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EDITORIAL NOTE

HUGH BRODY

Permanence and Transition: Anthropological Perspectives

The 2015 Conference of the Anthropological Association of Ireland, held at the University of Cork, was a remarkable celebration of Irish anthropology and the immense range of work being done by Irish anthropologists. It was an honour for me to be invited to give a keynote address and then be able to be part of the audience, discussion and flow of the conference. This was intellectually compelling – the papers I heard and the anthropologists I met were inspiring. For reasons that lay outside the conference itself, this was also a deeply moving experience: I was making a return to Ireland after an absence of more than thirty years. And it was close to fifty years since I had lived in Ireland as an anthropologist. The theme of the conference – Permanence and Transition – had a particular resonance. My work had begun in villages on the west coast of Ireland, had led from there to communities in the High Arctic, the North Pacific Coast and thence to Indian and, over the past fifteen years, to, southern Africa. Many kinds of professional and personal transition. Yet, being back in Ireland, hearing again the voice and themes of Irish anthropology, I was led to a series of thoughts about permanence – of underlying preoccupation, forms of curiosity and a distinctive kind of moral commitment. Life can conceal some of its unifying forces and factors beneath storms of change. This is an insight that comes of course from both anthropology and being an anthropologist; but it is also a feature of human memory, the internal stories by which we are shaped and with which spend so much of our internal lives.

In his article here [see page 72] Kieran Keohane describes our visit to Allihies, the village where I spent time as a young anthropologist. He also refers to Inishkillane (the book that grew out of my research in the west of Ireland) and to the possible thread that runs from that first piece of work through much that followed. I moved away from the anthropology of Ireland in 1971, feeling the pull of a very different kind of culture, history and field work; and feeling, also, the push from the intellectual exhaustion and sense of inner confinement that can swamp the last stages of making a book from a mass of notes. In all these ways I welcomed a long leap from the anthropology of the small farm at the western edge of Europe to discovery of the immense landscapes and hunting communities of the northern tip of Canada. I was seeking – and in a way – trusting to a definitive transition. And of course it was there to be found: a language to learn that had not a trace of Indo-European grammar, a way of being in the world that looked to ideology and everyday practice that were so wonderfully opposite to any I had lived with before and a geography that was wild and open and, above all, not shaped by generations of agricultural labour. All that I had worked with and within up to that point became a set of reference points or a framework within which to establish all that struck me as so distinctive, as so different. Different from what of course is the question this invites and which suggests that transition – however much it might be seized upon – is not going to be into the dark; the illumination of where I had worked before, the very fields and pubs of the west of Ireland, shone its crucial lights wherever I might go. I walked again along the main street of Allihies, stood in the bar where, fifty years before, I had listened to the beautiful sounds and yet poignant narratives that were the voices of the men who leant there and told me about their complicated lives, met again with
some of those I had known so long ago and stood by the strand below the village and heard the sea as it had always been. Every bit of it so familiar, so embedded within me; as if I had never been away. As if there was no such thing as time, and the distance between Allihies and the north tip of Baffin Island had collapsed.

This sense of no time or geography perhaps revealed how intense and important those experiences of the west of Ireland had been for me. Or may also reveal, more importantly, that for all the journeys anthropologists may make and for all the shifts I had found in my work – moving from one ‘field’ to another – there were profound ways in which I had remained in the same place. And this may be a first and elemental realisation about permanence: there is, like it or not, a set of baseline or benchmark ideas about human history and even the human condition that come from some original and formative experience. This cannot be dodged. Even with that essential insight of the young Marx – there is no such thing as human nature, only the creations of human society – the mind proceeds by way of comparison, through the tension and then the findings of our surprise. From this, or beyond this, there was for me, at the growing centre of my work, a more complicated realisation about the anthropology I was becoming committed to, at the supposed margins of colonial powers or dominating industrial economies, in places where new kinds of change were flowing from issues of domination and subordination. The more I worked at these troubled margins, the further I journeyed into the history of people who had to deal so much in their subordination; the more I linked the anthropology I did with the needs and the rights of those who were being so acutely disadvantaged. Losses of heritage, language, resources, land, even the right to life (I was later to find myself deep in the history of both Australia and southern Africa). These became the themes of my work, because they were what I had been steeped in, was taught, and told about and in which, again and again, as I did research in homes and communities at various colonial frontiers, I saw being revealed in everyday life.

When I was living and working in Ireland, there were powerful storms of history breaking through the communities along the west coast. The most important part of my research came from the detailed analysis of each household in one parish, supported by the stories men and women in some of these households told me about the more troubled and most personal part of their lives. To document this was the only way of doing justice to this work and, I thought at the time, to do right by those who had let me know about their difficulties. It turned out that to publish this, even with names changed and geography obfuscated, was to cause grief to some of those I had known best. I have always regretted this, yet I also always thought that my wish to speak to the real, and, in so doing, to identify some of the destructive forces at work in the wake of a particular history, was to honour those who had spoken to me of their pain. As Kieran Keohane says in his account of our journey together to Allihies and his generous reflections on my work, ‘ethical ethnography can empower and enable people and communities on the margins by illuminating the dignity inherent in all of the varieties and modalities of the human family.’ Perhaps I can push this thought one step further: all ethnography, all social anthropology, must include long and careful listening to what those we have chosen to live among most want to tell us. And if this includes, as it so often does, intense and often despairing concern about loss of all that has seemed to them to make life secure or meaningful, then our obligation, as anthropologists, as the messengers from there to here, from the frontiers to the centres of political and economic power, is to hear and to carry with us what we have heard. In the course of history, we are all to be judged by what we choose not to act upon, and the times we
choose to be silent. Anthropology can very often be the discipline, the form of human inquiry, the life choice where this kind of judgment can be of special relevance.

My impression is that the new generation of anthropologists understands this as well as, if not better than, my generation did. Many discussions with those who were at the conference in Cork, and whose work is celebrated in this issue of the Irish Journal of Anthropology, reminded me of this crucial continuity in anthropology. I give many thanks to all who made the conference, this issue of the Journal, and those who so generously invited me to return to the west of Ireland. In particular, special thanks to the conference organisers, James Cuffe, Fiona Larkan, Ioannis Tsioulakis and David Murphy. And deep gratitude to Kieran Keohane for leading me back to Allihies and making sure that our time there was a return to the heartlands of the world and the ideas we turned out to share in so many profound ways. I also want to offer special thanks to Anne, Jimmy and ‘Mitey’ McNally for welcoming me to their home in Allihies and, with such grace and generosity, reminding me of all that I had loved in the west of Ireland and all that I had carried from there into the rest of my life. This was the best possible lesson in the importance of both permanence and transition.

GENERAL EDITOR’S INTRODUCTION

JAMES CUFFE

It is a great pleasure for me to thank Hugh on behalf of the Anthropological Association of Ireland for speaking to our 2015 conference and for so generously giving his time while in attendance. Our 2015 conference saw great interest with scholars attending from distant shores. As always it is an opportunity to see work from our friends and colleagues on the island and indeed further afield and we offer a small selection of the conference papers here.

I will take this opportunity to congratulation Fiona Larkan as incoming chair of the AAI and also to welcome Dr. Lidia Guzy on board the IJA team as Associate Editor. This is a time for the AAI to go through a process of defining the journal’s future ambitions. I warmly welcome input from our membership on suggestions as to whether the journal should move solely online or remain in both print and digital format. There are also ongoing debates whether the journal should move to a publishing house or if it is better to remain independent. These are important considerations and should be heartily discussed by members whenever the occasion might arise and I welcome feedback on these matters.

I also warmly thank Hugh for his role as guest editor in this issue of the Irish Journal of Anthropology. In addition to the conference papers showcased here we have two topical articles in our regular sections Comment On: The Geopolitics of Ebola and Global Health Security and Interview With: Professor Thomas Hylland Eriksen in an engaging conversation on the state of Anthropology in Europe today. Enjoy.

Again thanks to the whole IJA team without whose Sisyphean efforts these contributions to the anthropological community of Ireland cannot be made
Hugh Brody
Hugh Brody is a renowned British anthropologist, writer and film-maker. He taught at Queens University Belfast and conducted seminal ethnographic work in Irish anthropology. He is an Honorary Associate at the Scott Polar Research Institute at the University of Cambridge, and holds a Canada Research Chair at the University of the Fraser Valley. His career spans five decades of work in a wide range of cultures, making contributions to the anthropological literature, developing the anthropological basis for indigenous land rights and directing many documentary films. His publications include: Inishkillane: Change and Decline in the West of Ireland, The People’s Land, Maps and Dreams and The Other side of Eden.

Fiona Larkan
Fiona Larkan is a Medical Anthropologist with a particular interest in the social aspects of HIV and Chronic Illness in Ireland and South Africa. Her PhD focused on Sexuality, Risk and Choice in middle class communities in South Africa and Ireland. Based at the Centre for Global Health, Trinity College Dublin, as Director of the MSc Global Health, Fiona is also affiliated with the School of Public Health at University of the Western Cape in South Africa.

Caroline Ryan
Caroline Ryan is a doctoral researcher at the Centre for Global Health, Trinity College Dublin and lecturer in the Department of Veterinary Medicine at University of Rwanda with a specialization in Veterinary Medicine, One Health and Global Health. Her research interests include the globalization of emerging infectious diseases, specifically examining the dynamics between the global and the local from the perspective of the latter.

Sebastian Kevany
Sebastian Kevany has conducted over 100 missions to Africa, the Middle East, and South-East Asia, with a particular focus on conflict and post-conflict settings, conducting program evaluation, diplomatic alignment, and other representative duties. Sebastian holds BA and MA degrees from Trinity College Dublin, an MPH degree from the University of Cape Town, and is an international policy specialist at the University of California, San Francisco.

Sindy Joyce
Sindy Joyce is a PhD student in the Department of Sociology, University of Limerick. She is the module coordinator and lecturer in ‘Travellers, Rights and Nomadism’ and ‘Travellers, Ethnicity and Rights’ in University College Dublin with the School of Social Justice. She is a recipient of the 2014 Traveller Pride Award for Education. Her PhD title is Minkiers Siúladh: An ethnographic study of young Travellers’ experiences of urban space. Sindy’s publications include: 2013: Seminar Review of ’Imogen Tyler: Revolting subjects: eviction and occupation in neoliberal Britain’, Socheolas: Limerick student of sociology, 5(1),

Noelle Mann
Noelle Mann is a doctoral candidate at the Department of English, Trinity College, Dublin. Her thesis 'Music in the Glen: Traveller Culture and Song' explores the cultural significance of music to Irish and Scottish Travellers, as described in their memoirs and song compositions. She is funded by the Irish Research Council.

Samuel Ward
Samuel is a Ph.D. student at the Institute of Cognition and Culture, Queen’s University Belfast. He holds a B.A. in Social Anthropology, and an M.A. in Cognition and Culture, both from Queen’s. Samuel is interested in how different forms of organised, embodied action, such as ritual and ceremony, facilitate sustainable, cohesive and co-operative communities. While this has obvious relevance to the Anthropology of Religion, Samuel also
maintains an interest in how said structured actions may manifest, and are utilised, within modern and secular societies.

Wanting Wu
Wanting Wu received her MA's from both Minzu University, China and Queen's University Belfast, both with distinction. Currently, she is a PhD Candidate and Dance instructor at the School of History and Anthropology Department, Queen's University Belfast. Her research interests include Dance, Tibetan Migration and Refugees in Europe, Conflict Transformation and China study. Her paper has been recently published in the Queen's political review in April 2015.

Sean O'Dubghaill
Sean O’Dubghaill is a Doctoral Researcher in Anthropology at K. U. Leuven, from Ireland, with a special interest in the Irish immigrant community in Brussels, as well as the Irish Diaspora generally.

Silvia Brandi
Silvia Brandi has a background in Ancient Classics and Journalism. She currently teaches Social Policy and Social Theory with the Higher Diploma in Social Policy at the School of Applied Social Studies, UCC. Her research interests verge around the notions of ‘race’, racism, ethnicity, culture, identity, discourse and the related social phenomena and issues. Her studies include a Critical Discourse Analytical interrogation of the 2004 Irish Citizenship Referendum. More recently, in 2013 she concluded her PhD dissertation ‘The intra-Traveller debate on ‘Traveller ethnicity’: A Critical Discourse Analysis’.

Kieran Keohane
Kieran Keohane is senior lecturer and Head of Department in Sociology at the National University of Ireland, Cork (UCC). He has taught at the universities of York, Toronto; Carleton, Ottawa and Trent. He is author of Symptoms of Canada: An Essay on the Canadian Identity (University of Toronto Press), with Carmen Kuhling he authored Collision Cultures (The Liffey Press, 2004), Cosmopolitan Ireland (Pluto, 2007) and Domestic, Moral and Political Economies (Manchester University Press, 2014). With Anders Petersen he is the editor of The Social Pathologies of Contemporary Civilisation (Ashgate, 2013).

Thomas Hylland Eriksen
Thomas Hylland Eriksen is currently Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Oslo, as well as the 2015-2016 President of the European Association of Social Anthropologists. He has for many years studied, and written about, identity politics, ethnicity, nationalism and globalisation from a comparative perspective, frequently with an ethnographic focus on Mauritius and Trinidad. He has also published popular books, polemical books and essays on cultural complexity in Norway. He is also PI of the ERC Advanced Grant project ‘Overheating: The three crises of globalisation’, which studies local responses to accelerated change.

Elżbieta Drążkiewicz—Grodzicka
Elżbieta Drążkiewicz-Grodzicka studies development, globalization, relations of power and bureaucracy. She obtained her PhD from the University of Cambridge based on her dissertation 'An Emergent Donor? The case of Polish developmental involvement in Africa', funded by the Cambridge Gates Trust. Dr. Drążkiewicz-Grodzicka is currently a Marie Curie Fellow working at the Maynooth University (Ireland) Anthropology Department. Her most recent project concerns development cooperation between the Second and the Third World at the time of the Cold War.
COMMENT ON

THE GEOPOLITICS OF EBOLA AND GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY: WHY ANTHROPOLOGY MATTERS

BY FIONA LARKAN*, CAROLINE RYAN, SEBASTIAN KEVANY

Introduction
The combination of an exceptionalised disease, fragile health systems and a failure of global health leadership and governance constituted a perfect storm for the spread of Ebola in West Africa. In this heightened sense of emergency, a shift in global health securitization has occurred, which should not go unnoticed or unchallenged. Globally mediated epidemics are highly political and anthropologists are uniquely placed to interrogate the geopolitics of Ebola and global health security.

The outbreak of Ebola in three West African countries has raised the worldwide profile of this zoonotic infectious disease to an unparalleled level. No previous Ebola outbreak spread so widely; the previous 24 epidemics remained within national borders and were never reported to have killed more than 300 people (Lancet Ebola Resource Centre, 2014). International responses to the West African Ebola outbreak have elicited a wide range of responses – not all positive, some openly critical – and much hyperbole.

Only 3% of World Health Organisation (WHO) non-support staff have the non-medical skills (e.g. law, diplomacy, trade, economics and anthropology) required for epidemic preparedness (Gostin & Friedman, 2015). Clearly anthropology can contribute to understanding outbreaks in terms of customs and practices and local responses to disease (Hewlett & Amola, 2003; Hewlett & Hewlett, 2007). Following a One-Health approach, anthropologists have also explored the extent to which human-animal-environment interactions (Brown & Kelly 2015) and hunting practices (Wolfe et al, 2000; Saez et al, 2014) are central to the emergence of zoonotic diseases. Indeed because of this, anthropology also has a significant role to play in reviewing and critiquing the repercussions of Ebola on international politics and international relations.

The Perfect Storm
Exceptionalisation of Ebola

The framing of a disease as exceptional or unique from other diseases (and therefore warranting exceptional response) has vast, often problematic, consequences. As evidenced by AIDS exceptionalism, 30 years of targeted interventions has been criticised for shifting resources disproportionally away from endemic diseases and health system strengthening (Smith & Whiteside, 2010), and for contributing to the problem of stigma and self-stigma (Cameron 2006, Kelly 2006) in low income contexts. Infectious diseases (widely referred to as ‘emerging infectious diseases’), and include the inappropriately named haemorrhagic viruses, such as Ebola. The
haemorrhagic term stems from a westernized, media-hyped image surrounding the gastrointestinal haemorrhagic clinical symptoms, sometimes seen towards the late stages of the disease. However the more apt and recently applied title, Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) has not normalized the exceptional image of Ebola. Portrayed as an uncontrollable threat, particularly to the westernized nations, EVD is viewed as one of the greatest threats to global security warranting co-ordinated global action (Kalra et al., 2014). In 2015 that global action took the form of military deployment by donor countries in West Africa.

Bass (1998), Bennett & Edelman (1985) Sontag (1989) and Wald (2008) have all documented the consequences of consistent and stereotypically negative narratives of a disease. By fashioning an account around a priori assumptions,

‘history seems clear and undeniable because the analytical perspective has made it so [...] leaving the psychological impression that one is experiencing reality-driven objectivity’ (Bennett & Edelman, 1985:162).

Sontag (1989:141) observed that ‘from class fiction to the latest journalism, the standard plague story is of inexorability, inescapability’. Bass (1998:446) argues that this ‘hegemonic residue of imperial 'contamination' remains embedded in our culture’.

Thus, along with a ‘disease-knows-no-borders’ rhetoric, this move toward securitised response strategies has emerged from a concept of ‘universal consensus’. Granted, the concept of universality in terms of collaboration and sharing resources to resolve major global challenges is hard to challenge. However targeting responses to Ebola from the perspective of containment in terms of securitization, and placing such response strategies at the top of the global health agenda, may support a ‘universal consensus’ that in Connell’s (2007) words represents ‘the views of the most privileged 600 million assuming the same views are experienced by the whole 6000 million who are actually in the world’.

Fragile Health Systems:
The high mortality from Ebola in this instance is in part due to inadequate health systems and lack of resources (Boozary, Farmer & Jha, 2014)- problems that will continue to challenge these three West African governments when the outbreak is contained. Edelstein, Anglides & Heymann, (2015) detail some of the challenges that are already being observed - decreased vaccination coverage for infectious diseases (including measles); a disruption to HIV, TB and Malaria programmes, and the loss of more than 800 health workers from an already depleted health workforce. The focus on Ebola at the expense of other health programmes has resulted in an increase in the rates of other treatable diseases including respiratory viruses, diarrhoea, Lassa fever, malaria (Lancet Ebola Resource Centre, 2014). And this does not begin to explore the economic, social, and psychological impact of the outbreak which will also have repercussions for many years to come.

Failure of Global Health Leadership and Governance
It is clear that global health leadership failed West Africa in this instance (Farrar & Piot 2014, Gostin & Friedman 2014, 2015, Horton, 2015, Rosling 2015, Boozary et al 2014). The early response was left to national governments of the three most affected countries – Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia – which are amongst the world’s lowest ranking countries in terms of the Human Development Index; none had the capacity or
infrastructure to respond to the worsening crisis.

The WHO over the past decade has reduced its core budget, and the bulk of its remaining budget is project/programme driven, with relatively little core budget to respond quickly to situations such as Ebola (Rosling 2015). Despite the establishment by the WHO in 2005, of a legally binding governing legal framework – the International Health Regulations – there is no coordinated, funded commitment to countries with reduced capacity to comply with the regulations (Wilson, Brownstein & Fidler, 2010). Global health governance is shown to be an ‘ad hoc series of institutions, laws and strategies that do not function as a coherent whole’ (Gostin & Friedman 2015:1903). In the vacuum created by the lack of clear leadership we saw a shift in power from the WHO to the UN in the form of a UN Mission (UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response – UNMEER) which, as Boozary et al (2014) point out, gained more support than any resolution since the founding of the United Nations in 1946.

Global Health Security

The West African Ebola outbreak, constituted a serious crisis for the people of West Africa, not for the world. It was without doubt a humanitarian emergency that merited international support and assistance. However the securitization and militarization that followed should not go unnotice or unchallenged.

While the idea of Global Health ‘security’ has been in existence for some time, in recent years this has increasingly been shaped by the war on terror (Collier et al, 2004). Ingram (2005) explores the origin of the structure and dynamics of the security discourse, and its shift from the paradigmatic case of war. Extending the security discourse to other realms he argues, ‘risks mis-stating the nature of the problem, rendering ‘security’ analytically fuzzy, or calling forth inappropriate state involvement’ (2005: 524). Global health security thus becomes extraordinary, or outside the frame of ‘normal politics’. The decision to introduce forces (in a civil defence capacity) might seem attractive, even understandable, advantages include the productive and humanitarian employment of personnel and equipment otherwise designed for destructive purposes and the increased integration between international development and broader international affairs and relations under the ‘smart global health’ (CSIS, n.d.) paradigm. However, the ‘norm of preparedness’ (Lakoff, 2008) which shapes, and structures, the Emergency Response discourse and strategies has ongoing consequences for global health and involves ‘the migration of techniques initially developed in the military and civil defense to other areas of governmental intervention’ (2008:422). The concern here is while the key to preparedness would undoubtedly be a robust health system in each country, that goal is being usurped by preparedness for an ‘emergency response’. The best possible form of preparedness would be a combination of long-term, well resourced health systems in-country and strong global health governance structure.3

Of particular concern is the manner in which donor countries, such as the United States and European Union member states (including the Republic of Ireland), dispatched military forces on the basis of an ‘emergency response’ – on the basis that armed forces are considered to have the most well-developed capacity to respond to epidemic outbreaks that threaten health security in a way that the more lumbering, bureaucratic structures of the United Nations and other supranational
and multilateral organizations could never hope to do.

This interface between societal, political and medical forces is where anthropology should situate itself. How have recipient and other severely-affected societies been affected by the international response? To what extent have issues of national sovereignty and independence been jeopardized by the occupation of international armed forces in West Africa? How are legislative, diplomatic and organizational structures developed and maintained – often at very short notice – to govern such measures? How are local communities affected? And, perhaps most importantly, what precedent does this set on an international level? Could the incumbent Russian government, for example, employ similar measures – on the basis of national security – in response to perceived or actual disease outbreaks in the Ukraine?

In the 21st Century, security concerns – including specific elements such as global health security – tend to trump all other considerations, including the diplomatic, the societal, the medical, the political and (given the costs of securitization) the economic. Similarly, at the individual, community and national population levels, these concerns may have eroded other priorities. The gains are manifold; including diversification of military roles, greater resource allocation to global health, and tangible increases in human security. But what are the costs, most particularly at the societal and cultural levels? The imposition of global health security measures, including surveillance, the employment of health service provision from outside the national health system without an official mandate, and the associated disempowerment of the individual in related policy decisions all stand to erode social and political empowerment in developing countries. In order for future interventions comparable to the Ebola response to be successful, the employment of anthropological perspectives and preparations are therefore essential.

Conclusion

The combination of disease exceptionalism, fragile health systems and a failure of global health governance has contributed to a shift in power in global health emergency responses, and the setting of unfortunate precedents. The overlap between military forces and global health initiatives is not limited, as one might imagine, to global ‘superpowers’. In conjunction with the global response, the Irish Department of Defence deployed 4 personnel to the United Kingdom’s Ebola treatment centre in Sierra Leone in 2015. Although the recent involvement of the Irish Navy in the European migrant crisis does not transgress international sovereign borders, these efforts provide a further compelling example of the armed forces’ enhanced role in health and humanitarian endeavors – with a specific focus on emergency responses – in the 21st Century.

For better or for worse, the precedent has been set for the militarization of such interventions. The question that both the global health and anthropological communities will face is whether to embrace or steadfastly oppose these changing remits and purviews. If the former, the articulation of a set of standards or guidelines, jointly developed by civil society, the military, and the global health community, governing the boundaries of military involvement in global health efforts according to ‘diplomatic’ standards, should be articulated. It is not enough for Western powers to mobilize responses to resource poor settings and withdraw once the crisis is overcome. Failure to build up strong health systems will
inevitably lead to additional crises in the future, and require further rapid (and costly) intervention

References


The process of (in this case) supranational and international actors transforming subjects into matters of ‘security’, thus enabling extraordinary means to be used in the name of security.

United Nations Human Development Index ranks Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia at 183rd, 179th and 175th respectively on a scale of 187 (UNDP, 2013)

One of the few good reviews the US military received in this regard was the construction of long-term health clinics – however these are often un-used because of parameters on treatment.

