Changing Movement(s)

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Introduction: Changing Movement(s)

Bart van Dieën, Beatrice Scali, Isa van Schaick, Sonya Condro Lukitosari

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The world is in constant movement, with patterns, objects, and beings shifting like imperceptible currents in a river. Global forces result in different forms of migration; societies and cultures change through time; and ideas and beliefs infinitely transform. Conventional thinking relates movement to progress.[1] Yet, to isolate movement as advancement here and loss there would be a misreading. Movement is incessant, bringing about change that is not necessarily forward-moving or consistent. This understanding of change as continuous and multi-linear helps us to make better sense of the world, therefore forming the departure point of this fifth edition of LEAP. The different articles reflect the diversity of definitions of 'movement' from the perspective of multiple fields of study, theoretical frameworks, time periods, and geographic regions. The contributions are grouped in three parts that point to three different dimensions of movement: Movement through Space, Movement through Ideas, and Movement through Action. Movement, however, remains an ambiguous concept. This Special Issue reflects this, in that the articles interact and overlap with each other, and resist rigid categorization. While no single contribution captures movement in totality, collectively this Special Issue contests reductive and conventional understandings of movement, aiming to participate in and expand on academic discourses on movement. In the words of philosopher Thomas Nail: "[i]f we want to understand contemporary social reality, and thus respond to it appropriately, we need ways of thinking that foreground movement and transformation as central to human experience."[2]

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[1] Cambridge Dictionary, "Progress."
[2] Nail, "Introduction I," 2.

Movement through Space

This first group of articles conceptualizes movement through various types of spaces, ranging from digital to physical spaces, and from cultural to political spaces. In line with relational spatial theory, the various contributions share an understanding of space as "the product of interrelation [and] always under construction."[3] The articles also reflect the idea that space and the objects within it—whether goods, ideas, languages, or cultures—constitute one another in an ongoing process of negotiation and contestation. This process lies at the basis of contemporary global politics. From the EU's revised pact on migration and asylum, to increased numbers of individuals being sent to processing and deportation centers globally, current affairs remind us that movement through space is not neutral.[4] Power often depends on the possession and instrumentalization of spatial knowledge and infrastructure. Space, then, is political: who determines how spaces are given shape and who benefits from this? The ways knowledge is obtained and applied by controlling space is also a means of *exerting* power.[5] With this in mind, the focus in this first dimension moves from digital to physical space.

Milla Piitulainen's work, "Weaving Through: Digital Cowpaths and Placing the Web," is about navigating digital space. It focuses on how people exercise agency through playful explorations of platform affordances, such as digital cowpaths. Piitulainen explores how user personal mobility is reduced, as shared online spaces are handed over to corporations and shareholders. Personal mobility, thus, remains a negotiated concept, even when the negotiation occurs online. By shedding light on the continuous contestation and redefinition of online space between its users and regulators, Piitulainen's work also underscores the 'realness' of online spaces. Ultimately, the article criticizes the polarized reactions of obstruction or legitimation to playful web space behavior, an issue that is especially pertinent in a twenty-first century web infiltrated by algorithms and customized feeds.

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[3] Massey, *For Space*, 9.

[4] European Commission, "Migration and Asylum."; Amnesty International, "EU Return Proposals."; Walters, "Denied, Detained, Deported."

[5] Gutting and Oksala, "Michael Foucault."

Giorgio Sebastiani's travelogue "Logistics of Dispossession: A Transit through the Isthmus of Tehuantepec" marks the transition to reflecting on physical space. Sebastiani grounds first-hand accounts of his interactions with Southern Mexicans impacted by the logistical megaproject in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in critical logistics studies literature, illustrating the megaproject's impact on the region and its inhabitants. He finds that while some view the project as a source of opportunities, for many others it leads to violence and dispossession. As such, Sebastiani explores the theme of movement in terms of the securitizing and policing of space, highlighting the Isthmus of Tehuantepec project's contrasting effects on the movement of things and people.

Touching upon similar themes, Bart van Dieën's "'Hanoying' Traffic: Manifestations of Mobility Injustices through the Cát Linh-Hà Đông Metro Railway" is an ethnographic approach to theorizing Hanoi's inaugural metro line as a vexing paradox. While ostensibly designed to improve mobility, the infrastructure reconfigures itself into a biopolitical apparatus that polices mobility in space. Van Dieën reveals a gap between the state's strategic intent and the 'on the ground' effects, where the superimposed technopolitical visions of mobility collide with how people experience mobility in Hanoi. As such, Van Dieën's work is an important reminder that infrastructure's transformative power arises not from intention, but from how it materializes once it enters the everyday world.

