this study investigated the potential routes of transformation and the changeable relationship with the damaged heritage[2] because of destruction. Findings were outlined in three arguments; restoring the Old City to more than 'as it was', accepting changes defined as a correction or upgrading, and the challenges of commemorating the war through built heritage. Discussing these findings in regard to the relationship with the destroyed heritage showed a correlation between transformation directions and relations' transformation. In addition, presenting war memories explored a contentious relation with the destroyed heritage.

Introduction

Turbulent and radical social changes within any community are pivotal factors in redefining the values held in the architectural structures as visual messages through the landscape (Piquard & Swenarton, 2011; Herscher, 2010). Transformation and rearrangement of the architectural norms, loyalty of place, meaning of place, and perceptions, are more likely to be challenged during, or as a result of, conflict. When a challenge occurs, what should be retained, corrected, upgraded, or significantly changed becomes a point of debate. Why the Old City of Aleppo? First, contextualizing the Old City within its Arab region, it is dissimilar to other examples, and is considered as having a well-preserved pattern with comparison to its urban development (Sevčenko, 1983). Despite the variety of historical layers, which have been added to the core of the Old City, it still reflects strong structural continuity since its Roman-Hellenistic rectangular grid[3] (Bianca 2000). However, the threat of radical transformation due to the conflicts' implications is expected. This comes from the large- scale and extensive levels of damage, with about 60% of the Old City destroyed (AAAS, 2014). Secondly, efforts, both locally and internationally, to create visions of the post-conflict Old City were represented through documentation and historical overviews (Kurgan et al., 2015), offering unrealistic propositions to link some of the Old City's significant buildings on the underground level (Bao, 2017), or imitating modern cities like Dubai by distributing skyscrapers all around the Citadel (IUSD Lab, 2016). However, attention was not given to discussing potential threats of any transformation.

[1] The Old City was out of armed conflict and accessible in December 2016.

[2] The specific geography of the research is the route of Bab-Al Faraj Clock Tower, Seven Lakes roundabout, the Great Mosque of Umayyad, Souk Al Zerb, and the surrounding area of the Aleppo citadel.

[3] (3rd - 4th BC)

Visual and Mental Representations of Heritage

To understand how the heritage of the Old City of Aleppo is perceived during and after conflict, the values and meanings the heritage represents needs to be clarified. In addition, what associations the heritage emphasizes, or loses in the event of destruction, will be explored.

> *'Heritage is commonly understood as a process of conscious, purposeful remembrance for the political, cultural or economic needs of those in the present; it involves a subjective representation of valued objects, significant persons, places and symbolic events of the past.'* Sabine Marschall (Howard & Graham, 2008, 347).

What Marschall wrote stresses the complexity of nexuses that are generated by heritage. This rich narrative around heritage can justify the attention that has recently been given to protect more than the material culture. Community values materialized in architectural dimensions are also considered valid parts of the heritage scene and listed as meaning of place (Nasser, 2003). Meaning of place can also be related to a series of values that connect places and people through their personal perceptions and experiences of the built heritage. Deconstructing this narrative provided by heritage is inevitable when destruction occurs; where physical damage inflicted on heritage sites is often irreversible (Lang, 2013).

Heritage provides an explicit connection to the past. In the context of destruction, this leads to the loss of such a crucial connection between history and future generations. Destruction from conflict minimizes this connection with the past, leaving the community with the option of rebuilding and preserving what little is left. However, it is more likely that what is left is lost through unthoughtful management and lack of resources (Stenning, 2015). Herscher (2010) explains that the destruction of these linkages can result in the perception of the heritage as a mere product. Destruction usually displaces architecture from the architectural debate, if not the cultural domain more generally, and switches its position to the domain of violence. Through this shifting to violence, new epistemological frameworks are created; changing how architecture is perceived within these dramatic changes. In the end, this changes the architecture definition from its pre-conflict meanings and values (Krishnamurthy, 2012).

Methodology

A literature review and in-depth semi-structured interviews were used to contextualize the research. The interviews were based around the retained visual image of the pre-conflict heritage, and the projected mental image, after conflict. In addition, how the incident of destruction was perceived is also investigated.

Data Collection

Eight semi-structured interviews, conducted in 2018, including academics, historians, professionals and members of protection committees. Due to the limited technical knowledge of most interviewees, the interviews were conducted via voice-only calls over the internet. Despite literature detailing the limitations of distance interviewing, the data was rich; containing a comprehensive variety of perceptions, and reflections on the situation before and after, including current examples. It served its purpose in bringing local community

perceptions. The selection criteria was based on:

- Relevant backgrounds or interests in the Old City; specializations in urban planning, sociology, the Master Plan of Aleppo, heritage, history and memory of Aleppo, reconstruction, architecture, and rehabilitation.
- Inclusion; local academics as well as private, governmental, international (UNESCO) and community sectors (both genders).
- Location; present in Aleppo at the time of interview.

Data Analysis
Data collected from phone interviews was handled through the framework: data reduction, data display, and conclusion, drawing with multiple cycles of coding (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014). The interviews' duration varied between 45 to 180 minutes (including internet disconnections and unstable electricity in Aleppo). Through comprehensive reviewing of the multitude of relevant data, a first-cycle of coding was conducted. The reduced data was then displayed in a more organised and compressed way – tables and mind maps – to allow further interpretation and thematic analysis. In-depth noting and exploration of the patterns and regularities resulted in drawing conclusions of three scenarios of transformation (see below).

Ethics
Participants were informed about the research by both an 'Information Sheet' (clarified in English and orally in Arabic) and 'Consent Form'. The Consent Form indicated the conditions for participation – to be recorded, and whether to choose anonymity – clarified via numerous calls prior to interview. In addition, ethical approval was obtained from the researcher's university[4].

Analysis: Scenarios of Transformation

1. Restoring the Old City to more than "as-it-was"[5]
"The same as it was before war" is the generic desired future of the Old City from the perspective of the majority of the interviewees. However, the way the interviewees expressed this concept of conservation reveals a disagreement about what 'as it was' means. This adds another layer to the debate, as the interviewees introduced differing definitions of conservation. Very conservative meant applying only minor interventions that recreated the 2011 Old City (Kattoua, 2018), while it meant to Samman to restore its compact fabric – showing very different scales of understanding the reconstruction of the Old City. Also, conservation was defined to be a periodical transformation; the Old City's reconstruction will never be completed and will halt for financial reasons, but this will only be a temporary stop towards the 'as it was' concept. An incomplete image of the Old City does not mean that it is a distorted image as Seket (2018) said.

On the other hand, by acknowledging the absence of a clear definition of conservation, some pragmatic perceptions introduced transformation as a matter of fact. These less-optimistic observations were based on witnessing the interventions happening in the Old City in 2018. The Old City is seen to be moved to what Khangi (2018) called an 'abyss'. Transformation

[4] Oxford Brookes University – MA in International Architectural Regeneration and Development – Thesis
[5] 'as it was' is referring to the time just prior to the start of the conflict in 2011.

is seen to occur because of individual reconstruction initiatives happening unevenly and without clear long-term strategy. The Old City is seen to face a different type of destruction because of random methods of reconstruction, materials and building techniques, leading to a change in its identity (Khangi, 2018). This observation mirrored Chikh-Mohamad's view about the heterogeneous future of the Old City. However, Chikh-Mohamad (2018) based his interpretation on the absence of a clear definition of 'reconstruction identity' and that Aleppo is a unique case. He predicted that the identity sought will be reached and clearly identified after many 'wrong attempts of reconstruction'. Still, when the situation is considered 'too vague to be judged' in the wider geographical context of the conflict[6] (Hadjar, 2018), the 'as it was' concept should not happen with the presence of uncertainty, instead it is better to pause the reconstruction until it is confirmed that there will be no further destruction.

2. Correction or Upgrading: subject to the reference point

Restoring the Old City was a recurring theme with all interviewees, however, when challenging the interviewees for further details about the imagined reconstructed Old City, they showed acceptance of changes under other definitions. For the majority, transformation is acceptable when it is positive. Positive changes for them are 'correction' and 'upgrading'.

Correction includes the removal of any irregularities occurring from the interventions happening outside the official manual of the Old City (Building Regulations and Control) and includes correcting any previous planning errors.[7] Olabi called the correction an 'historical chance', for example, the current excavation in the Great Umayyad Mosque benefited from destruction, as it revealed what was hidden "see Figure 1". This meant for Herbly and Samman the Cadastral Plan[8] as a reference point of reconstruction. Upgrading is the second feature for the future of the Old City. Olabi and Khangi highlighted the urgent demand for the Old City to be updated to meet the contemporary needs of its residents and to address what Olabi called the 'challenges of contemporary life'.

By dismissing any need for historical reference points, 'honesty' has been introduced by Chikh-Mohamad (2018) as a valid concept to lead the reconstruction of the Old City. Regardless of what kind of image the reconstruction process will produce, or the amount of change that may be needed – the main concept of this approach is to deal honestly with the post-conflict circumstances. This interpretation is extracted from Chikh-Mohamad's proposal for the Great Mosque's Minaret to be reconstructed, based on creativity and essential change, to emphasize what has happened; restoring the stone historical minaret to one of glass that spreads light in all directions as a symbolic representation of 'honesty'.

3. Controversies of commemorating the war

Implementing war memory on the built heritage landscape provides a variety of viewpoints; rejection, acceptance, and doubt of the influence and suitability of this representation in the Old City.

Rejection – representing war memories by leaving any destroyed part of the Old City, is seen as a "negative sign". This negativity is linked with unpleasant feelings, as leaving part of the destruction could trigger the community's negative memories. It was clear that one who refuses to accept the destruction, refuses to remember it – this was clearly illustrated in the

[6] Hadjar (2018) meant that the Old City is not safe if it is still surrounded with conflict zones.

[7] Master Plan of the Old City in 1982 where parts of the organic layout were changed and where 4-5 storey buildings were implemented (Al-Siijin Street).

[8] Master Plan of the Old City in 1930 where the layout of the Old City was compact without any interventions by foreign planners.

absolute rejection by Kattoua and Seket (2018). Their responses correlated with the way they classified the period of war as a negative memory which should be erased. As Kattoua said:

'..It is going to be a scar..'.

However, acceptance asserted the importance of representing the war in order to create awareness in the future generations and for the sake of documenting the period (Khangi, 2018; Herbly, 2018). This was proposed and implemented in the Great Mosque where a few damaged stones were saved as a witness "see Figure 2 & 3". War representation was seen to have 'positive educational meanings', where this representation is philosophical, and meanings left to interpretation (Olabi, 2018). It was seen as a lesson for the next generation about persistence and perseverance in overcoming war and destruction (Herbly, 2018). Also, it can be an architectural lesson before being a humanitarian one, said Chikh- Mohamad, where architecture can neutrally help deliver the message of how horrible war is. This dialogue is difficult on the humanitarian level due to its sensitivity.

Acceptance of this representation was conditional upon; being in a specific small-scale location or positioning it where it can catch people's attention – without dominance, or through assigning it to less important destroyed buildings like informal settlements. The way all the interviewees visualized war representation clearly shows the lack of familiarity and comfort with this approach with the tendency to marginalize it.

Figure 1
Archaeological excavation

Figure 2
Damaged stones

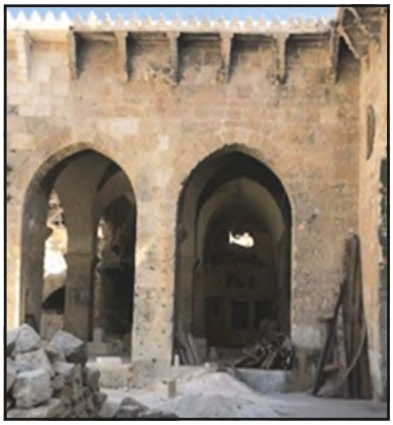

Figure 3
Affected intrernal elevation

Note: By Shekh-Debs, 2018, The Great Umayyad Mosque, The Old City of Aleppo, Syria.

Discussion: The relation with the destroyed heritage

Transformation directions lead to relations' transformation

The interviewees' initial responses gave a generic and emotional description about a fated and pre-decided transformational direction from destruction towards only conservation. This is represented by the thoughts of replicating the Old City of 2011, and their well-preserved mental image of the Old City. This fixed relation before and after destruction

disagrees with the irreversible situation introduced by Lang (2013). However, the detailed observations strongly suggest different directions of potential transformation; leading to a new heterogeneous Old City, and a destroyed Old City, through unthoughtful reconstruction. These rational perceptions agree with Lang (2013) and Stenning (2015) of a definite coming change. This consequently proposes an establishment of new relations towards the new Old City.

Also, establishing a new relation with the Old City that is different from 2011 is considered as valid, acceptable, and positive, when classified as a correction of previous faults. Interviewees saw their loyalty to the historical versions of the Old City as not threatening their loyalty to the city that they grew up and lived in. Going backwards in perception is understood as an assertion on history and adding more value to their relationship towards it. This might question the approach proposed by Stenning (2015) about breaking the narrative with the past, during conflict. Paradoxically, destruction can pave the way for an "original" narrative of the past.

On the other hand, going forward in perception, proposing to upgrade the Old City to stand in the face of contemporary challenges brings confusion to the relationship. This can relate to the inability to visualize what and how to upgrade in order to determine their relationship.

Discussing these findings in light of transformation, defining a clear reference point to the Old City to be restored to is the key factor in navigating the community's perceptions and their relations towards it.

Presenting war memory brings a controversial relation

Assigning a space in the Old City for war representation is very controversial. Rejecting this approach comes from perceiving the destruction as a visual negative memory, and so implementation would not help to forget and erase the conflict's memories. In addition, the same implementation of war memory could be perceived as a distorted action and negatively affect the continuity of the relationship with the Old City by blurring the preserved image in the community's perception.

Still, if accepted, this is subject to many negotiations on the style, location, dominance and size. These restrictions are clear indicators of the lack of validity for this approach in the communities' perceptions. The fear of accepting it frames a relationship that is always triggered by the existence of destruction. This could make heritage be perceived as a part of the violence and not merely architectural representation as Krishnamurthy (2012) argues.

Yet, if implemented, it can occasionally be a healing discourse. Accepting any war memory representation comes from the positive potential seen in investing in the damaged site. Also, this investment could offer a tool of reconciliation for current and future generations through the messages and interpretations left by both heritage and destruction. This greatly agrees with the concept of using the destroyed place as a tool for healing, discussed by Giblin (2013). Moreover, implementing war memory could be an emphasis on the continuity of the Old City as it would evidence how the Old City overcame war. This suggests a solid relation from its inhabitants when the Old City gives a lesson in resistance.