The West African Ebola Viral Disease (EVD) situation:

As of 12th August 2015 WHO reports 27,929 total cases (Suspected, Probable, and Confirmed) of this strain of Ebola subtype ZEBV (CDC 2014, Baize et al 2014, Kalra et al 2014), with total deaths recorded as 11,283. Guinea and Sierra Leone continue to have new cases though the trend is downward. Liberia, has been declared Ebola-free. The WHO situation report of 10th June 2015 states 'case incidence has been below 10 confirmed cases per week for three consecutive weeks, but there remains a significant risk of further transmission and an increase in case incidence in the near and medium term'.

ARTICLE

DIVIDED SPACES: AN EXAMINATION OF EVERYDAY RACISM AND ITS IMPACT ON YOUNG TRAVELLERS’ SPATIAL MOBILITY

BY SINDY JOYCE

Abstract: This research builds upon the understanding that our relationships to space are mediated through our social and cultural identities. It draws on Michel De Certeau’s theory of the use of ‘tactics’ to counteract the dominant ‘strategies’ used to control and regulate the movement of Irish Travellers. The theoretical literature provides a contextual framework for an analysis of the limited spatial practices of young Travellers. Racial boundaries exist that are socially constructed and are policed and governed in order to control and tighten their spatial mobility. The study highlights the veracity with which young Travellers are severely restricted in their movements.

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Introduction
In contemporary society, the spatial mobility of young people in general has been circumscribed by restrictions and regulations placed on their movement as a consequence of stereotypes associating them with unpredictability and irresponsibility (see for example Devlin 2005 and 2006; Cohan 1980; Falchikov 1986; Giddens 1993 and Griffen 2004). Specific groups of young people are further constrained in their use of space as a consequence of perceived risks and restrictions resulting from the status of their particular ethnic, religious, racialized and gender identities (see for example Leonard 2007, Nayak 2003, Black 2005 and Hopkins 2007). The European Union’s ‘freedom of movement’ principle is central to the theme of security and justice for all EU citizens. However, not all citizens have equal opportunities to move freely. Lefebvre’s (1968) work on the ‘right to the city’ concentrates on the ‘right to difference’ whereby respect and celebration for social diversity is essential for basic citizenship rights. The historical on-going regulation against Travellers’ nomadic movements in Ireland has resulted in limited spatial mobility which affects life chances and opportunities. Restrictions placed on movement are excessive; for example occurring via a process of linking Travellers to criminality; it is now a criminal act to camp in public space (see the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002).

It is generally recognised and accepted that Travellers are the most marginalised community in Ireland (see McVeigh 2007). In terms of spatial mobility, the process of
exclusion has socially produced a Traveller image as undesirable, thus, it has become essential for authority (government, urban planners and policing

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Table 1: Boys Chart

bodies) to have their spatial mobility controlled. For example, in 1998, Fine Gael County Councillor John Flannery indefensibly suggested that Travellers can be compared to ‘pedigree dogs or livestock’ whereby ‘tagging’ is necessary. Thus, he was suggesting that all Travellers be ‘tagged with microchips like dogs’ in order to monitor their movement (Independent.ie, 1998). He was cleared by the courts of inciting hatred against Travellers.

Methods
Research plan

This research utilized a thematic qualitative methodology; discussions were drawn from audio recorded focus group interviews with 18 young Travellers aged between 16-18 years of age. Madeleine Leonard’s (2007) method of using geographical maps in focus groups was used for this study. Using maps in qualitative research has proved ‘valuable’ in understanding youth’s ‘perceptions’ of their location in a city (Darbyshire et al 2005, p.422, also, see Leonard 2007; 2008).
Sampling Procedure

Participants were recruited through Traveller support groups in Galway. Ethical approval for this research was attained from the University of Limerick Research Ethics and Government Committee.

Data analysis

The data collected for this research identified many themes, however for the purpose of this paper I will concentrate on the theme of everyday racism. A map of Galway City was used in which the participants marked areas where they go and do not go. Coloured stickers were provided to the participants; they marked ‘safe’ areas with green (here $\mathbf{P}$); areas of ‘risk’ with red (here $\mathbf{O}$); and areas in which they ‘self-regulate’ with yellow (here $\mathbf{\Delta}$). This provided a comprehensive understanding of their spatial practices. See sample tables below:

Research Findings

Everyday racism

In modern Ireland there has been reluctance to recognize the extent of racism against Irish Travellers. The Encyclopaedia of Race and Racism (2013) suggests that there are three strands of everyday racism- 'the marginalization of those identified as racially or ethnically different'; 'the problematization of other cultures and identities'; 'symbolic or physical repression of (potential) resistance through humiliation or violence'. Travellers experience all three strands. The clear spatial division between Travellers and non-Travellers in Ireland is no doubt as a result of the historical phenomena of the clamp down on the Traveller/nomadic culture especially after the introduction of the Report of the Commission on Itinerancy in 1963.

The marginalization of Travellers identified as racially or ethnically different

By signing the Lisbon Treaty in 2007 and ratifying it in 2009, Ireland along with other European Union member countries agreed to combat poverty and exclusion through the European Union’s social policy; the EU social inclusion strategy was developed. However, inclusion based on ethnic difference was never the Irish government’s policy for the 'Traveller problem' (Report of the Commission on Itinerancy, 1963), it was and still is assimilation and acculturation. The denial to recognise Traveller ethnic identity by the Irish government has been criticised by international human rights agencies such as CERD, ECRI, FCNM and the EU Race Directive.

‘They think you can just stop being a Traveller’

‘Yeah because we are Travellers they put us living beside dumps where we are cut away from everyone else’

‘It’s a sin really the way they treat us and then they try telling us to ‘fit in’ as if you can stand there and let people put your culture down’

How space is contested and negotiated is central to the separation between Travellers and the majority population. Travellers view space differently and as nomads they tend to have a close connection to the land whereby boundaries are unobserved or tactically manoeuvred. Galway city has a history of excluding Travellers from the city centre boundaries. In 1925, the Galway Chamber of Commerce was worried about Travellers being in the city during tourist season believing British and American newspapers would publish a description of 'beggar life in Galway' (cited in Helleiner 2003, p.53). By 1939, legalization and by-laws were introduced to 'put itinerants out of the area'
By 1953, the city council outlawed temporary camps to be set-up in the city and by the 1980s Travellers who were still living in the city remembered the risks of camping within the city boundaries; continuous summons and fines were given. The evidence that Galway city is a divided city therefore, is coming from a historical context whereby Travellers were excluded on the justifications of ‘protecting public health or the economic interests of the city’. The young Travellers in my study discussed racist incidents as a common routine as if they were becoming immune to it and ‘tactics’ were utilized in order to negotiate spatial practices.

‘When we are going anywhere - we prepare ourselves for what could happen, like, you just never know if we’d be allowed in or not, sometimes you just can’t look too much like a Traveller cos if you do, you know there’s no way you’re getting in’

‘We don’t walk up to the door together; we try mix in with the crowd and pretend we are with other people’

‘You just have to hold your head up high and get on with it.’

Conflicts and tensions between Travellers and non-Travellers have resulted in young Travellers sensing and experiencing feelings of antagonism towards their identity and in turn Traveller spatial practices become restricted forcing them to negotiate their mobility or immobility on a daily basis.

Race like public space is socially produced and constructed in order to justify discriminative spatial and social practices. Henri Lefebvre (1974) stressed that these practices are what govern the experiences of everyday life. The effects of these negative attitudes on young Travellers were obviously visible during the discussions.

‘It’s not fair really the way we are treated but sure you get used to it’

‘According to them we are all trouble, we are the ones that get blamed for everything even when we are in the right’

‘People always ask me about Big Fat Gypsy Weddings, it can get annoying because you just keep repeating yourself all the time and then when you tell them that all nomad racism is deeply rooted in an ideology of sedentary superiority which regarded ‘unsettled’ people as racially inferior to settled people. Previous to the new Irish state, Irish people were portrayed as nomads, beggars, ignorant, uneducated, backward, superstitious and violent people by the British; a discourse which was entirely transferred onto Travellers after the construction of a nationalist Ireland. (Ó hAodha 2006, p.138). The dominant populace was embarrassed by its past and Travellers were a constant reminder. Clearly, the limited spatial mobility of Travellers can be understood from a historical context of state legalizations and racism (Gmelch 1976; McCann et al 1994; Drummond 2007).

Micheál Mac Gréil’s 2010 report Emancipation of the Travelling People concluded that settled people’s attitudes towards Travellers include- ‘60.1% would not welcome a Traveller as a member of the family; 72.3% would support Travellers to live their own way of life decently; 63.7% reject Travellers on the basis of their way of life; and 18.2% would deny Irish citizenship to Travellers’. The problematization of Traveller cultures and identities

Irish attitudes towards ‘tinkers’ and Travellers in the 19th century were influenced by social Darwinism and by the growth of bourgeois nationalist ideals (Jim MacLaughlin, 1999). Anti-Traveller and anti-
Travellers are not like that or we don’t do ‘grabbing’ they look at you like you are telling lies’

Encountering racism and intolerance in everyday life has become such a normal experience for the young Travellers that they have managed to negotiate their spatial mobility to the point of using the ‘tactic’ of finding ways to hide their Traveller identity.

‘You can’t dress too Travellerish; sometimes I wear glasses to make me look more posh’

‘My brother can’t say that he is a Traveller coz then he will lose his job’

‘When you get stopped at a disco sometimes you wish you weren’t a Traveller, not wish! ‘Not wish! - You didn’t look like a Traveller I mean - just to get inside (pauses) - but you’re born who you are and you have to be proud’

‘Sure they will never accept us as Traveller people’

The discussions revealed that anti-Traveller racism is a normalised action in Irish society that is prolonged and sustained by the ‘problematization of Traveller cultures and identities’.

Symbolic or physical repression of (potential) resistance through humiliation or violence

FOUR Travellers have been awarded €1,200 each by equality officers for the ‘humiliation’ and ‘distress’ they suffered after they were refused service in a pub at a Christmas party (Independent 2002).

Arland D. Jacobson wrote ‘the purpose of humiliating others within larger social contexts is to disempower them and to control them, and at the extreme, to eliminate them’ (2013). The long historical struggle for cultural and ethnic recognition has resulted in Travellers being ‘disempowered’ and ‘controlled’ while feeling that their culture and identity is being eliminated.

In 2004, the International Coalition of Cities against Racism was launched by UNESCO; this was designed to fight racism from the roots of the design and planning of urban areas. Cities were the focus because ‘their composition, design and governance reflect historical patterns and ideologies of discrimination’ (p.3). The ‘right to the city’ was Lefebvre’s declaration ‘for the recognition of the urban as the (re)producer of social relations of power, and the right to participation in it’ (Gilbert and Dikeç 2008, p.254). The idea was a tactic to legitimize ‘the refusal to allow oneself to be removed from urban reality by a discriminatory and segregative organization’ (p.255).

The symbolic violence towards Traveller identity posed a threat to future physiological well-being. Mental health issues among Travellers are troubling as 11% of deaths are caused by suicide; suicide is 7 times higher for the Traveller community than the settled population and it is most common among young males aged between 15-25 years old (AITHS, 2010).

‘People wonder why there is so much suicide in Travellers (looks around the room) – when I think: been not liked or, they been racist has something to do with it’

‘Sure you have to get bored being stuck in all the time, then when you do go out it actually feels worse because you have people judging you all the time’
Of course you get bored and then you have plenty of time on your hands to be thinking too deeply about things’

‘It’s worst for the boys I think, because we can fill our time chatting, cleaning or minding the children, the boys just sit around bored and in a bad mood (rolls her eyes) - you can’t blame them really!’

Smith et al argued that ‘culture may act as a protective factor or as a facilitating factor that increases risks of suicide to already vulnerable groups’ (cited in Walker 2008, p.20).

The young Travellers discussed issues with a sense of violation through excessive regulation, surveillance (by the city council) and restrictions on their spatial mobility.

‘We can’t even climb the walls in our site coz if you do a voice comes out of the speaker telling us to ‘GET DOWN NOW’ they are watching us the whole time’

‘They watch us like a hawk everywhere we go’

‘Yeah it’s like an open jail or something’

‘There is nothing out here, look this is where they threw us, would anyone else live here, no, there is nothing here, we are stuck 5 miles outside of the city with no buses or shops or houses or anything, the only thing that is out here is the rubbish dump next door, nice’

‘Every time I go into that shop I get followed around like I am going to rob something, it would make you sick’

City spaces are divided into categories that represent the use and identity of spaces depending upon the extent of the racial/cultural divisions created.

Research (see Lefebvre 1974; Löw 2008; Black 2005; Hopkins 2010) proposes that urban areas are governed by a social contract whereby rules are in place in order to engage peacefully with one another in public space. For this to function effectively one of the basic rules is to treat everyone with respect. The subjective experience of the young Travellers in my study discovered that they did not feel respected in any sense. Ironically, it is the Travellers that are seen as not being capable of upholding the social contract.

‘They think we are going to break up the place or something’

‘Seriously though, it don’t matter who’s in the wrong cos we get the blame anyway, every time’
'We are never allowed to explain ourselves, no matter what you say, they already have their mind made up that we are bad people and nothing will change their mind, you can see that in their eyes, the way they look at you it’s as if you are just a bit of dirt on their shoes'.

The above quotes highlight the young Travellers’ perspective of how they are viewed in everyday lived space. The stigma of ‘trouble’ attached to the Traveller identity immediately creates conflict and resistance in public space. The young Travellers spoke about the importance of maintaining their Traveller identity in a space of conflict.

'We need to show that we are proud to be Travellers, we are always going to be here so they will eventually have to accept us for who we are'

'It is great to be a Traveller, I love celebrating who we are like ‘Traveller Pride Week’ and the fairs'

'I would never deny being a Traveller but some people do and I think that is wrong, it’s like when Peter denied god, you couldn’t get any luck for it'

Characterised as being ‘failed settled people’, ‘drop-outs’ or simply ‘dregs of society’ Travellers are physically bounded to city locations that would be classed as undesirable for anyone else to live. Lefebvre (1968) expressed ‘the right to difference and the right to use the centre, a privileged place, instead of being dispersed and stuck in ghettos’ (cited in Goonewardena et al 2008, p.261).

'We can’t get in or out of the city unless we are driven in by someone so it is rare that we go in'.

'I hate living here sure it’s like they just want to keep us hidden away behind high walls so no-one can see us as if we are just going to disappear or something'

'I love living here coz you always have someone to chat to'

Although some of the young people spoke about being treated unfairly seldom did they recognise the treatment as racism or use the concept.

'I just think it is because we are too different, we are two separate groups and that’s that'

'They don’t understand us and they don’t want to either'

'It doesn’t bother me anymore I am so used to being treated different; I wouldn’t change being a Traveller for the world'

These thoughts of having no choice to accept racism can be related to similar research into ‘Islamophobia’ and other ethnic minority group experiences (see Aitchison et al 2007; McElwee et al 2003).

Conclusion
Spatial regulations placed on young Travellers such as being denied access or being stereotyped plays a significant role in inequality and has the potential to cause future mental health issues. A study conducted by Sellers in 2003 (cited in Jackson and Carter 2007, p.8) investigated the relationship between physiological distress, racial discrimination and identity among young blacks and found that racial discrimination makes life more stressful and can cause mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. To understand race related stress researchers have highlighted the importance of appreciating the effect that identity status has on physiological and mental health.
Spatial segregation in cities is a historical phenomenon that is associated with the rigid divisions and distinctions made between rich and poor, good and bad, powerful and powerless; these divisions are mainly social that are produced and re-produced by conscious acts by those who hold the power. The physical and social separation between groups of people in the city not only supports segregation but it also reproduces it. Mats Franzén 2009, argues that

[...] if people and activities are of different kinds, space can be supposed to be implicated in not only the reproduction, but also and more importantly, in their constitution.

The dominant construction and control of the city by the settled population has resulted in young Travellers being excluded from any decision making processes that affect their life. My study revealed that spatial exclusion produces a situation where it is very difficult to challenge the prejudices that inform that exclusion because of a lack of opportunity for interaction between the ‘oppressors’ and ‘oppressed’.

References

AITHS: All Ireland Traveller Health Study (2010) Pavee Point: Dublin.


‘The Good Old Days’: Travellers and Nostalgia

By Noelle Mann

Abstract: This paper examines the tendency of Travellers and settled people to hold nostalgic views about aspects of Traveller culture, and how these views are represented in a selection of songs recorded by Traveller musicians. The Fureys’ ‘Campfire in the Dark’ explores recent changes in Traveller culture and traditions. ‘The Good Old Days’, by Scottish Traveller Jimmy Williamson, ironically celebrates the past, whilst describing how many families often went hungry. Finally, Jack Delaney’s song ‘Lashún Gátna’, which featured in a recent episode of the drama Love/Hate, uses Irish Traveller language to present a message of cultural pride to young Travellers.

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Introduction
The aim of this paper is to explore the reasons why some Irish and Scottish Traveller singers use their music to represent nostalgic views of Traveller culture. There are numerous songs which detail the changes which have been observed by Travellers, from the waning of traditions such as tin-smithing, to the declining use of Cant or Gammon language, which are similar to the concerns of individuals in other minority cultures which have also experienced rapid change. Other songs document the pressure increasingly placed on Travellers by mainstream society to move into bricks-and-mortar accommodation. Simultaneously, some Travellers play down the hardships that had to be endured when living ‘on the road’, or overlook the advantages of becoming less nomadic, such as easier access to healthcare and education. Some may view nostalgic song as little more than charming whimsy, or a way of preserving lost aspects of culture. However, by examining theories of nostalgia, I also hope to show that expressions of nostalgia can be a force for change, as a way of visualising a future that combines positive aspects of the past with contemporary elements of Traveller culture.

Today people often describe the old way of life that Travellers had as a very romantic one. According to some of the books you read we were all happy-go-lucky people without a care in the world. We spent our days trotting along with our horses and wagons from one campsite to the next. Sure, there were times when there was a bit of romance attached to that life. Sure, there was always something special about travelling the tóhbar and there always will be. But it was not all fun and games. Far from it (Dunne 2004: 19).

In his autobiography Parley-Poet and Chanter, Pecker Dunne describes his life growing up as an Irish Traveller in Ireland.
and, later in life, working and busking around the world. Despite his acknowledgement of the tendency for writers to romanticise the lives of Travellers, Dunne cannot avoid falling into the same trap himself. His childhood memories are often couched in romantic terms, with Dunne reminiscing that ‘it was lovely back then, the freedom of it’ (Dunne: 6). Dunne also believes that there was less prejudice against Travellers in the past, saying that ‘you could multiply the prejudice against Travellers by ten and you still wouldn’t be anywhere near what it is really like today’ (Dunne: 36). However, if Dunne is guilty of romanticising some aspects of his childhood, he also takes care to recount the dangers and difficulties he experienced as a Traveller. He recalls that his earliest memory was waking up cold and damp from the rain-soaked ground after sleeping in a tent. He also describes the environmental dangers faced by Traveller families: how busy roads, electricity lines and hazardous materials in dumps or waste ground have the potential to injure children who are camped near them. It is Dunne’s music, however, which gives him the greatest opportunity to blend together his nostalgia for the road, the importance of living a nomadic life, and the negative treatment he received by settled people. Dunne clearly wanted to bring awareness to the difficulties faced by himself and other Travellers, and achieved this in many of his songs, including ‘Wexford Town’ and ‘Tinker’s Lullaby’.

Definitions of Nostalgia

Although it is widespread in contemporary culture, the concept of nostalgia is difficult to define. Fred Davis, writing about nostalgia in Yearning for Yesterday, commented that it is ‘susceptible to semantic vagueness, drift and ambiguity’ (Davis 1979:7). Dennis Walder, in his book Postcolonial Nostalgias, warned that nostalgia ‘eludes clear definition’ and also expressed his surprise on ‘how little, relatively speaking, has been written on it from a critical or analytical point of view’ (Walder 2011:4). Perhaps the most authoritative text on the subject is Svetlana Boym’s The Future of Nostalgia, a study of the development of nostalgia as a concept and its manifestations in the culture of post-Communist Bloc cities. Boym defines nostalgia as a generalised ‘longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed’ (Boym 2001: xiii). As the ‘mourning of displacement and temporal irreversibility’, nostalgia may be a way of expressing feelings of loss or dislocation, but it can also be the rumination of a personal fantasy and a search for origins (Boym: xvi-xvii). Boym also argues that progress exacerbates the need for nostalgia as it ‘inevitably reappears as a defence mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historic upheaval’ (Boym: xiv). As the world appears to speed up and alter around us, and as we encounter unfamiliar territory, we attempt to understand new events by interpreting them through the filters of past experience. Although holding fantasies about the past can be comforting, Boym also warns that nostalgia tends to ‘confuse the actual home and the imaginary one’ (Boym: xvi). We may become convinced that our pasts were much better places than they actually were, idealising aspects of our childhood experiences whilst simultaneously obscuring the hardships. Using these definitions of nostalgia, it becomes clearer why many people, including Travellers, might become nostalgic about their past life experiences. As British and Irish society has transformed over the years, Travellers have become displaced from traditional patterns of nomadism and other aspects of their culture. If a person’s current lifestyle is beset with stress, discrimination and poverty, it might be tempting to view the past as being a better time to have lived.
In contemporary society, although nostalgia can be felt as an intensely personal emotion, we recognise that wider cultural changes both prompt nostalgia and shape definitions of it. Davis, among others, argues that increased mobility caused by the pursuit of education, work and a general shift away from the rural towards city life has caused ‘constant movement in sociogeographic space’, so individuals have less psychological attachment to particular places (Davis 1979: 3). Nostalgia, instead of allowing people to long for a lost home per se, enables them to yearn for the loss of less tangible things, such as ‘the slower rhythms of the past, for continuity, social cohesion and tradition’ (Boym 1979: 16). For many Travellers, the idea of ‘home’ is often wider in scope than a single dwelling or village, and instead relies more heavily on the extended family and shared customs and traditions.

As more Travellers have moved into cities, they have become subject to social changes caused by rapid industrialisation and modernisation, including the transformation in types of work and increased population density. It is therefore entirely understandable that Travellers may be susceptible to feelings of nostalgia. Yet, while mainstream society has become more mobile in nature, the movements of many Travellers have instead become increasingly restricted, due to the criminalisation of nomadism, the reduction of temporary stopping places and a shortage of culturally-appropriate accommodation. Many Travellers appear to be faced with a stark choice: to aim for wider opportunities in mainstream society through increased cultural assimilation, or to accept further segregation and inequality between themselves and the majority population. In this context, nostalgia may be interpreted as a coping mechanism for Travellers undergoing rapid cultural change; an attempt to preserve aspects of their culture as it evolves to fit the realities of the present day.

**Nostalgia for Nomadism, Health Concerns and Past Traditions**

It might seem inconceivable that the health of an ethnic group might worsen when many families move from temporary, non-serviced sites into standard accommodation with modern comforts. Yet, the findings of *Our Geels: The 2010 All-Ireland Traveller Health Study* highlighted the fact that the gap in life expectancy between male Travellers and the rest of the Irish male population had actually increased, from around 10 years in 1980 to 15.1 years in 2010, with the average life expectancy for Traveller men being 61.7 years (All-Ireland Traveller Health Study Team: 95). The life expectancy of Traveller women was markedly higher, at 70.1 years, but this was still 11.1 years behind settled women. The death rate amongst Traveller infants was also high, at 14.1 per 1,000, compared to 3.9 in the rest of the population. The *Traveller Health Study* gave a clear message to the Irish government: ‘The fact that an identifiable disadvantaged group in our society is living with the mortality experience of previous generations 50-70 years ago cannot be ignored’ (ibid). The picture for Scottish Travellers is broadly similar to the situation facing Irish Travellers, although there is no equivalent health study to *Our Geels*. However, a recent parliamentary report, ‘Gypsy/Travellers and Care’ (2012), draws from several small-scale local and UK studies. The report states that Scottish Gypsy/Travellers’ life expectancy is unknown, although one GP, conducting independent research, and acting as a witness for an earlier committee, ‘put it as low as 55 for men’, therefore making it comparable, if not worse, to that of Irish Traveller men (Scottish Parliamentary Committee: 2).
Apart from problems related to precarious accommodation, Travellers who choose to move into houses can also find that the experience negatively affects their mental and physical wellbeing. Michael McDonagh explains that ‘when you as a Traveller go into a house it is one of the most frightening experiences you can have,’ because you are expected to remain living in that house indefinitely, and this can create feelings of confinement and panic (quoted in Sheehan: 37). He continues that

some Travellers have become depressed when they move into houses and never adjust to living in one place permanently. Many Travellers have left houses for this reason (ibid)

The impact of Travellers moving into housing goes far beyond the creation of wistful feelings about the importance of ‘the road’ or the simple exchange of a trailer for bricks and mortar. Many important cultural aspects of Traveller life are limited when living in a house. Many of these issues are explored in the song ‘Campfire in the Dark’ written by Paddy Houlihan, a settled singer and songwriter who spent many years working with Irish Travellers in Ennis, County Clare. The song was recorded by Irish Traveller musicians The Fureys on their 1992 album Winds of Change. The song is unavoidably nostalgic, comparing cozy family scenes of the past to problematic aspects of Traveller life in the present day. Yet, it does highlight legitimate issues that arise when Traveller culture has to adapt to the restrictions of living in a house. The keeping of horses is usually prohibited on housing estates and many halting sites, for example, and many privately rented houses do not allow dogs to be kept as a condition of the lease. ‘Campfire in the Dark’ reflects these missing elements in the description of absent sounds, with the narrative voice reminiscing about hearing ‘a collie bark’ and ‘horses moving in the dark’.