The relationship between people, mobility, and infrastructure is also addressed in Steven Hoekstra's contribution "The Liminality of Early Modern Japanese Roads: Physical and Social Mobility in Utagawa Hiroshige's *Fifty-Three Stations of the Tōkaidō*." Specifically, Hoekstra researches the visual representation of travel in early modern Japan (1603-1868), arguing that Utagawa Hiroshige's prints of the *Fifty-Three stations of the Tōkaidō* show roadsides as liminal spaces that challenge social boundaries. As such, Hoekstra's work sheds light on the unanticipated ways in which road users utilize space to exert their agency, crossing social boundaries, and displacing norms as they navigate physical space.

This reflection on movement across space resonates with Sonya Condro Lukitosari's work, "Identifying Sounds: Comparing Interpretations of Sonic Histories of East Javanese *Ludruk* Folk

Theater Performance," though this time the focus is on an audiovisual medium. Lukitosari's work investigates current scholarship on the movements of sound within *ludruk*, arguing that analyzing this art form's soundscapes is essential to gaining a deep cultural understanding of this genre of folk theater, and, by extension, of East Javanese society as reflected on stage. Lukitosari's work highlights sound's ability to act as a carrier of culture, moving through physical space and reaching certain ears but not others, thus following paths that reflect larger patterns of cultural production and consumption. As such, music becomes more than just sound and transforms into a politicized medium that leaves a trace in the spaces it crosses.

Movement Through Ideas

The contributions in the second part of this Special Issue explore movement through ideas. To think of the evolution of ideas from the perspective of movement is to emphasize that knowledge is not a collection of fixed truths, but something that continuously changes as it circulates through space and time. Thomas Nail, in his book titled *The Philosophy of Movement: An Introduction*, redefines reality as fundamentally kinetic (where even "solid" or "static" things are temporary patterns in flux), thus treating knowledge as migratory.[6] This also applies to the knowledge produced about social norms, belief systems, and scientific theories. Social norms are created through resistance and revision; belief systems adapt to new contexts; and scientific theories are not endpoints, but change continuously through evidence, scrutiny, and reinterpretation. Fundamentally, conceiving of movement through ideas poses a shift from *what we know* to *how we know*.

One key institution where knowledge is created, scrutinized, and organized is academia, an important forum for the movement of ideas. Currently, this function of universities is under threat by cuts to university budgets, especially in the United States, but also closer to home. These cuts limit academic freedom, challenge the movement of ideas, and restrict access to diverse perspectives.[7] The

[6] Smith, "Foreword."
[7] Binkley and Megerian, "Trump orders a plan."; Puylaert, "Voorjaarsnota."

articles in this part introduce changes in perspective that allow for the creation of new forms of knowledge. The authors investigate how reality is structured and shaped through narration and through beliefs, by individuals, (in)formal institutions of power, or through social networks.

Theocharis Tzimas's work "Grammaticalization and Cognition: The Catalan go-past" studies the "go + infinitive" periphrasis (a linguistic term referencing the use of several words in the place of a few or one) in Catalan. Unlike in most of its neighboring languages, in Catalan, this periphrasis functions as a past tense rather than as a future marker. This changes its pragmatic uses. As such, the periphrasis marks a double semantic shift, or movement: through space, with the verb 'to go' losing its lexical meaning, and through time, with the verb's tense detaching from the action's temporality. Hence, Tzimas's work highlights how movement exists in and through languages, and how this movement comes to shape cultures and cognitive processes. In the philosophy of language, how we learn languages establishes how we learn to view the world. Our perceptions of the world are partially based on how we describe this world through language.

The following contribution discusses the scientific implications of shifting our perception(s) of movement. Myrthe den Boestert's "Movement all the Way Down" is a double interview with philosopher of science John Dupré and nanobiology professor Liedewij Laan, about how (nano)biology as a discipline fundamentally challenges conventional ideas on science, movement, and objects. Objects are commonly conceived as displaying 'substance ontology': they are assumed to have an underlying, measurable substance that undergoes movement, changing in position or state. In their book, *Everything Flows: Towards a Processual Philosophy of Biology*, Dupré and Nicholson theorize movement as part of the fundamental fabric of reality: he conceives of objects as processual instead of rigid.[8] Objects *are* movement rather than being something that *undergoes* movement. For Laan, this idea resonated when studying small-scale living systems. The fundamental rethinking of movement has important implications for

[8] Dupré and Nicholson, *Everything Flows*.

scientific knowledge production, for instance by moving research away from measuring single "things," such as molecules.