Conclusion

Through debating the transformation phenomena from the community's eyes, it is obvious that the community can greatly help read the scene and provide many indicators on which direction they wish their built heritage should take. It can also inform the practitioners and decision makers about the status of the collective memory of a destroyed place. The relation towards the built heritage is affected when the place is destroyed. Particularly, the affected two channels – past-present-future continuity and the present relationship between community and its heritage – make it a 'conflict of memory'. This challenges the community to re-establish connections with the historic damaged place again.

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Figures

Figure 1: Shekh-Debs, S. (Photographer). (2018, September 29). *Archaeological Excavation in the Process of Reconstruction at The Great Umayyad Mosque* [photograph]. Old City of Aleppo, Syria.

Figure 2: Shekh-Debs, S. (Photographer). (2018, September 29). *Damaged Stones at The Great Umayyad Mosque* [photograph]. Old City of Aleppo, Syria.

Figure 3: Shekh-Debs, S. (Photographer). (2018, September 29). *Affected Internal Elevation at The Great Umayyad Mosque* [photograph]. Old City of Aleppo, Syria.

Rescuing class from nostalgia: notes towards an anthropology of class transformed

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Abstract

Much has been written about the working class in recent years, especially since the ugliest proponents of our domestic culture-wars have vociferously laid claim to representing 'it'. Anthropologists too have re-engaged the concept of class as an analytic for thinking through unjust and unequal structures of power with a new interest. While the return to class in the study of oppression is both timely and urgent, it will be advanced that ethnographic approaches that fixate on stable cultural images and understandings of class relations but are inattentive to the ways in which capital continuously transforms them are inadequate. In the worst cases, such approaches can come dangerously close to validating the 'legitimate concerns' of the nativist right, by way of naturalising the social relations that underpin them. Beyond offering a critique of narrow 'identitarian' studies of class, the present article will argue for a thoroughly dynamic and multidimensional approach that foregrounds class as heterogeneous, historically produced and always in becoming – always transformed and, in turn, transforming people. It will be proposed that such an anthropology of class should be particularly attentive to processes of class composition, decomposition and recomposition. These processes can only be grasped if our analyses are stretched to encompass both their cultural and ideological representations, and concrete struggles, against the changing organisation of capitalist relations in our fields.

Rescuing class from nostalgia: notes towards an anthropology of class transformed

After Brexit and Trump, the social sciences looked at class with a renewed preoccupation for its spatial composition, the 'lumps' that capitalism's uneven and combined development had produced (Cooper in Kasmir and Gill 2018). After all, the departicularising force of globalised financial capital was what, according to some commentators on the left (and the right), the 'populist' electoral upsets of 2016 represented a break with (c/f Streeck 2017, Friedman 2018). The euro-american working-classes, the argument went, had rejected the amalgam of fiscal conservatism and skin-deep social liberalism which had characterised Third-Way politics on both sides of the Atlantic for over two decades: a politics that relentlessly undermined working people's capacity to reproduce their local communities, to then blame them for supposedly failing at it (Fraser 2017). People like Gurminder Bhambra, however, warned us against romanticising the emplaced and embedded. She argued then that the localist 'legitimate concerns' rhetoric in which much dog-whistling is coated had too often been echoed by those ethnographers who wanted to give voice to the casualties of deindustrialisation, those 'citizens of somewhere' (c/f Goodhart 2017) who had grown to feel 'strangers in their own country' (Bhambra 2017). When social scientists tell the stories of the 'left behind' but elide those who were always 'left out', to paraphrase Bhambra, they

contribute to foreclosing the possibility of realising the working-class as a truly emancipatory collective political subject. This kind error is due to what Bhambra calls methodological whiteness, an unwillingness to centre the production of difference as a defining and structuring feature of the accumulation of capital (c/f Bhambra 2017).

Bharmbra's critique resonates with me. I would further argue, however, that the misrecognition of the relationship between capitalism and difference is not the consequence of a too-narrow focus on class: in fact, it is compounded by its dematerialisation, by which working-classness is recast primarily as a denigrated cultural identity rather than a position in a social system necessitated by the exploitation of labour (but not wholly determined by it, c/f Shi 2018). Is there a difference between an anthropology written about, and sometimes with, working class people, and an anthropology of class? This article is preoccupied with the unintended political and epistemic consequences of substituting the first for the second. I will look at well-known ethnographies of working-class housing estates in England, wherein class is primarily framed as culturally-constituted identity, and class struggle is located in the clash between local moral economies and the calculative logics of state and market (Smith 2014). Their authors are fiercely committed to 'restore people's humanity through ethnographic depth' (Tyler, 2015:1182). By insisting on the autonomy of local moral and political configurations, they give us a counter-history 'from below' of the reactionary turn of the English post-industrial working class: one that apportions blame, duly, to state and capital. Yet the image of the working-class they present us with is static and self-limiting, built out of obsolete maps of productive relations.

There is an ethnographic approach better suited to capture the dynamic, always-in-becoming, multifarious character of the working class. This approach, informed by the Marxist distinction between class composition and class consciousness (Salar and Mohandesi 2013), considers the reproduction of specific working-class cultural formations, and the ways of being, feeling and thinking that make them up, by centring the transformations which constantly decompose and recompose class 'at the point of production'. This methodology asks that we look at the conflicts that emerge within the transformations of labour, and follow these faultlines outwards, into the communities that are reproduced by work, and upwards, so as to open up the world-historical processes, that are their distant source, to interpretation.

New Problems, Old Maps

Gillian Evans, who does fieldwork in a Bermondsey council estate, writes about 'placeism': the system by which resources where distributed within the local working-class community according to 'born-and-bred' systems of place-based belonging, to the detriment of Irish and Jamaican immigrant workers (Evans 2006:61). Xenophobia is rooted in local histories of precarity, where 'work, housing and public services were to be defended at all costs' from outsiders (Evans 2017a:217). Discontent is voiced against a welfare system which allocates resources according to need, thus trumping local hierarchies of deservingness as rootedness, and people become increasingly resentful of the growing visibility of culturally foreign ways of living, perceived as a threat to their sense of place (2017a:217). Displaced from their socio-economic status as the 'nation's backbone' by the ravages of globalisation and Thatcherism, unable to ascend into the middle class, within the new 'multiculturalist'

hegemony cemented under New Labour, Evans' informants 'became ethnic' too (2017a:218). Hence, their turn towards political formations like the BNP, EDL, and the relatively 'moderate' UKIP – an 'expression of discontent in post-industrial Britain' (2017:219). This kind of argument has a precedent in Young and Wilmott's suggestively titled *The New East End: kinship, race and conflict* (2002), a follow-up study to their seminal *Family and Kinship in East London* (1957), where they argue that white Tower Hamlets working-class residents' hostility towards their Bangladeshi neighbors is the localised effect of the 'over-centralisation of welfare in the name of strict equality', which transgressed local informal networks of mutual support (2002:230-231).

In a similar move, Koch claims that 'a retreat to defensive populism may be the only space left to working class people in the current political system' (Koch 2016:27-28). She investigates the declining fortunes of the Free Workers Party (FWP), a 'localist populist' political formation born out of a majority-white council estate in an English town 'heavily affected by industrial decline' (Koch 2016:4). The FWP saw itself as a left-wing alternative to far-right formations like the British National Party (BNP), yet like its rightwing counterparts it rejected multiculturalism, foregrounding instead 'bread and butter' issues such as the fight against 'crime and anti-social behaviour' on the estate (2016:10). The FWP informally policed the estate, targeting perceived drug dealers and drug users. Their moderate electoral success in the mid-noughties, Koch argues, reflected both their appeal to local working people's 'ordinary concerns', and her informants' disenchantment with the Labour party, which had cemented support in the post-war era through 'paternalistic' housing policies, but, in the aftermath of welfare reform, was perceived as distant and unaccountable, far removed from those close networks of support which had by then become 'a precondition for survival against the predicaments and unpredictability of daily life' (Koch 2017:108). To the outside of these networks were also recent immigrants, and new council tenants, often in temporary accommodation.

What establishes working-class concerns as such? Throughout Tony Blair's tenure as Prime Minister, the Institute of Race Relations1 documented the government's relentless assault on asylum rights, the intensification and consolidation of a crisis rhetoric around immigration, the exclusion of all non-European migrants from the benefit system, the singling-out of Muslim minorities as the new enemy within (concurrent with the turn to 'war on terror' national security policies), and the expansion of the criminalisation and policing of minorities and working-class youths (IRR archives 1999-2007). All of these phenomena must be seen in a labour context marked by 'racialized exclusion compounded by household poverty, unemployment and educational underachievement', which did 'persist [and] indeed multiply' throughout the 1990s (Hall 2000:2). Outsiders, it would seem, are not just the making of 'local' people preoccupied with reciprocity and embeddedness: state and capital play a decisive role in their invention. Immigration, or antisocial behaviour for that matter, are not 'working-class concerns' any more than they are upper class concerns. Moral panics around them are routinely manufactured to constrain and contain those social forces which capital perceives as threats (c/f Jackson 1988, Glynn 2002, 2005). Therefore, to engage working-class support for xenophobic policies and punitivism as a 'legitimate' form of political consciousness emerging from subjective experiences of dispossession, is to 'abstract individual effects from the contradictory structures which produce them' (Hall 1978:x).

What we ought to be asking instead, is how 'demands for protection [are linked] to structures of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic domination' in our fields (Samet 2019:278). Koch and Evans might have illuminated these processes, had they undertaken to rekindle the severed ties between the 'place-based' networks of reciprocity in which their informants are enmeshed, and current productive relations in their fields. In this sense, there is an important difference between considering all antagonisms in which self-identified working-class people are involved as having emerged from the class relation, and consciously attempting to engage the social relations which are evinced from these conflicts from the antagonistic perspective of the subversion of the system (cf Panzieri 1994). The latter exercise is what we may accomplish if we turn our ethnographic focus towards the small and big transformations which result from specific processes of class composition, decomposition and recomposition in our fields.

Towards and anthropology of class decomposed and recomposed

Working class cultures, as I have argued before, are strongly tied to modes of production, but never wholly determined by them as they are brought about by conscious and agentic working-class self-activity (see Hall, 1981). As such, they do not just disappear when modes of production change, but stay behind in the form of shared traditions, memories, practices, and structures of feeling (Williams, 1957). These 'hauntings' of class culture are what, in my opinion, the ethnographies I have analysed are chiefly preoccupied with. However, different locations and historical conjunctures correspond to contingent social relations of production, with particular technological characteristics, and recombining workers in new alliances. The 'micro' scale at which class is made and remade is what the framework of class composition seeks to gauge, by differentiating between the technical composition of the class, i.e. the manner in which it is materially constituted by capital through the division, management and exploitation of labour, and its political composition, i.e. the manner in which it composes itself in the struggle against concrete situations of exploitation (Mohandesi 2015:85). Divisions of gender, race, ethnicity, and citizenship play a role both in the technical and political composition of class, and can be reproduced, reconfigured or (through class-based solidarities) transcended. Decomposition and recomposition point to the processes by which class breaks down and is rebuilt, both in terms of the technical restructuring of modes of production and of their social components, and of the defeat of a political subject which may be afterwards replaced by another, related to, and yet distinct from that which came before it (2015:86). It follows that, at any given moment in time, one objective class formation can correspond to different political subjects which operate within different temporal horizons and are more or less tightly related to concrete situations of exploitation (Kasmir and Carbonella 2018:3).

One way we might study this identity is by centring the tensions between 'recomposed' class formations and long-standing class cultures. The permanence of old labour cultures, in this sense, can manifest itself by reorienting emerging arrangements towards old forms of sociality, as the deregulation of work re-embeds formal economic processes within informal strategies of production and reproduction (Narotzky and Goddard, 2017). This is evidenced

by ethnographic work on the 'distributional labour' through which new surplus populations 'try to recast claims of deservingness by mixing logics of production and redistribution after deindustrialisation' (Rajkovic, 2017:42). One very good example is Mao Mollona's (2005, 2008) research on the transformation of work and workers in the British steel industry. His informants in Sheffield have responded to deindustrialisation by communising their resources through 'extended and flexible households' whose income streams pull together 'informal exchanges and production with the formal organization of the factory' (2005:543). However, the wealth generated through such solidaristic practices is distributed unequally, in line with the hierarchies of skill, age and gender that 'hegemonic capitalism' (Burawoy in Mollona 2009) makes on the shopfloor and which ultimately generate an informal culture 'that reproduces the capitalists' values and intensifies their profits' (Mollona, 2005:544). If, for Evans, exclusion is an uncontrived response to scarcity in a disunited country (Evans 2017:217), Mollona traces it back directly to the (much more intentional) work of the Fordist 'psycho-political nexus' (c/f Gramsci 1971).

But transformations to the social organisation of labour in a given locality are not thrust upon working people by an invisible hand: they are the result of the always ongoing struggle between labour, state and capital. Desolidarisation and fragmentation can be resisted, new solidarities forged. Maria Ines Fernandez Alvarez' work with the Argentine *Confederación de Trabajadores de la Economía Popular* (Confederation of Workers of the Popular Economy), a coalition of wageless workers engaged in a diversity of socio-economic activities, shows how a shared consciousness is built across differences (generational, of gender, and ethnicity) through labour (Fernandez-Alvarez 2017, 2019). In her field, highly precarious workers 'with neither labor rights nor employer', in the process of identifying, articulating and making claims to collective rights qua workers, embed themselves into a new collective subject. Through the everyday practice of political organising, in turn, they direct the collective towards the creation of future forms of well-being that can integrate heterogeneous, long-standing ways of being, while also seeking to expand, and not just preserve, individual freedoms (Fernandez-Alvarez, 2019). In the case of Fernandez-Alvarez's informants, this takes the form, amongst others, of demanding recognition from the state of the special relationship that exist between the public spaces of production and exchange and those who make their livelihoods there, in what is fundamentally a process of commoning (ibid 2019:64).
This is a model of place-based resistance which has the potential to be subversive, rather than reactionary, inclusive, rather than exclusive.

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1: The Institute of Race Relations archives can be accessed at https://irr.org.uk/

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Features

Could the COVID-19 recovery context be a good opportunity to advance just and sustainable transformations? Learnings from the transformations to sustainability and environmental justice scholarships

Interview with Dr. Iokiñe Rodriguez, University of East Anglia

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Abstract

The COVID-19 outbreak has added an extra pressure to the longstanding ecological and socio-economic crises faced by the global community, with the climate emergency being described as "the defining issue of our time" by the United Nations Secretary-General Guterres (United Nations, 2021). Despite the sudden reduction in daily global CO_2 emissions during the COVID-19 lockdowns (Forster et al., 2020), the resulting atmospheric concentrations of major greenhouse gases continued to increase in 2020 (United Nations Environment Programme, 2020) and the world is still heading to a temperature rise far beyond the Paris Agreement's central aim of limiting global warming to well below 2°C (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2015). Therefore, one of the learnings from the pandemic in regards to climate change is that global responses require deep structural changes in key economic sectors towards decarbonization (Le Quéré et al., 2020).