My Mother likes the house, the hot water and the rooms.
It’s warm in the winter and she’s handy with a broom.
Sometimes she makes colcannon, more often griddle bread,
For there’s a hunger deep inside her for a life that’s nearly dead.

The second verse of the song acknowledges the comforts of living in housing, but these are offset by the loss of nomadism, a central aspect of Traveller culture, and this is expressed as a yearning for a culture ‘that’s nearly dead’. Some of the strongest imagery in the song is reserved for a sense of community that is now absent: other verses describe the lack of socialising around campfires, to ‘pass the time away with talk about the day’ while children play nearby. The father in the song instead finds it difficult to structure his day as there is ‘nothing much to do’, so he fills the time, like many older Travellers, by telling his family about the past through ‘stories of the Travelling life he knew’. The sense of social isolation is increased in the song by the local settled community rejecting the Travellers living among them. The Traveller in the song is refused entry to a nightclub, a situation familiar to many Travellers, and he says that despite trying to connect with settled people, they still regard him and his people as no more than ‘tinkers’ and ‘still strangers after all these years’.

Some of the most shocking statistics in the Our Geels Traveller Health Study involved mental health and suicide, as the report found that ‘a Traveller man is 6.6 times more likely to die by suicide than a man in the general population’ which may partly account for the low figures on life expectancy, along with increased alcohol and substance abuse (All-Ireland Traveller Health Study Team: 94).

When Travellers move into standard housing, they may find themselves at a considerable
distance from their extended family, breaking up their support system and leaving them vulnerable to feelings of isolation and defencelessness. The 'Gypsy/Travellers and Care' report similarly stated that 'living conditions on sites and the fight to improve site quality, alongside social stigma and prejudice experienced as a result of site living, are seen as a main cause of both physical and mental health issues' (Scottish Parliamentary Committee: 11). One Scottish Traveller, Lizzie Johnstone, explained that she felt that she had given up her 'culture and ways of life' by moving into a house for the sake of her son's health (ibid: 45). When Travellers speak of being healthier in the past, they are not simply yearning for a romanticised, lost nomadic lifestyle. They may be longing for a time when they felt less subject to the mental and physical symptoms of stress caused by forces of assimilation and the pressure to move into houses.

Realism as an Antidote to Nostalgia
In his study Postcolonial Nostalgias, Dennis Walder talks of nostalgia being a ‘particularly seductive phenomenon for people who have literally been displaced (Walder 2011: 9).’ Perhaps this is due to displaced people searching for an identity that has not only been changed by the passage of time, but also by the movement from one place or country to another. Travellers may also fall under this description, since their culture has changed over time and has also been affected by the pressure of assimilation and reduction of nomadism. However, Walder rejects the idea that nostalgia should only involve the cosy recollection of a lost and treasured past. Instead, nostalgia has the capacity to make individuals question their identity and their present place in the world.

A ‘fuller understanding of the past’ for Travellers (and settled people alike) must therefore include the exploration of some components of their lives which do not fit the usual romantic ideas of ‘the road’, and represent more about Traveller culture than the traditional symbols of campfires, horses and tinsmiths. For Walder, exploring links between the past and present requires ‘a level of self-reflexivity about or within nostalgia’ (ibid). That is, self-awareness about the construction of nostalgic representations and how they are used, are central to a proper engagement with the past and the interpretation of issues surrounding the present. One Scottish Traveller song in particular attempts to do this.

'Oh I Remember', by Scottish Traveller Jimmy Williamson, is a nostalgic song which also displays Traveller self-awareness, using sarcasm to poke fun at some of the more romantic ideas about Traveller culture in the past. Instead of the usual Traveller images of open roads and freedom, the lyrics describe the hardships and poverty Travellers endured, followed by the refrain ‘Oh I remember, (yes, I remember), those were the good old days.’

We were rich if we’d a horse and cairt to help us wi’ our load,
To pile our bits and pieces on as we walked the weary road.
We never had many claes to fit and nae shoes upon our feet.
And it wasnae very often that we had enough to eat.

In the first verse of the song, the ownership of horses is represented accurately: only the more solvent Traveller families would be able...
to own horses as they require time, skill and money to keep in good condition. Aside from horses, more common modes of transporting goods were prams, bicycles, and by hand. The road is also described in this verse as ‘weary’, a very different depiction to the usual romantic symbol of Traveller freedom. If a person had to walk the roads, carrying their possessions on their back with poor footwear and little food, they might find it difficult at times to avoid feeling miserable. Yet, these conditions were also the reality of the ‘good old days’.

Mother’d go fae door to door and earn whate’er she could.  
But it wasna very easy for to feed a hungry brood.  
Faither’d always dae his share but looking back it seems,  
The life that we are living now could only be lived in dreams.

In a second verse, Jimmy Williamson again refers to hunger, emphasising the poverty suffered by his family in the past. His mother undertook the traditional Traveller role of hawking, but there was never enough to keep the family from going hungry. The practise of hawking relied on good relationships between Travellers and the households they visited, and is an aspect of Traveller culture that is often referred to nostalgically. But not all visits would result in success. Plenty of people turned Travellers away and some even threatened violence. More significant in this verse, however, is Jimmy Williamson’s awareness of the positive developments of modern life for Travellers, as by the experiences of earlier generations, Travellers today enjoy a standard of life that could have previously only existed ‘in dreams’. It is true that some aspects of Traveller culture have become obsolete over the passage of time and a selection of these, like the skills of tin-smithing, are very precious and symbolic to Travellers and non-Travellers alike. Yet, the development of the welfare state in the UK and Ireland should mean that Travellers never again have to face starvation or physical exhaustion from the sheer effort of survival. Although there are still shortages in culturally acceptable accommodation, and settled resistance to the development and extension of halting sites, Travellers are now able to access housing more readily than in the past. Even if a listener may suspect that some of the details in the song have been emphasised for dramatic purposes, it is still noteworthy that Travellers such as Jimmy Williamson can show their recognition of the improvements in standards of living for Travellers in modern times. His awareness of how nostalgia can alter people’s perceptions of the past also shows that, although Travellers may be guilty of glossing over the hardships their parents and grandparents suffered, they are never entirely forgotten. This is as true for Irish Travellers as it is for Scottish Travellers.

The song 'Lasún Gátna' or 'Beautiful Child', which featured prominently in an episode of the Irish drama Love/Hate, is written and performed by Jack Delaney, and explores the subject of Irish Traveller identity. The song describes positive and negative aspects of Delaney’s life as an Irish Traveller, and was purposefully composed in Cant or Gammon language. In his song, although Delaney states proudly that the life of a ‘Tinker’ is the ‘best’ for him, he also notes that he has been moved on by Gardai and suffered ridicule whilst performing his music in the street. He also feels torn between a desire to live among the beauty of the countryside and the need to remain in a city where he can earn money. The final two verses of the song discuss the survival of Traveller culture, and focus on providing a positive message to young Travellers in particular. Verse six of 'Lashún Gátna' reveals the uncertainty that some Travellers feel regarding the future of their culture:
Milk a’ Mikérs táral stésh the Minkérs tásp’d,
sik erpa wid stésh nid’esh achíver arák.
My d’il táral stésh gochil inochs atap,
na be getúl súblín for no midal is d’arp.

Some Tinkers think that the Tinkers are dead,
some others say it will never be the same.
But I am saying that everything is alive,
don’t be afraid young lad for no Devil is true.

The difference of opinion between Delaney and other Travellers reflects the ongoing debate within Traveller communities about how their way of life might survive. Delaney explains that the final two verses of ‘Lashún Gátna’ are an appeal to young Travellers to be resilient. Speaking from his own experiences, Delaney explains that although there is now more support for young Travellers, there are very few people, both inside and outside the community, ‘who actually understand the internal/external struggle that a young Traveller has growing up’ (Delaney: email communication, December 12, 2014).

It seems to me that although there are people growing up in worse conditions, more challenging circumstances and so forth, the specific situation of a young Traveller is problematic in the sense that it is unique. Without going into the situation too much: the peculiar situation of living in a First World country with people that look similar, dress similarly and speak the same language and having the heavy weight of persistent de-humanization is a hard thing to understand as a young person (ibid).

Delaney also contrasts the experiences of younger and older generations of Travellers, and how each group copes with prejudice from people in sedentary society. In the past, previous generations of Travellers maintained a degree of separation between their own community and settled people, creating a ‘bubble’ of safety where they felt that they need not be judged or affected by the wider population. However, young Travellers are more integrated in settled society, and Delaney believes that this is why ‘there is an elevated psychological battle within younger Travellers’ (ibid). Delaney concludes his song by addressing young Travellers directly. The second line of the final verse is reassuring, as Delaney states ‘get getúls mishli past lim a’ d’ilsha’, meaning ‘let your worries go past the side of you’. However, the last lines advise ‘grober aga d’ilsha/skop lurks and súni m’ lashún Gália’ or, ‘there is work to do/open your eyes and see my beautiful child’. Delaney explains that ‘the last two verses of the song are hopefully a communication by someone from their own community, in their own language, to firstly stay alive and secondly to stand and fight in any way possible, primarily mentally’ (ibid).

Conclusion
Some Traveller writers and singers have attempted to realistically document their lives by including incidents of discrimination, the decline of nomadism, and its effects on individuals. Charles Smith, a Romany Gypsy poet, chose to write about subjects such as the Porrajmos (‘the devouring’) where thousands of Gypsies were murdered alongside Jews and other victims in the Nazi genocide. In the introduction to his poetry anthology Not All Wagons and Lanes, Smith attempts to dispel some of the nostalgic fictions people may hold about Gypsies. Smith urges Gypsies and Travellers not to become distracted or dispirited by their nostalgia for the past. He fears that, ‘if we spend too much time living in the past we shall miss what is really happening today and if we do that, we just entrench ourselves into the stereotypes that many in the non-Gypsy society want us to be’ (Smith 1995: 6).
However, romantic or nostalgic representations of Travellers are still popular among Travellers and non-Travellers alike. For Svetlana Boym, nostalgia appears to be an inescapable phenomenon, something that exists ‘at the very core of the modern condition’ (Boym: xvi-xvii). Other commentators, such as Gerald Clarke, give nostalgia a longer history, arguing that ‘all Western culture for the last two thousand years seems to have involved nostalgia’ from the time of the Romans looking back at the Greeks (Clarke 1971: 77). If it cannot be escaped, nostalgia must therefore be interpreted as fulfilling a need within society. By yearning for the ‘good old days’, individuals are expressing criticism for the way that they are living today, even if the past they are comparing it to is a fiction. Boym urges us to view nostalgia as a method of critiquing society in a creative way:

*Creative nostalgia reveals the fantasies of the age, and it is in those fantasies and potentialities that the future is born. One is nostalgic not for the past the way it was, but for the past the way it could have been. It is the past perfect that one strives to realize in the future (Boym: 351).*

Travellers who describe the past in romantic or idealistic terms are therefore expressing discontent with their present lives. They also may be envisioning an idealised version of the future, which would involve better physical and mental health, adequate accommodation with no more evictions, and positive relationships between Travellers and settled people. For some Travellers, it would also ideally involve a nomadic lifestyle, or the potential to have one with fewer restrictions. Travellers realise that this ideal future is not very likely to emerge unless there are massive changes to attitudes and legislation within mainstream society. It is therefore perhaps inevitable that nostalgia also provides a form of escapism in the face of many social obstacles. However, Traveller activism is growing and should hopefully make a difference for Travellers in the future through measures such as ethnic recognition. The nostalgic representation of Travellers held by settled people deserves further consideration beyond the immediate scope of this paper. Perhaps the most problematic issue is the way romantic ideas about Gypsies and Travellers have been incorporated into research and debate over their origins. In this case, nostalgia becomes more than a romantic representation; it becomes an instrument of discrimination. Nostalgia has a powerful emotive function which needs to be considered carefully in its use, but by envisioning a perfected past, it also has the potential to help communities shape their future.

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**Musical Recordings**


EMBODYING IDENTITIES IN TRANSITION THROUGH CHINESE DANCE IN BELFAST

BY WANTING WU

Abstract: This paper examines processes through which non-Chinese dancers learn a form of Chinese dance in a multicultural dance studio in Northern Ireland, showing that what is presented as ‘Chinese dance’ in Belfast differs significantly from dance practice in China. Linking dance to identity through Bourdieu’s conception of ‘habitus’ I show how non-Chinese dancers struggle to master Chinese forms of dance movement due to habitus rooted in other dance disciplines, and how the teacher resorts to training in Yunlü, Chinese ‘rhythm of the body’ which I equate with Chinese habitus, in order to make the dance recognisable to a Chinese audience.

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Introduction
The Chinese community constitutes the largest ethnic minority in Northern Ireland numbering around 8000, most living in Belfast.¹ The community holds communal celebrations twice yearly in which dance plays a significant role: the Spring Festival celebrating the Lunar New Year and the Dragon Boat Festival in June. Chinese dances also feature in multi-cultural events in Belfast, and the Chinese celebrations themselves have become somewhat multicultural, as audiences beyond the Chinese community have been attracted. In this multicultural milieu, dancers from non-Chinese backgrounds have become interested in Chinese dance (see Wu forthcoming). In this article, I focus on the Lilac Dance, taught by a Chinese dance-teacher and choreographer in a multicultural dance studio in Belfast.²

The studio runs a range of classes, including Indian, Irish and Chinese dance. The classes are free, because the Studio provides dancers for various performances, for which it charges. The Chinese dance class usually attracted six to ten female students. I will focus in this chapter on a special class that was run specifically to train four non-Chinese female students, aged 20-40, with previous dance experience, who had volunteered to perform at the Spring Festival in Belfast. The class, in which I also danced, ran every Sunday for eight weeks before the performance, lasting two hours.

I first discuss theoretical approaches to dance and identity, focusing on embodied identity, before considering the choreography of the dance and its relationship to the embodied identity of the choreographer. In my
analysis, I refer to Hobsbawm’s (1983) conception of ‘the invention of tradition’ and draw upon Kristinsson’s (2007) conception of authenticity and Stock’s (2012) discussion of hybridity in globalized cultural environments. I then examine the difficulties experienced by students in embodying unfamiliar Chinese movement techniques and the ways the teacher sought to overcome these problems so that their dance could be recognized as Chinese by a Chinese audience. I use Bourdieu’s (1977) concept of ‘habitus’ to understand both initial difficulty and eventual success, and draw on Wenger (1998) and Ingold (2000) to relate the concept of habitus to identity.

Dance and Embodied Identity

Dance theorists usually approach identity through embodiment. Dyck & Archetti (1998:37), for example, assert:

*In sports and dance, techniques of the body connect and operate in concert with techniques of the self. Who one is and what one does . . . may be readily conflated . . . what physical action produces on play-field or dance-floor is selves.*

Wulff (2007), drawing on Bourdieu’s (1977) conception of ‘habitus’ as the instantiation of the social in the body, asserts that dispositions, perceptions and actions are inscribed into a dancer’s body. I will show how the competences of Chinese dance stem from worldviews, values and ways of being that predominate in Chinese society, and how this can make it difficult for non-Chinese dancers to successfully embody Chinese dance skills.

Chinese identity and dance has been explored by several scholars (Wu 1997; Johnson 2005; H. Wilcox 2009; E. Wilcox 2012). Emily Wilcox (2012), in her account of the performance of Mongolian ethnic identity by a well-known dancer, suggests that Mongolian identity is perceived through dance movement and performance, whilst Hui Wilcox (2011) asserts that Chinese dance is central to the construction of a unified Chinese identity in an American city. Similarly, Johnson (2005) suggests that Lion Dance performance in schools is important in the education of identity amongst children of migrants in New Zealand. I extend these insights to encompass how mastering Chinese dance skills may change perceptions of Chinese identity amongst non-Chinese dancers, as well as Chinese people who observe their performances. As Dyck & Archetti (2003:84) assert, ‘How we experience our bodies, as a form of self-representation, and how bodies are manifestations of others are culturally defined and learned’. This view is encompassed in Yi-Chan Wu’s (1997) work on cultural identity in Chinese classical dance, which claims Chinese dance movement is imbued with aesthetics derived from Taoist philosophy, analysing dance movements to explore cultural values. Similarly, I use analysis of dance movements to understand the connection of Chinese dance to wider Chinese lifeways.

Choreographing Chinese Dance in Belfast

Liu, the Chinese dance teacher and choreographer in the Studio, came originally from Wuhan, southern China. In her mid-forties, she is married to a Northern Irish man and has lived in Belfast fifteen years. The dance she taught is described in the Studio’s literature as ‘traditional Chinese dance’ I will examine the components of the dance in detail, before analyzing how the form of this dance may be related to the embodied identity of the choreographer.

The music chosen for the performance was a popular 2004 Chinese song called *The Lilac*, the name also given to the dance, which aims
to convey emotions of love, melancholy and suffering in the lyrics. The lyrics and vocal style are Chinese, and Chinese instrumentation is used in the introduction, but the fundamental rhythm is a triple-time waltz. The use of such Western rhythms is common in contemporary Chinese popular music. The arm and hand movements and shapes used in the dance, such as 'Orchid Hand', 'Cloud Hands,' and 'Little Five Flower' are clearly derived from Chinese dance practice. 'The Orchid Hand' is of particular significance as it derives from the Beijing Opera, reputed to be a thousand years old, and is universally known amongst Chinese, and widely regarded as a symbol of Chinese-ness, and in particular, of Chinese female identity.

In order to facilitate quick learning, most of the foot movements in the Lilac Dance consist of Western ballroom steps which fit easily with the waltz rhythm of the music. Ballroom, however, is normally danced by a male and female couple using close holds. In Chinese tradition, public contact between men and women is inappropriate, and the Lilac Dance is danced entirely by women.

The Lilac Dance costumes were created in Belfast, inspired by the traditional Chinese style: tang-zhuang, but in blue and purple rather than traditional red. A major difference from dance practice in China was that shoes were leather, rather than the traditional slippers. Leather shoes would never be used in China, because they constrain traditional foot movements which require flexibility. The costumes also included elaborate ear-rings: never worn by traditional dancers in China, but popular with the Indian dancers who also rehearsed at the Studio. These costumes are perceived, by both Liu and her audience, as an expression of Chinese identity. In the eyes of a Chinese trained dancer, such as myself, however, they make the dance appear less authentic, and indeed, less Chinese. Chinese identity, then, may be differently experienced, and its authenticity differently evaluated, according to the habitus of the perceiver.

Transforming Chinese Identity through Reinvented Choreography

Liu uses the Lilac Dance to represent Chinese identity in Belfast, yet the dance she has created includes many elements which are not traditionally Chinese. In conversation with her, it became clear that Liu was unconcerned by these departures from Chinese tradition. When asked why she used leather shoes, for instance, she replied that they looked beautiful. Such comments suggest that Liu’s tastes have diverged from Chinese traditional practice during her fifteen years in Belfast, and she has reinvented elements of the dance in line with her changing tastes. Hobsbawm (1983:3) claims that such reinvented features are designed to facilitate readily definable practical needs always allowing for the inertia which any practice acquires with time and the emotional resistance to any innovation by people who have become attached to it.

Liu, however, does not have to contend with inertia or emotional resistance, since in the Belfast context, few know or are attached to the old traditions. Liu, with the authority which derives from her Chinese ethnicity, therefore has power to reinvent the tradition in Belfast that she would not have in China. Krüger (2009:87) has shown how, even within ethnomusicology, a teacher of the ‘correct’ ethnicity is often assumed to be both more expert and more authentic than a ‘western’ teacher.

To me, as a Chinese-trained dancer, it was apparent that there were many ways in
which Liu’s choreography failed to meet the standards of the tradition in which I was trained, or to fully embody a genuinely Chinese identity as I had learned to understand it. Whilst Liu uses distinctive arm movements to accent the Chinese-ness of her dance, her comments suggest that features such as waltz steps and the leather shoes, similar to those used in Irish dance, derive from the Belfast environment in which her tastes have been transformed. This hybridity involves a loss of certain significant features of the Chinese dance, however. Insofar as the leather shoes render traditional foot movements impossible, preventing the feet from mirroring arm movements, they compromise the holistic style of body movement which is central to the learning of traditional dance in China. According to Stock (2012:1),

"Concepts of hybridity and multiple identities seem to work in some cases against the holistic nature of the communicative and expressive dancing body."

As we will see below, this loss of holism caused problems for the choreographer. This is not to say that a new holistic style could not eventually emerge in Belfast, but since such holistic types of movement derive from shared cultural norms, ideologies and bodily repertoires, such emergence was not possible in the limited time available for this diverse group of students to learn the Lilac Dance.

Kristinsson (2007:1) has noted that

"behaviour is authentic to the extent that it is motivationally supported by states that are embodied in the individual, and inauthentic to the extent that it lacks such support."

The fact that it did not seem authentic to me resulted from the very different development of my own habitus through living in China and training since childhood in the Beijing Dance Academy, whose institutional habitus (Wainright et al 2006) I had embodied. Ultimately, who has the authority to determine what is and what is not authentic? The answer is a function of power. In the Beijing Dance Academy, Liu’s Lilac Dance would probably be seen as an inauthentic departure from Chinese dance tradition, but the authority of the Beijing Dance Academy does not extend to Belfast, where Liu finds the freedom to develop new ideas of authenticity derived from her own tastes. The choreography of the Lilac Dance may be seen as a hybrid product of tastes developed during Liu’s life experience in both China and Belfast. As Stock (2012:24) puts it,

"How we choose to accent our multiple identities is how we present our art and ourselves."

Bourdieu (1984) has shown that tastes are vital components of habitus, so Liu’s habitus has changed since arrival in Belfast. Jackson (1989:119,128-9) has explicitly linked habitus to embodied identity, so as Liu’s tastes change, her identity is also changing: both Butler (1990) and Wenger (1998:154) have emphasized that identity is not a state of being, but of becoming: a constant transformation.

**First Contact: Reflexivity of Habitus, Resistance of Identity**

The four non-Chinese students learning the dance were: Jacinta, a Mexican-American; Ashna, an Indian; Edyta, from Poland and Lindsay, from Belfast. All had dance experience in other traditions, and it quickly became apparent that their diverse dance training conditioned the ways they perceived the Lilac Dance. Ashna saw similarities between Indian and Chinese dance which she attributed to their shared Buddhist heritage, although she observed that Chinese dance
seemed more peaceful, whilst Indian dance was happier since it was aimed to please the gods. Jacinta remarked that in America, dance was seen as healthy and energetic: the Chinese dance appeared very sad to her, whilst Lindsay commented on the lack of variety in formations, compared to the Highland and Irish dancing in which she was proficient.

The initial perceptions of Chinese dance expressed by the dancers were a product of their limited experience of just one dance, compared to their considerable experience in other dance traditions. Not all Chinese dance is sad, peaceful or spatially limited. The dancers, however, reacted strongly to this first experience of Chinese dance, limited though it was. This exaggeration of difference may be seen as a manifestation of a perhaps unconscious resistance to unfamiliar ways of using the body, stemming from their established bodily habitus. As Jackson (1989:119) puts it, 'Habits cannot be changed at will because we are the habits.' Confronted with new and unfamiliar ways of moving their bodies, the dancers had to turn to a reflexive consideration of their own habitus in order to interpret this new experience. Heelas asserts that 'people have to turn to their own resources to decide what they value, to organize their priorities and to make sense of their lives' (Heelas 1996:5). In engaging with a new form of body movement, their own bodily habitus is the resource to which these dancers turn.