Such a shift in scientific perspective is echoed within Dana Bouwknegt's article "Modeling the Movement of Beliefs: Epistemic Bubbles and Echo Chambers," which examines the concepts of epistemic bubbles and echo chambers through the lens of network epistemology. Bouwknegt builds on philosopher C. Thi Nguyen's distinction of the two concepts, arguing that even rational people can enter echo chambers without committing epistemic vices, and that epistemic bubbles and echo chambers are often unjustly conflated in digital empirical research. Bouwknegt shows how findings from the field of network epistemology, in which computational models are typically used to study polarization, can be reused to bridge the gap between philosophical conceptions of bubbles and chambers and their empirical analysis. As such, Bouwknegt's work is essentially about the movement of beliefs, and about how a system-level perspective on this movement can improve our understanding of epistemic bubbles and echo chambers.

This part concludes with Berber Kommerij's contribution "Memento Mei: The Two Thieves and the Movement of the Soul in the *Spiegel om Wel te Sterven* (1694)." While investigating a very different medium, Kommerij, too, focuses on factors that influence people's belief systems. She analyzes a 17th-century richly illustrated Dutch book that instructs the *ars moriendi*, the art of dying. Kommerij argues that the role of the Two Thieves in the *Spiegel* text and engravings is pivotal in eliciting the church's prescribed penitential conduct to perfect the soul in the last moments before dying. As such, Kommerij's work approaches the theme of movement as *emotional* movement. This type of movement can sometimes transcend the mind's boundaries and result in practical action: in this case, the following of the Good Thief's model to die a good death by learning to 'suffer with' Jesus.

Movement through Action

The last group of articles reflects on how individuals and collectives are moved to take deliberate action. Within the humanities, there is a tendency to interpret the concept of movement politically, as a

means of enacting social change.[9] Action, in this context, can be interpreted as re-action; as the act of reacting to and resisting specific systems of power, whether they be institutional, socio-economic, or cultural. Antonio Gramsci theorizes this type of action as counter-movement against "cultural hegemony," the concept with which he refers to the dominant ideologies that pervade every aspect of life within a society.[10] Like all social movements, counter-movements rely on the sum of individual efforts to thrive; there is no collective movement without individual participation. In the current political climate, engaging in peaceful forms of resistance has become increasingly policed, not only in authoritarian states but in liberal democracies as well.[11] Dissent is increasingly criminalized—with more previously lawful behaviors being stigmatized—and with forms of protest receiving harsh punishment.[12] One recent example is the prosecution of two young 'Just Stop Oil' activists, who were respectively sentenced to two years and twenty months in prison for throwing soup at a Van Gogh painting, even if this piece of art was not irreparably damaged.[13] Civil disobedience, too, is increasingly met with violent repression, whether through physical police violence during (student) demonstrations, or through intimidatory acts such as the recent instances of Dutch police paying visits to the homes of Extinction Rebellion protesters.[14]

Reflecting on movement through action means reflecting on how individuals can be inspired to act on their beliefs despite their obstacles. Therefore, the contributions in the third and final part of this Special Issue zoom in on individual agency, through a series of case studies that relate to patriarchal and environmental injustice. They explore how the connections between activism, mindfulness, and philosophy influence humans' relations to their own and to each

[9] Fard, "The Transformative Power."; Amenta and Polletta, "The Cultural Impacts."
[10] Martin, "Gramsci."
[11] Amnesty International, "Under Protected."; Selmini and di Ronco, "The Dissent and Protest," 225.
[12] Selmini and di Ronco, "Dissent and Protest," 201.
[13] Rufo, "Activists jailed."
[14] NOS, "Kort Geding Extinction Rebellion."

other's bodies. The focus, then, is on how humans embody and express knowledge through action.