Crucially, the coronavirus pandemic has also shown that societies can drastically change the way they do things. To mitigate the spread of the virus, countries all over the world have implemented an array of public health measures with sharp impacts on social behaviour.

With many countries adopting strategies to recover from a post-pandemic recession, stimulus packages can be opportunities to use these investments to address key global challenges such as climate change or social inequality. In that regard, the University of East Anglia's (UEA) transformations to sustainability and environmental justice scholarships can help to offer valuable insights to articulate aspirations for a post-pandemic response to build back more resilient, sustainable, and just societies.

In this feature piece, Dr. Iokiñe Rodriguez (Senior Lecturer in Environment and Development at UEA) discusses the different approaches to transformations to sustainability, the challenge of combining transformations with environmental justice, and how transformation can be enacted and sustained over time. The concept of transformations towards sustainability has gained central position in global sustainability research in recent years (Patterson et al., 2017).

But what is meant by 'transformation'? Despite the common use of the term, it is less clear what is or needs to be changed, how these transformations occur, and whose visions are to be considered. This interview aims to discuss key issues on just and sustainable transformations and how they can be applied in practice in the context of COVID-19 recovery strategies.

Dr. Iokine Rodriguez is a Senior Lecturer within the UEA School of International Development. Part of the Global Environmental Justice Group, she uses local environmental knowledge and participatory action-research to help resolve environmental conflicts and promote environmental justice in Latin America.

The interview was conducted online by Alba Prados Pascual, former environmental practitioner and currently a postgraduate researcher examining climate change policies and decarbonization strategies.

Q: Research interest in transformations towards sustainability is growing across disciplines. What are the key convergences in how different disciplines conceptualise transformations?

A: In terms of similarities, the various approaches to transformations to sustainability share the recognition that we need to put in place different processes and mechanisms to get from A (the current global environmental crisis) to B (a future that is more sustainable). Different academic disciplines are coming together to do this. Originally, the focus was on transitions away from different environmental problems that we are currently facing and was linked more strongly with the search of socio-technological innovations or policy-making responses. The transitions to sustainability scholarship have placed lot of focus on understanding socio-ecological systems as dynamic ecological and social processes. Therefore, broadly speaking, transitions to sustainability scholarship have tended to look more at the necessary changes in the governance arrangements, the institutions, and the available technologies.

Q: According to Patterson et al., (2017), some of scholarly approaches to transformation include socio-technical transitions, transitions management, socio- ecological transformations, or pathways to sustainability. What are the distinct or divergent visions on transformations that different schools of thought bring to the discussion?

A: The transformations to sustainability scholarship focuses more on bottom-up transformations, the role of resistance and mobilizations, and what has been called the 'un-ruling politics' in pushing for that change. Transformations thinking is more radical and aims to engage with structural and systemic barriers and the required shift in the power relations. Because of that, it gives more attention to the role of civil society. However, there are certain overlaps between these bodies of literature. Some scholars from the area of transitions are also studying power relationships but often confined within the making of the socio-technological innovations or political solutions at micro-level.

Q: What is the role of justice in transformations to sustainability? Which are the different dimensions of justice that are relevant to sustainable transformations?

A: In addition to the previous debates, some scholars are also pointing to the justice dimensions when discussing transformations to sustainability. That is the case of the Global Environmental Justice Group at UEA, where we are trying to create awareness that there is no real opportunity to transform socio-ecological systems without justice being at the core of these changes. We are seeing that many alternative processes that have been developed – for example, renewable energy projects – reproduce many of the injustices that take place in more conventional development projects, such as dams, pipelines, or road constructions. They often reproduce the same unequal participation procedures, as well as unfair distribution of the impacts and benefits of the project. There are instances where communities are forced to suffer the impacts of having a windfarm in their territories, without even being given access to the electricity being generated. These projects can also displace communities from their lands and end up being as disruptive as any other development project. In environmental conflicts, the most common dimensions of injustice are a lack of participation, an unfair distribution of the benefits and harms, but also a disrespect and disregard for local cultural identity. However, there is an even bigger level of injustice underlying most environmental conflicts that is related to the reproduction of colonial views of development, of the imposition of modernity as a civilizational model and of science as the valid form of knowledge. Transformations to sustainability must be about creating opportunities for different forms of development, knowledge, and worldviews to coexist.

Q: There is strong evidence that supports the association between conflict and transformation and, how in many cases of environmental struggles, mobilization for environmental protection is initiated by local communities in different forms of resistance and conflict (e.g., Martin et al., 2020). What is the role of conflict in transformative processes to sustainability?

A: One of the distinctive features of just transformations to sustainability thinking is the approach to conflict. In this body of knowledge, we see conflict as a productive phenomenon. We don't necessarily see conflicts as inherently negative because conflicts allow injustices to flourish and asymmetries of power to become evident, forcing discussions about them. This view of conflicts was proposed some time back by particular thinkers from peace studies like John Paul Lederach and Johan Galtung. These authors have worked with environmental conflicts and rethought how to engage with these situations of dispute. Rather than seeing them as disruptive events, they consider conflict as opportunities for transformation. Conflict transformation allows us to engage with different dimensions – such as personal, relational, structural, or even cultural frameworks – that need to change to move towards situations of greater societal justice.

Q: The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a dramatic loss of human life worldwide and has presented an unprecedented challenge to public health, food systems, and the world of work, among others. What has been the impact of the pandemic to existing environmental struggles?

A: The COVID-19 pandemic has had a very worrying impact on environmental struggles as there has been an increment of abuse and expansion of harmful projects, such as mining in indigenous territories and protected areas. The current situation of lockdown restrictions in many countries have difficulted the capacity of communities to respond and mobilise against these projects in collective ways. We have also experienced the increase of a securitisation discourse by many governments that gives the green light to a more authoritarian form of governance. The risk in situations of crisis is the advancement of policies or projects that may face less social opposition than could be expected in normal circumstances. On the other hand, this pandemic has made injustices at different scales so clear that people have been mobilizing all the same, such as the recent protests against the tax reforms in Colombia or the Black Lives Matters movement.

Q: Governments all over the world are under mounting pressure to align their COVID-19 recovery plans to build back the economy with other environmental and social objectives. What are the key learnings from the transformations to sustainability and environmental justice scholarships on how just and sustainable transformations can be enacted and sustained over time?

A: First, putting justice in the middle of the conversation to ensure fairness in the adoption and implementation of development plans. The research on environmental struggles, particularly in Latin America (where I work), shows that we need to have societal discussions at different levels about the future we all want and about what development and well-being means to different people, opening up the conversations beyond particular projects or initiatives that create resistance. These discussions tend to happen when there is already a crisis; for example, when a particular development project is already going ahead. We need to have conversations about the development model we want to adopt as societies beyond certain projects. These discussions need to take place at local or community levels, as well as regional and national levels. Indigenous peoples have been pushing a lot to have these sorts of conversations when they refer to their own cosmovision: their own life plans or visions. The second key learning is the importance of understanding the distribution of benefits and harms of specific short and long-term development plans, such as national and regional COVID-19 recovery packages. If these plural perspectives and wellbeing views are considered, a more holistic and inclusive vision of future scenarios can be achieved.

Concluding remarks

Dr. Iokiñe Rodriguez sustains that transformations towards sustainability cannot be considered a success without social justice. The road to environmental sustainability can be pursued in an inclusive or exclusionary manner and often environmental conflicts act as opportunities for power imbalances to become evident and, potentially, be addressed. Just transformation requires forms of action that remove asymmetric distribution of transformational risks (Martin et al., 2020), but also the uneven capacity of marginalized groups to change or transform entrenched injustices (Patterson et al., 2017).

The framing of just transformations to sustainability discussed during the interview is

highly relevant in the context of COVID-19 recovery plans and their potential to deliver on the promise to build back better societies after the crisis. As 2021 advances, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to create disruption around the world. Nevertheless, political attention is increasingly turning to shaping the social and economic recovery from the crisis and many countries have adopted a variety of stimulus packages. Spending commitments have consisted mostly of emergency rescue funding thus far (Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, 2021), but they are increasingly evolving into longer-term recovery measures. Embedding justice and sustainability considerations at the heart of these strategies is crucial to ensure just pathways towards a sustainable future.

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COVID-19 and the moving body: Examining intertwining discourses around the morality of physical activity

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Abstract

That the COVID-19 pandemic has radically changed the way we live is axiomatic, to the point whereby words such as 'unprecedented' and 'extraordinary' have lost meaning. The ways and means by which one moves their body have acquired new significance in the contexts of the pandemic; actions which were once innocuous became deviant, immoral, and reckless, due to the bodily capacity to carry and spread the virus. This manifested legislatively through non-pharmaceutical interventions, which have operated in lieu of and alongside vaccine drives, imposing significant restrictions on freedom of movement and assembly and drastically reducing the availability of services and public spaces.

This feature will consider the transformations borne of the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to how we move and understand our bodies. Looking at the previously established discourses around motivations and participation in physical activity, I will unpick the discursive threads and imperatives which intertwine around and bind the body, creating moral panics and ruptures. Understandings of the transformation of the pandemic are vital; we should also be asking ourselves what there is within this malaise of change which we might wish to tentatively hold on to and explore. This feature will pose some suggestions for consideration and discussion as we move forward, through further unfurling transformations.

Introducing COVID-19 and the moving body

Since the start of this new decade, we have all experienced extraordinary transformations which resonate throughout our identities, routines, and relationships, calling upon our collective and individual resources in new and striking ways. I imagine we all carry with us our own personal moments which punctuate this pandemic. The first times, and the times which we did not know were last times. The memories in which you almost seem like a different person, the person you were before you'd heard of COVID-19. The transformations you were expecting or hoping for running in tandem with those which came. The spread of COVID-19 and the crises that unfurled have cut to the very core of our humanity, creating knotty entanglements of moralities, risks, practicalities, and rights, forcing big and complex questions.

The threat to human life posed by the virus has pushed bodily considerations to the forefront of our global socio-political landscape, whereby our fleshy breathing bodies have been understood as dangerous and consequently in need of increased monitoring and restraint. The resultant legislations restricted the ways people move their bodies, as a means to reduce the risk of endangering oneself and others through our capacity to carry and spread

the virus. This placed the human body at the centre of socio-political discourses, under increased scrutiny, control, and contradictory moral imperatives. We should consider how we have reacted to these different pulls and anxieties and what this means for how we inhabit and move our bodies. This feature discusses how these legislative changes entangle with established and emergent discourses in an attempt to unpick what these transformations might mean for how our bodies are understood, and how we live in them.

I have spent the entirety of the COVID-19 pandemic in London. It would be remiss not to acknowledge the potential effects of my locale on my thinking, especially during a time when our worlds have become so much smaller. This feature is mostly focused on and informed by a UK perspective, and the legislative restrictions referred to are those enacted in England. It is perhaps somewhat city-centric, assuming a dense population and limited open outdoor space. Despite these contextual specificities, I hope that some considerations and disentanglements I will offer a conceptual framework for understanding and moving forward from these strange times.

I will start by speaking to the discursive positioning of the body during this pandemic and understandings of the needs and risks around the moving body and physical activity (PA). Second, I will look to unravel and lay out the changes that have occurred within and around the body and what that might mean for our collective understanding. To finish, I will offer some notes of optimism for the future and ways in which we might look forward.

Positionings of the Body During COVID-19

Whilst the fact that we have lived through a time of great transformations is plainly apparent, expectations regarding the impact of the pandemic on PA are murky. Some evidence has been presented showing an increase of PA during the pandemic. For example, Brand et al.'s (2020) quantitative survey of 99 countries concluded that the likelihood both of active people maintaining and inactive people acquiring physically active practices during lockdown were both high. Most research, however, has shown that there has been a significant decrease in engagement with PA since the onset of COVID-19 (Stockwell et al., 2021). In England specifically, PA among adults had been increasing until March 2020, then decreased significantly whereby 3.4 million more adults were inactive (Sport England, 2020). This must be considered as a public health issue – considering the detriment of physical inactivity to both physical and mental health – and a social justice issue, with marginalised social groups over-represented in this category.

The threat to public health posed by COVID-19 has increased the importance of health maintenance practices as a means to protect public services, with people instructed to physically prepare to battle the virus in the same way as they would prepare for war (O'Connor, 2020). This reinvokes the well-established nationalistic imperative around PA; that is, the need to maintain fitness and health in order to well serve nationalist interests (Scraton, 1992). However, the restrictions of the pandemic looked to reduce both social mixing and time spent in public spaces, meaning that access to places of PA, such as gyms, swimming pools, clubs, and studios, was inhibited or forbidden, significantly reducing exercise opportunities.

The understanding of the moving body as dangerous, alongside the imperative to stay fit and healthy, presents both moral panic and rupture. While some methods of PA were often, but not always, permissible, such as going for a run, walk, or cycle in public spaces, these were also positioned as risky to both the self and others, through the bodily potential to communicate the virus.

In addition to the threat to physical health, the psychological strain has also been considerable. Mental ill-health increased during the pandemic, and those living with symptoms – including increased anxiety and depression – were likely to be less physically active (Marashi et al., 2021). Anxieties are known to create a continuum of self-perpetuation, whereby inactivity is produced through fatigue and lethargy, which exacerbates further negative thoughts, depression, and consequent demotivation (Sport England, 2021a). This cycle can only be strengthened by the reduced opportunities and increased isolation of lockdown, as well as additional specific anxieties around catching and spreading COVID-19.

Emerging Understandings and Moving Forward

Moral imperatives regarding PA are not new. The long-established nationalistic thread has operated alongside the social currency of conforming to violent beauty norms and modification (Azzarito & Hill, 2013). The emergent pandemic discourses have been confusing and confounding, with obligations pulling our bodies in different directions. To stay home, but also to stay active; and which of these would be the best way to stay healthy? Both carry with them a set of risks and are fraught with moral ambiguities.

Although PA in general seems to have decreased during the pandemic, certain activities – namely, moderate intensity leisure activities and active transport (such as walking and cycling) – have increased (Sport England 2021b). Conjecturally, this could be the result of a lack of other leisure activities, combined with a desire to avoid the enclosed crowds of public transport. Motivations towards PA also seem to have shifted, with the most common reason for continued exercise during the pandemic being the mental health benefits (e.g., reducing anxiety and stress relief), meaning that mental ill-health can operate as both an incentive and impediment to PA (Marashi et al., 2021).

Perhaps this speaks to shifts within the crises of the pandemic which we might cautiously look to as positive, or poses further questions around what aspects of the extreme recent transformations we might want to tentatively hold on to or explore. It is reasonable for us to consider how we might best honour the difficulties and tragedies of the COVID-19 era, and ask ourselves what we should learn from them, now that it seems we might be nearing the end of its climax. This should certainly apply to pandemic policy and contingency planning. However, it also has the potential to reach beyond that, to broader considerations of how we live together.