In the first class, Liu taught the hand shapes and arm movements that formed the most distinctively Chinese elements of the Lilac dance. She started with the ‘Orchid Hand.’ It was soon apparent that previous experience conditioned the perception of this hand shape. Ashna found the shape easy to learn. She observed that in Indian dance there are one hundred forms of hand language, which, she asserted, constitute a form of communication between man and gods. She was confident in her ability to learn the Orchid Hand, having formed the impression that Chinese dance was similar to Indian dance, but simpler. It was apparent, however, that Ashna’s training in Indian hand language introduced subtle variations in the ways she performed the Orchid Hand, staccato movements that derived from Indian dance practice. Moreover, Ashna tended to coordinate her hand movement with eyeball movement, another feature of Indian dance which is not part of Chinese tradition. Jacinta, in contrast, found the Orchid Hand difficult to learn. She observed that hand-shapes formed no part of her Zumba practice and frequently forgot to maintain the Orchid Hand, rather adopting an open palm hand shape.

Similar differences appeared in the second lesson in which arm movements were taught. Hui Wilcox (2009) observes that

> roundness is the most important aesthetic principle of Chinese dance, and as twisting movements are roundness developed into the third dimension, they make up the most common physical movements of Chinese dance.

For Edyta, the ‘Arm Circling’ movement was uncomfortable, she remarked that she felt her body was twisted, unlike ballet in which arm movements emphasized stretching, openness and straightness. Lindsay, an experienced Highland dancer, struggled with the wrist lifting and pressing that formed part of the Arm Circling movement. She felt that these wrist movements were not beautiful because they interrupted the smoothness of her movement. She tended, therefore, to keep her wrist straight, in a style closer to her previous dance experience.
In the third lesson, devoted to foot movement, the dancers again had very different experiences resulting from their previous training. Whilst Ashna had problems remembering the order of the movements, even when repeated, all the western dancers found the ballroom steps easy to acquire due to previous experience. Edyta observed that 'The steps are familiar - they are like the couple dance in Polish folk dancing,' whilst Lindsay equated them to Céili dance steps. Although all four dancers experienced some problems learning the various hand, arm and foot movements that Liu taught them, by repeated practice, all eventually mastered the movements. At this point, however, a deeper problem manifested itself. Liu became concerned that the movements of the four dancers did not appear Chinese. In fact, the cultural differences between them remained clearly visible. Attempts to correct this by technical means merely highlighted the problem. Edyta, for example, said that:

> Sometimes, I feel that my feet automatically stand on the toe - I want to show a noble feeling when I do Chinese dance, the neck and chest will try to reach high - this is the habit in my body.

Similarly, elements of Zumba, Indian Dance and Highland Dance could be seen in the performances of Jacinta, Ashna and Lindsay respectively. Liu realised that rather than Chinese movements performed in unison, what she was seeing was the same movements performed in four quite different styles derived from the previous bodily experience of the dancers. What, then, does it mean, to ‘appear Chinese’?

**Mastering Yunlù (The Rhythm of the Body)**

In the fourth class, Liu radically changed her teaching approach. She had previously avoided teaching the fundamentals of bodily rhythm: breathing, encapsulated in the injunctions to 'breathe like a blossom' and 'move like water': the first things usually taught to Chinese dancers. Liu had felt that these principles would be too difficult for non-Chinese students to engage with. She now realised that without teaching these fundamentals, the movements of the dancers would never look Chinese to a Chinese audience.

Liu introduced the dancers to the Chinese ‘Rhythm of the Body’, expressed in the term Yunlù: making breathing follow the rhythm of the movement. She demonstrated how to breathe when dancing: inhaling during lifting movements and exhaling during downward movements. Hui Wilcox (2009:4) describes this cycle, known as Ti-Chen (rising and sinking of the chest):

> ‘Ti’ (to rise) is the upward movement when the body takes in a breath of air. . . . ‘Chen’ is this second part of the cycle, when the breath slowly goes out, and the body sinks down.

Liu explained that through breathing in this rhythm, the air would travel through every part of the body, bringing energy and coherence, in the natural manner of the opening and closing of a flower.

Liu also taught her students the Three-Way Curve: an S-shaped form composed of three bends, from the head and chest, to waist and legs, and hips and legs. The strong control of the whole body in the Three Way Curve should make the body appear uncontrolled as if blown by the wind. This apparently uncontrolled movement is described by the concept of Rang - 'Allowing': rooted in Taoist philosophy. 'Allowing' avoids injury by natural forces and borrows strength from them. The success of the dancer in conveying this feeling of 'allowing' should lead to the disappearance of the body from the
perception of the audience - just as water or wind cannot be grasped.

Liu coached the students in Yunlü, including breathing exercises, Three-Way Curve and 'Allowing'. Through these exercises, the students learned to move their bodies by the circulation of their breath as Liu called out 'Ti - half-circle - one, two three; Chen - half-circle – one, two, three. Liu then asked them to integrate the Ti-Chen duality into specific movements. After practicing this, the students started to integrate all the aspects of Yunlü into their dance without further prompting and the dance became perceptibly more uniform, and, to both Liu and myself, more Chinese in appearance.

Analysis: From Yunlü to Chinese Identity
The dance students were challenged to adopt unfamiliar forms of movement which felt strange to them. Trying to engage with new ways of moving through experience gained in other dance traditions, they were eventually able to perform the movements, but their dance did not appear Chinese, because they did not possess the habitus which Chinese dancers embody through years of training, but rather, rooted their learning in their own established habitus. It was only when they learned Yunlü, the core of Chinese dance practice, that they were able to achieve some degree of the holistic integration of the body which Chinese dance requires. Only then were they able to replicate Chinese dance movements in ways which were recognisable to their Chinese teacher and to me.

What then, is Yunlü? The Rhythm of the Body includes ways of moving and breathing, thinking and feeling, resulting from the accumulation of cultural ways of being over generations. The concept of Yunlü, then, may be related to Bourdieu’s conception of ‘habitus’, which he defines as ‘systems of . . . perception, appreciation and action that result from the institution of the social in the body’ (Bourdieu & Waquant 1992:126-7). Bourdieu (1984:174) notes that:

Habitus is neither the result of free will nor determined by structure but created by a kind of interplay between the two over time: dispositions that are both shaped by past events and structures, and that shape current practice and structures and also, importantly, that condition our very perceptions of these.

techniques are active ingredients of personal and social identity. Thus, the very practice of a technique is itself a statement about identity: there can be no separation of communicative from technical behaviour.

I suggest therefore, that there has indeed been a transition in identity, if only a small one, brought about by the acquisition, through time and work, of a new competence. Through incorporating Yunlü into their habitus, they were recognized by themselves and others as ‘Chinese dancers’. The dancers eventually succeeded in making the dance recognisably Chinese to their audience in Belfast, including many Chinese non-dancers. For this audience, the fact that the dancers had mastered iconic hand movements such as the ‘orchid hand’, and movements embodying Yunlü was sufficient to signify Chinese identity, over-riding the non-traditional elements in foot-movements and costumes.
Conclusion

I have shown how non-Chinese dancers were introduced to a 'Chinese' dance: a hybrid product choreographed by a Belfast-Chinese migrant whose own transformed identity was expressed in the dance. I considered the origins of the different aesthetic criteria by which Liu and I judged the authenticity of the Lilac Dance. I drew on Kristinsson's conception of authentic behaviour as ways of acting that are in accord with what is objectively instantiated in one's body - with one’s habitus. For Liu, whose habitus has been transformed by decades living in Belfast, the leather shoes and earrings are 'beautiful', whilst for me, still influenced by the disciplines of the Beijing Dance Academy and wider perceptions of Chinese dance within China, they seem strangely incongruous. Whose conception of authenticity comes to predominate, however, is a consequence of power relationships, and in Belfast, the authority Liu derives from her Chinese ethnicity and effective monopoly of Chinese dance skills has allowed her to redefine Chinese dance in ways compatible with her own transforming identity.

We saw how the engagement of the dancers with the teaching was conditioned by their own habitus, and only when they learned Yunlü, central to the embodied philosophy of Chinese dance, were they able to perform in a way that satisfied their teacher. I have used the Chinese concept of Yunlü to extend Bourdieu’s concept of habitus to include fundamental physical functions such as ways of breathing, understood as 'the Rhythm of the Body.' I went on to equate habitus with embodied identity, suggesting that the dancers had undergone some small transformation in identity through the acquisition of a Chinese dance habitus whilst the Chinese teacher, from teaching those with a different habitus, gained a new perspective on her own identity. Despite the fact that none of these dancers were Chinese, they were able to include new competences in their habitus allowing their performance to be recognized as Chinese dance by their teacher, by the Chinese community in Belfast, and, to some extent, by me. To the extent that my assessments of the dance still differed from those of the Belfast Chinese teacher and audience, these differences may be attributed to diverse habitus developed in differing contexts.

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Notes

1 www.culturenorthernireland.org
2 I refer to the business where the classes took place as 'the Studio'.
3 The song was written by Leitang, an amateur songwriter about a girl he had become close to on the internet. When the girl vanished from the net for several days, he made an effort to find her, and discovered that she was a cancer patient in a Beijing hospital.
4 If a Chinese male holds his pen or chopsticks in a way which appears to form an Orchid Hand shape, he will be the butt of jokes about his gender identity.
5 The toes may be curled upwards or the foot arched in different movements.
CÈILIDH AS COMMUNITY: PARTICIPATION, KNOWING AND SOCIALIZATION ON A SMALL, SCOTTISH ISLAND

BY SAM WARD

Abstract: The island of Féina lies 50 miles off the west coast of Scotland, and is accessible only by a three hour ferry journey. Féina, though beautiful, is rugged and unsuitable for cultivating anything but the hardest livestock, and the harsh weather only adds to the sense of remoteness. Féina’s isolation and often hostile conditions has led, as in much of the Hebrides, to an increased necessity for community cohesion and co-operation to access basic resources. Despite its remoteness, Féina has not escaped the disruptions of modernity: subject to both inward and outward migration, religious collapse and loss of traditional industries, and therefore cannot rely on conventional institutions, such as the church and clan-like systems of association, to foster a feeling of community. The following will examine how the cèilidh, a fluid, participatory social performance, allows islanders to forge a practical sense of belonging, and mutuality.

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Introduction
The island of Féina is 15 miles long, three miles wide, with a population of 180. It lies within the Hebridean islands, off the west coast of Scotland, and is only accessible by a three hour ferry, across choppy waters; a voyage which is conducted one-way only once a day. The economic and social centre is the largest settlement, Ballygorach - home to the grocers, ferry pier, school, café, and community centre. Féina is subject to harsh weather conditions, and the terrain is craggy and unforgiving, even in Hebridean terms – earning it the nickname 'the Rock'. These conditions made life on the island difficult: petrol shortages were common, the grocers were constantly under-stocked, and arable farming was altogether untenable. Unsurprisingly, this led to an increased reliance upon neighbours to gain resources; be it goods, services, or simply some company. However, unlike many other tightly knit, cohesive communities, Féina’s population was far from conventional or homogenous.

Traditional sources of employment, such as fishing and crofting, had become unviable due to growing regulation, and an increasingly competitive, global market; this, coupled with the allure jobs on the mainland, has drawn much of the native population away. Simultaneously, growing fascination among the urban population in the highlands and islands as a place of refuge from modernity, and a way to re-connect with one’s roots, led to high levels of migration to
Fèina from the mainland (Macdonald, 1997: 75, Strathern and Stewart, 2001:54, Basu 2007: 93). However, newcomers are quickly disabused of the notion that life in the Hebrides is a pre-modern utopia, island life being a constant struggle against the elements. Native and non-natives had, in the past, been integrated into island life through religious means, by attending one of the two churches were present: a Church of Scotland, and a Free Church of Scotland – both Calvinistic and Presbyterian, yet the latter with a more evangelical flavour. However, the Free Church, the more popular of the two, had been unable to raise enough funds to maintain their small building, the congregants on Fèina already barely having enough to get by, and had shut. The animosity between the two institutions was such that no Free Church members attended the remaining Church of Scotland services, which itself had run into trouble: there was no permanent minister on the island, but rather volunteers who would stay two weeks at a time – and thus unable to develop meaningful relationships with parishioners. The congregation never numbered more than ten: many of whom were tourists, and none of which were native to Fèina.

The situation on the island was one where co-dependency and cohesion were crucial, yet paradoxically could not be facilitated by traditional institutions such as religion, shared family history (non-natives only having their immediate family on the island, and native families normally having lost significant members to the mainland), or even occupational association – the forced economic diversification of the island leaving few islanders with a common source of employment. Social gatherings were common on Fèina, and to detail them all would be impossible. Yet one community activity was archetypal of the semi-structured, social events which proliferated, and possessed heightened importance to the islanders: the monthly cèilidh. The cèilidh is an event at which islanders gather in the community hall, and includes a number of activities: country dancing, a charity raffle, or simply sitting at the bar and ‘chewing the fat’ (idle chitchat). The cèilidh, therefore, is an ideal model with which to analyse the form and function of structured interaction on the island. The term ‘cèilidh’ will be used in contrast to the anglicised form ‘ceilidh’ or the Irish ‘céilí’, so as best to reflect the emic terminology of the participants. When the inhabitants of Fèina refer to the cèilidh, they are describing something slightly different to the cèili or ceilidh, which refers primarily to a country dance event (Foley, 2011), something which is incorporated within, though not definitive of, the Fèina cèilidh: which is broadly used to mean any medium to large scale, social gathering (in conscious reminiscence of the Gaelic word origin, namely a ‘companionable gadding’).

The cèilidh in history and discourse
The folklorist Alexander Carmichael gives one of the earliest descriptions of the cèilidh, as primarily an oratorical experience, with members of a community gathering together to tell stories, sing, and recite histories (1928). This form, referred to as a 'house cèilidh' still remains on Fèina, though of secondary importance to the dance cèilidh, which this essay means to discuss. One interviewee, bright and alert, yet approaching her hundredth year, recalled how ‘cèilidh’ once meant to go from house to house on the back of a cart or automobile, eating and drinking at each stop until the early hours. Thus the cèilidh, unlike the churches, genealogical affiliation and occupational interest associations (such as crofters associations) which proliferate elsewhere in the Hebrides, has remained due to its ability to adapt to changing times. This is not simply a one way process; the
inhabitants of Fèina having gone out of their way to accommodate the cèilidh. A primary reason given for abandoning the old hall, and building a new structure, was that it could no longer cater for cèilidhs: its hall could not accommodate the growing population, the electricity outlets could not support more complex forms of equipment required for a modern cèilidh, (such as sound systems and stage lighting) and the roof was so low that the boisterous dancing styles, popular among the youth, often led to dancers knocking their heads on the ceiling, not to mention the irreparable damage to the floorboards from stamping feet of dancers and observers.

Many islanders cited these shortcomings as the main reason for relocating the hall: over and above the drafts, poor location (in a field outside of Ballygorach, prone to flooding) and seriously inadequate plumbing. This general state of disrepair was a reasonable enough argument to alter the old hall in some way, independent of its utility as a cèilidh venue, however, the fact that the old halls shortcomings were expressed through the medium of its inability to host cèilidh’s, and that the hall was not simply renovated but replaced by a larger, modern and more robust building capable of hosting larger, festive social gatherings, revealed the importance of the cèilidh in island life. Indeed, despite the first cèilidh of my fieldwork occurring two weeks after my arrival, the first question I was asked by many islanders was whether I would attend. I later discovered my being granted further access to the lives of islanders hinged on my participation.

The cèilidh in practice

Though principally ethnomusicological, Turino’s distinction between participatory and presentational performance are useful heuristics in analysing the Fèina cèilidh (2008). Presentational performance is marked by a high distinction between performer and audience, with the former taking an active role, and the latter a passive. Participatory performance, alternatively, is founded on the principle that everyone present can, and should, participate. This is reflected in its structure, with low barriers to entry, and a tailoring to allow for those of all abilities to engage. The Fèina cèilidh is undeniably a participatory performance: even the cèilidh band, themselves virtuosos, were specifically selected for good track records of playing to allow maximum participation (a steady rhythm to dance by, tunes which people knew, having amiable personalities conducive to 'audience' interaction). The cèilidh is also characteristic of Wenger’s concept of a ‘community of practice’ (1998), a group which maintains association through necessary collective action, rather than abstract affinity (an ‘imagined community’ – Anderson, 1983). Characteristics are identified by Wenger as mutual engagement (the act of everyone working together, harmoniously or not), joint enterprise (an ongoing, common purpose – rarely stated or achieved in any final sense) and shared repertoire (a collection of notions and actions that a group adopts and utilises). These could be found both within the cèilidh, yet also within the island community that formed around it. The following will detail one, well-attended cèilidh, that occurred halfway through my time in the field.

Though private and public drinking preceded individuals actual congregation at the community centre where the cèilidh was to take place, the event officially began with a 'children’s dance': chairs were arranged around the edges of the hall, where parents and many older islanders sat, to observe younger children dancing relatively simplified country dances, to slower and more simplistic tunes than would be encountered
later. This was fundamentally a learning process: children as young as five were instructed, largely through imitating adults (and one commandeered anthropologist) on the correct movements: the right height to hop, the appropriate force with which to swing one’s partner, and how to kick in an exuberant, controlled manner, whilst remaining within one’s personal space. They were also educated on the correct etiquette: parents encouraged their nervous offspring to approach un-partnered individuals, often the elderly islanders sitting around the dance floor, who often took great delight in accompanying the young dancers. Other forms of protocol were also instilled: one should never run on the dancefloor, a male dancer should always hold a female dancer firmly but gently, one must never refuse a dance invitation, and so on.

There have been many interpretations on the symbolic meanings of Scottish folk dances: Johnson and Boswell remark upon a wild dance on Skye, in which dancers are steadily swept up into one, whirling mass. They report this dance was called 'America', representing the fervour of emigration, which steadily swept up individuals, until a whole community was displaced (Boswell, 1785). Strathern and Stewart note that, in the borders region, local dancing customs are perceived as a symbolic rejection of perceived Anglo-Saxon hegemony: 'every step... dancing on the English' (2001: 60). On Fèina, too, emic analysis occurred: one islander, Emma, informed me that one dance, in which couples broke off into separate groups, dancing in a circle around a larger group of dancers to whom they would eventually join, was symbolic of how fishermen, though wandering from the island, would retain it as a point of reference, and would eventually return. While the perceived symbolisms of the dances is fascinating, it is noteworthy that no such meaning is transferred in their initial learning, unlike the aspects of the dance which were instrumental, be it either in terms of socialization or entertainment. Abstract exegesis on the dance structure was primarily retrospective, and was often more a search for personal significance, rather than shared meaning - I do not believe it to be a coincidence that Emma was a keen fisher. The children’s dance was therefore about conferring a form of embodied, implicit knowledge, not necessarily consciously held (Dilley, 1999) but habitually exercised to structure future interactions (Bourdieu, 1977).

As youths and childless adults began to arrive, from either the pub or their own homes, the children’s dance came to an end, and many of the children left the hall – either for bed, or to drink soft drinks in the bar area. At this point in the evening, volunteers began to sell raffle tickets, at a table laid out next to the entrance to the hall, in order to raise money for the children’s after school club. The location was no coincidence. Though purchasing a raffle ticket was not compulsory, declining to do so would be met with a frown. The reason for this unspoken disapproval was serious: the islanders, so far removed from the mainland, were forced to organise and maintain many services, such as childcare, through donations and volunteering. Not buying a ticket would mark one out as an outsider. No such disapproval was meted out to the few tourists present, islanders believing that one could not expect these outsiders to take an interest in the community.

The adult dances were more complex than the earlier children’s; this higher level of complexity was an essential part of maintaining interest, and thus mutual engagement, for the more accomplished dancers: requiring a greater degree of
intricacy to achieve a state of 'flow', in which their faculties would be fully engaged, yet not challenged to an impossible degree (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). The dances were interspersed with short breaks, in which participants would have time to catch their breath, get a drink at the bar, or engage in conversation. This – in terms of socialization – was as crucial to the event as dancing. Etiquette required that no willing individual should be excluded, so this reprieve acted as a period in which invitation to dance would be made: unaccompanied dancers would ask those seated who might look interested, and likewise, they themselves were obligated to accept, if their refusal would lead to a member of the opposite gender being left without a partner. This was, in a sense, compulsory mutual engagement. Likewise, chitchat between individuals, be it in the hall or at the bar, would frequently regard others present: their state of inebriation (and how this might reflect their moral character), their dancing skill, whether or not someone was 'showing off' (and thus derided), and who seemed to have their 'eye on' who that night – the cèilidh being for many young people a courting ritual. Another topic was who was not in attendance, and why: illness would elicit sympathy, and promises of aid, while those who were thought to be snubbing their fellow islanders were classified as anti-social or unreliable, and thus outwith the desired community of practice.

After several hours of dancing, a longer intermission took place, in which the winners of the raffle were announced. As near enough everyone in the crowded, sweltering hall had bought a ticket, the anticipation was felt by all - albeit in a convivial, jocular sense. As each number was announced, cries of 'Fix! Fix!' were shouted, humorously accusing the ticket caller of rigging the results. Once prizes were received, those which were edible, such as chocolates, cakes, and a bottle of whisky, were opened immediately, and passed round the hall – though they were handed first and foremost to one’s closest confederates. This instilled a sense of communion, consumption of a common substance evoking a feeling of shared, internal substance – a common practice in Gaelic Scotland (Masson, 2005).

At this point, many adults took the lull as an opportunity to depart, leaving only the youths present for the final dances. These were similar to the previous set, but were far more ambitious and even aggressive: partners would swing each other round at such force that they barely touched the ground, and dances which involved kicking and stamping became fiercer, with near collision being a source of gratification. I was informed by an elderly islander, Morag, that the aggressive dancing style was a way for youngsters to vent anger and frustration, and therefore responsible for the near non-existent level of crime on the island – I believe she was only half joking. Eventually, the time came when the bar had shut, the centre volunteers were exhausted, and the cèilidh came to an end. This was announced by the same M.C. who had officiated over the raffle, and was greeted by boos and hisses. After the rowdiest of those present accepted their fate, everyone present gathered in a large circle, linking hands with their arms across their bodies, singing 'Auld Lang Syne'. During the choruses, which were the only part of the song many knew, the dancers would simultaneously charge into the centre of the circle, still holding hands, with many near collisions - a subject of much laughter. After the final stanzas had been mumbled, the remaining revellers stumbled 'awa' into the nicht', leaving the centre to be locked by volunteers, who would clear up the debris the next day.

The above analysis could of course be guilty of over-intellectualizing proceedings: the
most important aspect of the cèilidh for many being simply to have a good time, with a group they enjoyed the company of. However, this is not altogether incompatible with my analysis: if humans are indeed social animals (Neuberg and Cottrell, 2008), it would be logical to conclude that the process of socialization would often, if not always, be jubilant and desirable. Furthermore, as a great deal of human identity is founded upon memory, especially of an autobiographical nature (Stewart and Strathern, 2001: 8, Whitehouse, 2004), relevance can be found in that the cèilidh creates a memory in which oneself may be related to all of those present, through a jubilant, festive medium.

Making and managing community
'Community' has been critiqued as a concept which is often arbitrarily applied to a body of people, often inhabiting a common area, who in reality share very little, besides etically prescribed boundaries (Macdonald, 1997:8-9). Macdonald observed on Skye that individuals were heavily divided within a community, often identifying themselves by means that contrasted them to their fellows (1997) and Cohen found on Whalsay, in the Shetlands, symbols of community were popular precisely because they had no single, dogmatic and shared meaning (1987), an analysis equally applied to Scottish Nationalism (1996). While the critique of the term 'community' has brought forth many interesting reconsiderations, this essay contends that community is not always and everywhere imagined, but is something enacted in social relations, on an everyday basis (Levine, 1999, Kohn, 2002): what is shared is not an abstract concept of self, but rather the practice of maintaining an existence in a locale, '...that tangled web of human interactions which endow work with meaning' (Bauman, 2001: 28).

The cèilidh, as an arena of interaction where most islanders were present, operated as a means by which a community of practice might come to know one another, both in the literal sense, yet also in terms of gaging another’s reputation and abilities. For instance, my presence at the children’s dance, and willingness to interact with them showed that I was ‘good with wee ones’: subsequently, a busy mother offered to cook me lunch, over which I would be free to interview her, on the condition that I entertain her five year old whilst she attended to some minor chores — my perceived skill with children granting me a reputation that preceded me. There was also an active gift economy on the island, driven by the isolation and poor agricultural conditions. The gift economy, well documented by social scientists (Mauss, 1969, Tooby and Cosmides, 2005), took the form of scarce goods or services being granted to fellows, without any explicit demand or expectance of payment.