Beatrice Scali's article "Taiwan's #MeToo: Early Takeaways from a Late Movement" analyses Taiwan's 2023 #MeToo wave as a case study to assess the movement's effectiveness as a political tool against gendered violence. Scali engages with the anti-carceral critique of #MeToo, which accuses the movement of sharpening the criminal justice system's repressive tools instead of creating systemic change. Taiwan's case study, however, suggests that #MeToo does contribute to dismantling patriarchal violence, and its carceral turn is a collateral effect induced by the movement's habitat, rather than a structural flaw. Ultimately, Scali's work reflects on the tension between institutional and grassroots approaches to activism within social movements.

Subsequently, Isa van Schaick's work "Anti-Capitalist Ecology: Are Green Parties Part of a Counter-Hegemony?" is similarly concerned with a social movement and the question of how to take action. She discusses Global North movements against climate change and zooms in on the economic positions of various Green parties. In literature, ecologist parties are usually conceived of as anti-capitalist, especially Green parties, which are ecocentric in nature. By studying the Parties' election manifestos and contrasting these with the Parties' ecological standpoints, Van Schaick argues, however, that Green Parties are not as anti-capitalistic as their ideological underpinning might suggest. This raises the important question of whether Green party principles should be revised in order to better address environmental issues.

The question of how to take action against climate change is also central to Christopher Schweitzer's "Buddhists Responses to the Moral Imperative of Climate Change." Through applying Buddhist conceptual resources, Schweitzer investigates the motivational gap between accepting a moral imperative and acting on it, and its related moral issues, including intergenerational justice. He argues that Buddhism can help us understand and overcome the lack of action on climate change, fostering the development of moral agency that is essential to bridge the motivational gap, and prompt the kind of sustained and collective action needed to answer the moral imperative of climate change.

This reflection on an inner, selfless impulse to take action is also present in Inge Versteeg's contribution "Moving Towards Compassion: Butoh's Embodied Methods to Enrich Śāntideva's 'Exchanging of Self and Other' Meditation," which reflects on the transformative potential and philosophical underpinnings of two apparently separate practices: Butoh, a dance style, and Śāntideva's exchanging-meditation, a Buddhist meditative approach. Bridging the practical and theoretical distance between the two practices, Versteeg argues that butoh's embodied methods could effectively enrich Śāntideva's meditation to enlarge compassion. This enrichment is warranted because butoh's methods align well with the existing corpus of Buddhist embodied meditation practices and both approaches are rooted in compassion. Indeed, Versteeg's work touches upon themes common to all three conceptions of movement identified in this issue, underscoring our argument of movement being circular, rather than linear, and constantly resisting efforts to bend it towards a certain direction, or compartmentalize it into rigid categories.

Similar to the previous issues of LEAP, this fifth issue reflects a continued commitment to the Humanities as a crucial space in which ideas are exchanged, debated, and sometimes acted upon. Collectively, our contributions aim to disrupt received ideas about movement by critically interrogating the concept's current manifestations in the world, and by offering alternative explorations of movement and counter-movement. Our thirteen voices are already in dialogue with each other through this Special Issue, and we now invite you to join the conversation.

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PART ONE

MOVEMENT THROUGH SPACE

Weaving Through: Digital Cowpaths and Placing the Web

Milla Piitulainen

A new park is built in a neighborhood. It features well-kept grass, neat gravel paths, shading trees, and entertainment amenities, like a café and a playground for small children. On opening day, the park's designer looks on with pride as the park fills with visitors. A few months later, however, when the designer visits the park again, they are disappointed to see patches of dry grass between the gravel paths and trees. These are cowpaths. They are formed when visitors veer off the gravel path and make their way to lounge in the trees' shade on hot summer days. The designer weighs their options: one is to add signs or perhaps even fences, discouraging people from stepping on the grass. Another option might be to extend the gravel to the newly formed paths, since people are clearly taking that route already. However, the designer thinks, this might result in too much of the grass being covered, especially if visitors keep forming cowpaths wherever they desire. Although it is disappointing, the designer decides to let the problem be for now, even though it goes against their original vision and plan: this space ultimately belongs first and foremost to those using it, including those stepping on the grass.