Concluding Thoughts and Hopes

This feature has sought to trace some discursive shifts in how we understand our body and the places, values, and meanings we ascribe to its movement. There are the hints of potentials for a healthier placement of PA within the socio-cultural imagination, shifting away from aesthetics, body modification, and conformation of violent norms, towards the maintenance of physical and mental health and meeting of one's socialisation and transport needs. Whilst these are bound up in complex and conflating forces of morality, duty, and accessibility, there are discernible positive threads which run through. Our bodies have been centred in COVID-19 discourses through being the nexus of moral debates, restrictions, and high risk; however, I would hope that we have seen the beginnings of different bodily understandings. As we cautiously shift forward from this traumatic moment of intense restraint, perhaps we can centre our bodies in a different way. A way which acknowledges the potentials they hold as sites of pleasure and celebration, thus moving them, not to adhere to moral obligation or cultural norms, but in ways that feel good and that serve our physical and emotional needs.

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Vectors of disease and symbolic self-consumption: Transformation through COVID-19 control

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Abstract

The hyper pluralised consumer context of late modernity has brought forth perpetual processes of self-consumption; the individualised quest for personal authenticity constitutes a 'pick and mix' of symbolic meaning expressed through conscious consumer choices. The plethora of products being consumed are marketized specifically towards the relationship of 'the self with itself': fast cars, sexy underwear, and even spiritual practices offer rapid remedies to an ever-pervasive need for self-improvement. As COVID-19 has spread throughout the globe, the process of symbolic self-consumption has mutated, with social distancing, face masks, self-isolation, and other governmental policies serving to transform the individual into a potential disease vector. Such a transformation elicits a new spectrum of modalities in which the self is consumed, as new socio-cultural standards emerge pertaining to (non)adherence to governmentally-imposed measures. This work affords a critical, socio-cultural commentary on how such modalities subversively manifest in day-to-day forms.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought forth a unique and confusing situation for everyone on the planet. The fluctuating daily rates of death and infection, the ever-changing patchwork of travel restrictions between countries and continents, and the highly politicised production and rollout of the various 'brands' of vaccine are just some of the tangible contributors to what is now experienced by many (if not all) as a COVID-saturated worldview. The principal focus of this feature is to reflect on another pertinent outgrowth of the COVID-19 pandemic: the governmental implementation of various pandemic control measures. By examining how these measures have had a transformative effect on symbolic processes of late modern self-consumption, this feature looks to elicit a critical, socio-philosophical understanding of some of the emerging consequences of life amidst this socially transformative 'lockdown' period.

Self-Consumption and COVID-19

This feature takes late modernity as the cultural container within which the present pandemic is occurring; the fragmented world of competing identities, contrasting lifestyle cultures, and fluid social relations that transform the individual into a reflexive, multiple self (Giddens, 1991). Moving away from traditional, institutional adherence and encouraging more privatised individual concerns, late modernity also fosters a 'turn to the self' dominated by the industrialised values of novelty, rapid change, and personalised satisfaction (Wattanasuwan, 2005). As this relationship of 'the self with itself' is commodified and distributed according to the same market criteria that defines the prevailing model of material exchange, the self is subsequently made consumable as a social product (Kelly, 2013; Rindfleish, 2005). The varieties of self-consumption that follow thus transcend cosmetic, spiritual, and ideological boundaries; symbolic self-meaning is endlessly derived from consumer choices whether

pertaining to beauty, identity, ideology, or anything else (Gabriel & Lang, 1995). It is this pervasive, late modern logic of self-consumption that the present feature uses as a theoretical springboard, to position the discussion that follows in such a way that will invite more critical understandings of the pandemic control measures and their transformative effects on social behaviour.

It is to be argued here that the governmental implementation of COVID-19 control measures has had a profoundly transformative effect on the already pervasive processes of self-consumption described above. In stressing the importance of maintaining physical distance, reducing occasions of close contact, and avoiding large gatherings, together with good respiratory hygiene practices, regular handwashing and use of face masks, the measures have catalysed a responsibilitization of the individual citizen as an infection spreading vector of disease. Burdened with the gargantuan task of slowing down the spread of the virus, reducing the strain on the healthcare system, and ensuring the safety of everyone else around, the individual inevitably consumes themselves in this 'vector' form as the inverted relationship of 'the self with itself' is mobilised towards its responsibility for pandemic control. Consumption of the self as a vector of disease can manifest in a plurality of social actions and behaviours, but this feature will discuss two distinctive conceptualisations: *noble snitching* and *viral victimhood*. It is argued that, in keeping with the symbolic process of self-consumption outlined above, these behaviours are not operationalised solely for their utilitarian value but for the cultural meanings they carry and communicate; the self as a vector of disease is consumed through an exploitation of meaning that demonstrates one's (correct) social position within the culturally constructed world (see Wattanasuwan, 2005).

Noble Snitching

Throughout the lockdown period, regional police forces across the country have encouraged the reporting of coronavirus rule breaches by way of anonymous digital form or telephone call. Speaking of "the individual duty to collective health", policing minister Kit Malthouse spoke to the Telegraph in September 2020 to explain the continued implementation of non-emergency hotlines for people who had concerns regarding rule-breaking gatherings. Such anonymous reporting has been constructed as helping to inform police patrols, encourage mutual community monitoring, discourage eventual incidences of rule breaching, and act as a vital tool for stemming the spread of coronavirus and bringing about an earlier end to lockdown measures (Guardian, 2020). Most importantly, such 'reporting' is resolute in its framing of both the reporter and transgressor as disease spreading vectors; individuals are no longer private social entities, they are vectors of infection to be monitored and scrutinised by one another. The calls for snitching have been answered the world over, with hundreds of thousands of reports being made across the UK (Guardian, 2020).

The act of informing the authorities about someone else's COVID-19-related law-breaking fits with the definition of snitching afforded by several authors, with acknowledgments being made to the specific contexts in which such snitching occurs; witnesses testifying against an offender, an offender testifying on their associates, or a community reporting illegal activities in their neighbourhood are all considered instances of snitching (Clampet-Lundquist et al., 2015). Such disparate instances are typically unified by their occurrence in situations that

pose difficulties for law enforcement, either because of group norms regarding solidarity (e.g., the idea of omertà and 'prison code') or due to the limited resources of enforcement institutions (Copes et al., 2013). In respect to the nationwide enforcement of social distancing measures on a population of over 66 million people, it is obvious that UK police resources are severely limited in their capability to effectively monitor such measures and the call for anonymous snitching is therefore unsurprising. A more critical observation is how those who are breaching regulations are framed as problematic and transgressive, and the way in which anonymously snitching is encouraged as a noble contribution to nationwide efforts at curbing the pandemic.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the concerned citizen was encouraged to secretly report members of their community to bodies of state control. The perpetual process of self-consumption mutates once more as the individual consumes themselves as a noble servant of the state acting on behalf of the greater civic good; moral and ethical questions pertaining to snitching and semi-authoritarian behaviour are neutralised in favour of conformity to the demands of bodies of state control (Bergemann, 2020). The utilitarian value of snitching on someone else is therefore located in becoming an extension of state power, as one acts in correct accordance with the cultural construction of the COVID-19 disease spreading vector. Critically, in consuming the self as a noble snitch, attention is rallied towards an inverted suspicion of our own communities, rather than directed at the governmental and institutional apparatus responsible for managing the pandemic.

Viral Victimhood

In consuming the self as a vector of disease, the individual is led to further exercise a hyper-vigilance towards proximal transmission risks. If one does not properly follow the government instructions regarding social distancing measures, one is likely to succumb to the contagious effects of COVID-19 and, potentially, pass it on to family, loved ones, and other strangers. This debilitates broader efforts at stemming the pandemic on both the national and international stage. The hyper-guarded, hyper-vigilant surveillance of social proximity that follows exacerbates the development of a 'viral victimhood' – a new kind of moral culture in which differential adherence to social distancing measures elicits a new dimension of socio-moralistic response. Moral codes are adhered to at different degrees by different people, and others judge by punishing or rewarding them accordingly (Campbell & Manning, 2018). Committing a morally transgressive act lowers the moral status of the perpetrator, as does the punishment that typically follows; conversely, engaging in praiseworthy acts and subsequently being rewarded raises one's moral status (Cooney, 2009). In some cases, being the victim of an offence might elevate one's moral status irrespective of whether one has committed any moral 'good'; holding the victim of an offense in high moral regard can mobilise a reversal of the negative effects they have experienced and, by the same elevatory process, punish the offender that wished or intended to harm (Campbell & Manning, 2018). This is the essence of victimhood; a moral status constructed around the suffering individual.

A study by Graso et al. (2021) describes in detail the moralisation of the COVID-19 health response and, in their analyses, reveal that heightened personal concerns over contracting the disease are associated with greater asymmetries in human cost evaluation, such that

public shaming, deaths and illnesses, and police abuses of power are deemed acceptable so long as they result from efforts to minimise COVID-19 health impacts. This illustrates how, in consuming the self as a vector of disease and a morally superior viral victim, one subsequently nurtures an indifference towards the deliberate chastising and ensuing plight of those that fail to adhere to the governmental social distancing measures.

Viral Others

What connects the two manifestations outlined above is the way in which they both involve a definitive process of 'viral othering'. Though this feature has primarily focused on the internal process of consuming the self as a vector of disease, we must acknowledge that an externalisation of a viral threat is also an instrumental factor. To consume oneself as a vector of disease is to consume the other in the same way, with the governmental restrictions and social distancing measures doing much to bolster this two-way process. As the discussion has shown, this sentiment has been stirred up by individuals symbolically self-consuming as disease spreading vectors, leading to heightened tensions mixed from emotion, anxiety, and hostility that have subsequently drawn divisive lines through public and private communities. Future emergencies, occurring on a national scale, are likely to rouse the same latent hostility that was stirred up by these governmental pandemic control measures and the state itself will likely take little issue with encouraging processes of inverted public vigilance. In such instances we can expect symbolic processes of self-consumption, entrenched as they are throughout late modern society, to once again expediate these processes by mutating and manifesting into new sociological behaviours.

It is at this stage appropriate to observe some of the limits of what has been discussed throughout this feature. There are questions pertaining to the universality of the conceptualisations formulated throughout, particularly in respect to population demographics such as age, political views, rural-urban classification, and so forth. Similarly, though symbolic-self consumption is posited here as the 'meta' explanation behind the behaviours discussed, it is important to acknowledge that such behaviours may be experienced and constructed by individual perpetrators in radically different ways. A full consideration of these limits would require a degree of qualitative analysis far beyond the reach of this feature, involving a much larger, more specific data set and dedicated discussion. For the scope of the present paper, however, a stimulation of these reflections and any further critical considerations remains a welcome, fruitful outcome.

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Reflections

Entering the ivory tower: A farmer's perspective

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Abstract

Transformation can be interpreted in various ways by different people. When I hear the word 'transformation,' I think of my own personal transformation throughout my doctoral studies. In this piece, I reflect on what I regard as the process of transformation in becoming an academic researcher. The 'ivory tower' metaphor is often used to express the disconnected life of an academic. In this metaphor, it is regarded as a somewhat less real and almost protected world, where academics are in some ways viewed as elitists who do not experience the same everyday realities facing 'proper' workers. In this essay, I reflect on my own transformational experience of entering the so-called 'ivory tower,' discussing the misconceptions around this metaphor from a farmer's perspective. I suggest that business and management scholars should bridge the gap between academic theory and practice, engaging in empirical research that practically connects academia with farming communities. Doing this allows academics to challenge the metaphor and leave their ivory towers.

Reflection

Transformation can be interpreted in various ways by different people. This piece focuses on my own personal transformation throughout my doctoral studies. In this essay, I reflect on what I regard as the process of transformation in becoming an academic researcher. I discuss how I have entered the so-called 'ivory tower' coming from a working farming background. Different interpretations around the metaphor are discussed, arguing that both academia and farming communities can benefit mutually from knowledge exchanges.

The 'ivory tower' is often used to theorize the lives in which academics live (Shapin, 2012). The metaphor has a somewhat cynical and derogatory tone, implying that scholars are considered elitists, seeking residence inside a protective tower away from society and pursuing knowledge for knowledge's sake. Those who 'look in' reside outside the tower walls of academia (i.e., farmers), and those who 'look out' live inside the tower (i.e., academics) interpret academia differently from one another. In the following sections, I discuss how I have transformed throughout my doctoral studies, moving from an outsider 'looking in' as a farmer to now 'looking out' as an academic.

Personally, I feel my life has transformed since entering the world of academia. Before pursuing my doctoral studies, I mistakenly viewed academia as an ivory tower. As I deepened into my studies, I realised how unaware I was of the complexities of academic life. The competitive job market, uncertain work contracts, failed grant proposals, 'publish or perish' culture and expert level understanding of subjects are often not realised by those 'looking in.'

Indeed, transforming from a farm worker to a PhD student had its challenges. While my parents are proud of my academic accomplishments and ambitions, they do not understand

past the financial reasons in pursuing an academic career. I am the first in my family to pursue a doctoral degree and to them, while they have every faith in me selecting it as a career path, they still have absolutely no idea what I do. I am still in school in my parents' eyes, with them being unaware that a PhD is often a requirement to secure full-time academic employment. Personally, I find the intellectual pursuit and freedom to research topics the most rewarding reason for entering academia, but this is hardly comprehensible to my parents. Nonetheless, this farming upbringing continues to be a fundamental part of my research into farm entrepreneurship. This unique positionality allows me to build on the small body of research that reflects on the academic implications behind empirically understanding farm business management practices (McElwee, 2008).

While my farming parents struggle to grasp what academia is. Many academics struggle to understand farming, with farming contexts in business and management research remaining underexplored (Fitz-Koch et al., 2018). Academics often treat farmers as homogeneous social groups, with only those that have physically experienced living and working in farming communities understanding their heterogeneous nature. Many individuals outside of farming fail to realise the multiple identities farmers construct to run successful farming businesses. Farmers do not simply farm land. They are entrepreneurs, strategists, agronomists, mechanics, accountants, builders, shopkeepers, conservationists and parents. Academics often overlook the various identities farmers construct.

Some may consider the two worlds (farming and academia) miles apart. I am lucky enough to have experienced both sides. I know of few academics with manual labouring backgrounds, with even fewer farmers having PhD's. However, I believe that academia and farming communities can benefit from mutual exchanges with one another. Farmers might benefit from academic research which practically engages with them, whereby the findings can be used at the farm level, such as by improving the economic performance of their businesses. While academics can benefit from practically engaging with farmers, producing more practice-orientated research to understand farming systems, businesses, and lifestyles. Academics can then leverage their positions of power to help make fundamental changes to agricultural, rural and environmental policies, which in turn impact the daily lives of farmers.