However, there was an implicit, perhaps even subconscious, expectance of eventual reciprocity which governed these exchanges. I experienced this first-hand: delivering a bottle of whisky from Ballygorach to an isolated individual earned me a generous portion of the aforementioned; an impromptu cleaning of the café kept me fed and watered for a day, and volunteering to prepare food at the community centre earned me a generous portion of home-grown lettuce. Besides specific occurrences, I noted a definite correlation between my offering help, attendance of social gatherings (especially the cèilidh) and the generosity of the islanders. The necessity of attendance of cèilidh gatherings on Fèina to become a member of the islands community of practice, of which the gift economy was a central aspect, may be further illustrated by a local woman, Grace, and her distribution of
rhubarb. Grace had a well sheltered garden, a rarity on Féina, and utilized the space to grow vegetables and fruit. During my stay, Grace’s crop ripened, and she went door to door throughout the island, gifting the surplus to those she knew. However, she did not take the time to offer her produce to those with whom she did not engage with in social gatherings — not out of any malicious sentiment, but because she did not feel she knew who they were, so could not approach them and felt no obligation to do so. As rhubarb was not commercially available, only those who were part of a community of practice were able to acquire rhubarb, and thus suffer less from shortages.

Islanders are fully conscious of the necessity to attend cèilidh’s and other social gatherings to become and remain a member of the community; indeed, it seemed to be central to their notions of how they differed from neighbouring islands. During one interview, when I enquired as to what marked out the islanders as unique, I was looked square in the eye and told ‘we’re not like Eile [a neighbouring island], we’re an island of do-ers’, likewise, when interviewing Lachlan, who ran many sports activities with both children and adults, he felt keen to recount an incident which he felt to be illustrative of the centrality of community participation to the Féina way of life: ‘we went across to play a game [of football] against Eile...we had twenty... they had ten... and five of them were tourists! That shows you the difference... we’re proactive, they don’t join in’. Many non-natives also detailed how their integration was dependent on going to the cèilidh’s, whenever they were on ‘whether you were up for it or not... belonging is about mucking in’, as one contributor put it to me.

Social gatherings also allow fellows to discuss individual’s behaviours and characteristics: either to the people in question or with a third party. This is not simply idle chitchat, but rather a means by which to share and assess reputations, and provide feedback on behaviours; I was myself subject to both. After the cèilidh, I attended a Féina Senior Social coffee morning, to which I was cautiously granted access. I was approached by Lindsay, one of the organizers, and told how she and another member of the group had noticed what a ’big eater' I was, reflecting observations about my appetite on the night of cèilidh (in my opinion defensible, given I was living in a small tent, and walking upwards of ten miles a day). While such commentary was not malicious, it highlighted that I had contravened etiquette - information which made me feel self-conscious and I made note not to repeat the action, the comment shaping my behaviour accordingly. I was later cordially invited to the groups monthly dinner at the island’s pub-cum-hotel, an honour that would be denied most young men my age and which I noted had coincided with an increased effort on my part to only accept food if it were absolutely insisted upon - and to do so frugally. I do not believe if I had continued in my previous manner that I would have received the invite. Thus, given the importance of reliable, co-operative relations on the island, the cèilidh, where all the community were present and observable, presented islanders the opportunity to assess, provide feedback to, and in the worst case scenario, reject, those with whom they co-habited the wet and windy 'Rock'.

Conclusion
It has been observed that the peculiar forms modernity imposes has led to identity and community becoming disembodied (Macdonald, 1999: 116, Bauman, 2001: 27-28, Basu, 2007: 94). This is undeniable: travel, migration and the internet have made notions of self increasingly dislocated from immediate
surroundings. However, humans have a drive towards sociality, especially in conditions as adverse as Fèina, where co-operation and co-dependence are the only means to survive - we therefore see a 'rerooting' of the uprooted (Bauman, 2001: Ch. 3, Kohn, 2002), borne out by a desire to belong. Fèina is a peculiarity, and not representative of the modern world; however, it provides fascinating conditions in which individuals without a shared history, or set of institutions, must learn to cohere and co-operate. By engaging in joint enterprise with one’s neighbour, a wider pool of knowledge and skill sets may be utilized, allowing a broader potential outcome of possibilities. But for such co-operation to be achievable one must know one’s neighbours, and know that they are dedicated to joint enterprise. This is a functional asset of social gathering and recreation, a fluid, socializing form which helps individuals to continually navigate and embed themselves, in a constantly changing world.

References

Notes

1 As all participants were guaranteed anonymity, all names have been anonymised, as has the name of the island itself. Notably, another anthropologist had come to the island in the past, and, not suitably anonymised individuals and their narratives, leading to sensitive information, given in confidence, becoming public knowledge: resulting in a damaging of interpersonal relations. Some of the upset caused was still viscerally felt upon my visit, over a decade later.
ARTICLE

CHANGING THE SUBJECT:
MODELING CHANGE AND THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL SUBJECT IN TRANSITION

BY SÉAN O’DUBHGHAILL

Abstract: This work aims to show the limits of the notion of liminality and contends that there are many instances in which the idea has little theoretical usefulness, such as in the analysis of diasporic belonging and in the conducting of inductively driven ethnographic research. Beginning with an overview of the concept, and some instances in which its employment has been illuminating, I attempt to tease out the unstable elements of the model’s design, which often takes a homeostatic model of social structure for granted. Examining the Irish abroad might seem a topic to which liminality is well-suited, given the feeling of precarity and of disconnection often felt, but in its place I suggest a turn towards mobilities studies as well as to continental philosophy.

A critical treatment of the notion of liminality is necessary to ensure that its application is apposite and not indiscriminate. Accounting for change over time, or conducting ethnography around a topic which attempts to achieve this very end, might be better performed by not expressly looking to liminality which prescribes or guarantees the acquisition of an equally well-defined position.

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Introduction

Migration as rite of passage: While some work contends that adventures (such as during the ‘grand tours’ in Europe) might be conceived of as being a rite of passage, such as in Wokler (2007), I believe that an anthropological sensitivity to the role played by the destabilizing liminal is at odds with the act of a new status being acquired.

More modern accounts of migration are also possible candidates for the tripartite model of rites of passage, also turn out to be less apposite than they first appear. In conducting ethnography among young men from Hazarajat, Afghanistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran, Monsutti (2007) convincingly argues that the separation undergone by young men looking for work neatly coincides with Van Gennep’s model:

[T]he perilous journey young Afghans make may also be placed in the framework of rites of passage: it is a spatial and partially social separation from the families and homes which contributes to the cut the links with the period of childhood. (Monsutti, 2007:175)

The emphasis in the work remains on the non-destabilising role this migration plays though; instead, it is proposed, that the process of migration has been successfully woven into everyday understandings of gender roles and the accrual of skills. A similar expectation that migration can lead to
the acquisition of skills or money necessary to thriving in adulthood can be observed in the *merentau* – temporary migration undertaken by young men in Indonesia (cf. Lindqvist, 2009; Salazar, 2011). What is amiss in transposing liminality to the constructs outlined here is that in both instances home is something contingent, not a stable point of departure, and so the separation, liminal and reincorporation phases become collapsed rather than being one contiguous line guaranteeing adulthood.

These issues all stem from the exact definition offered by Van Gennep, the pioneering thinker of rites of passage, in the early 20th century. The three-part model overlooks the possibility that the ritual being analysed, rather than guaranteeing a status, adulthood or experiential and monetary wealth, might in fact fail outright. Given that Van Gennep’s proscription is clear, rites of passage guarantee the transitioning from one social position to one which is equally well defined, we might ask whether there is any leeway for contingency. Van Gennep writes:

*BIRTH, SOCIAL PUBERTY, MARRIAGE, fatherhood, advancement to a higher class, occupational specialization, and death. For every one of these events there are ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well-defined... In this respect, man’s life resembles nature, from which neither the individual nor the society stand independent.*

*(Van Gennep, 1961[1909]:3)*

Rites of passage involve the rituals analysed which involve risk and which are prone to failure at times (Howe, 2000). Liminality is not just inchoate, it might fail outright. To my mind, the critical role risk plays in ritual ensures that any account of any given rite of passage contains within it the possibility of failure, a possibility that is overlooked where the notion of liminality is used as an end unto itself. In what follows I will examine what retrieving subjectivity from behind the model proposed in liminality would involve, what its presuppositions are and will provide a manner by which ethnographic inquiry might move forward.

**The limits of structure:**

Wittgenstein (1951) claims that to know the limit of something is impossible because it requires thinking both sides of the limit; in other words, in order to know the extent to which we can think of the applicability of any given term, liminality for instance, we would have to go beyond the concept itself to see when what is being applied becomes inert or becomes a pointless exercise. The difficulty in an operation of that kind is that we would somehow have to know the limit of something which we don’t know has a limit and testing it would only result in the postulation of non-sense. That being said, it may be possible to approximate the *most pronounced* version of a given postulation to see whether the limit can come into view. This is particularly edifying in studies of ritual as Van Gennep prescribes them as liminality derives its etymology from *limen*, which denotes a threshold, within a social structure that is conceived of as being itself limitless.

I would like to return to an ancient debate concerning the nature of flux versus fixity: not that of Heraclitus contra Parmenides, but instead one concerning the possibility of a fixist metaphysics at all. To what extent might the stable model of social structure with liminal stages of rites triumph over an aqueous social structure whose rites play into the conceit of stability? Anthropological projects conducted in Ireland later on in the twentieth century still retain traces of the primacy of structure and fixity over mobility and free association:

*Balance, pattern, system, structure, may perhaps seem formidable terms. They may*
seem too heavy and too prosaic to do justice to the countryman's way of life. Or again, they may strike you as too formal; for what I name with them is compounded of a thousand personal intimacies. Yet no other terms represent so well the fluid realities of social life. (Arensberg, 1959[1939]:71)

In writing on the 'Irish countryman' the fluid realities of everyday life are trumped by the necessity to structure their behaviour. What this has brought about is the necessity to question the presupposed grounds upon which anthropological research takes place. What I am questioning, then, is what is presupposed in the model of rites of passage, that there is a fixed entity at all. After all, is the advancement of particular, new strains of thought a worthy endeavour without having a sound foundation upon which to rest them?

**Fixity and Flux:**
One theoretical example of the manner, in which a mobile and transnationally contingent representational phenomenon might be understood is in terms of the idea of diaspora. Given that diaspora is the apotheosis of transnational representation (Vertrovec, 1999) and that diaspora severs and upsets the notion of a monadic 'tradition', from which it derives, how might we represent a model of a diaspora without reducing it to a unicity? Can a theoretical model account for the multiple processes of mobility, such as liminality is often thought to do? In this instance, I would like to propose that it is indeed possible through becoming and that in replacing a conventional rite of passage structure we might break open a space in which structure becomes jeopardised.

The mobilities paradigm has drawn attention in many different manners to the undergirding notion that mobility has always had a role in the constitution and reconstitution of place, status, identity and in rituals; this gives rise to questions of whether or not the object proper of mobility can be known or whether mobility is simply a manner through which to approach a given subject. Urry (2003) contends that while this is ultimately impossible, representations can be posited to close the gap between epistemology and methodology:

> Indeed, it is epistemologically and ontologically unknowable, with efforts at comprehension changing the very world that is being investigated. But, because of the power of metaphor in thinking, some notions from complexity will be interrogated in order to assess their fruitfulness in representing those processes implicated in such a global ordering’ (Urry, 2003:16)

What studies of mobility might presupposes then, and which studies of liminality might not, is exactly this kind of unknowability and uncertainty. How, then, might ‘becoming’ be used as an adequate tool to remedy the predominant concern with structure and stability in liminality. According to Kaufmann, Bergmann and Joye (2004) the problem may lie with the application of theoretical visors to similar-seeming evidence:

> Intellectual fashions weaken the cohesiveness of paradigms in the social sciences, while concurrently reducing the choices of theoretical explanation and interpretation... [D]ivergent results are not necessarily based on different research findings, but rather on divergent interpretations of similar evidence (Kaufmann, Bergmann and Joye: 2004: 746)

The concern, therefore, in the postulation of any new model is whether it is apposite, and can meaningfully address a new situation, or whether it is designed with a particularistic approach to an idiosyncratic concern deriving from one’s own ethnographic venture.
Many examples of the critique of notions imported from popular paradigms into anthropology include Brown (1996) which seeks to curtail the applicability of the popular notion of resistance, only to subvert the category itself by critiquing its use-value, Schneider (1987) which, rightly, points out Geertz’s troublesome extrapolation drawn from empirical insights to broader social aspects of Balinese life by asking where the notion of ‘playful theatricality’ actually comes from, and finally a rather more ornery critique by Sahlins (1999). Given the multiplicity of postulates in anthropology, then, is accounting for phenomena in the mobilities paradigm just a matter of selection, or of trial and error? How do we avoid employing certain popular theorist’s ideas as sufficient evidence for the analysis of a particular phenomenon?

Anatomy of a dispute: Becoming Deleuzians:
Let us take the recent application of Deleuzian thought to anthropology as a case study of this exact difficulty. The problem which remains is in identifying the point at which the relationality between the dual concepts of fixity and fluidity give way to a total emphasis being placed upon movement, such that the drawing of any distinction is either analytically fruitless or hopelessly circumspect. This is my aim in trying to delimit liminality’s usefulness. The social field itself is sometimes thought of as being rather liquid in nature, with a range of epistemologies built in different shapes and sizes to contain this aqueous matter, occupying whatever container they fill. This is also the case where, as highlighted earlier, anthropologists can transpose understandings of continental philosophers onto anthropological thought for the betterment of both. Even within Biehl and Locke’s work (2010) on bringing ‘becoming’ over into anthropology, Michael Fischer, in the commentary section of their work, adopts a strong position of defiance in which he contends:

The ‘theoretical quick fix’ of philosophers’ names, like attributing trademarks to ordinary words—assemblages, friction, equipment, concept work, multisided (attribute and use them quickly, expiry looms, next arrives)—is a self-defeating neoliberal game of valuation, hardly an improvement over Cold War ideological schools (you evil deconstructionist, postmodernist, bioculturalist, structuralist, functionalist). (Ibid, 2010, pp 357-358)

The intention here is to evoke this problematic, rather than offering rebuttal to this refutation, particularly as this present work relies on the notion of attempting to curtail or criticise liminality’s appeal by supplementing it with other ‘valuable’ terms. That said, what remains important in Fischer’s commentary is the employment of philosophers’ names alone as sufficient evidence for an ethnographic contention. This is by no means definitive and any theoretical constructs placed around an irreducible entity or upon an abstract contextual notion will never be final or complete. This has been suggested above where liminality, thought to be the transformative core upon which social structures depend, might fail. Biehl and Locke posit, in relation to Fischer’s criticism, that:

In emphasizing the powers and potentials of desire (both creative and destructive), the ways in which social fields ceaselessly leak and transform (power and knowledge notwithstanding), and the in-between, plastic, and ever-unfinished nature of a life, Deleuze lends himself to inspiring ethnographic efforts to illuminate the dynamism of the everyday and the literality and singularity of human becomings. (Biehl & Locke, 2010, 317, Emphasis in original)

Here we acknowledge that if Deleuze is to be successfully deployed, it is in the capacity in which his thought can be said to be of
immediate salience to anthropology as such. Is the mobilities turn simply a vehicle, like ‘becoming’ in the Deleuzian sense, for ascribing meaning to an age old phenomenon, the only thing new about which is simply the pace at which the process of the dissemination of images, ideologies, capital, technologies and ethnoscapes has accelerated beyond historical recognition?

Leakage appears to be the most immediately present metaphor for the constitution of the social field in the 21st century (cf. Bauman, 2000). The effort should be then, if we agree with the aqueous metaphysic, somewhere between the sedentarist metaphysic and the fully malleable one. The primary notion in becoming is not simply its aqueousness, and its parenthetical irreducibility, but rather its receptivity to the prospects of the past as well as to the prospects of the future. In the most programmatic assessment of the possibilities of becoming, towards the close of the piece, we find the contention:

*It is not enough to simply observe that assemblages exist; we must attend, as Deleuze and Guattari originally urged, to the ways these configurations are constantly constructed, undone and redone by the desires and becomings of actual people- caught up in the messiness, the desperation and aspiration, of life in idiosyncratic milieus. (Ibid, 337)*

It is not simply a redirecting of the agenda of anthropology, but rather an augmenting by way of Deleuze and Guattari, that is said to be going on. A model of this very sort would allow for the possibility that rites of passage (and rituals more generally) might fail as well as succeed. It also allows for equally interesting examinations into interstitial states, ones which do not depend on prescriptive outcomes.

Becoming, because it departs from a point that it negates in its departure, can help us carve out a model not contingent on a solid homeostatic grounds. Deleuze offers us the following prospect:

*A line of becoming is not defined by points that is connects, or by points that compose it; on the contrary, it passes between points, it comes up through the middle, it runs perpendicular to the points first perceived... a point is always a point of origin. But a line of becoming has neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival. (Emphasis in original, Deleuze, 1987: 323)*

Away from the fixist, origin-establishing entity of social structure or the nation state lies the understanding of a becoming not contingent on notions of origin or dependant or derivative of those things from which they draw their meaning; put otherwise, becoming does not depend on social structure, function, tripartite theories of rites or upon prescription. The reason that this element is so important is that in theorising the diaspora, and the Irish diaspora in Belgium specifically, is that ‘becoming’ was a sort of architecture that allowed for more keen observations of the phenomenon, as it is lived, to take place; the following section is devoted to the topic of the Irish diaspora specifically where the notion of becoming, and not liminality, is concerned. I have dealt with other aspects of identity and the Irish language elsewhere (O’ Dubhghaill 2014a; 2014b), and so the examination will be limited to testing the applicability of an idea which concerns thresholds but which rejects liminality.

**Becoming and identity:**
If we take the notion of mobilities as being fluid and radically contingent and prone to change, in a manner described by Cratylus and not just that of Heraclitus, we will observe that so prone to change is the social
field, so fluid and parenthetically complex, that we must ready ourselves for this event and not place too much purchase in less apposite, less flexible or more prescriptive theories.

It was in this mode of thinking that I came to analyse the notion of becoming, to determine its merit in relation to the examination of the Irish diaspora in Belgium. Rather than taking a liminal situation as being something which is inchoate, when compared to a static reincorporating ‘home’ place, there are greater depths to plumb in theorising identity if we consider what it might become:

There is, however, a second, related but different view of cultural identity. This second position recognises that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute ‘what we really are’; or rather - since history has intervened - ‘what we have become’...Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. (Hall, 1990: 225)

Cultural identity is deployed in Hall, therefore, to signify that difference is also bound to a becoming, the future, and a possibility of the current situation not being so or, more importantly, of having failed to emerge somehow. Frello (2008) contends that mobility is also bound to difference, as mobility is the acting out of the encounter with difference:

The distinguishing quality of these activities [mobilities, broadly stated, ed.]-what makes them qualify as ‘movement’ activities- is not the overcoming of physical distance, but rather the fact that they involve engaging with some kind of ‘difference’, such as academic disciplines of different (imagined) worlds. (Frello, 2008:29)

One microcosm of this imagined world, in which difference is encountered, is the notion of ‘Europe’ which involves collapsing the notion of Europe as a geographical space and the European Union as a political entity. ‘Europe’ can be theorised by anthropologists and is experienced by interlocutors who are said, by way of the ‘contact hypothesis’ (Deutsch et al., 1957) to encounter difference among Europeans first and then similarity thereafter, leading to a ‘we-feeling’ among ‘fellow’ Europeans. The European Union is often metonymously associated with Brussels solely and that geographical constructions of Europe revolve around the Western mainland.

One example of the manner in which the Irish Diaspora specifically relate to imagined worlds involves their relationship to the Diaspora. The relationship of Irish people, with a diaspora that is estimated to be 80 million strong, to mobility and travel is difficult to overstate even in the instance of a seemingly ‘closer’ venture to the European mainland. Wulff (2007) contends:

Travel has long been at the heart of Irish culture, which means that Ireland is a case in point for how mobility, and different types of longing for the land, shape society. (Wulff, 2007:540)

Another presupposition in encountering difference or being exposed to difference by way of crossing borders and engaging in acts of mobility is that they often depend on the tacitly assumed aspect of the age-old adage ‘travel broadens the mind’, without examining the structures of identification which would allow us to delineate exactly when or where that happens.
between continuity and rupture which can augment or diminish feelings of isolation such that becoming can manifest itself and can vary from person to person- a notion not encountered in liminality. I have often heard among my informants a disavowal of this tacit agreement phrased in the following way:

_I mean you see I feel like I am an exile here. My college requires that I go abroad for three months only to go back. I don’t really know why either. I think they think that they’re giving me something that I am not getting here... I won’t be returning a different man._ (M., 31, Student).

This notion, that encountering difference has failed to instil a particular identity, is not one which is problematic to becoming but is one that is generally phrased in a tenacious manner in mobilities literature. Once again, this sentiment cannot be understood in terms of liminality either, given that no real transformation has occurred. This is something of an issue throughout the Irish community, leading some to refer to it as a cocoon community (Nagy, McLean & O’Sullivan, 2013). The notion that once mobility has been engaged in then that the group or diasporic element must be known thereafter in one, monadic fashion is slightly remote from becoming and is examined in Drakakis-Smith:

_[M]obility could be more (and less) than a life-stage choice with far-reaching implications for norms and values which could endure even when travelling ceased and which could come to define the individual indefinitely._ (Drakakis-Smith, 2007: 470)

The national delimitation of the sedentarist impulse is exposed to a kind of becoming which opens up possibilities and conditions through which people can, by coming into contact with them, become something more. That said, unlike the model of liminality, it is not incumbent on them to do so. By employing anthropological models, testing alternative theories and providing a cursory overview of the current literature on mobilities, by-gone literature on liminality and in-field vignette, I hope to have demonstrated why the model requires critique, that it needs to be approached with a certain amount of suspicion, and that explanatory power is inextricable from the furthering of a particular, fixist worldview.

**Conclusion:**

To close I feel it is necessary only to restate that ‘becoming’, either through Deleuze and Guattari’s readings or through Biehl and Locke’s, must be severed from its cachet and abstracted as a non-symbolic manner through which experiences of mobility might be understood in a manner which exceeds the liminal experience. Representational understandings have been applied, and
mobilised, through Deleuze’s critique in an attempt to capture a glimpse into the current state of engagement as well as to future possibilities of the same. Becoming is a critical tool through which mobility can attempt to handle the aqueous make-up of various trajectories encountered at specific, punctiliar occasions which combine to form the broader conceptual composition of the social field. Allowing for inductive sentiments to exceed reduction is a truly anthropological ambition; I contend that it allows for the possibility of a world broader in kind than can be structured, whose rituals can be divided into specific sections and by positing that new statuses can be achieved in a non-delineated or non-serendipitous way. Moreover, the invocation of ‘becoming’ can bridge the gap between fixity and flux while maintaining the necessity to posit epistemological grounds from which a method and new theories can rise.

References


**IRISH TRAVELLERS: CULTURE AND ETHNICITY REVISITED: TWENTY-FOUR YEARS ON’**

**BY SILVIA BRANDI**

**Abstract:** This paper takes as its starting point the 1991 Anthropological Association of Ireland’s conference ‘Irish Travellers: culture and ethnicity’. It assesses its key contributions, pointing to the long-lasting influence of Ní Shúinéar’s published paper. This became one of the highly quoted documents to attest the scientific validity of the notion of ‘Traveller ethnicity’ as an objective fact and to substantiate Travellers’ demands for official ethnic recognition. While stressing Travellers’ right to self-determination, this paper is aimed at reopening the academic debate on ‘Traveller ethnicity’, as constructed by Traveller advocates of the ethnic status, in line with Ní Shúinéar’s theorization.

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**Introduction**

My paper takes as its starting point the conference ‘Irish Travellers: Culture and Ethnicity’, which was held in Dublin in 1991 by the Anthropological Association of Ireland (AAI henceforth). Its purpose was to offer an occasion for a critical examination of the then new approaches to the understanding of Irish Travellers in Ireland. Among the commendable aspects of that event, it should be remembered the inclusion of Traveller activists among the speakers (e.g. Michael McDonagh and Martin Collins), as well as the organizers’ commitment to critical dialogue among various and conflicting perspectives on this subject.