Digital platforms can be understood as kinds of places through which users move down certain paths and in certain patterns. Along these paths, they consume content and digital products, they interact with other users, they form communities and organize, and they generate new forms of culture and meaning. Towards these ends, digital spaces offer different opportunities and obstacles than physical spaces in terms of accessibility and allowances. Digital space now accommodates a lot of the traffic previously reserved for physical spaces: shops, banks, libraries,

galleries, and various offices are expected to offer their services digitally whenever possible. Social interactions and gatherings have also taken a drastic shift online, both for maintaining old relationships and establishing new ones. As social actors move from parks to platforms, their freedom to modify digital space becomes both a site of social control as well as a point of consideration designers have to grapple with. The continuous optimization of digital procedures has become overly normalized due to the swift development and application of suitable technologies, along with their massive potential for monetary gain. This happens at the cost of play, creativity, and collective ownership of spaces. To clarify this point, I apply theories of physical space to digital contexts, with consideration to similarities as well as differences.

Movement within the digital space has long been recognized as valuable in an economic sense. Cookies and tracking-based algorithms lie in the center of discussions surrounding privacy, surveillance, internet censorship, and economic development, especially insofar as these relate to the interests of platforms in maximizing audience exposure to and interaction with advertisers' content. The value of digital movement, however, goes beyond advertisement revenue.

A growing body of literature makes connections between public, urban space and digital space. Christiane Wagner connects visual creativity and ownership of a public space with freedom, highlighting "the exercise of citizenship, which refers to the inclusion of all inhabitants through the right to participation and appropriation."[1] Shifting our conceptions of internet 'users' to 'citizens' highlights their role in shaping their inhabited digital space. One unique and central aspect of this kind of digital citizenship is data ownership. Brand et al. centralizes this notion in the context of cityscapes: "Data justice advocates' insistence that we ground social justice claims in structural, political-economic critiques and lived experiences is a clear intersection with the [right to the city]."[2] Critically, Kuntsman and Miyake point out the increasing difficulty in digital disengagement, with emphasis on its embedding "in the

[1] Wagner, *Visualizations of Urban Space,* 7.
[2] Brand et al., *Data Justice*, 5.

capitalist, neoliberal and data hungry mode of digital communication as dependent on users".[3] Through a phenomenon reminiscent of genericide (a trademarked brand name becoming generic in everyday use), private digital platforms have expanded their userbase to a degree that calls into question their reading as private entities at all. Jessa Lingel writes extensively on internet cultures, communities, and their tensions with platform design through urban/spatial metaphors. Her book *Gentrification of the Internet* (2021) begins with criticism of "an industry that prioritizes corporate profits over public good and actively pushes certain forms of online behavior as the 'right' way to use the web, while other forms of behavior get labeled backwards or out of date." [4] Emphasized here is the power of the user "to experiment or play with digital technologies, and to control how the web looks and feels."[5] Connection to digital space is experimental, playful and embodied in a way that exceeds the visual.

Technological advancements and their connection to potential disembodiment have piqued interest in academic research. On one hand, online interactions normalize the lack of body language and identifying markers, such as one's likeness or the sound of one's voice, where offline interactions rely more on those aspects for connection. On the other hand, thinkers like Judith Butler challenge understandings of the internet as disembodied, since the internet still requires a body to access it, and the consequences of online (inter)actions will, for better or for worse, ultimately be directed towards a physical body.[6]If the internet is not indeed disembodied, perhaps the bodies that move through the digital space leave tracks in the environment, similar to the effects of foot traffic on the pavements on streets or the lawns of parks, not to mention graffiti on walls, fingerprints on shop windows, worn paint on benches, et cetera. Philosophies of place can be utilized in web and platform analysis to inspire alternate ways of thinking about digital movement and the opportunities and responsibilities of platforms as a central part of human infrastructure. A key aspect to

[3] Kuntsman and Miyake, *Paradoxes of Digital Disengagement*, 144.
[4] Lingel, *Gentrification of the Internet,* 1.
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] Butler, *Bodies in Alliance,* 92-4.

this approach is an understanding of belonging and ownership, as it pertains to spaces' existence on the private-public spectrum, and their placement on that spectrum affecting the rules governing that space and its inhabitants. A key aspect is understanding the economic conditions different spaces are subject to, as those conditions relate to the accumulation and investment of generated revenue. To approach allowances and freedom provided by space, one must establish who is allowed to do what in or to a space.