Indeed, some farmers I have spoken with have not experienced positive encounters with academic researchers. One farmer recently told me of a research student with a 'hidden activist agenda' who used deceptive tactics to damage the image of the farming sector. These negative encounters could explain why some academics (i.e., outsiders) struggle to engage with farming communities (Kuehne, 2016). Farming communities are close-knit, often cautious of outsiders unfamiliar with rural and farming life. Being mindful of this and disclosing my farming background certainly enabled me to access data from farmers. Perhaps universities could benefit from employing more researchers with agricultural backgrounds to overcome access issues in farming research contexts.

However, I feel the 'ivory tower' metaphor is not readily applicable to my research, perhaps due to my practical working experience, which has steered my research in the direction of empiricism. While it contains theoretical and philosophical debates, my research relies strongly on empirical data that proposes both practical and policy-based contributions.

These contributions can be communicated and understood by farmers. Arguably, the ivory tower metaphor is more applicable to conceptual studies, whereby individuals and those 'looking in' (i.e., farmers) do not realise its value.

Being connected to the family farm and immersed in rural life has allowed me to construct multiple identities, shaping the way I carry out academic research on agricultural businesses. Reflecting upon my transformational experience of entering academia from a farming background allows me to make a methodological contribution to my research field, showing other rural research scholars the positives and negatives associated with carrying out farming research as an 'industry insider.' I use methods that scholars often overlook, such as using ad-hoc conversations, photographs, and a research diary to collect data that arise from spontaneous interactions with farmers influenced by my insider positionality.

I have found that conducting empirical work allows me to engage with farmers and deliver tangible benefits. I was also surprised by the number of farmers who wanted to read about the results of my research. While the findings of my work are disseminated in the form of academic journal articles, I make sure that they are also accessible to farmers. I share shortened summaries of my work in online farming chat platforms, alongside discuss my research with farmers in person when working out in the field. Doing this has allowed me to show farmers that not all academics live in ivory towers.

In summary, the world of academia is as theoretical or as practice-orientated as one wants to believe. There is a strong practical element in the context of my research, which does not coincide with the ivory tower metaphor. I am not researching alone in my ivory tower, more often than not I am on the farm with the farmer, listening to them and seeing how my research can improve their situation. I have drawn upon my positionality and used it to guide my research, allowing me to carry out research that makes academic, practical and policy-related contributions. However, there are still practices in academia that fit the metaphor, such as research that lacks practical application, alongside studies published in highly specialised journals that are read by only a select few in the academic circles (i.e., ivory tower).

Scholars should make more efforts to leave their ivory towers, encouraging public engagement and making work more readily available to non-specialist audiences. Academics should better communicate how their research helps farmers, as many are unaware of what academics do, with disconnections occurring between academia, policy and practice (Phoenix et al., 2019). Business and management scholars should, in particular, attempt to bridge the gap between academic theory and practice and communicate their findings simply so those in practice roles (i.e. farmers and other agricultural stakeholders) can understand the benefits of engagement between academia and practice. Academics with practical working backgrounds can offer value to farmers, alongside utilise their knowledge to contribute further to management research into farming contexts. Reflecting upon my own transformational experience of becoming an academic through the 'ivory tower' metaphor has shown my working background's important role in my academic career. Moreover, it has made me think about how business and management scholars should seek transformation away from their ivory towers and do more to engage practically with farming communities.

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Transforming and being transformed – an eclectic learning journey

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Abstract

Transformation could be translated as 'to undergo a change of form'. In this work, I will reflect on transformation during my PhD on several levels, from my personal learning journey (what has changed me and what have I changed since the beginning of my PhD) to changes in the way I do research (to move from lab-based testing to online experiments). As transformation often is an implicit process, we do not notice how far we have come and that we have achieved goals, which was only possible thanks to our adaptation to a new situation. In this reflection, I will focus on looking back at my own experience and hope to encourage others to think of, and reflect on, their own transformation.

Main Text

In this piece, I will reflect on my transformation as a second-year PhD student in Cognitive Neuroscience, both on personal and professional levels. During my first few weeks as a PhD student I felt like an explorer without a compass – I had no idea in which direction to go. Without even knowing how to structure my days, I tried to figure out what doing a PhD actually meant. How do you DO a PhD? Where do you start? Coming directly from a French undergraduate degree (Maths, Computer Science and Cognitive Science) and a very guided and exam-based approach to Higher Education, adapting to my new freedom and responsibilities as a PhD student in Psychology at the University of Leeds was a big challenge.

As an undergraduate student, I was used to having classes to attend and assignments to hand in, and even if I knew that the daily life of a PhD student would look somewhat different, changing into new working habits took me quite a while. What should I do today? And most importantly, how much time would I allow myself to spend on a particular task? It was only about a year into my PhD that I realized the transformation I had gone through, without even noticing it. Looking back now at what I did about a year ago, I am able to see how much I have learnt so far and how many new skills I have acquired, from being able to visualize data in R to designing experiments online. To answer these questions, I now have a very good feeling about tasks I want to achieve at a given day. Sometimes, a To-Do-List helps me to organize myself, sometimes it is knowing about an approaching deadline, but most of the time it is reminding myself of my final goal and breaking a generic Gantt-chart into little chunks of tasks towards the completion of my PhD.

I remember a big milestone during the first year of my PhD, in January 2020: the first conference I ever attended in my life. Even if I only went as a listener, I felt very grateful for being part of the scientific community and discovering all the fascinating, most recent research in Cognitive Psychology. This was the only conference I experienced 'live' and not

online, and looking back at it now, it really transformed me. It was after the conference, on my train journey home, that I finally gave up thinking of myself as a student (which, unfortunately, the term 'PhD student' implies), but more as a researcher. At that moment, I felt like being part of a bigger network of researchers and even wrote down names of people I wanted to remember to look up their work. Maybe it was just a paradigm shift in my own mind, but it made me realize that I now belong to a community of researchers and that my work contributes to what we currently know in Cognitive Neuroscience. Half a year later, I presented a poster at the same event and just had my first oral presentation at the same conference this summer. From listening to presenting, I have become more and more confident in my abilities, and my doubts of having all it needs to complete a PhD make themselves heard only occasionally.

But *transformation* did not only happen to myself as a person, it also took place in my research journey. During the first few months of my PhD, pre-COVID, I would never have imagined conducting studies online or that this would be even an option in my field. But it was and here again, these changes made me rethink the whole research process. While starting to plan my first, bigger study in March/April 2020, my supervisors suggested that I create the experiment in an online platform, so that data collection could be done at a distance. The study was measuring reaction times to visual stimuli and my biggest concerns were that I could not observe participants while they would concentrate on my experiment and ensure quality of the data collected. These were valid concerns, but when I had a look at the data and compared them to the ones of a similar lab-based study, I only observed slightly slower reaction times, but nothing too serious for the effects I was interested in. Not seeing my participants took away some valuable insights I would probably have gained by talking to them about my research, but it also meant less time spent on data collection, as several people could take part in my study at the same time. This clearly seems to be a major advantage of online research, as behavioural data can be collected in a matter of days, allowing researchers for example to concentrate on faster dissemination of results. Finally, by doing my research online, I was able to adapt to the new circumstances and to become more creative in making the experiments engaging. As I was aware that my participants would be at a distance, and probably with their phones or flatmates around, I made sure to keep distraction at a minimum. This meant several attention checks in my experiment to ensure participants were still concentrated and regular breaks for them, where they could decide when to continue the study. Once they had completed everything, they were also able to provide feedback, so that I could learn from their experience. In fact, I am already planning my next experiment online and have taken into account recent feedback, from font size and clear instructions to the order of screening material.

Finally, I transformed in the way I think of, and use, my own languages. As a matter of fact, the main topic I am studying in my research is bilingualism and its impact on brain and mind. Unsurprisingly, as for most researchers in this scientific area, my interest stems from a personal context: as a German native speaker, I discovered my passion for languages early in life, and now use three languages on a regular basis. While during my degree in France I felt almost like 'losing' my German and not having enough time to practise my English, I recently noticed that I had reached a balance between these three languages. While English remains the

language of my research work and soon enough it will be the one of my written thesis, I use German and French to communicate with friends and family, to read and to watch films. This third and more personal transformation is one I am proud of, as too much perfectionism in speaking my second and third language almost made me forget how great it is to have three mental lexicons available, to actively feel and sense in three different languages. While I believe that I am not exactly the same person, depending on which language I speak and think in, I am grateful for those moments where, suddenly, languages mix and a completely new word comes out of my mouth, being half French, half English, but with a German pronunciation. Often not understood in its complexity by either native, monolingual speaker, it shows that languages influence and enrich each other and the person speaking them.

In conclusion, I deeply believe that transformation is what makes us learn and improve ourselves, whether it comes from inside of us or is caused by our environment. I would go even further and say that in order to successfully complete a PhD, we all have to undergo transformation, personally and professionally.

Maps can document transformations

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You ain't seen nothing yet. If the transformation wrought on society by COVID feels hard to cope with, think again. This may turn out not to be the transformation that it seems – the post-pandemic world will still look much like its predecessor, even if some people are still working from home, or wearing masks on public transport. A true transformation will require a complete rethink of the way we do things – what we eat, where we live, work and play, and how (or even if) we travel. The COVID-induced changes may turn out to be quite minor compared to those required to meet an altogether greater challenge – reengineering almost every aspect of our lives to create a zero carbon society as a response to the risks of climate change. Although this will not happen overnight, if we are to limit global heating and avoid destructive environmental changes, most of this transformation has to be made in the next thirty years.

The pandemic has affected our sense of place and our horizons – philosophically as well as geographically. If we can no longer safely hop on a train to London or a plane to Los Angeles, are we trapped or do we build deeper roots in our local community? If, in its early days, there were gaps on supermarket shelves, did we really need to eat Kenyan beans or Peruvian asparagus? And do we need to party in Prague, rather than in our back gardens? We have all been confronted with maps showing infection rates, borders and boundaries – *"you should stay at home, you cannot go there."*

This narrowing of place during the pandemic may be temporary – budget airlines have not all gone bust, and international supply chains proved more resilient than expected. But the next transformation may prove to be much deeper and longer lasting. Scientists have shown that the world is heading for a global climate catastrophe unless it rapidly reduces its emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2) and other greenhouse gases, principally associated with the use of fossil fuels (CCC, 2020; IPCC 2014). This will require huge changes to energy systems – at home, at work and in how we travel.

I am professionally involved in facilitating this energy transformation, including encouraging the move away from internal combustion engines in road vehicles to lower carbon forms of propulsion, such as electric vehicles. However, for transport this is just the latest transformation in mobility – in earlier times we have seen the move from foot or horse to rail, the arrival of bicycles – which created a demand for leisure travel, at least among the European middle classes – and then the move from horse buggy or bicycle to automobile. Many of these earlier transformations have been mapped, too.

That brings me to my research. As well as being a sustainable energy professional and environmentalist, I am a PhD student at Canterbury Christ Church University, researching into twentieth century road maps, primarily those issued by petrol and oil companies. Everyday maps such as these reflect and report upon historical changes – minor transformations, perhaps, compared to COVID or climate change, but ones showing the rise of diesel or LPG,

the spread of dedicated motorways, the introduction of lead-free petrol or the introduction of filling stations at supermarkets, for example.

A research theme that has emerged is the degree to which maps encouraged or supported the uptake of new fuels or forms of transport as opposed to simply reflecting their existence – how they communicate with their intended users. Maps supporting most twentieth century transitions were muted, perhaps implicitly accepting they were not transformational compared, say, to the Victorian revolution in personal mobility. For example, symbols marking petrol stations might grow a flag or an extra underlining to show that new fuels were available. In other cases maps were produced for users – but diesel maps generally assumed the driver was piloting a truck, not the family car on a day out: the move to diesel as a mass market fuel went almost unremarked. Specialist fuels, such as liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) spawned equally specialist maps – these documented incremental change, not a full blown transformation.

So what are we to expect from the next transformation, away from fossil fuels?

Just as motorists seeking diesel or lead-free petrol needed a map to find a refuelling station, so do owners of electric vehicles. However from the viewpoint of a cartographic historian, there is one major difference: the digital transformation has revolutionised how maps are produced and consumed. Whereas I can relatively easily find a Pratt's Perfection Motor Spirit road atlas from over 100 years ago, I cannot access the Zap-Map of EV charging points from even one year ago: being web-based, it has been already been lost for future researchers, just as have the interactive maps showing COVID infections. The situation for the resurgence of the bicycle is better: many local authorities have supported local cycling maps, and Sustrans has also produced maps of its long distance leisure routes. However there is a danger that much of this climate change-induced transformation will not be documented.

At one level, this may not matter. A map showing electric vehicle charging points is never going to affect our perception of the world as much as a mediaeval *mappa mundi* or one showing the expansion of empires, or even a map showing areas of high COVID infections, or cities at risk of flooding from rising sea levels due to climate change. At most, it might be seen as providing a limitation on our horizons – "I cannot go there, as I cannot recharge my car to return home" – as the thrill of the open road gives way to range anxiety. But there is a danger we will worry less about what happens in Pyongyang or even Paris if a COVID or carbon-constrained world makes them feel more distant. Zoom or Teams may have shrunken the world for some, but I for one will miss the discovery of real places previously only seen on maps: a less-travelled society may be a more inward looking one.

Despite this, maps have a role to play in keeping horizons open. A child with a paper map may indeed point to the blank spaces on the page:

> *'Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look like that) I would put my finger on it and say, "When I grow up I will go there".'* (Conrad, 1899)

Conrad's maps were still showing a major transformation as Europeans were, quite literally, still colouring the map red. My transformations, evidenced on twentieth century maps, are quite minor even if they felt significant to those living through them. The next transformation – from a fossil fuelled world to the cleaner, renewably powered one needed to reach net zero by 2050 – will require carbon and energy savings equal to 2020's COVID-induced reductions every single year. Without a concerted effort, we will need to redraw maps – not to show mundane changes, such as EV charging points, but to reflect changes to coastlines and cities, as the very countries we live in are transformed by climate change. Compared to the changes of the past century: *you ain't seen nothing yet!*

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Encountering Wounds and Transforming Research through Fieldwork alongside the Subalternised

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His main interests are in Post-, anti-, and decolonial work, ethnic and racial studies, inequalities, Islam and Knowledge making on which Ali has published multiple peer-reviewed and non-academic articles and essays. His current research focuses on the lived experiences of discrimination and exclusion of visibly Muslim Lebanese citizens with a particular focus on the role of urbanity and space in these experiences.