The 1991 conference marked the beginning of a process of naturalization of the application of the concept of ethnicity to Irish Travellers within Irish academic circles and beyond. As Ó Siócháin, Ruane and McCann (1994: xi-xii) noted, the then new application of the concept of ethnicity to Irish Travellers had ‘radical implications’, such as contributing to the recognition of Traveller culture as

*distinct and valuable in its own right with its own historical path of development, rather than as a short-term adaptation to poverty or marginality.*

Another repercussion relates to the academic endorsement of new policies, respectful of cultural differences, in contrast with the dominant assimilatory ones. Furthermore, the understanding of Traveller ethnicity that has since prevailed is, as I will explore, one
against this backdrop, my paper aims to re-
open the debate on this construction of
‘Traveller ethnicity’ – as an objective fact –
sharing the commitment to dialogue and
debate that the 1991 AAI’s conference set as
one of its three guiding principles (Ó
Specifically, in this paper I take the
opportunity to invite to this scholarly debate
all Travellers, not only those who are
academics, intellectuals or activists, but also
any Pavee who wishes to contribute to
Travellers’ collective self-understanding and
self-definition in contemporary Ireland. What
I have in mind is an open and constructive
debate among Travellers and academics on
both the contemporary understandings of
Traveller ethnicity and culture in Ireland and
the potential implications of such
understandings for Travellers.

Considering the great political sensitivity of
this topic and to avoid any political misuse of
my work for oppressive purposes, I explicitly
state that I fully respect and support Travellers’
right to self-determination in
relation to their ethnic status. Furthermore, I
recognize the enormous merits of Traveller
activists as agents of progressive social and
cultural change, who have struggled for the
diffusion of a human rights culture and the
creation of a pluralist society that respects
and nurtures diversity. Their commitment
and political mobilization have benefited not
only the advancement of human rights for
the Travelling Community but also Irish
society at large.

My primary concern is, however, Traveller
erasity's formulation as an objective fact.
This is not only a purely theoretical matter.
My preoccupations also relate to the
potentially detrimental practical implications
of such an objective approach for Travellers
themselves, as some Traveller opponents of
the ethnic categorization have pointed out
(see Brandi 2013).

My theoretical position draws from critical
insights on ethnicity and culture offered by
writers in the field of Ethnic and Racial
Studies, Cultural Theory and Anthropology
(Bulmer and Solomos 1998; Fenton
Jenkins 1997/2003; Cowan et al 2001 and
others). Authors such as Gilroy (1993: 65)
have warned against the problematic
convergence of ethnicity, culture,
‘race’/racism and the danger of ethnic
absolutism in the contemporary world: ‘a
reductive, essentialist understanding of
ethnic and national difference, which
operates through an absolute sense of
culture’ as ‘a fixed property’ of discrete
human groups. Against this understanding,
they have defined culture as a ‘sociological
fiction, referring to a disordered social
field of connected practices and beliefs, which are
produced out of social action and thus it is
mistaken to imbue with any independent
agency or will of its own’ (Cowan et al 2001:
14).

An additional source of inspiration comes
from writers who have interrogated the
impact of identity politics and identity claims-
making within contemporary social
movements and highlighted their dialectical
potential (Malik 2005; Parekh 2008; Phillips
2007 and others).

In this paper I begin with a brief overview of
the contrasting arguments on ethnicity
presented by Ní Shúinéar (1994) and
McLoughlin (1994), followed by an
assessment the contribution of O’Connell
(1994). Second, I connect this Irish debate
with the broader theoretical debate on ethnicity within the social sciences. Third, I refer to the consolidation of Ní Shúinéar’s understanding of ‘Traveller ethnicity’ within both academic circles and Traveller politics. Fourth, I present selected findings from my recent study on Traveller activists’ discursive construction of Traveller ethnicity (Brandi 2013). Finally, I outline potential issues of concern arising from this construction of ‘Traveller ethnicity’ in both theoretical and strategic terms. I conclude by calling for a re-discovery of the subjective and political dimension of Traveller ethnicity and a re-opening and further broadening of the debate on ‘Traveller ethnicity’.

The Irish academic controversy on Traveller ethnicity
Some commentators at the 1991 Anthropological Association of Ireland conference used the concept of ethnicity in relation to Irish Travellers. However, only two of them applied it systematically, Ní Shúinéar and O’Connell, yet differently so. On the other hand, only McLoughlin explicitly rejected this notion. I will first outline the main arguments on ethnicity by the two opposing academics and, subsequently, highlight O’Connell’s different application of this notion.

Ní Shúinéar opened her paper by referring to Barth’s (1969) dissent from the traditional anthropological understanding of the concept of ethnicity. Barth had contested the latter’s focus on cultural content by providing evidence of the maintenance of ethnic identities despite cultural variation within in-groups. This empirical finding shifted the focus onto the key role played by ethnic actors themselves in constructing and maintaining inter-group boundaries (for greater details see the following section). However, without engaging with Barth’s arguments, Ní Shúinéar moved on to ‘prove’ that Irish Travellers constitute an ethnic group, in line with the traditional anthropological approach, thus, via a checklist. Accordingly, she argued: ‘we are dealing with a group that fulfils ‘all the objective scientific criteria to qualify as an ethnic group’ (Ní Shúinéar 1994: 60 [emphasis added]). These were individually discussed as follows: biological self-perpetuation/racial difference; shared fundamental cultural values/cultural difference; social separation; language barriers and spontaneous and organised enmity.

Conversely, the historian McLoughlin (1994) called for the discarding of the concept of ethnicity in relation to Irish Travellers for theoretical and strategic reasons. First, she contested ethnicity (as equated with ‘race’) in theoretical terms as an inaccurate and problematic concept, entrenched in notions of racial distinctiveness, purity and biological difference (McLoughlin 1994: 78-80). In political terms, she argued that demands for equality on a special rights basis would constitute ‘a most conservative claim’ since ‘equal participation in the bounty of the state should be available to all Irish citizens’.

Finally, in practical terms, she individuated another problem in the lack of consensus among individual Travellers themselves on the ethnic status (McLoughlin 1994: 79). Her argument (1994: 79) was sustained by the conviction that the ethnicity claim did not address the contextual historical and structural factors involved in the discrimination and victimisation of Travellers among many other social groups in ‘an oppressively monolithic Irish Republic’ (McLoughlin 1994: 79). Yet, her rejection of ethnicity did not imply an opposition to Travellers’ cultural claims. On the contrary, she insisted that, as a distinct group in Irish
society, they had a legitimate claim to ‘cultural engagement with the dominant culture on their own terms’ within a pluralist society (McLoughlin 1994: 79 and 91).

However, there was also a third paper that explicitly discussed the application of ethnicity to Irish Travellers. This was O’Connell’s (1994) ‘Ethnicity and Irish Travellers’. His contribution was in favour of applying the notion of ethnicity to Travellers, yet in line with post-Barthian approaches. He acknowledged also the subjective component of ethnicity, reconciling a social constructivist understanding with a mild version of primordiality. He defined ethnicity as a socio-cultural phenomenon of collective and individual identification and differentiation between groups, occurring during social transactions, produced in specific historical contexts (acquiring greater salience in situations of oppression and poverty), changeable and adaptable in meaning over time and with internally contestable membership criteria (O’Connell 1994: 111-113). O’Connell (1994: 115-116) also pointed to the role played by asymmetrical relations of power (as domination and subordination), unequal distribution of resources and ethnocentrism in the emergence of dominant and subordinate ethnic identities. From this he moved on to explain how the ideology of sedentarism underpinned assimilationist governmental policies towards Travellers in Ireland. In turn, he recognised the role played by anti-Traveller oppression, discrimination and exclusion in strengthening Travellers’ sense of ethnic identity (O’Connell 1994: 118). Finally, his paper concluded with a reference to the instrumental, political and strategic function of ethnicity: ‘it is also a political instrument for the achievement of basic human rights’, such as the legal protection of Travellers against discrimination (O’Connell 1994: 118).

Links to broader theoretical debates on ethnicity

By discarding ethnicity as an analytical concept to apply to Irish Travellers, McLoughlin (1994) did not engage with the broader theoretical debates on ethnicity. Yet, her equation of ethnicity and ‘race’ partly resonates with critical concerns on the dangers of the conflation between these two notions. I will return to this point later in this paper.

On the other hand, the diverging understandings of ethnicity embraced by Ní Shúinéar and O’Connell reflect broader theoretical divisions on ethnicity in the social sciences: the polarisation between primordialist and instrumentalist perspectives, drawn respectively from Geertz (1962) and Barth (1969). The first orientation, commonly found in traditional anthropological analyses, stresses the inherited nature of ethnicity by asserting that each human group presents certain typical primordial features, which constitute its specific and essential characteristics. Hence, ethnicity is treated as ‘one of the givens of social existence, deriving from birth into a particular community of language, belief and social practices’ (Bolaffi et al 2003: 97). In the second orientation, instrumentalist theory is founded on the legacy of Max Weber, who was the first to stress the subjective dimension of ethnicity as contrasted with the objective dimension of ‘race’. For Weber, the ethnic group shares a subjective belief in common origins, founded on a ‘similarity of habits, customs and/or collective memories of migration or colonisation’ (Bolaffi et al 2003: 94). Weber’s insight that a group’s cherishing a sense of common, even if fictitious, ancestry constitutes a base for the creation of community is still at the core of most current definitions of ethnicity (Stone and Dennis 2003: 32).
Until the late 1960s dominant theorisations of ethnicity were set by traditional anthropology: ethnicity was regarded as a fixed property of ethnic groups. Attention was paid especially to the cultural content, used as a criterion for verification of ethnicity. The Narroll framework (1964) provided an inventory of characteristics, which were seen to confirm scientifically the ethnic status of a group: biological difference, cultural difference, social separation, distinct language and spontaneous and organised enmity (Barth 1969: 10; Equality Authority 2006: 47).

Barth (1969) revolutionised this traditional understanding of ethnicity. Building on Weber, he laid the foundation of the social constructivist and instrumentalist perspectives, which have since prevailed with European and North American scholars in anthropology and sociology (Jenkins 1997: 19). Empirical research by Barth (1969) showed that ethnic identity could be maintained despite evidence of cultural variation within the in-group. This maintenance is made possible by a re-definition of in-group membership criteria, which overrides cultural variation. Thus, the understanding of ethnicity has moved from the static vision of ‘a thing completed - a unit-vessel filled with cultural content’ (which is how the ethnic actors themselves continue to view it) to a dynamic one of process and ‘work-in-progress’ (Avruch 2003: 75).

Attention has shifted to group interaction and boundary-construction processes by ethnic actors and away from ‘cultural stuff’ in itself. Ethnicity is understood as an instrument, a resource and a strategy, invoked to maintain demarcation between in-group and out-group. This appreciation leads to the political dimension of ethnicity (Jenkins 1997: 12). Bits of culture are objectified by political actors, projected publicly and then resourcefully deployed for political purposes (Avruch 2003: 77) and material gains. This point does not deny the importance of the cultural stuff for putative ethnic groups (Jenkins 1997: 107). Yet, for ethnicity to spring to life the cultural content is not sufficient: social awareness and political mobilisation on behalf of the putative group are also necessary (Fenton 1999: 6). The social constructivist and instrumentalist perspectives have since prevailed with European and North American scholars in anthropology and sociology (Jenkins 1997: 19), although combined with a mild version of primordiality, which recognises the social relevance of the ‘cultural stuff’ and the affective dimension of the ethnic identification for human groups (Fenton 1999: 112; Jenkins 1997: 76). From this emerges a view of ethnicity as simultaneously constructed and historically, socially and culturally grounded (Fenton 1999: 59/64-65).

**Subsequent Irish scholarship on ‘Traveller ethnicity’**

Despite this shift within the international literature, Irish scholarship on ‘Traveller ethnicity’ has instead endorsed the application of ethnicity to Travellers in pre-Barthian terms, by referring to Ní Shúinéar’s (1994) contribution, while dismissing McLoughlin’s position. Ní Shúinéar’s paper (1994) became one of the highly quoted landmark documents that attest the scientific validity of the notion of ‘Traveller ethnicity’ as an objective fact, verifiable through a checklist. Independent researcher and pro-Traveller activist McVeigh (2007) summarized the contemporary degree of consensus within Irish academic circles on this matter:

(...) Most academic commentators tend to accept Irish Traveller ethnicity fairly unproblematically. (...) These commentators all broadly agree with Ní Shúinéar that, 'we are dealing with a group
that fulfills all the objective scientific criteria to qualify as an ethnic group’ [emphasis added]. (McVeigh 2007: 107)

The Traveller ethnicity campaign
With this academic support, since the early 1990s the national Traveller organizations Irish Traveller Movement (ITM), Pavee Point, the National Traveller Women’s Forum (NTWF), and, more recently, Minceirs Whiden have appealed to the discourse of Traveller ethnicity in campaigning for policies that are respectful of Traveller culture. Thanks to this, the discourse of Traveller ethnicity has become dominant within Traveller NGOs, national and international human rights and anti-racist bodies and various other organizations and intellectuals. Even the statutory and voluntary sector in Ireland have the facto applied the concept of ethnicity in their policies dealing with Travellers (McVeigh 2007: 96-97).

However, in 2004 the Irish government moved from a position of ambiguity to one of active denial (McVeigh 2007: 103) by refusing to officially recognize ethnic status to Travellers. It has since persisted in this denial4. One of the justifications for this position was the academic controversy between Ní Shúinéar’s and McLoughlin (Equality Authority 2006: 60). The governmental denial constitutes an illegitimate political misuse of the controversy (McVeigh 2007). The government’s refusal constitutes an illegitimate political misuse of the controversy (McVeigh 2007). In fact, ethnic status is an internationally established legal category within human rights, which already applies to Irish Travellers as ‘they satisfy the internationally recognized criteria’ (CERD 2011: 2). The governmental denial constitutes an illegitimate political misuse of the controversy (McVeigh 2007). Over the last decade the Irish State was repeatedly reminded this by the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination5 (CERD 2011: 2-3).

Against this backdrop, in December 2008 the Irish Traveller Movement launched the Traveller ethnicity campaign and petition with the aim to win widespread public support in Ireland for Traveller demands of ethnic status against the government’s persistent refusal to recognize the ethnic status to Travellers. These efforts have been paid back with an enormous success among Travellers and non-Travellers. Most Traveller organizations nationwide currently endorse Traveller ethnicity as well as several NGOs and associations of any kind (including the Gaelic Athletic Association). In April 2014, the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice, Defense and Equality (2014) also published a report, urging the government to proceed to recognize the ethnic status of Travellers. More recently, Cork City Council and South Dublin County Council have supported this recognition too (thejournal.ie, 2014).

Traveller ethnicity as a fact in the Traveller ethnicity campaign
In a previous publication (Brandi 2013) I have pointed to key points within important documents utilised by supporters of the Traveller ethnicity, such as the Traveller ethnicity leaflet and film produced by the ITM within its Traveller ethnicity campaign, as well as Minceirs Whiden’s (2010) Policy Document. While these documents might not reflect the whole range of positions held by individual members of the ITM and Minceirs Whiden, their longstanding inclusion in the websites of these NGOs seems to suggest the endurance of certain understandings of Traveller ethnicity, culture and identity at their core. Among my findings, the following points are central for the discussion developed in this paper.

First, the construction of Traveller ethnicity by its proponents is strongly influenced by the international discourse of human rights
(Brandi 2013: 248-249). As a result, ethnicity and ethnic status (recognition as an ethnic minority group) are used interchangeably and conflated.

The adoption of the human rights framework is a source of many symbolic, legal, material, political and policy benefits for Irish Travellers. Furthermore, by virtue of this approach Travellers activists act as a force of progressive social and cultural change in promoting a culture of equality and respect for diversity within the Travelling community and broader Irish society (Brandi 2013: 189). However, it is also a source of tensions and potential limitations, which are considered below.

Second, ethnicity, when presented in this way, tends to absorb the reifying and essentialising characteristics of the legal category: it is presented as an objective fact, verifiable through a checklist of essential characteristics that Travellers are visually shown to match (see analysis of the Traveller Ethnicity leaflet in Brandi 2013: 151-175/250). This transfer is facilitated by objective scholarly formulations in pre-Barthian terms such as Ní Shúinéar (1994). Accordingly, Traveller ethnicity is characterized mainly in cultural terms and according to a bounded and static definition of culture (for further details see Brandi 2013: 168/185-186/249).

Third, the adopted formulation may be regarded as having some deterministic and reifying implications. For instance, the statement ‘ethnicity is a fancy word which means what makes you; YOU’, which is written in the ITM’s Traveller ethnicity leaflet, seems to set ethnicity and culture as acting entities that externally determine and shape Travellers. In this way, one sole source of identification appears to be selected and assigned as the maker of Travellers and their identities, without acknowledging either the various dimensions of identity or the other concurring elements or the relevance of the historical structural and action context. This process may facilitate the homogenization and reduction of Traveller identities to one Traveller identity, the one that is constructed within the discourse of the Traveller ethnicity campaign. Even though Traveller advocates recognize the internal heterogeneity existing within the Travelling community, they tend to stop short of recognizing the existence of multiple and differentiated Traveller identities. A clear example of this is offered by Minceirs Whiden’s (2010) policy document; within the latter Travellers’ internal heterogeneity is seen as a matter of ‘diverse needs’, rather than multiple and differentiated Traveller identities (see Brandi 2013: 188-189). As a result, all the complexity and dynamism pertaining to processes of identity-construction tend to be flattened and reduced to a simple and clear action realized by an abstract entity. Instead, in line with contemporary identity-formation theories (see Parekh 2008), I argue that identities are multi-dimensional, plural and involve also an element of collective and individual choice.

Fourth, the attribution of agency to abstract notions is coupled with a tendency to either omit or deny choice and agency to Travellers in self-identifying as ethnic as per the ITM’s position (Brandi 2013: 159). Travellers who learn about their ethnicity solely on the basis of the Traveller Ethnicity leaflet and/or film might not be made aware of the centrality of their own will and political assertiveness in this regard. Yet, they might be exposed to alternative sources of information, since a good deal of the discussion around Traveller ethnicity takes place also at Traveller conferences, events and in Traveller authored media, some of which are not
directly accessible for non-Traveller academics.

While my study looked closely at PR or campaign materials, which are necessary brief, this is also evident in other mediums, which can be accessed online on the ITM’s website. For example, Niall Crowley⁶, former Chief Executive Officer of the Equality Authority and, before this, one of the core founding members of ITM in 1990, made the following comments in a speech delivered on occasion of the 2009 ITM’s Annual General Meeting in Athlone:

There has been much discussion as to whether or not Travellers are an ethnic group. This misses the key point. Ethnicity is an academic concept that has been relatively well defined. Travellers are an ethnic group by this definition. (…) But the starting point is that Travellers are an ethnic group and this is not something that is in the Government’s gift, nor is it a matter of choice for Travellers [emphasis added]. (Crowley 2009)

This position was already formulated by the Equality Authority Report on Traveller Ethnicity (2006) published when Niall Crowley was its Chair Executive Director. As considered above, this statement on the self-evidence of ‘Traveller ethnicity’ draws on academic essays, which are quoted as authoritative sources (e.g. Ní Shúinéar 1994; McVeigh 2007).

Fifth, Minceirs Whiden’s (2010: 8) in its policy document goes even further by explicitly denying that Traveller ethnicity is a political strategy (yet, this denial may be interpreted as a political strategy too): ‘Traveller ethnicity is not a political tool to secure human rights from the state as these rights should be granted automatically’. This denial significantly clashes with the contemporary critical understandings of ethnicity which were outlined above. Critical theorists (Brubaker 2004; Bulmer and Solomos 1998; Gilroy 1993; Fenton 1999/2010; Jenkins 1999 and others) question ethnicity as an objective entity and as a fixed property of neatly divided human groupings. Such critical formulations regard it rather as a socially constructed, historically grounded, dynamic, relational and transactional process of identification on the basis of perceived groups’ similarity and difference, as well as a potent social and political resource for racialised and oppressed groups that can be availed of in their struggles for equality and human rights. The subjective and political dimensions are the ones that guarantee the progressive potential of ethnicity as a means of emancipation against the regressive potential of ‘race’ as a means of oppression. Thus, while ethnic claims do arise around and mobilise the identified ethnic (cultural) attributes, nonetheless the latter are not sufficient on their own to ensure ethnicity. Ethnicity cannot be externally imposed but must be voluntarily chosen and claimed if its emancipatory function is to be preserved; otherwise it would risk slippage into ‘race’ and could be open to exploitation as an instrument of oppression and racism.

In this light, the ethnicity advocates’ conflation and overlap between the legal category and the theoretical notion, despite its emancipatory and strategic function, may be regarded as problematic in so far as it tends to deprive Travellers of their agency and choice in self-identifying as ethnic. In this way it inadvertently tends to render ethnicity akin to ‘race’ with its determinist and reductionist legacy.

Conclusion
Ní Shúinéar’s (1994) paper began a process of ideological naturalization of ‘Traveller ethnicity’ as a self-evident, scientific fact within both academic scholarship and Traveller politics. This has reached its apex in recent years, especially following the launch
of the Traveller Ethnicity Campaign in 2008. Traveller activists involved in this campaign seem to have at times leaned towards an objective, reified and deterministic formulation of Traveller ethnicity, in order to strengthen their claims during their emancipatory struggle, against an unfair and culturally genocidal Irish State.

Yet, an objective definition of Traveller ethnicity in line with Ní Shúinéar (1994) is close to past criteria of pseudo-scientific racial classification and theoretically problematic. The conceptual contiguity of ‘race’, culture and ethnicity, their historical overlaps and the latter’s inheritance of ‘race’’s problematic legacy (e.g. tendency to determinism), as pointed out by critical theorists (Brah 2005; Bulmer and Solomos 1998; Gilroy 1993/1998; Rattansi 2005), should not be underestimated. This is especially relevant in the contemporary world, characterized by the simultaneous phenomena of the culturalization of racism, politicization of ethnicity and ethnicization of politics (Fenton 1999: 51). In this sense, McLoughlin’s (1994: 80) ‘grave sense of unease’ at any appeal to notions of racial distinctiveness, even if for emancipatory purposes, should be given more credit.

But Ní Shúinéar’s stance is also a political one. In the awareness of the overlaps between the political and the academic spheres (Ní Shúinéar 1994: 73-74), her work is animated by progressive political intentions: Travellers’ emancipation within Irish society.

Yet, I believe that an objective definition of Traveller ethnicity could also be politically dangerous for Travellers’ emancipation in the longer run: once ‘objectively’ there, it could be transformed into an oppressive label to justify punitive policies.

Furthermore, I believe that it would be beneficial to make a distinction between ethnicity, as an analytical concept, and ethnic status, as a legal category, while acknowledging their reciprocal influence. In this way, it would be possible to preserve both the egalitarian progressive function of the ethnic status and the subjective (socio-constructionist, political, instrumental) dimension of the phenomenon described by the concept of ethnicity. Positions such as the one advocated in this paper may have been discussed among Traveller activists involved in the Irish Traveller Movement and other Traveller organizations. However, it is crucial that these alternative and diversified stances gain access also to public and academic discourse.

Ethnic status, as an internationally established legal category, an instrument of protection from racial discrimination and leverage for affirmative action policies, is an entitlement of Travellers, beyond national discussions on ethnicity. A concern with an objective understanding of ethnicity does not imply the discarding of ethnicity altogether. For instance, O’Connell’s (1994) application of ethnicity to Irish Travellers is a theoretically very balanced and accessible one. It certainly deserves to be rediscovered and engaged with by us all. After all, O’Connell himself first introduced and systematically applied this concept to Irish Travellers in the early 1980s within his campaign for their human rights.

In light of this, I would like to conclude by recalling one of the concerns of the editors of Irish Travellers: Culture and Ethnicity (Ó Siocháin, Ruane and McCann 1994: xiii): their attention to ‘the subjective component of ethnicity’, i.e. the crucial question of ‘how Irish Travellers understand their experience at the present time’. Even Mary Robinson (1994), in her foreword to the book,
expressed a similar point: ‘(...) the issues of distinction and self-perception are vital to the understanding of the travelling people [sic]’.

Safeguarding the subjective dimension of ethnicity — Irish Travellers’ self-perception as ethnic — is a concern that I deeply share with the former president of Ireland and the editors of the aforementioned book. This is a necessary prerequisite in securing ethnicity as an emancipatory category of self-ascription, against an externally determined and potentially oppressive ‘race’. Most importantly, even the United Nations CERD Committee’s General Observation N.8 (1990) recalls the principle of self-identification as a critical factor in the identification and conceptualisation of a people as an ethnic minority group.