Understanding the embodiment of the internet is necessary in developing theories about the ways the web is used. Arguing for an embodied internet emphasizes its necessity and status as a public space, making the internet into something to be interacted with instead of passively spectated. Chad Luck's writing on ownership in American culture as expressed in literature centralizes the connection between ownership and spatiality. Luck discusses the tension between visual and tactile experiences of space. Drawing on the works of Charles Brockden Brown, Luck proposes sight as decentralized as the primary sense, and embodied touch is brought to the light: "It is touch that situates the body within, and not above, the landscape."[7] Hyperfocus on visual content is a central aspect of present-day social media platforms, which can distance digital spaces from their embodied users. Limiting our understanding of digital interaction to its economically ideal forms of retained attention and statistics for maximum revenue relies on relatively passive intake of endless visual content. Cowpaths are one way to understand embodied digital movement as *interaction* beyond preconceived, economically and hyper-visually driven iterations of the word.

Parkour Paths and Play

'Cowpath,' in a relatively simplistic and physical sense of the word, describes a path created by the motions of an individual or herd taking the same route over and over, until that route becomes visible in the ground traversed. The concept of cowpaths (also referred to as 'desire paths') has come to be used in a metaphorical sense in fields such as UX/UI[8] design as well as the corporate world. Within

[7] Luck, *The Body of Property,* 47.
[8] User Experience/User Interface

business contexts (and arguably in broaded aspects of life), the saying 'don't pave the cowpath' warns against solidifying temporary solutions into standard practice, as this risks neglecting due diligence and failing to optimize processes. In design and marketing, however, 'paving the cowpath' can, in fact, be a smart strategy for centralizing user behavior down pathways with pre-established majority support, minimizing the need for tutorials or help requests.

A physical desire path is mainly motivated by efficiency, ease, or speed. Digital space lies in different dimensions, however, and the reasons for digital desire paths can vary from their physical counterparts. A cowpath can also arise as a form of active resistance or proof of popular dislike of a structure. Notably, this does not inherently imply immorality or illegality.

The threshold for when use of a space becomes misuse (or maluse, violation, etc.) is a key aspect to the mediation of that space and its norms. Vague terminology such as 'normal wear-and-tear' relies on pre-existing normative expectations and perhaps even discourage innovation and the associated risks. A sport like urban parkour, for example, is often practiced in public spaces and utilizes the infrastructures found there with the explicit purpose of moving through it in an unusual manner. Notable influences in the sport express regular disdain for gyms and graceful critiques of purpose-built parkour parks, which are too often built "by the wrong people", advocating instead for the appreciation of the sport on a social level and expressing careful optimism for community-driven legitimation of parkour in major events such as the Olympics.[9] Parkour athletes themselves (also referred to as traceurs or freerunners) have varying positions on the acceptable levels of environment modification for safety or problem-solving.

Parkour philosophy is useful for illustrating the difference in obstructing, tolerating, or paving cowpaths: parkour is often defined in terms of paths from point A to point B and the different ways to take that path. Although directness and efficiency are valued, those values are not applied as they would be to sprinting or mass public transport. Thomas Raymen's ethnography of parkour highlights how the 'points' of a parkour path are not comparable to, for

[9] Storror, "WORST Parkour Parks," 0:25; "STORROR Parkour Olympics 2021," 33:28.

example, stations along a railway system: there is nothing there *but* the point, and indeed, "oftentimes, traceurs derive most pleasure from touching those parts of the city which otherwise go untouched."[10] The nature of digital cowpaths is not entirely the same as parkour, but their similarity is highlighted in their shared resistance to "the purposeful hyper-regulation of our contemporary urban centres of consumption." [11] Raymen ultimately dismisses parkour's anti-capitalist potential, describing it as one of the "micro-forms of dissent and self-critique" welcomed and allowed by capitalism.[12] However, the spatial and political tensions in parkour are reflected in those on online platforms, suggesting analyses of parkour can offer valuable insights into digital movement and the potential of cowpaths in the digital realm.

Many parkour athletes have been met with hostility or violence from private persons for perceived 'useless' degradation of infrastructure, trespassing, and endangerment. The reactions of authorities called upon to obstruct parkour from happening are also often mixed. Interpersonal empathy getting in the way of enforcement might be one reason for increased reliance on various devices which, in an attempt to deter parkour athletes, end up making the sport unnecessarily dangerous, manufacturing risk at the cost of the athletes' physical wellbeing.[13] The degree to which risks are tolerated in the name of parkour is lesser in comparison to, say, in the name of other forms of exercise, protest, or celebration, i.e. that which is perceived as more necessary. This double-edged sword of safety—the enforcement of it on one hand, and the dismissing it on the other—reflects the legitimation/obstruction dilemma of space design and highlights the necessity of a certain degree of a gray-shaded tolerance.