Abstract

In the summer of 2018, I began qualitative fieldwork for my PhD dissertation investigating Islamic visibility in Lebanon's political sphere. As I began fieldwork, I quickly realised that practicing Lebanese Muslims, including those with significant political activity, did not find my topic and research question pertinent. For them, it was anti-Muslim racism across spheres and scales of life in Lebanon that was worthy of research, analysis and redress. For them, it was wounds they carried, wounds inflicted by global Eurocentric modernity, that I needed to visible, analyse, and seek to find amends to. Meeting this, my research project and questions were redirected and transformed into an exploration of lived experiences of anti-Muslim racism on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. Consequently, the encounter with subalternised communities and the choice to listen and obey their requests formed a transformative juncture of my career and activism, as well as my own self and concerns. Accordingly, a 'fieldwork of listening' alongside the subalternised emerged as a powerful and generative site from which social science research can be transformed, identifying and orienting itself to the lived problems of those on the darker side of western modernity

Text

Lebanon is a small multi-confessional country on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean with a complex multi-party political system. An ex-French colony, the nation 'never existed before in history. It is a product of the Franco-British colonial partition of the Middle East'

(Traboulsi 2007, 75) established under Christian Maronite domination. Today, the country functions through a complex system where power is shared among Maronite Christians, Sunni Muslims, and Shia Muslims under a westernised neoliberal order (Baumann 2019). During 2018, I began fieldwork on my doctoral project exploring emerging Islamic semiotics and visibility within the Lebanese political scene with a focus on Lebanese Muslim women's experiences and Islamic dress' emerging and growing presence within formal and state politics in the country. The methodology for the project consisted of in-depth interviews and focus groups with photo-elicitation with Lebanese citizens involved in political spaces. Questions asked covered participant's political participation, relation to political parties, to the state and its institutions, and to their community activities and activism. Throughout, questions focused on linking these issues to participant's Islamic beliefs and practices. By adopting a reflexive and qualitative methodology of interviews and in-depth conversations with participants, space was made for participants themselves to orient discussions and consequently significantly shape the knowledge being generated in the field.[1]

As I began fieldwork in Beirut, I encountered much interest on the part of women wearing Islamic dress to participate in the project. With significant ease, interviews were scheduled and conversations began. From the very start, interviewees were enthusiastic and most conversations went beyond the scheduled time. Two of my early interviews unexpectedly turned into double-interviews where participants came with a friend who was 'really excited about the project and was wondering if she can join, even if just to listen', as a young university student with whom I had my very first interview explained.

Yet, as I went through my data at the end of the first month of fieldwork, having conducted around 6 in-depth interviews, I realised that the data collected around political participation, elections, party-representation and formal state-centred organisation, was meagre. Further, reflecting on my conversations with participants, I began to notice that I lacked the rich, layered, and in-depth insights on political change and emerging political presence I pursued. For example, participants were not interested in discussing their involvement in electoral processes or in advocacy at the levels of the parliamentary or legal systems in the country and how their Islamic beliefs and practices impacted such behaviours. Similarly, they were not interested in delving into the role and impact of the country's political parties in hindering or facilitating the growing presence of Islamic symbols within the Lebanese political sphere or what meanings such symbols take on. Indeed, as I went through the collected data, I began to realise that much of it was not about formal or state-level politics at all, but was rather about lived experiences of being a visibily Muslim in Lebanon at the level of the everyday. Covering various spheres of social life, including the economic, the domestic, and the public, I began to realise that significant data revolved around participants' experiences of discrimination and exclusion as a result of being a visibly Muslim within much of Lebanese society – even though this was not a part of my interview protocol nor of what I had envisioned to be part of my project. Thinking through this, I realised that it was participants who were introducing the question of discrimination, and who took the initiative in putting forth such experiences. In one interview, I was told by a participant that she 'assumed' the project was about discrimination since that is what is really most challenging for practicing and individuals easily identifiable as Muslims in the country.

[1] This fieldwork raised a number of ethical concerns, from my gender as a male researching a female-only object to my training and position within the westernised academy researching lived experiences in the Eastern Mediterrenean. An exploration of these concerns neverthless remains beyond the scope of this reflection, refer to Kassem (forthcoming).

Consulting with my supervisors, I decided to begin including a question on experiences of discrimination during subsequentinterviews. The reception went beyond anything I had anticipated. From receiving 20-minute narrations to interviewees sharing stories of deep privacy and much pain, I quickly realised how important the issue is for women wearing Islamic dress in Lebanon and the extent to which they desired to speak about it. During my first focus group, I was even explicitly told by participants that 'the most important problem is discrimination, the most important thing that really needs research and that no one was looking at is our rejection and how they think we are lesser' [Beirut, 2018]. By the end of the second month of fieldwork, I had arrived at the conclusion that my project's interests did not align with the major problem my participants considered to be plaguing their lives.

After much reflection and discussions with my supervisors, colleagues, and gatekeepers in Lebanon, I decided to cease fieldwork around 6 weeks after it had begun, return to the UK, and rethink my project. As I reflected on my few weeks of fieldwork and the data generated, I increasingly felt that it was wounds participants carried, wounds inflicted by global Eurocentric modernity (Mignolo 2012), that my research needed to focus on. Such a shift seemed most important as it would allow me to engage and address what appeared to be the major issue for participants and to respond to their requests in line with a research where participants are engaged as co-creators of knowledge. Further, this was a shift that would permit invaluable insights and significant interventions and contributions to both academic as well as wider debates and challenges. Spending a little under two months in the UK, I consequently re-developed my project to focus on the question of lived experiences of discrimination. I then returned to the field, spoke to over 65 visibly Muslim woman over a period of fivemonths and consequently wrote a dissertation titled *'Coloniality, Erasure and the Muslim Hijabi's Lived Experiences: Lebanon as a Case-study'*.

This dissertation did not offer an analysis of the growing presence of Islam within Lebanon's sphere of formal politics and within the various spaces of the Lebanese state and its apparati. It also did not offer an analysis of Lebanese Muslim women's agentive work, as practicing and visibly Muslim women, within the realm and various scales of Lebanese politics and how Islamic beliefs and practices played a role in such work. Rather, it offered an invaluable case of anti-Muslim racism within the Arab-majority world, and even within Muslim-majority communities. Analysing this case, it generated multiple contributions across fields and divides and innovative insights into the scholarsip on questions ranging from anti-Muslim racism and post and decolonial theory to ethnic and racial studies, the sociology of religion, as well as the study of the West Asia region and Lebanon.

I am myself Lebanese, having been raised in Beirut. I had also been conducting research, including working alongside Lebanon's Shia Muslim community in particular, for a number of years before my PhD. I had additionally studied and taken various courses on Lebanese history, Lebanese politics, and Lebanese society throughout my education. Yet, I was oblivious to the harm and aggression visibly Muslim women experienced and the wounds this produced: these were invisible experiences for me, while my research and intellectual concerns laid elsewhere. Fieldwork here offered an invaluable corrective. If anything, my fieldwork powerfully brought forth the subtle and hidden nature of much wounding

aggression produced by global Eurocentric Modernity and the hegemonic structures of exclusions governing our contemporary world. In this sense, it made clear the potential of fieldwork approached as a listening exercise to make wounds visible; offering them as powerful sites of research and scholarship. Based on this, multiple avenues of future research and invisible wounds emerged. For example, parallel fieldwork across the Muslim-majority and Arab-majority geographies promises an invaluable intervention to rethink dominant narratives and assumptions around anti-Muslim racism and lived experiences. Research around the entangling/intersecting nature of these experiences, incorporating factos such as a skin colour, citizenship, and gender, further emerges as a promising avenue of future research based on this work. Questions of national identities, social differences, and steryotpes, prejudices, and hierarchies produced at the juncture between the global and the local all further emerge as important questions of further critical and participatory research across geographies and spaces. Ultimately, the encounter with subalternised communities and the choice to listen and obey their requests formed a transformative juncture for my career and activism, as well as my own self and concerns, and opened up multiple avenues and possibilities for future research.

In elaborating on the decolonial invitation for a different kind of social research, and focusing on W E Du Bois's work, Maldonado-Torres (2007) argues that decolonial research 'requires detachment and wonder' and 'demands responsibility and the willingness to take many perspectives, particularly the perspectives and points of view of those whose very existence is questioned and produced as insignificant'. (Nelson Maldonado-Torres 2007, 262) In line with this invitation and my experiences presented above, I here conclude that research with the sublaternised must be oriented as a project of making visible the invisible from the invisiblised position, heeding their calls and labouring against their lived problems.

Problematising the assumption situating researchers as 'the experts', my experiences in the field have ultimately allowed me to humble my position as an academic researcher and to envision my engagements with my participants as an opportunity to listen and heed their calls. In this sense, the takeaway argument from these experiences is that research questions and hypothesis, as well as fieldwork preparations including interview protocols, must continuously be subject to reflexive scrutiny in light of the experiences in the field and must be oriented to the problems and challenges of the subalternised. Indeed, showcasing the importance of empirical fieldwork with subalternised communities, these experiences embodyhow the encounters of the field can transform a research project, and how it is important they be allowed to do so.

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Negotiating the Field through Necessity: Transformations in Approach to Ethnographic Research on Religious Studenthood during COVID-19

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Abstract

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, ethnographic researchers have not escaped the restrictions that have resulted in physical distancing since March 2020. This piece offers a brief commentary on some practical and discursive challenges that have influenced one such researcher in a project aiming to document the lives of students that comprise Catholic university chaplaincies in the UK today. The reflection considers the unique position that this researcher holds, who typically identifies with the category of the research sample, in attempting to negotiate and adapt their methodological approach in such circumstances. In choosing to embrace the uncertainty that has characterized the pandemic, the author concludes that to have personally undergone similar experiences alongside the research sample affords opportunities for authenticity which contributes in an essential way to producing a realist account of contemporary religious life.

Introduction

Any attempt to conduct an in-person ethnography of a social group during the pandemic has not been without significant challenges, with the immediate physical threat to both researchers and researched being perhaps the most pressing concern of any institutional review board. However, transformation has the potential to be viewed propitiously if one continues to deploy one's 'sociological eye' amidst uncertainty (Collins, 1998). Due to the events and measures implemented beyond our control, my project aiming to explore UK Catholic university chaplaincies, has undergone several methodological and practical transformations.

The nature of Catholic university chaplaincies often means that constituent members' backgrounds are ethnically and culturally diverse, whilst strongly united by one confessional sensibility. Groups are also united by their common studenthood. Studenthood here refers to the biographical category that characterises learners' action whilst participating in institutions of higher education (Warmington 2002, p.585). Chaplaincies, particularly Christian ones, are often based on an 'incarnational' ontology which relies on chaplains' presence or of being available, rather than performing any specific action; a way of being rather than doing

(Threlfall-Holmes 2011:120). The restrictions imposed on physical contact have been a cause for reflection on the discursive boundaries of what constitutes university chaplaincy life when 'normal' conditions are destabilized or paused. My intention to join university chaplaincies as a participant observer therefore required methodological transformations in order to practically respond to this new reality and its accompanying discourse. Indeed, 'periods of social transformation seem to provide simultaneously the best and the worst evidence for culture's influence on social action' (Swidler 1986, p. 278).

The transformation from place (on campus) to space (on the internet) within which the chaplaincy group 'meets' together has illuminated modes of group self-definition and expectations. The sudden problemisation of embodiment demonstrated its tacit and essential nature in chaplaincy life and the role it played in determining groups' self-definition (spiritual and pastoral support) and expectations (regular participation). The groups' typical boundaries were temporarily suspended due to the inability to meet in situ (Alderson and Davie 2021, p. 19). This raised questions over self-understanding: was chaplaincy only defined by its ability to provide in-person care? If participation rates declined, in what ways could chaplaincy still constitute itself as a group, or, more specifically, a community? Responses to such rudimentary questions over group self-definition(s) and expectations would be determined by the extent to which chaplaincies were able to evolve beyond traditional, in-person ways of meeting. I had anticipated that religious online participation may not be (well-) attended, partly because of fundamental irreplaceability of in-person interaction and because of the uncertainty caused by the pandemic. I expected students may transform their routine habits and prioritize other areas, for example: academic success or mental wellbeing. For this reason, individual students may not have chosen to maintain regular contact; thereby reducing demand for group activities and consequently failing to sustain previous expectations of participation. This lack of physical presence, however, has not caused social distancing proper, insofar as we understand the social as the extent to which we relate to, identify with, or are influenced by, others. Accompanying this temporary suspension of expectations was the possibility for a transformation into the normalisation of an exclusively digital chaplaincy. Sociality could still be maintained as students quickly adapted to gathering, praying together, and receiving religious instruction via the internet, and therefore successfully transformed to constitute now-virtual Catholic university chaplaincies. Students' engagement with chaplaincy throughout the pandemic could be attributed to a need to represent their social nature in something as normal as 'corporate belonging'. In such a belonging, students as detached individuals would appeal to university and/or religious institutions to create meaning (Perfect 2021, p.56). Through digitalisation, chaplains have been able to remain useful and relevant as they like to be found wherever there is an identifiable need (Cadge, 2020). Despite this, the ability to create an online presence has not replaced the preference for in-person meetings. Rather, for groups that have been able to congregate online, the virtual has fostered anticipation for the opportunity to meet 'in real life'. This is an acknowledgment by students and staff of the somewhat superficiality and the fatigue caused by the digital, perhaps because of its ubiquity in contemporary life.

In the addition to the digitalisation, I was led to another transformation of approach, on becoming cognisant of the availability of potential research samples. I had anticipated,

pre-pandemic, that gaining access to the groups would be facile. However, it is no corollary to equate chaplain enthusiasm with students that are happy to attend chaplaincy events throughout the pandemic or allow me to join them in a research capacity. Without a group to observe and join, one chaplain regrettably informed me, there was little for him, as gatekeeper, to welcome me into, despite his personal appreciation for my project's aims. Including attempts at renegotiating access, I also received recommendations for prospective samples from those chaplains that politely declined my request. This necessity for adaptation of my sample selection method demonstrated how increasingly difficult access issues were becoming.

I soon began taking an interest in autoethnography as it seemed valuable to record my own research experiences in diary format as useful data for my final thesis. This transformation occurred within my methodological perspective as it seemed prudent to produce a personal account as a university student during the pandemic, alongside the recording of the faith lives of other Catholic university students that I endeavoured to study. In the same way that diversity is represented in chaplaincy, my postgraduate research student's perspective would not be replicable to the majority of (undergraduate) students because of the idiosyncratic and solitary nature of research. Nevertheless, some helpful parallels include: appreciating the distance incurred physically from friends, peers, substituting the lecture hall or seminar room for Zoom, or facing restrictions on library access. The practical transformation brought by the pan-digitalisation that has characterized studenthood throughout 2020 and 2021 will leave significant marks in the collective memory of all those studying at this time. Such physical detachment has caused disembedding from those sites that constitute the university experience, for example lecture halls, labs, libraries, campus coffee shops, pubs for the majority, with the addition of chaplaincy spaces, chapels, for others. Giddens (1991) describes disembedding as extracting 'social relations from local contexts of interaction' and reappropriating them 'across indefinite spans of time-space' (Giddens 1991, p. 21). The intellectual stimulation and inspiration that one associates with the university experience, whether through formal meetings or spontaneous 'water cooler' moments with tutors and peers, has been largely lost as the student is dislocated from their intended social and physical environment (Perfect, 2021).