Finally, in order to facilitate this process, I make an explicit invitation to Travellers to participate in the academic debate on contemporary understandings of Traveller ethnicity, culture and identities. Underpinning this invitation is the conviction of the importance of guaranteeing access to academic discourse also to those Traveller positions that are still unpublished and unrecorded. This would renovate and enrich the current academic discourse as well as reaching this paper’s intended goal: reopening the debate on Traveller ethnicity, critically engaging with Travellers, their NGOs and academics in a dialectical and dialogical way to address together the potential pitfalls deriving from the pursuit of equality through the route of identity politics.

The Irish Journal of Anthropology and the AAI are apposite arenas for such a critical engagement, given their historical role in actively seeking and hosting Travellers’ contributions to academics debates for the full recognition, legitimation and advancement of Travellers and their rights in Irish society.

In fact, at the 2015 AAI Annual Conference some contributors have already offered interesting examples of Traveller’ agency in availing of ethnicity and culture as political tools to challenge anti-Traveller racism. For instance, Leanne McDonagh’s paper on ‘The Permanence & Transition of a Community’ invests her artistic work on ‘traditional’ Traveller culture and environment with the political function of challenging stereotypical assumptions on Travellers, held by non-Traveller viewers. Furthermore, Noelle Mann’s paper [see this issue page 24] on ‘Travellers and nostalgia’ makes reference to Traveller singer John Delaney’s political use of Gammon in his songs in order to awaken and reinforce a sense of cultural pride among young Travellers. Finally, Sindy Joyce’s paper [see this issue page 15] on ‘Divided spaces’ contextualizes young Travellers’ spatial exclusion from many public and commercial spaces within the practice of anti-Traveller racism, hostility towards their Traveller identity and the debate on Traveller ethnicity.

References


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Notes

1. The anthropologist Narroll established a set of criteria for the scientific verification of ethnicity with regards to any given group.

2. Only recently, there is some evidence of the emergence of different analytical approaches in relation to Traveller ethnicity. For instance, in 2012 at a Dublin conference organised by the National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee on 'Ethnicity and Travellers: An Exploration' (27/09/12), two Irish academics presented theoretical perspectives on ethnicity that highlighted its dialectical potential, drawing on insights from previous studies on other minority groups. Yet, they did not challenge the application of ethnicity to Travellers. Marian Cadogan’s paper 'Ethnic identity as a double-edged sword' pointed to the significance of ethnic struggle for oppressed minorities, alongside the potential drawbacks of such a strategy. Similarly, Andrew Finlay’s speech on 'The political economy of ethnic identity' recognised the political and strategic significance of ethnic mobilisation while identifying its limits, such as the adoption of 'the language of the bosses'.

3. For instance, the Equality Authority (2006, 57-58) stated that McLoughlin’s points 'do not constitute a convincing challenge to the wider body of anthropological and other academic work discussed above that supports the argument for recognizing Travellers as an ethnic group'.

4. Against the UNCERD (United Nations Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination) Committee’s reminder of the relevance of the self-identification principle in matters of ethnicity, this position was maintained three times in Irish government reports to the UNCEDR Committee, first in 2004, then in 2009, and, more recently, in March 2012 within the publication of its Combined Third and Fourth Report in response to its recommendations made with the United Nations Universal Periodic Review process (see Equality Authority, 2006, 35-40 and Office of Minister for Integration, 2009, 5).

5. For instance see the following excerpt from the CERD Committee (CERD 2011, 2-3) '(...) the State party should pay particular attention to self-identification as a critical factor in the identification and conceptualization of a people as an ethnic minority group. In this regard, the Committee recommends that the State party should continue to engage with the Traveller community and work concretely towards recognizing Travellers as an ethnic group.'

6. Crowley’s speech is available at the ITM’s www.itmtrav.ie/keyissues/myview/82 accessed on 07/02/2011 at 10.27 a.m.
ARTICLE

HUGH BRODY’S INISHKILLANE: A RETURN VISIT

BY KIERAN KEOHANE

Abstract: This article is written as a short reflection on Hugh Brody’s attendance at the annual Anthropological Association of Ireland conference and subsequent trip to Allihies during which, decades previously, some of Hugh’s formative ethnographic experiences took place.

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Fifty years ago, Hugh Brody, now Professor at the University of the Fraser Valley in British Columbia, Canada, then a young anthropologist from Oxford and a Lecturer in the Philosophy Department Queen’s University Belfast, spent a year or so living in Ireland; in Donegal, in Clare, and in Allihies, Beara, West Cork. In 1971, before moving on to work in Canada, he wrote a book based on his experiences in Ireland, Inishkillane: Change & Decline in the West of Ireland. Hugh Brody’s book was both celebrated and controversial, in the Irish academic community, and, especially, amongst the communities of people about whose lives the book was written. Inishkillane is a pseudonym for an imaginary community, a composite picture of the several different places where Hugh Brody had spent time, mixed up together and blended with poetry, prose, stories and folklore. Inishkillane is ‘fiction’, in the sense that it was ‘made up’, but made up from facts and experiences drawn from real life. Amongst an academic readership Inishkillane may have been an adequate disguise, but communities in the west of Ireland are small places, places where privacy is often a luxury, and some people recognized themselves and their neighbours in Hugh Brody’s book.

More than forty years have passed since the book came out, and, hopefully, time has healed hurt feelings in the meantime. As well, perhaps not very many academics read Inishkillane anymore, as nowadays it has the status of an historical text, a classic book in the Irish social science canon; and, some may say, Inishkillane is a book that has become dated and out of focus with the Ireland of the present. That’s unfortunate, and incorrect, for to be a classic means not that a book is dated, that it belongs to a certain time, but rather that it is timeless; that the excellence of the ideas that are formulated and articulated, and the methodological craftsmanship are of such quality that the book rewards being read over and over again. I picked up a copy from the UCC library recently. It hadn’t been borrowed by anyone for quite some time, sadly. I hadn’t looked at it myself since about 1985, I must admit! Browsing through it again I experienced something that I had missed completely when I first read it as a brash and
conceited undergraduate student eagerly looking forward to the metropolitan excitement of London, leaving behind a drab & depressing Ireland that—as I saw it then—was depicted in Hugh Brody’s book.

This time around, though, my reading experience was very different. I had the sensation of being transported back in time to an Ireland and to a West Cork that I remember from my childhood when my father took us ‘home’ to the Mealach valley near Bantry where we were all—small children, parents, relations and neighbours—enlisted in the work of saving the hay: turning the hay, raking it into rows, piking rows into cocks, building cocks into trams, carting trams to the hayshed; and I remember July evenings with the house packed to the rafters with cousins home from England and my aunt & uncle sleeping in the loft over the cowshed in the old house. It all seemed to me then to be lovely and wonderful. But I was too young then to know just how tight money was on a small West Cork farm; and I was too young to know—though I know since, and Hugh Brody’s book has recently reminded me—of a house further along the valley where a woman had come home from England to look after her father, but ‘the nerves were at her’; and of another ‘poor misfortune’ who was ‘gone out of his mind with drink’; and of another house where a bachelor farmer had, they said, ‘died of the lonesomeness.’ Hugh Brody’s book, it seems to me, reading it now, in hindsight, is a deeply empathetic book. On the one hand Hugh Brody shows us and he celebrates the warmth and decency of people living in the still-surviving structures of traditional communities; and, on the other hand, he reveals to us the painful truth of the sadness, loneliness and the despair of people whom those same forms of life were failing and had become dysfunctional.

Inishkillane was written in the wake of one of the grimmest periods of our history, when emigration was as high as it had been in the aftermath of the Famine. Economic transformation was only beginning to be felt, and then only in stops and starts and only in urban centres; and the modernization of agriculture under the EEC similarly. There was ‘no future’ for many young people in the West of Ireland, and ‘no past’ either, as traditional ways of life had become associated with poverty and backwardness and so they were disparaged and abandoned. Hugh Brody focused on the experience of being caught between an old world that was declining and an uncertain future coming falteringly into existence; an experience of being out of time, or in-between times, as it were, and the frightening, disorienting, uncomfortable and unhealthy conditions of de-moralization associated with that experience of liminality. I think most people now, looking back, will say, in fairness to Hugh Brody, he got that absolutely right. And I imagine too that many people will agree that whereas back then we were very uncomfortable talking about mental health and similar problems, today we realize that it’s better to talk about loneliness and depression than it is to suffer in silence.

Hugh Brody’s Inishkillane is a book about the difficulties experienced by people living ‘betwixt and between’, living in a protracted state of liminality, when ‘time is out of joint’ as it were. Ironically, his own book suffered a similar fate, as it, too, came to be seen as anachronistic and out of synch with the times. At the time when Inishkillane was being researched and written, prospects for places on the margins, communities in the West of Ireland, were very bleak indeed. But in the meantime something quite miraculous seems to have happened in Allihies. A community thought then to be a place on the margin, a backward spot, a place in terminal decline, has turned out to be a centre of cultural
renaisssance and cosmopolitanism. Rather than there being only emigration, there has been a generation of immigration; and abandoned houses have been restored and re-inhabited by artists and writers and musicians and organic farmers. Those now living in the Allihies community, an extraordinary coming together of natives and ‘blow-ins’, have combined their energies and their diverse inheritances, both local-traditional and urban-continental, in wonderful ways: a new generation of children are learning again traditional music, taught by a German immigrant who’s become a local; and, if they wish, they can imagine a future life living locally, and / or both locally and globally. The abandoned school has re-opened as an Arts & Language Centre; the shell of the miners’ church is restored and reborn as an award winning museum & interpretive centre; a Tibetan Buddhist community offering a ‘spiritual care education programme’ draws hundreds of people, Irish and international, for weekly retreats and meditation. Mary Robinson launched her Presidential campaign from Allihies, showing that rather than being a place of demoralization, Allihies has become associated with spiritual renewal and moral regeneration. Could Hugh Brody –could anyone- have imagined such a turn-around?

When Hugh Brody was in West Cork, Clare and Donegal he was a young man in his twenties, and like anyone who was still learning his craft he made mistakes. Yes, perhaps he should have taken better care to disguise the world he was depicting and to protect the anonymity of his hosts; but how much dissimulation can one do before one loses sight, loses touch, and begins to do a disservice to people represented by fictionalizing their real life into unreality? And no matter how well one dissimulates, curiosity –and perhaps even vanity- will have people poring over the text anyway, searching for familiar faces. Yes, perhaps the portrayal of a local businessman in a critical light was unfair and unsympathetic. But is it reasonable to expect a twenty-something years old cosmopolitan student to empathize with and to understand the relentless hard work – sixteen hours a day, six and a half days a week; the sweat equity and invisible labour of an entire family, husband and wife, teens to tots; the painstaking graft, thoughtful planning, risk-taking and prudence that it takes to build up a shop, and a farm, and a guesthouse into a thriving business; the well-earned respect and prosperity that comes also with the onerous responsibility of being the local strong man who does more than many to bring the community along in his train, while bearing also the inevitable resentment and begrudgery? It’s only very recently, I must admit to myself with some embarrassment as from my privileged university life I look on in admiration at my cousin who has similarly built up a successful business from a small West Cork family farm, that I have learned to have due respect for such a form of life. Some of life’s lessons can only be learned across the life course, indeed across generations. But here’s what Hugh Brody learned as a young man in Allihies, and what he brought with him from the West of Ireland to Western Canada: he learned to have a deep empathy for people living though cultural damage due to the loss of their traditional ways of life and the disorienting and often destructive impacts of accelerated modernization.

Hugh Brody’s own biography had already made him open and sensitive to learning from living in-between histories and cultures. He was born in Sheffield in 1943 into a Jewish family of refugees. His father’s father came from the Ukraine (where Brody is the name of a town) and his mother had come from Austria after the 1938 Nazi Anschluss. His grandmother lived with the family and he says
she was determined that her grandson would not be "merely English". He says she was very central European in her attitudes and, "thought England was a bleak rock in the Atlantic. And as for Sheffield..." She spoke to her grandson in French, taught him Latin and played chess with him. "So I ended up having borscht and gefilte fish and goulash and being sent to Hebrew classes three times a week, but I also went to a Church of England school and my brother and I were both given very English Christian names. It was a double existence." These ambivalences and double existences were an essential part of Hugh Brody’s character and gave him an empathy with other people whose own lives have been marked by displacements, splits and divisions.

Since Inishkillane Hugh Brody’s work in Canada has been dedicated to developing a deeper understanding of the lives and cultures of Indigenous peoples there, and, based on that understanding, to developing better policies and improved social services, for Indians on skid row in Edmonton and for Inuit communities in the Arctic and the Northwest Territories. Hugh Brody’s book Maps and Dreams is a beautiful portrait and a powerful argument in support of First Nations peoples in British Columbia trying to maintain their hunting practices and their ancestral sense of place and attachment to land in the face of dispossession and dislocation. For the Indigenous peoples of Western Canada and for people living in similar marginal communities in India and in Southern Africa, for people whose cultures and ways of life are disrupted and endangered, Hugh Brody has been a tireless advocate: documenting their lives and their endangered histories, celebrating the importance of their knowledge and the value of their cultures in books, in films, in reports, and defending them through the courts. In his book The Other Side of Eden: Hunters, Farmers, and the Shaping of the World Hugh Brody shows the resourcefulness and the deep wisdom of those peoples throughout the world who are in tune with Nature and with the cosmos; people of intelligence, beauty and moral integrity, qualities imbued and ingrained in their ways of life.

Fifty years on the lasting influence of the West of Ireland can be seen in Hugh Brody’s work, which was, and still is, characterized by an empathy with people who are struggling to live coherent and meaningful lives as they are strung out between a disintegrating past and uncertain future. There is a clear and strong golden thread of thematic and ethical continuity between Inishkillane, Maps and Dreams, and The Other Side of Eden: a continuity of empathy that Hugh Brody developed while living amongst the people of the west of Ireland.

On Sunday March 8th 2015 I enjoyed the unique pleasure and privilege of bringing Hugh Brody back to Allihies. Forty people turned up at Jimmy’s pub, where fifty years previously Hugh Brody had lodged in a room upstairs and served behind the bar. There were older people who remembered him well from years ago; adults who were children then, whose parents are memorialized in Inishkillane; and there were more recent members of the new Allihies community who had heard (for better and worse) of Hugh Brody’s book about their small corner of the world. At Jimmy’s we showed “Tracks Across Sand”, an award-winning documentary film directed by Hugh Brody that tells the story of the Kalahari Bushmen’s pursuit of a claim for their ancestral lands. Afterwards, Hugh Brody spoke eloquently and passionately, tracing the arc of his career from the Arctic through India and Africa, and back to Allihies, everywhere showing how ethical ethnography can empower and enable people and communities on the margins by illuminating the dignity inherent in all of the varieties and
modalities of the human family. Hugh Brody was warmly welcomed back to Allihies. Conversation and gracious hospitality continued over dinner with Anne and ‘Mitey’ McNally. Jimmy himself was delayed a bit, as a cow was calving. He arrived home, beaming, to announce the birth of a fine bull calf, to be named “Hugh” in honour of the famous Anthropologist.
**Interview With**

**Thomas Hylland Eriksen**

**On the EASA and Anthropology in Europe Today**

By Elżbieta Drążkiewicz-Grodzicka

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**E. Drążkiewicz:** You recently became the President of EASA, what would be your plans for the upcoming presidency, how would you like to influence the Association?

**T. H. Eriksen:** I should like to contribute to making anthropology more visible and known in European societies. This would in turn strengthen recruitment to our discipline and might have other positive effects as well, such as strengthening its presence in schools and its influence on intellectual life.

**ED:** Your Presidency comes at the time of increased tensions within European Academia. Academics and students in places such as Netherlands, UK, Ireland or Poland are protesting against recent changes at Universities and within Higher Education systems. I wonder if these should be considered locally, or if there should be approached as some larger – European/global issue. Is that something that would concern EASA?

**THE:** There is clearly a European dimension to these protests. As the Young Scholars Forum at the last EASA conference in Tallinn made clear, there are important similarities between the challenges facing people struggling to establish themselves in the discipline. The kind of knowledge we represent – not obviously of instrumental utility, slow and thorough – is under threat almost everywhere, and the EASA should find ways of supporting our members and other anthropologists who find themselves in an increasingly precarious situation.

**ED:** One issue which is especially emphasised in the current academic reforms is emphasis on the applicability of the research. The issue of applicability have been the one dividing anthropologists for decades. Given your public involvement in Norway, using your own experience, would you advocate for stronger engagement of anthropologists in public debates? Is there anything that EASA can do to promote such engagements?

**THE:** Yes, EASA can facilitate a greater public presence by encouraging popularisation, interdisciplinarity and various forms of public engagement. In my book *Engaging Anthropology: The Case for a Public Presence* (Berg 2006), I ask why it is that anthropologists, in general, are not more visible from the public sphere, since we have so much to offer in so many areas, ranging
from cultural diversity and migration to
globalisation, human nature and religious
revitalisation, just to mention a few of the
most obvious fields. It is almost as if others –
evolutionary psychologists, political theorists,
cultural studies scholars and so on – stole our
clothes while we were out swimming, and it is
time we took them back. Seriously, it says
something about our ability to communicate
our message in a crisp, engaging and
intelligible way that the most famous
anthropologist alive today is a physiologist and
ornithologist. I am, of course, thinking of Jared
Diamond. Interdisciplinary work encourages
some of the same qualities as popularisation. It
forces us to translate what we are doing to
outsiders and show why it is that anthropology
is in fact a fundamental intellectual dis-
cipline, indispensable in any endeavour to understand
the world and the human condition.

What we should be wary of doing is
succumbing to the temptation of advertising
the instrumental usefulness of anthropology as
an intrinsic quality. That would be tantamount
to playing into the hands of those who try to
turn universities into dignified sausage
factories. But having said this, this is not a time
to be complacent or puritan about the mission
of anthropology. Young people who consider
taking up anthropology may reasonably ask:
What do I learn, and what can I do with it? We
may have to come up with some new answers
to these questions, especially the last one. It is
not as if the meaning of life necessarily lies in a
permanent academic position at a university.
Anthropologists can do many different things,
and we should get better at showing it.

**ED:** Could say more about your own
experience? Your own public involvement in
Norway: what were the pros and cons of it?
How (if) did it impact your research and
academic career,

**THE:** Yes. For many years, I have been very
active – some might reasonably think a tad too
active in certain periods – in the Norwegian
and Scandinavian public spheres. There are
definitely pros and cons to this. And it is not as
if everybody should feel a pressure to go out
and give talks to Rotary Clubs, discuss Islam
with populists on TV or write popular books
about identity or happiness. In my own case, it
has largely been a matter of sharing
anthropological perspectives in order to add a
small drop of complexity, some thought-
provoking stories, some new angles on current
or timeless matters. Many of my books in
Norwegian are not anthropology books –
among other things, I've published two novels
– but I couldn't have written them if I had not
been an anthropologist. The professional
strangeness of anthropology, the ability to see
the familiar in the exotic and the exotic in the
familiar, is a virtue in any public sphere, and
should be cultivated. Having said this, there is
a price to be paid. As Einstein reputedly said:
'Make it as simple as possible. But not
simpler.' That is always a risk. Moreover, in the
current labour market for academics, you have
to make certain that you are doing all right
academically before you go public. On the
other hand, owing to the decline in student
numbers that many European countries are
experiencing, a greater visibility for the
discipline cannot be bad. I have been lucky to
have generous and supportive colleagues at
my home department, who were happy to see
social anthropology appearing in the
newspapers and on TV.

When it comes to research, it is obvious that
taking part in the public sphere affects the
intensity and continuity of your research.
Sometimes there are synergies, when you
engage in public discussion about your own
work, but it can be an either/or situation as
well. Partly for this reason, I have not been
very visible in the Scandinavian public spheres
in the last few years.
ED: I think our readers would be very interested in reading about your experience connected to the Breivik’s trial – in a way, even if involuntary you got involved in the very public and controversial issue exactly because of your research and the knowledge you have produced. I guess you have widely discussed this topic in Norway, but I think it would be interesting for our international readers to learn, through your experience about the power of the knowledge we create. The consequences it might have.

THE: Absolutely. A couple of years ago, it reached the point where I was accused, in an op-ed article in Aftenposten, the leading Norwegian newspaper, of being *de facto* responsible for the terrorist attack, since my ‘deconstruction of majority culture’ and implied defence of cultural diversity made so many Norwegians so angry that they – or, to be precise, Breivik – was eventually provoked to commit his atrocious act. I am still looking forward to her explanation of the rise of Nazism.

Breivik and others on the extreme right in Norway seem to have had a minor obsession with me, frequently quoting statements I had made as evidence that Muslim-loving, spineless multiculturalists had taken over the country. Before the terrorist attack, it was easy to take a relaxed stance; after all, everybody is entitled to their views and misunderstandings. Before the 22 July attack, I used to say that being misunderstood may be better than not being understood at all. I am no longer sure.

Controversies over cultural change, national identities, migration and diversity are no longer a party game. Real people were killed by real bullets because they believed in diversity. And then we had the Charlie Hebdo massacres. These tendencies – violent right-wing extremism and violent Islamism – are two sides of the same coin. The current ideological landscape in Europe is far more polarised and overheated than it was in the 1990s. At that time, defenders of diversity might be called naïve; they are now often called traitors. This does not mean that you and I should not challenge conventional mindsets and tell stories people are not used to hearing, but we now do so within a changed ecology of ideas.

ED: Clearly, a public involvement, an engagement of an anthropologist with public debate is something which in important way shapes your work. I would also like to learn about your opinion on another matter which is stressed in the new academic regime, that is obsession with ‘accountability’, increased competition, efficiency, ‘excellence’. At present, the emphasis is on producing outputs – publications in peer reviewed, highly ranked journals. These journals are usually based in the UK or US, their editorial boards are usually populated with scholars representing Anglo-Saxon, (Western?) anthropology.

I wonder how the pressure to publish in them will impact the way we produce and exchange our anthropological knowledge? Are we risking homogenisation of anthropological knowledge, through promotion of only specific types of narratives, theories, but also chosen schools and academic centres?

THE: Good question! Now, I would be the last person to question the quality of the best Anglo-Saxon journals, but your question is well taken and somehow addresses a set of questions which have been at the core of the EASA’s mission since we started. It concerns the relationship between the overlapping, but inherently diverse anthropological traditions in different parts of Europe. We would be well
advised to shift the balance in favour of languages other than English and publishing outlets other than those represented by the established hierarchy of journals and publishers. The issue has a political dimension for sure but it also raises intellectual challenges to do with criteria for assessing the quality of scholarship - the by now total dominance of English-language publications and so on. Some decentralisation of symbolic power is needed.

**ED:** Link to that question is the one about access to these journals and capacity of various researchers, representing different countries to publish in them. These journals are predominantly publishing in English, while the training and teaching across most of the Europe is still done in national languages. What can be done to secure more inclusive character of these journals? Do you think this issue can actually be tackled at the EASA forum: given the local anchoring of most of these journals, would EASA’s involvement in these matters be considered a transgression of its prerogatives?

**THE:** At a purely technical level, good language editing and access to (often meaning funding of) competent translators represent a kind of infrastructure that should be given higher priority; we are talking about the ‘switchboards’ enabling and facilitating the global conversation. At a deeper and more substantial level, you are partly hinting at different ways of doing anthropology and the possibility that this diversity might be reflected better on the European stage. Although other people’s publishing policies are not strictly speaking any of EASA’s business, we can and should have a position. After all, the association was originally founded to strengthen not only European anthropology, but also the network of European anthropologies. This entails, among many other things, finding ways of challenging existing symbolic hegemonies.

**ED:** My follow up (on this and previous question) would be exactly about the decentralization of the symbolic power, but at the same time, the power of European Anthropology (or should I say ethnology?) to compete/collaborate with UK-American centres. In a way it seems paradoxical to me that while British journals (and consequently scholars who populate their editorial boards) hold quite a powerful position in academia, they seem not to be very visible or active at the European forum. I haven’t done research on it but every time an EASA conference is taking place, it strikes me how important this event is for Eastern European, and some other ‘continental’ anthropologists, while at the same time very few senior scholars from leading UK institutions get involved in organizing panels, workshops, networks etc. It seems to me that before even Brexit started to be discussed in UK, British anthropologists have checked out from European involvement (except perhaps of EU funding 😊). For them the go-to place is AAA. How can we foster the dialogue between UK and the continent? Or is my diagnosis of the power division in European anthropology wrong all together?

**THE:** I’m not sure about the non-participation of British colleagues. There may be a tendency that some prioritise the ASA and, to a lesser extent, the AAA; but what has struck me over the years is the gradual disappearance of French colleagues from the EASA. I made a headcount after the Copenhagen EASA conference, where there were more Slovene than French anthropologists present. We should probably find a way of strengthening the original bilingual identity of EASA. But as to your larger question, all I can say is that we have to make a real effort to make sure that the EASA conference is the place to go in order
to present and discuss your work, make new friends and keep abreast with the theoretical and empirical development of the discipline.