Tolerance of seemingly nonsensical movement without interrogations to its purpose generates fruitful grounds for creative expression. One example of such a digital 'game', akin to playground cultures associated with small children, arose on the blogging platform Tumblr following its introduction of a polling

[10] Raymen, *Parkour, Deviance and Leisure, 5.*
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] *Id.*, 11.
[13] *Id.*, 125-127.

feature. Instead of strictly gauging audience opinions or gathering other kinds of demographic information, Tumblr users began to use the polling feature to 'bake cakes' by posting polls whose voting options represented ingredients. An infamous result of one of these polls included a fictional cake comprised of 44.3% vanilla extract.[14] The Youtuber and internet historian Strange Æons then baked a cake following the ingredients and proportions provided in the poll.[15] This movement from the digital into the physical realm (and then returning to it) is not the norm however. Similar games surrounding online polling infrastructure have appeared on other platforms, including Youtube's polling feature being used to create visual shapes with progress bars.[16] This polling game, despite its similarity, has not been picked up or transformed into other kinds of content.

Games such as the ones described here tend to fly under the radar, since they have little reference to their wider media environment. As such, they can work to disrupt the usual flow of social media. While they do encourage interactions—key currency in the attention economy—they make very limited reference to posts or content outside of themselves. There will be no arguing over the cake once the user has cast their vote, and thereby tossed into the batter another fraction of vanilla extract. Neither is the cake an advertisement. The community has baked its playful cake.

The nature of such an online cake-baking game would be wildly different if it took place within an infrastructure explicitly directing users towards that end. The vanilla extract cake was not baked in a video game, which might feature illustrations of sweet treats and other thematically appropriate design elements. Tumblr's polling feature had no reference to baking of any kind, and yet the game was played. This may be testament to the unique nature of Tumblr in comparison to many other social media sites, including its design choices as well as its history with monetization and general "subcultural identity as a platform."[17] Considering the cake game as an example of a digital cowpath, its formation is certainly mediated

[14] relientk, "okay let's bake a cake."
[15] Strange Æons, "Tumblr's Vanilla Extract Cake."
[16] ohwell17, "Perfect E."
[17] McCracken et al., *a tumblr book*, 9.

to a degree by the so-called Tumblr soil being soft to tread as a result of the platform's cultural and infrastructural peculiarities.

The playful potential of digital movement is often glossed over: in general, either the technological side is over-emphasized, and features that are used for their unintended purposes are ignored as unintentional and too volatile to study, or the desire paths generated by users are understood strictly through the lens of illicit activity (such as torrent networks or 'jailbreaking'). However, emphasizing user creativity in utilization of digital features without the ultimate goal of weeding such behaviors out or legitimizing them through further product development or corporate meddling can unlock discussion for the creative and revolutionary power of digital space, making it truly for the people. (Dis)allowances of digital behaviors ought not to focus solely on their legality or morality as a sole divisive factor. Movement's division into intended-and-permissible and unintended-and-forbidden is unjust and antithetical to the rights of the public in signifying its spaces. This applies to digital space as well.

Paved Paradise and the Road Ahead

Playfulness aside, non-conventional digital movement can also be more serious or self-serving in nature. To provide an example, imagine user 'ally_thesportsfan99' browsing Instagram when she realizes the needs to do a quick store run. On her phone, she just so happens to be scrolling through the feed of her favorite athlete, 'sportsperson_tom.' With a single tap, she is taken to the direct message (DM) page. 'Tom' has millions of followers, a number which means it is probable that he has a social media manager, in which case the personal connection between him and the account would be minimal. 'Ally' figures that, while she's here, faced with a textbox and an app function that saves her messages for later perusal, she can use Tom's DMs to write out her shopping list. This she does. Hitting send, the message follows none of the linguistic features expected of a message between a fan and their idol, even though it is mediated through a channel which could facilitate such an exchange as well. Ally has created 'a digital cowpath'. Although this particular cowpath is not a game or much of a social interaction at all; instead, it relies on the assumption that the message *will* be

ignored. Digital cowpaths, then, have to be considered beyond terms of mere playfulness.