Without this first-hand experience, my research will have undoubtedly gained a different angle and like any good ethnography close attention is paid to the data collected, rather than perhaps the data one wishes one might have collected. An ethnographer's commitment to realism engenders authenticity, however manifest. What has been crucial to recognize is that, despite any initial disappointment and the ostensibly untimely nature of the pandemic for this project, is the wealth of data that would not have been attainable otherwise. Despite appearances, the pandemic can afford new opportunities for knowledge generation. In the social sciences, I believe we are just at the beginning of the wealth of incoming research studies that attend to the experiences of people throughout and in the aftermath of this COVID-19 pandemic. In my own field - the sociology of religion -it will be fascinating to observe in what ways the experience of the virus itself and state interventions have affected people's engagement with religion and spirituality in the UK.

Conclusion

In conclusion, whilst I may not be able to operationalize my ideal ethnography, one's methodological priority is to produce data that is deeply authentic – and that surely is the purpose of all and any research. The plight that all university students have experienced over the last 12 months or so deserves attention. In order to provide a 'best account' (Taylor, 1989) of Catholic chaplaincy life, it requires acknowledging, the unavoidable complexities and the necessary transformations that help to provide a richer, more nuanced story.

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Transformation to socially distanced research: Reflections from qualitative social sciences fieldwork

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Introduction

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, a proliferation of resources emerged on the transformation, mitigation, and adaptation of social science research projects (see Lupton, 2020; Lobe et al., 2020). Many of these include redefining the 'field' – with travel bans and enforced social distancing removing the possibility of in-situ research. For many, the 'field' became a predominantly digital, online space. Whilst online research methods are not a new phenomenon, they have rapidly increased in pervasiveness and popularity. As a result, methodologies and data collection methods have, and continue, to evolve. Here, I offer personal reflections from my international fieldwork interviewing students and key stakeholders involved in the student housing landscape in Dublin on the transformation from face-to-face to socially distanced research. I discuss the opportunities and challenges involved in this transformation, including flexibility, cost, understanding of place, recruitment, and sustaining connections. In doing so, I provoke a space for reflection, rather than presenting a 'how to' guide, for the planning of future qualitative social sciences research.

The digital shift

In March 2020 I was in Dublin conducting face-to-face interviews and focus groups for my PhD research on the financialisation of student housing. A UK based researcher, I was two weeks into my trip when on 12th March Ireland announced the first of its pandemic related restrictions, announcing the closure of its schools and colleges. Initially, as I had another two weeks of accommodation in Dublin paid for, I was committed to remaining. However, as the severity of the pandemic became more apparent, I paused my fieldwork and returned to the UK. Whilst research projects across the globe were paused or delayed, for others, funding clocks and deadlines kept ticking. I, like many others, faced the challenge of conducting research in a socially distanced world.

Cue the digital shift. After a short pause, my research continued relatively smoothly. I had built up contacts from previous time spent in Dublin, and snowballing assisted in identifying future interview participants. Face-to-face interviews became online or telephone interviews. To encourage recruitment, participants were initially given the choice of either a phone call or a video call using Zoom. Where a phone call was chosen, a WhatsApp voice call was used where possible to avoid international call charges. Prior to the interviews, participants were emailed a consent form and asked to either sign and return the form or reply in writing that

they were happy to proceed. As the research progressed, I noticed participants favoured phone over video interviews. I was mindful that due to 'stay at home' messages many of my research participants would be participating from their own homes, and not all would have a private space in which to participate. This was also the case in my position as a researcher. A phone interview therefore gave participants greater control of the setting of the interview. Several participants were out walking during our interview, with one explaining they had left their apartment due to noisy construction work outside. Phone interviews therefore offered participants greater convenience and flexibility, as well as providing the anonymity of non-face-to-face interaction. Flexibility in the medium that participants can take part in qualitative research can improve participant access to research (Heath et al., 2018).

The biggest challenge came when seeking new participants beyond the scope of snowballing. I had previously benefited from being 'in' the field, attending events and being able to make face-to-face introductions to potential participants. In a socially distanced world, identifying and motivating potential participants proved more difficult. Using purposive sampling, potential informants were invited to participate via email or Twitter (if they had a public and active profile). Though some participants were recruited this way, I was often met with silence. Occasionally, initial enthusiasm from participants was short-lived and they disconnected soon after the conversation moved from discussing the research topic itself to confirming the interview and gaining informed consent. This proved both frustrating and time-consuming. I began to question the importance of my research – did this mean people weren't interested in the research? Did this mean the research wasn't meaningful? Whilst the pandemic could suggest a limit to snowballing, other scholars have commented upon the suitability of an online snowball approach using gatekeepers (Souleimanov, in Krause et al., 2021). However, without the benefit of a gatekeeper, my experience supports literature that access and rapport can be difficult to establish online (Jowett et al., 2011). Kristensen and Ravn (2015, p.725) note how researchers 'suffer personal costs from being repeatedly turned down, and embarrassment and faintheartedness can easily become their daily partners in a slow recruitment process'. It is important to highlight the recruitment process as emotional work that 'should not be underestimated' (ibid, p.725).

Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed our experiences of social sciences research. Whilst in-person research has traditionally been perceived as the 'gold-standard' for qualitative data collection (Reñosa et al., 2021), the ongoing pandemic continues to present obstacles for in-person research. This requires approaching flexibility as 'a necessary tool' in the research process (Billo and Hiemstra, 2013, p.317). Souleimanov (in Krause et al., 2021) proposes a hybrid approach to data collection where possible, suggesting distributing online questionnaires and following up with respondents with particularly interesting answers for interviews during 'post-lockdown' stages of the research. Beyond interviews, Zukerman (in Krause et al., 2021) suggest archived primary and secondary materials, including ethnographies, field reports, and journalists' renderings, can be important substitutes for field research. The digital shift presented my research with unique opportunities and challenges, most notably that research could continue to some degree amidst a pandemic. Financial savings and reduced time

required are important advantages. Whilst my ability to observe happenings in the field were curtailed by the pandemic, to some extent I was able to achieve 'remote embeddedness' through online observations and interviews (Howlett, 2021). Howlett (2021) noted how digital methods revealed angles of the field that would not normally be observed during in-personal fieldwork. However, this could not replace 'being in' Dublin itself, experiencing and living in the city I was researching. I built a stronger rapport with research participants I met face-to-face. These participants remained more engaged with the research over time and were more willing to participate in longitudinal research.

It is important to recognise that the digital shift is not possible for all research projects. In the context of my research, I did not experience language barriers, nor differences in time zone, and all participants had access to and were confident in using technology. In their research on land transformation in West Bengal, Banerjee (2021) highlights participants access to technology and network connectivity as a major constraint. Furthermore, Reñosa et al. (2012) discuss the challenges collecting qualitative data in four 'resource-constrained' settings. Even when access to technology is possible, Mirua (in Krause et al., 2021) explains how due to concerns about surveillance, conducting interviews on Zoom or similar online platforms with their participants in China is not possible. Technological advancements, accessibility, and security play a major role in contemporary social research.

COVID-19 is a global, but geographical uneven, pandemic. Remote research can offer a valuable opportunity to rise to the challenge of social distancing whilst maintaining data collection efforts. However, differently abled populations may encounter different barriers to remote research (Reñosa et al., 2021.) Social science researchers must therefore remain context-sensitive (Holloway and Todres, 2003). Looking to the future, it is important to consider the lasting impacts of the pandemic on the practice of conducting social sciences research. What are the impacts of conducting research from significant temporal and spatial distances on research data, the researcher, and the participants themselves? I conclude by suggesting that future social sciences research should consider a blended approach to data collection, combining elements of both face-to-face and socially distanced research. Researcher flexibility is important and, when possible, research can benefit from offering participants a choice of participation method. Regardless of pandemic-related restrictions, a flexible approach to data collection and field research is essential.

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Proposing Research for Education Technology in a Post-Covid-19 Society: Perspectives of a new Doctoral Student

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As a doctoral student, developing a proposal for research within the field of education technology is a daunting yet exciting prospect. In this article, I reflect on some of the apprehensions I have as a new student during the Covid-19 global pandemic, drawing upon some of the contemporary challenges faced by institutions and researchers, and considering how proposals for future research may be impacted by recent dramatic and sudden transformation of the field. My initial proposal for the Doctor of Education programme took the form of a case study approach to evaluating the potential of education technology and hybrid learning strategies within the traditional learning environment, with a specific focus on post-16 education within the UK. One methodology of interest at this initial stage was action research due to its central aim of change and problem solving (Thomas, 2017). However, due to the Covid-19 global pandemic, I am compelled to critically reflect and review these ideas.

Technology is a rapidly evolving field of research. Inside the classroom, a plethora of EdTech companies have emerged to provide solutions that claim to aid teaching and learning, and technology impacts almost every aspect of students' everyday lives (James and Busher, 2013). These rapid developments pose challenges to educational institutions that attempt to keep up with this pace of change (Department for Education, 2019). Consequently, when developing my initial research proposal in early 2020 for a programme that would span 5 years, the temporal validity of my work was already at the forefront of my mind. Little more than a year later, I find myself in the preliminary stages of developing a full proposal and the field of education seems almost unrecognisable from that which I set out to study.

To frame my reflections, I draw from a range of sources and it is important to comment on the type of literature cited. Research during the Covid-19 pandemic has been challenging, resulting in an ethical and methodological minefield (BERA, 2020). Thus, many researchers have taken alternative approaches to narrate and reflect on these events, such as desk-based studies and blogs. Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic is a global event during which its peak saw 167 country-wide closures of schools, impacting almost 1.5 billion enrolled learners worldwide (UNESCO, 2021). Schools and other educational institutions have been forced to rapidly adapt to online delivery, causing the global adoption of education technology to be accelerated (Ash-Brown, 2021). Therefore, it is valuable to acknowledge international literature – whilst traditionally there may be issues of comparability due to social, cultural and economic differences, many writers offer interesting insights into responses to the pandemic from a broad variety of perspectives.

For example, Teräs et al. (2020) compare the dramatic shift to remote education with Strong's (1990, cited in Teräs et al., 2020), model of epidemic psychology, dubbing it an 'epidemic of action'. Reflecting on my own experience as a teacher at a UK sixth form college, this is an excellent analogy to illustrate the dramatic influx of action taken by education professionals and institutions to continue providing for their students. This mass simultaneous action throughout the sector highlights the temporal nature of research, particularly in the field of education technology. It is essential for me to understand this temporality and the position of my own research within this context and should have a significant impact on the way that I review existing literature in this field. I believe that it is essential to critically consider to what extent research prior to this shift relates to future research, and also to what extent research conducted during the pandemic be generalised outside of these unique circumstances. Presently, I feel that it is too early to speculate constructively on this, however ultimately, the way that I develop my own research proposal and any assumptions that I held pre-pandemic must be critically reviewed.

Prior to the pandemic, my assumption was that we, as teachers, could be harnessing technology much more effectively to enhance learning. Subsequently, it could be argued that the 'epidemic of action' has provided unprecedented, albeit largely involuntary, opportunity for teachers to adopt new practices that they may otherwise not have had the opportunity to explore, thus providing the basis for an extensive amount of action research and supporting my initial methodological ideas. However, as noted previously, it could also be argued that due to the extenuating circumstances of the pandemic, there has been very limited capacity for research and reflection – it has been more action than research. Despite this, some publications have attempted to document these actions. For example, Ferdig et al (2021) curated a series of 'stories from the field', that documents the actions of some education professionals, whilst acknowledging the need for future study;

> *'these 'stories' were not your typical research narratives. In other words, these were not stories that began with a theoretical idea, developed into a research plan, received human subjects research approval, resulted in collected and analysed data, and then were going to be turned into 30-page academic papers. Rather, these were stories of heroes using technology to respond to desperate situations.'* (Ferdig et al., 2021, p. xiii)

Each 'story' was accompanied by an analysis of the potential of each action as an area of future study, showing an abundance of future opportunity within the methodology of action research. Although the use of language such as 'heroes' perhaps presents a 'rose-tinted' perspective, reflecting the bias of this particular publication, it is a useful example of an attempt to provide narrative of the experience of educators during this time. Thus, commenting on such responses more generally, LeFevre (2020, para. 3) proposes that these technological innovations 'should not be misconstrued as representing the field's full potential, but nor are they without value'.

It is interesting to consider if and how this period of enhanced technological innovation might transform the traditional classroom environment, which could provide an interesting direction for my own research. However, despite this significant practical progress, there appears to be a concern surrounding a disparity between education technology and genuine

pedagogical principles. Ahead of the pandemic, there was a widespread call for a critical approach to research in education technology and several papers were published criticising education technology providers for prioritising profit over impact and effectiveness of use within teaching and learning (Williamson, 2020 cited in Teräs et al., 2020). Furthermore, with the emergency adoption of a broad variety of learning technologies due to the pandemic, it could be argued that the tension between education technology and pedagogy has further been exacerbated, as teachers have turned to many technological solutions overnight, with little time or capacity for pedagogical thought, such as creating meaningful learning experiences and effective strategies such as assessment, scaffolding and differentiation. It is exactly for this reason that Teräs et al. (2020, p. 869) suggests that we should 'study the assumption that digital educational technologies offer quick fixes to every possible problem—without further investigation into their intertwining pedagogical, political, social, and individual consequences'.

It seems there is a potential balance to be made, between the ongoing legacy of innovation of the pandemic, and a critical approach in such areas. This balance is reflected in papers such as Thompson and Lodge's '2020 Vision: What happens next in education technology research in Australia' in which researchers attempt to take account of the situation within the broader context of education, and frame the potential future implications of this period. Although this vision refers to the situation in Australia, it provides an interesting account of recent policy, funding and research matters that are feasibly mirrored to some extent in the UK, and demonstrates the wider contextual issues that I should consider within my own approach to research. Over a year since the start of the pandemic, increasing amounts of literature is emerging in these areas and will play an important role in shaping my own research proposal through both socio-economic contextualisation and theoretical underpinning.

Although it is difficult to predict the long-term impacts of this turbulent period, it is broadly speculated that many of the new tools that teachers have adopted for remote learning will continue to be used to some extent (Thompson and Lodge, 2020; Code et al, 2020). This is the most significant reflection that compels me to critically reflect on my initial thoughts around action research as a potential methodology. It is evident that there is capacity for action research to more critically explore the potential of technological interventions that took place during the pandemic and fulfil my initial aims of evaluating the potential of such uses of technology within the traditional learning environment. However, albeit largely reflecting on my own experiences as a practicing teacher, I wonder whether, after an 'epidemic of action', there is an element of fatigue among teachers that may inhibit the potential of action research. Whilst there may be ways of encouraging teachers to engage with action research, these circumstances have inspired me to reflect on my own interests and assumptions. Most significantly, whether my research should aim to drive innovation and adoption of technology to enhance learning, or whether it is perhaps more pertinent to pause and take account of the current situation. Thus, more exploratory methodologies such as ethnography could be interesting avenues to consider as I continue to work towards my full proposal. Overall, this reflection as raised further questions that I presently do not feel able to reasonably answer, however these will certainly shape the next steps as I continue to explore the field and the potential direction of my own research.