**ED:** Following this train of thought I wonder about EASAs relation to AAA. As the President of the Association, how would you describe advantages of our European association and conference gathering over American ones? What about IUAES?

**THE:** We have a unique niche in that we were historically founded, following an initiative from Adam Kuper, as an arena for dialogue between different European anthropologies. At the outset, Central and East European anthropologists were only marginally included, but history caught up with us. The Iron Curtain fell before the first conference in Coimbra, and through the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the fledgling EASA executive committee managed to find funding to bring many East and Central European anthropologists to Coimbra. Ever since, it has been a meeting place of diverse anthropologies with overlapping, but discrete histories. This is not the case at AAA, which is not only far larger, but also in some ways more streamlined. I should also add that EASA meetings, owing to their smaller scale, have more of a family feeling to them than the AAA conferences; you bump into people in a way that doesn't happen at AAA. When it comes to IUAES, it is a different animal altogether; important in its way, but with its own mission.

**ED:** Going back to the discussion of current changes within the Academia, I would like to ask you about worsening situation of young scholars. Young academics are forced to take low paid, short term contracts, or hourly paid jobs. Mobility is promoted as one of the solutions to the problem. So the question here is what steps can EASA take to support young academics? But also: given your research experience from studies on globalisation, as well as the first-hand experience of managing large anthropological department with researchers originating from different places what pros and cons do you see of the existing shifts in the employment modes at the universities?

**THE:** Another multidimensional issue. First of all, an anthropology department should be a place where you want to spend your working day. It should be a friendly, supportive and intellectually challenging environment where people feel that they're doing something important together with others. But that's not really your question. It is in the nature of academic research and career trajectories that many have temporary jobs as postdocs, researchers, lecturers and so on – and there aren't permanent positions for everybody at any given department. For this reason, a second important criterion should be that departments ought to have many ties, strong and weak, with possible workplaces such as applied research institutes and NGOs, and many ought to improve their skills in developing joint projects with non-anthropologists. Mobility can help at the individual level, but obviously it does not solve the structural problem that you're hinting at.

**ED:** What is your opinion (again from your own experience of person who has a power to hire people) on the internationalisation of academia? What are the advantages for departments (and in particular anthropology) of getting people from outside of your own institutions and internationalizing? And then the dilemma of remaining loyal to your own
PhDs who are hoping for such jobs, is one obliged to such loyalty, what are the benefits?

**THE:** I believe this is a recurrent dilemma in many European anthropology departments, perhaps especially in the smaller countries. In the US, the situation is different in that people have to move after their PhD. Somehow we find ourselves in the same predicament as the Melanesian big-man in Sahlins’ classic article ‘Poor man, rich man, big man, chief’. The big man must pay attention to his kin and co-villagers, but he also needs to reach out and conduct foreign policy by visiting other villages, bringing gifts and so on. If he exaggerates, his kinsfolk will eventually rebel. With us, it is always a question of finding the right balance. In smaller countries like Norway, language is bound to be an issue, and you need people everywhere who are familiar with the local academic culture, who can do a competent job in university politics and so on. But there is no reason that everybody should have the same skills. Parallel to what I said earlier about popularisation and going public with your work, a good department thrives on complementary skills. But having said all this: No, we do not have an obligation to our own PhDs who are hoping for jobs. If we hire them, it is because they are the best applicants, full stop. Anything else would be unhealthy. And yet, what it means to be the best applicant is open to discussion.

**ED:** What advice today would you give to young students who wish to peruse academic career?

**THE:** You really need to want it, you have to be passionate about the kind of knowledge that we produce, and relish, in academia. Otherwise, you’re just going to be unhappy and frustrated. Yes, it may be wise to think strategically about the choices you make as you go along, but if there is no existential nerve – nothing important at stake for you – the result will, at the end of the day, not be satisfactory.

**ED:** One returning argument when these issues are being discussed is a lack of money. I wonder how much truth the is in this narrative – especially if we include in our consideration the issue at the macro-European scale. On the one hand there are not enough resources to offer new permanent positions to researchers/lecturers, to promote current staff while the teaching load is expanding. Yet, at the same time, within the EU, and across Europe, via various consortia, generous research/networking funds are on offer. My sense is that we already witness a formation of a new cohort of scholars who specialise in securing these grants and effectively focus predominantly on research. I wonder how this new financial mode, and potentially resulting from it division of labour which separates researchers from lecturers will change our discipline and academia at large?

**THE:** This has been an issue for many years, and it is being exacerbated by the new forms of funding. And the question really relates closely to your first question, about EASA and the situation for anthropology in Europe. For if the most well-known scholars disappear from teaching, this will in turn affect recruitment to the discipline. Besides, in my own experience, teaching and research go hand in hand, and large grants, such as ERC funding, should be of benefit to the larger community. However, the real problem here is structural; there are more good anthropologists and excellent research proposals than there is money to fund them. As a result, an entire industry of application production has emerged and – as you know – most of these projects are never funded.
Someone should do a study of the amount of time and money which is spent writing applications, and evaluating other people's applications, relating it to the amount actually spent funding and doing research.

**ED:** Are there any other issues, changes within the European academia, which you think are crucial from the perspective of anthropology and relevant for EASA?

**THE:** In some areas, we are doing rather well as a discipline, for instance when it comes to ERC funding. But we fail to exert the influence we should have had in the wider world. Perhaps we talk too much to each other and not enough to everybody else. I believe more interdisciplinarity and more accessible ways of writing would help. When the general intellectual discourse on human nature is dominated by evolutionary psychologists, the controversies over migration and social exclusion by sociologists and the finer points of identity are forefronted by cultural studies, one cannot help feeling, as a proud anthropologist, that other people stole our clothes while we were out swimming. We should reclaim them.

**ED:** To add something more optimistic to this interview – what positive changes do you recently observe in our discipline and universities at large?

**THE:** Regarding universities as such, I'm not sure what the positive signs are, to be honest. The kind of knowledge we produce in the non-vocational, non-instrumental domains of learning represents a counterculture – but don't get me wrong; it is a counterculture that can be both illuminating, critical and sometimes subversive. As to anthropology as such, seen as an intellectual project, it is easier to be optimistic. It is flourishing, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and the last few years have seen the re-emergence of intense controversies and disagreements, always a healthy sign, that we have been missing for many years now. I am thinking, in particular, about the vivid and occasionally heated debates about ANT and ‘the ontological turn’.

**ED:** I wonder if EASA has any way of making its voice heard within the EU Research Agency, or individual state Higher Education Institutions - have there been any attempts of impacting the decision making process in that regard?

**THE:** Let me say that we are working on it. We are members of several lobbying organisations representing the interests of the social sciences at a European level; when it comes to individual countries, we are following developments and do our best, with our limited resources, to defend the kinds of knowledge that we have faith in.

**ED:** Finally would EASA see it relevant to undertake a taskforce or research into the conditions young European anthropologists find themselves working in?

**THE:** In fact, we do have such a taskforce already! Hana Cervinkova and Paolo Favero are responsible for it. Among other things, they organise the ‘Young Scholars Forum’ at the next EASA meeting with Italian colleagues, and are also looking into the job market for young anthropologists. Any suggestions as to what we could do, would be most welcome!
Paul Downes’s (2012: 3) motivating line of interrogation underlying this book is to ask whether 'there is a spatial-phenomenological structure, of a primordial unconscious dimension, influencing human experience'. He argues that at a fundamental, universal level of humanness, there exists a structure of interaction between diametric (oppositional) and concentric (meaning holding a common centre) structures. These exist prior to language, prior to subjectivity, and even prior to our unconscious, and influence all experience (the latter term taken to signify, broadly, a phenomenological mode of being). The proposition here is that two apparently irreconcilable things (the diametric and the concentric) constitute this primordial structure and exist in a productive dialogue or tension. It is this so-called 'primordial dance' between the two structures that Downes seeks to uncover and understand.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part sets the stage for the remainder of the book, whereby Downes introduces us to spatial-phenomenology, and explains in quite some depth his notions of the diametric and concentric. He argues throughout this section that a focus on this primary mode of being is needed in order to go beyond ethnocentrism, which may seem curious at first given that he simultaneously argues for the universality of these structures. The second part considers these abstract concepts in relation to more graspable ideas, such as the concept of an ethic of care. The third and fourth parts of the book seek to demonstrate the existence of these structures prior to language, myth and subjectivity.

As a social anthropologist who values the merits of psychological analyses, my intention in this review is to play devils’ advocate for Downes vis-à-vis the likely anthropological objections to his book which I would imagine to be twofold. Firstly, for many anthropologists, the prospect that there could be such a thing as a ‘universal fundamental structure’ uniting human experience will ring immediate alarm bells. Secondly, following the postmodern turn in anthropology, whereby concepts previously viewed as natural were demonstrated to be socially constructed (such as gender, class, race, modernity, tradition, and so on), anthropologists have tended to be sceptical, and rightly so, of arguments grounded in notions of biological universalities.

However, I argue here that whilst the book offers unity (found in the notion of concentric structures), it does not suppress the possibility
of fragmentation (insofar as concentric and diametric structures intertwine). When we take into account the specificities of Downes’s argument, the theory proposed is built on a fairly sensitive combination of phenomenology, psychology and anthropology, where sameness and difference productively interact. What we end up with, then, I argue, is a platform from which to begin to think about reconciling anthropology and psychology.

The possibility of a pre-linguistic universality underlying experience does not deny the potentiality for cross-cultural variation or of social construction. Two of Downes’s more recognisable examples in this respect are those of sleep and care. Whilst it is argued that sleep is a universal primordial experience, this universality does not negate the possibility of sleep being open to cross-cultural analysis. Anthropologists could fruitfully take the universality as a starting point or platform to explore anthropologically relevant questions. How might the phenomenon of sleep differ cross-culturally? How is it that something as essential as sleep comes to be controlled, placed under surveillance, or marketed? Further, the notion that there exists a universal, underlying ethic of care whereby we exist fundamentally in relations of interdependency to one another opens the possibility for similar anthropological explorations of how this might be actualised – discursively, in practice, and cross-culturally.

Moreover, the explicit intention of this engaging (if not at times dense) book is to break away from privileging linear conceptions of history and time. These types of arguments are all too reminiscent of typical 19th century anthropological arguments from the likes of Tylor and Frazer which were used to justify claims that certain minds pertaining to certain groups of people (to put it bluntly, non-Western) were ‘less evolved’ than others. These models invariably posited Western society as existing at an apex of civilisation. However, Downes moves towards phenomenological accounts of spatial experience; put simply, the primordial universal structures underlying human experience are spatial, not temporal. So, notions of groups of people lagging behind in time on a supposed unilineal march towards civilisation, actualised in the West, are thus pushed to the side-lines.

The book as a whole offers an interesting re-reading of major philosophical, psychological, psychiatric and social scientific thinkers: from Kant, Freud, Derrida, and Heidegger through to Foucault and Lakoff, amongst others. One of the most engaging arguments of the book is a re-reading of Foucault’s argument that diametric structures of exclusion emerge at a specific historical point in the 17th century based on Downes’s analysis of 15th century paintings. If Foucault were correct in arguing that diametric structures emerge at a specific historical point, his work would undermine the possibility of the structures as primordial. However, that the same structures discussed by Foucault are present in 15th century paintings not only demonstrates their prior existence, but further provides a compelling argument for the productive combination of analysing art and theory under the same rubric.

However, the invisibility of phenomenon to study renders the book vulnerable to a common methodological critique of psychoanalysis. How are we to empirically implement an analysis of the spatial-phenomenological primordial structures of humanity if we cannot see them? Nevertheless, it is arguable that so long as we feel our actions are underpinned by strong, overpowering motives, even if we cannot see
them, psychoanalysis and anthropology can work together. Must we see to believe? Further, several successful anthropological sub-disciplines (such as those concerning embodied experience, or subjects such as death) are necessarily invisible and ungraspable (the subjective experience of death, for example, is de facto impossible). I would urge anthropologists to take a similar open-minded approach to at least consider the possibility that there are a series of underlying universal mental structures to human experience. Perhaps a good place to start would be this book.
TEN, artist and educator Fiona Whelan’s first book, is an object of multiple kinds. It is a story told in the first person, structured as a chronological account of the ten-year cumulative process in which Irish born-and-bred Whelan became a socially engaged artist. During this time, Whelan collaborated with young people and youth workers at the Rialto Youth Project (RYP), a community based youth service in Dublin’s South inner-city where, together, they created the What’s the story? Collective. TEN is also a very careful representation of a complex process of immersion and intervention that challenges the limits between the personal, the social and the artistic. An assemblage of storytelling, commissioned drawing, design, archival and bibliographic analysis, TEN is also a curatorial project that includes as sources, but also displays, diary entries, interview transcripts and pictures. Furthermore, TEN is a document of a time in which disciplinary distinctions between art, youth and social work, sociology, anthropology and other social sciences have become blurry, in accordance with, but also in contestation against, the institutional structures that make those distinctions still possible. It is also a document of the power dynamics between art and artists, their materials and subjects, their audiences and the spaces and funding institutions that make ‘art,’ and by extension ‘social sciences,’ possible as we know them today.

TEN is also an ethnographic representation. Storytelling, and the chronological narrative that Whelan used, reflect her long-term immersion as an in-house artist at the community setting of RYP (39) and the ‘slow enquiry-based approach’ she required ‘to grasp the specifics to a context’ (40-1). Whelan’s method thus shared features with the ethnographer’s. It is clear, though, that she did not see herself as a social researcher. Explaining how the Collective used personal stories she explains:

I did not see this as socially engaged art trying unsuccessfully to replicate an existing profession in the name of art; I myself would be critical of such an attempt. The social sciences had their own role but here was a creative project, driven by those who had themselves decided to tell their stories, with quite a different function from that of story gathering in formal research [...] These stories would be brought alive over time, analysed, and worked, adapted and built upon. They would be used as part of a major process of representation and representation which was about to unfold (86-8).

So, what is it that makes the contents of Whelan’s story ‘Socially Engaged Art’ and not just ‘Art’ or ‘Youth work’? In the initial stages of the collaborative work, the ‘art’ seemed to be present in products such as murals or installations made by her and by Rialto’s young people. But the challenge lay in creating ‘real learning which will empower them, not just satisfy them each week to keep them coming’ (45), in the RYP Director’s words. It was as
time passed and relationships of trust became stronger that the collaborative art material emerged: existing power relations between artist, young people and youth workers, the members of What's the story? Collective. As if moulding or re-shaping them, they created and carefully maintained new parallel relations of trust which allowed more power relations to become visible between them and the project director, Gardaí (police), audiences, artists, education and funding bodies, the media, the art world and art critics. The ‘art’ was thus in the continuous and slow-paced collective recognition of power relations and in the parallel creation of relations of trust. Some of these relations transformed, some did not, and this had a lot to do with how their work was made available for the public.

I propose the reader visit TEN as an exhibition experiment (following Basu and Macdonald, 2007) that makes visible the invisible; a sort of laboratory in which ‘visitors, curators, objects, technologies, institutional and architectural spaces are brought into relation with each other with no sure sense of what the result will be’ (2). The content of the book, the story, recounts how the What’s the story? Collective made the personal and private available for the public only after deep discussion, engaging in a trial-and-error method, and turning those discussions into the substance of their collective artistic work. At a different level, the book itself is an attempt to render visible what for many years had been ‘invisible’ to wider audiences. In this way, TEN reveals a politics of collaboration and authorship at play in exhibitions and publications—technologies that define who and what the public is, and therefore key sites for the transformation of those definitions. If the contents of the story told in TEN refer to an endeavour that was definitely collaborative, authored by different assemblages of people and institutions such as the What’s the story? Collective (Ch. 2), the story and the book that contains it are not:

Whelan is both the story-teller and the book’s publisher. In this way, she recovers, as it were, her identity as artist, acknowledging that while others contributed, it is she who had the last say. In the book she recuperates the authority she gave up by not making public this work as an individual artist and author, an issue she discusses in the section dedicated to the ‘Art world response to the exhibition/residence’ (206-212).

But if authorship marks a clear limit to collaboration, specificity creates conditions for further conversation. Whelan states that TEN 'represents a specific journey in a specific context at a specific time, during which a collaborative practice' (17) grew between her as an artist and RYP, but in the same spirit of the series of projects it accounts for, TEN presents material for dialogue, an attempt to share ‘practice-based knowledge’ (18) and 'to open up new conversations in [her] own field and across sectors' (244). I would add that these conversations may also take place across geography, in spite and because of TEN’s very local character: The book’s five chapters describe successive stages of the work that began in 2004, when Whelan had her first residence at Studio 468 in Rialto. This was soon after she had finished her HDip Community Arts Education Degree (30) at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin, where she later worked during TEN’s publication as the Joint Course Coordinator of the MA in Socially Engaged Art. Indeed, I feel inspired by and identify with What’s the story? Collective’s slow-paced exhibition strategies and their advocacy for engaged audiences (described in detail in chapters 3 and 4) and by Whelan’s first person story-telling. My reading of TEN was full of evocations from my own practice as an anthropologist that was trained and worked in the Colombian context, but who is now in the process of obtaining a PhD in the UK. I regard this book as a useful tool for anthropologists, sociologists and social
geographers (particularly, but not limited to the ‘applied’ branch of those disciplines), as well as for artists, art educators, museum professionals, policy makers, NGO workers and grass-roots activists, social and youth workers (also I look forward to a Spanish-translated version). It provides a hopeful and honest insight for those who, like me, believe in the need for action that involves institutions similar to those TEN and Whelan talk about, but who are also aware of the limits to transformation inherent to institutional structures and to any socially engaged approach.

References

The topics of death and grieving have gradually gained more traction in the public eye as debates surrounding the redefinition of ‘death’ in the case of organ donation and ongoing anxieties surrounding euthanasia for those suffering from terminal illness dominate public discourse (Lock, 2002; Sharp, 2006). These discussions take place against the backdrop of a globalized world, where the ethics surrounding the public mediation of death become more important in an era of rapidly disseminated images and videos through the Internet. Mediating and Remediating Death is the second volume in an interdisciplinary series examining the media constructions of death and dying, materiality and issues of temporality. The collaborating authors are academics from a variety of institutions, but predominantly centred in Denmark and Finland, with contributions from the United States and the United Kingdom. The volume’s strengths lie in its examination of how the assemblages of death are portrayed and practiced in news articles, television and radio, social media and online forums, reconfiguring ideas about a secular afterlife.

Many of the arguments presented in the book centre on Marshall McLuhan’s oft cited claim that ‘the medium is the message’. With this theory, McLuhan introduced the idea that media forms have changed the environment in which we live, and subsequently changed our interaction with those environments. Building on McLuhan’s idea, Mediating and Remediating Death explores the impact of a variety of media formats on the construction of death and dying in various local communities and transnational groups.

Essentially, McLuhan argued that media forms alter our perception of the world, and as a result, we adapt to this new reality. The idea is taken up in a few ways in this collection of essays. In his ethnography of ghost hunters in Gettysburg, Daugbjerg argues that scientific language and reconfigured media sources work together to alter realities. Ghost hunters remediated the sound signals of a radio box, interpreting them as voices from the afterlife, and assembled the snippets of sound into a new narrative of reality. Kristensen and Mortensen analyse the speed that information was disseminated after the death of Muammar Gaddafi, as well as the inability to censor images and information regarding his death, to argue that the internet has led to a shift in what information is considered ethical for
public consumption. The rapid proliferation of amateur images depicting the suffering without the ability to confirm the circumstances surrounding the events reinforces the same tension between a created and actual reality explored by Daugbjerg. Together, both examples illustrate how media alters landscapes of reality, and our reactions to them, and demonstrate McLuhan’s original premise.

The arguments in this collection of essays coalesce around additional key points. First, that media alters temporalities, ‘establishing relations with the dead without being present in the same space-time continuum’ (Christensen & Sandvik, 2014b, p. 1). Second, that media creates a specific kind of ‘cultural reality’ (2014b, p. 4) in online spaces, in ethical approaches to violent subject matter, in the ways that reality is created, co-created, and mediated through the filters of audiences, and in the acts of witnessing and re-witnessing death and dying across time. Third, authors introduce the concept of object-as-media, arguing that objects can also function like media and extend the idea of personhood beyond physical embodiment. Objects can include the skill of spear-throwing that is manifest in the spears assembled in Papua New Guinea (Rasmussen, 2014), or can refer to those materials that enable an essential self to live on in perpetuity through online platforms or in news clippings or other forms of media (Christensen & Sandvik, 2014a; Haverinen, 2014; Pennington, 2014; Schorr, 2014). Finally, media can simultaneously validate and call into question the facts surrounding death and dying through the contested interpretation of sound or ambiguous sources, tensions that are explored by both Daugbjerg and Kristensen & Mortensen.

Many of the articles discuss the ways that media blurs the boundaries between life and death peripherally. For example, the acts of witnessing and re-witnessing the death of others – whether through the proliferation of online images of suffering, as explored by Knudsen in the death of Muammar Gaddafi, or the distribution of the charred bodies of Tibetan monks explored by Warner, or the memorialisation of Sniper Alley in Sarajevo on YouTube analyzed by Knudsen – all point to the transgression of temporal and spatial boundaries. Viewers can access these events again and again, reliving them through media, collapsing the boundaries of space and time.

Furthermore, examining the effect of media on death – whether violent and sudden or the result of a long illness – opens fascinating questions about how life and a secular afterlife have been reshaped. Essays dealing with these questions are the strongest in the collection. Contributors examine online spaces such as Facebook or the virtual world of Second Life that create areas for grieving and bend temporalities to allow the personhood of the deceased to continue to influence others even after death. Grieving friends and families can remain connected to deceased individuals by continually interacting in these spaces, either by sending messages to the deceased as explored by Haverinen, Warner, and Pennington, or by leaving gifts at the graves of children, as illustrated by Christensen and Sandvik. Afterlife is here reconfigured through the use of the subjunctive mode in describing these practices, a process of repeatedly asking ‘what if’ when imagining what the life of the deceased would have been if they had not died (pg. 261). As the authors show, the subjunctive mode influences the daily practices of mourners in online forums as well as in cemeteries where parents of deceased children leave toys and decorations, turning the grave into either a child’s playspace, or a cradle. By doing so, they act in the subjunctive mode, as if the child had survived. Mourners blur the boundaries between life and death by
continuing to speak and practice as though the deceased were still alive, while simultaneously recognizing the loss of a life.

The volume examines the effect of media on death with breadth of focus and significantly contributes to the study of death and dying in general. Contributors examine the changing ethics, landscapes of grief, temporalities, and extensions of personhood that occur through mediation and remediation. The breadth and depth of analysis included in the collected essays is comprehensive, providing an important resource for scholars in media studies, as well as anthropologies of death and dying.
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CARING CULTURES/CULTURES OF CARE.

AAI MEETING, MAYNOOTH, MARCH 2016

WEEK OF 14TH MARCH 2016

Keynote Speaker: Professor Arthur Kleinman, Department of Anthropology, Harvard University and Department of Social Medicine, Harvard Medical School.

Care is infrastructural for human beings. Humans experience extreme dependency early in life, usually require at least some assistance at its end, and are likely to require periods of care in their middle years. Nonetheless, while studies of technologies of care have a long intellectual history (especially in Nursing), care as such has not been central to classic analyses of social life.

Feminist Philosophy and Moral Reasoning, however, engaged care in a serious intellectual way in the 1980s, while the topic has also emerged as a significant policy and economic anxiety in demographically graying societies during the last fifteen years or so. Since this point, “care” has developed into both a cross-roads and a meeting place for very different critiques of the idea of the bounded, calculating and self-interested subject presumably at the heart of capitalist social formations. Care now positively structures everything from new politics, different economics, new forms of social analysis, genres of art and performance practice, and, indeed, a potentially lucrative area for capital investment. Concepts of care are located in environment/sustainability studies, conflict and human rights, mobility studies, equality studies, and multiple other sites. Still, there are few direct measures of formal care, and the number of studies of informal care-giving (while growing) remains significantly under-developed in comparison to its ubiquity in social life.

This conference wishes to unpack the idea of care in both formal and informal settings through original theoretical and empirical studies. We seek an expansive understanding of this concept and invite papers from Anthropology, Sociology, Ethnomusicology, History, Economics, Nursing and other disciplines. We welcome proposals for both complete panels and for individual papers.

Abstract: 350 words by December 1st to abstracts@anthropologyireland.org