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From HMP to PhD. Transformation, Education and Rehabilitation

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Abstract

This article explores my own transition from prisoner to PhD researcher. Drawing on my own experiences, it emphasises the transformative power of education for former offenders more generally. The first part introduces the failure of the UK prison system to offer a rehabilitative experience for offenders and introduces the concept that the label of criminal can have a detrimental effect which lasts far longer than the prison sentence itself. The second part uses my own experiences to demonstrate the power of education in bringing about transformation, with particular emphasis on the development of social and cultural capital. The final part connects my own experiences with the emerging wider debate on the link between education and rehabilitation.

From HMP to PhD. Transformation, Education and Rehabilitation

Prior to embarking on my PhD, I spent a short time in prison for drug supply offences. Now I am a second year PhD student conducting research on East Kent bottom level drug markets. This article offers a personal reflection on the transition I have undergone from offender to academic researcher, and the key role education has played in that journey. Throughout, it draws on the significance of my attendance at University in undergoing my own transition, providing a positive experience which allowed me to shrug off negative labels (Young, 1971) and evolve from somebody who felt like an imposter in the world of academia into a skilled researcher, confident in my own abilities. This reflection emphasises the fact that I'm no longer ashamed of who I was, but am, rather, proud of who I have become and who I may yet still be.

From Outside to Inside. Transitioning to the 'inmate world'

Prison is a surreal experience – from being sent down under the court, through the van ride to the prison, to being booked in and strip searched before arriving in your first night cell. Every set of bars you get locked behind reaffirms that you are no longer in control. The processes are dehumanising and may be understood in relation to Goffman's (1961) 'inmate world', where by the old self is destroyed and your identity replaced with a new one. By the second day you are spat out into the general prison population and you are just another number in the 'human warehouse' (Hardwick, 2015) that is the prison system in England and Wales.

The prison wing is a daunting environment to step into: you cannot hide as there is nowhere to go. Additionally, you must face all the negative assumptions, largely fed to outsiders by a variety of media images, of prison wings as dangerous and violent spaces. These elements do of course exist within prison wings and there is always a degree of tension, but, there is

also some degree of community amongst prisoners. Rather than making prison wings into rehabilitative spaces, however, these communities reflect and reinforce the street cultures many prisoners come from.

Despite the rehabilitation of prisoners being a core part of the prison service's mission statement (MoJ), very few are actually rehabilitated with almost half (46%) of all adult offenders who are imprisoned being reconvicted within one year of leaving prison (MoJ, 2019). Instead of rehabilitating ex-offenders during their incarceration we label them (Young, 1971), with criminal records when they leave. Whilst criminal records may offer the perception of protection to society, they also label ex-offenders as outsiders (Becker, 1966) and act as barriers to employment, which perhaps amplify the pressures to reoffend (Jewkes & Gooch, 2019). These pressures are sometimes dismissed as ex-offenders having a lack of moral fortitude (Wikström, 2012) for failing to resist the temptations of crime. Rather, they should be understood in relation to being shut out of legitimate employment due to the stigma (Goffman, 1963) attached to criminal records (Jewkes & Gooch, 2019), which extends punishment far beyond the sentence handed down. Therefore, not only does the 'inmate world' destroy one's old identity and remould a new identity (Goffman, 1961), the criminal record attached to prisoners maintains and reinforces this new identity outside of prison in legitimate spaces and inhibits re-entry to society.

From the Inside to the Outside. Criminal Records, Rehabilitation and Re-entry

Many ex-offenders also perform other roles which come with their own pressures and expectations and become harder to meet without a job. In my own experience, for example, my criminal record limited my chances of being employed at a time I was desperate to support my young family. After a year of consistently being either rejected for or not hearing back from jobs, and feeling almost out of options, I enrolled at college and then continued on to university. I completed an access course with full marks, graduated with a first class degree in Sociology and Philosophy, and won a prestigious ESCR 3+1 scholarship for a Masters and PhD.

In the 8 years I have spent back in education I have had opportunities that I didn't think were possible when I first left prison. I have taught classes, spoken at conferences, designed a successful research proposal, and am now in the process of publishing my findings. Unlike criminal records and prison wings, educational courses and campuses have opened the door to meaningful opportunities in a supportive and wholesome environment which have allowed me to upskill and increase my life chances. My qualifications and academic successes have provided me with the social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) that allows prospective employers to see past my labelling as a criminal.

Whilst I do not plan to return to prison, I do not think this should be attributed to deterrence theory (Beccaria, 1963; Bentham, 1948) which conceptualises the experience of prison as a way of discouraging criminal behaviour. For me personally, it is not the experience of the prison that deters me from reoffending, but rather the meaningful opportunity provided by the educational institutions I have engaged with, combined with the support from my partner

and the purpose I have found in our young family. Whilst the pressures of life never go away, the capital (Bourdieu, 1986) at my disposable to tackle them now provides a clear path to a brighter future with an abundance of possibilities. The prison estate can take no credit for this. Nor can my criminal record which has only made it harder. Neither the prison estate or my criminal record rehabilitated me or encouraged this education path. Therefore, I will not be chalked up as an easy victory for deterrence theory, the prison estate or the CJS.

Education as a Passport for All, Even those who made a Mistake

My experiences of educational pathways as a means of rehabilitation are reflected in an emerging debate about the importance of education in rehabilitating offenders. Coates' (2016) work, titled Unlocking Potential A review of education in prison, identifies the benefits of continued educational courses after prison. Farley and Pike (2016) also discuss how engaging prisoners in educational courses reduces recidivism rates countering the link between illiteracy, innumeracy and offending (Natale, 2010). However, it is not just basic courses which prisoners show a desire to engage in with: a fifth of prisoners report wanting to engage in higher education courses (Coates, 2016). In fact, Earle and Mehigan's (2019) book, Degrees of Freedom, documents the successes of the open university and provides personal testimonies of a growing number of prisoners who, like me, have been revitalised via educational pursuits rather than the prison system.

Building on this discussion, I propose that instead of sending offenders through cycles of short sentences in prison environments we send them back to 'school', of some sorts, so that they might pursue meaningful opportunities and increase their life chances outside of crime. Currently even the basic literacy rate amongst prisoners is low (MOJ, 2019). 49 percent of people in prison have been permanently excluded from school (Natale, 2010). Although, prisons do offer educational and vocational courses, these are limited in number or at a basic level (Coates, 2016) and struggle to achieve their goals especially with short sentence offenders (Natale, 2010). Not only are ex-offenders shut out of the job market due to their criminal records, but many are also shut out due to their lack of qualifications or opportunity to pursue meaningful upskilling due to a lack of capital gained whilst incarcerated (Bourdieu, 1986).

Educational institutions recruiting directly from court rooms may seem like a radical idea, but the prison population is a pool of untapped potential waiting to be realised. We, as a society, must be more creative than criminal records in our attempts to keep society safe from ex-offenders and be bolder in rehabilitating what we perceive as lost causes and finally embrace education as a 'passport to the future' (Malcom X, 1964), even for those who made a mistake. The turnaround is possible, given the chance, and I hope my transformation from prisoner to PhD researcher serves as testament to that.

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Transformational junctures during my fieldwork

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Introduction

For me, transformation is a necessary part of overcoming difficulties. It can have both positive and negative dimensions, on the one hand, it brings possibilities, on the other hand, there are many sufferings and struggles during the process. This past year has been characterised by uncertainty and fear. As a postgraduate researcher I feel that opportunities and challenges coexist in the transformation to an increasingly digital world, particularly for ethnographers for whom being in the field is central methodologically.

My research is about middle-class schooling anxiety in Shanghai, China and how it impacts discussions about motherhood in online communities. My fieldwork originally involved three months online participant observation via WeChat[1] (in Norwich, UK), two months in-person interviews (in Shanghai, China), and a month participatory research activity (in Shanghai, China). However, before I had finalised my research proposal and obtained ethical approval, the whole country (UK) went into lockdown and consequently I had to revise my ideas about fieldwork. This led to encountering two main challenges: first, the interviews would have to be conducted virtually and I was not sure if the participatory workshops would go ahead; second, my relationship with respondents might be impacted and limited in an internet-only environment. In the following reflection, I share some practical issues and personal feelings that accompanied these transformational junctures, especially the changes in my relationships with respondents in a purely digital world.

Transformation in the local fieldwork

After an online probationary review my PhD life switched to an internet-only version. I'm lucky enough to have chosen in the early stages of my research to identify my 'field' as both online and offline as the focus of my observation is online communities. Nonetheless, as an ethnographer, the realisation that I might not be able to meet my participants was sobering. I began to wonder about the extent to which my ideas about fieldwork would have to change as my plans no longer aligned themselves with traditional fieldwork. Shanghai is the context of my research and I was going to do the fieldwork there, so Shanghai was my 'field', wasn't it? But my research also involves online communities, and I would be spending three months (or more) engaged in online participant observation, so then weren't these online communities my 'field' too? This idea comforted me: at least I would still be going into the 'field', albeit virtually.

The following months were not as painful as I feared. The online participant observation in the WeChat groups went well (from June to September 2020) and I decided to conduct virtual interviews by WeChat message through a smartphone during October 2020 from the UK. The move to the online environment was straightforward in that observations had already been planned as virtual and interviewing online was not too difficult. It was more like experiencing,

[1] WeChat is a Chinese multi-purpose messaging, social media and mobile payment app developed by Tencent. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WeChat

feeling, and observing participants' daily life through a smartphone.

I was more anxious about the third stage of my fieldwork which was to involve three participatory workshops in Shanghai. I felt I should return to China as soon as possible. However, in October 2020 a no in-person fieldwork policy was still in place at my University. I applied for a concession due to exceptional circumstances, but my application was refused. At this point it seemed that I would have to either organise virtual workshops or give up the third stage of my fieldwork. After discussions with my supervisors, I decided I could not relinquish the in-person participatory activities. My research is intended to include practical support for mothers as they navigate the worries and concerns around their children's education. In this sense the face-to-face workshops are an essential element in my research's intended impact. I envisaged that the face-to-face participatory workshops would help mothers explore different ways to deal with or lessen anxieties and difficulties; I saw it as providing a space for my participants to find practical solutions.

It was taking so long to get permission to carry out fieldwork that I decided to take annual leave instead and seek fieldwork approval once I was home. Daily life in China by then had returned to normal. I completed the forms and resubmitted them to the postgraduate office whilst in quarantine in Guangzhou (my landing city). I then spent a miserable month filled with the anxiety that my research fieldwork would not be approved.

Finally, in March 2021 I conducted three participatory action workshops in Shanghai. Card sorting, problem trees, and solution circle methods were used to explore the mothers' perceptions on schooling, gender division, and self-development, to discuss the possibilities of lessening their pressures and anxieties. The process of inviting respondents to meet in person and join a group discussion was not easy, but I am pleased that I insisted on doing so. About a month after the workshops one participant reflected, 'I was relieved that we talked about fathers' participation…my husband began to take our child out alone. On one occasion, I just went out leaving my husband in charge while our child got on with homework'. It seems that the participatory action workshops had helped the mothers take actions and make changes in their lives.

Transformations in relationships with respondents

The primary aim of the online participant observation was to help me familiarise myself with the online community, to find potential respondents, and to formulate interview questions. The observation certainly fulfilled these aims: WeChat groups can only be joined by invitation, so the group managers are powerful gatekeepers. I had to secure their permissions before engaging in any research-related actions in the groups. With the group manager's permission, I posted information about me and my research and then was able to recruit several respondents by adding them as contacts on WeChat. My online observation therefore not only led to group chatting but also gave me access to individual posts. It was easy to start a conversation (via WeChat message) based on daily posts. Most mothers were willing to share their perceptions and personal stories on a specific topic. WeChat conversations consist of texts, pictures, and emojis that make conversations far more informal and 'intimate' compared to even the most unstructured interview. Also, online chatting is flexible enough

to suit mothers' schedules. These asynchronous conversations (Mann, 2016) were particularly convenient given that we were in different time zones (O'Connor et al, 2008). Participants could reply to messages at their convenience and had more time to think about their answers (Mann, 2016).

Most of the time, I did not contact my participants, focusing instead on what they posted about their daily lives. My 'likes' and 'comments' were usually ignored but I felt that it was important to use these functions as a way of showing my attention and care in this digital world. An exception was Sui a particularly friendly and talkative participant who, as well as being a mother, was a teacher in a private institution. I decided to ask her for a digital semi-structured interview. She agreed and a few days later, through WeChat audio call we talked about the marketing of education and her perceptions regarding the drivers of parental anxieties. After the interview, we kept in touch as before – interacting through informal posts. One day in January 2021, she sent a message asking for a conversation, 'nothing about your research but just talking'. I was on the phone with her for about 120 minutes. I heard a story full of frustration and helplessness and I had no idea how to respond. I suddenly felt out of my depth. The experience led me to reflect on what participants might need or come to expect from me and what I could offer.

I realised that some participants – like Sui – simply wanted a good listener. As a mother, she had no one to turn to who had the time to listen to her properly, someone who would pay attention to her worries and challenges and could provide emotional support. For many, online communities do provide this support to some extent, but that afternoon Sui clearly saw me as a familiar stranger who could listen without being emotionally involved.

What I later discovered was that this friendly openness and willingness to share was very much confined to the online environment. I came to realise that the anonymity it provides may be a key element to its popularity. When I started my participatory action research in Shanghai, I invited Sui to meet me in person, no recording, just an informal chat. I thought she would be happy to have tea with me but to my surprise she politely refused my invitation. On reflection I realised that she probably was uncomfortable about the idea of seeing me in 'real life' after having shared those personal stories and 'secrets'. I decided to back off and continue to simply be a 'net-friend'.

Now, Sui is still a participant rather than friend but this kind of relationship feels more natural and friendly than the traditional researcher-participant mode. The experience with Sui helped me to feel less worried about how far a researcher should/can go with participants, recognising that participants have their own agency and that the boundaries of these relationships are co-constructed in this sense.

Conclusion

The changes in my research space were unexpected, jumping from participant observation in the online community to face to face workshops with the participants in Shanghai, and then back to the online world. Also, my role as a researcher has changed several times, from a stranger to researcher, as a net-friend, then back to researcher. These changes have

transformed my relationship with participants and with my research and have highlighted the need to continue to be flexible in how I position myself and participants, online and offline.

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Sentio community, Issue 3

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