To continue defending cowpaths beyond their play potential, one should consider in what ways they interfere with platforms' intended functions, which are to a great extent driven by algorithms or, essentially, accurate predictions of movement. Large datasets of what users are already doing can help software departments streamline future updates in a direction that retains that userbase and, ideally, increases it. In the era of platformization, the goal of any platform is to keep users on their platform specifically. This competitive nature of platforms to be all-encompassing can be seen in the rapid spread of various digital features across platforms of otherwise divergent focal points, for example 24-hour 'stories' (or a similar feature with a different name) spreading from Snapchat to Instagram, Facebook, and even WhatsApp. The most recent iteration is, of course, the never-ending stream of short-form videos. These videos play automatically and are selected based on an algorithms, which in turn make their predictions based on user interactions with previous videos. The desires and behaviors of users are more monitored and utilized than ever, raising serious questions when it comes to privacy and monetization (including data ownership). A well-functioning algorithm seems like a natural way to direct the flow of digital content between creators and consumers. It is almost as if countless cowpaths are created and moulded between a platform user and the endless streams of content. Moreover, platforms seem to sometimes go out of their way to showcase how useless they would be without these algorithms, seemingly to encourage maximal data sharing and cookie acceptance. Cowpaths, therefore, are at the core of web development, as more and more of global computing power is directed toward recording and anticipating user behavior on a more individual rather than general level.[18]

Whereas the park designer's gripe with the dry grass of cowpaths seems straightforward, discontent towards digital cowpaths is perhaps less focused on aesthetics and more focused on perceived

[18] To provide an anecdotal example, algorithms rarely push car advertisements to a 23-year-old female user, in comparison to how often she sees them anyway when tuning into a livestream to watch her favorite motorsports.

loss of revenue. Allowing users to form and take digital cowpaths without then encouraging more users to follow down those paths does not necessarily lead to increased demand of resources. It does mean, however, that users relying on more explicit direction on the platform might not follow the cowpaths, leading to decreased time spent on the platform. Legitimizing a cowpath would also create opportunities for novelty-based advertising. The concept of an 'ideal' digital path is therefore not straightforward, and the ideas of 'efficiency' or 'optimization' becomes more polarized between users and designers.

The elimination of digital dry grass is reflective of the profit-driven strategy for spatial management. In a late-stage capitalist society, the future of places is precarious. Indeed, many of the things associated with present-day use of digital space are described by Marc Augé in relation to non-places, especially in his description of highway networks.[19] In relation to travel more broadly, Augé points out its emphasis on visual images and the importance of seeing over feeling: ". . .there are spaces in which the individual feels himself to be a spectator without paying much attention to the spectacle. As if the position of the spectator were the essence of the spectacle."[20] This is reminiscent of present-day content creation based on the attention economy and 'playbour', relying on view counts and minutes spent consuming content created by others. Another key aspect of non-places is their particular way of using directions and road signs. Augé describes driving down a highway littered with billboards, texts which "make [the landscape's] secret beauties explicit" while said landscape simultaneously "keeps its distance", creating a situation where someone traversing the space of the highway knows exactly what is around them, and becomes "absolved of the need to stop or even look."[21] Similarly, online content can function like a billboard on the side of a highway that the user scrolls down: revealing something fascinating or interesting, something that was previously hidden from the digital traveller, but that does not ultimately invite them to seek out said attraction to satisfy their own curiosity.

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[19] Augé, *Non-Places*, 96-107.
[20] *Id.*, 86
[21] *Id.*, 97

In relation to digital cowpaths, then, attention turns to the road and its signals. Cowpaths in general, as discussed, go directly against the intended design of a space, often in a way that is physically more convenient or comfortable. A digital cowpath might not improve convenience: Ally's shopping list is hardly better off in Tom's messages than on her Notes app. A digital cowpath however diverts the user from 'the highway of content,' which an economically ideal social media platform would direct users to follow for as long as possible. The complex relationship between (digital) design and convenience is also a matter of ability. Digital space's allowances are different from those of physical space when it comes to access and modification. In particular, mobile applications offer relatively little modification in comparison to, for example, Tumblr's blog-based design, which allows for greater freedom. Arguably digital modification is more polarized: where it is allowed, it is easy and requires little preparation or outside resources. Where modification is not allowed, it is near impossible. Compare this to a modification of a physical space, where often outside resources are required (e.g. ladders to climb fences, a prepared poster, and wheat paste, all to simply make a poster visible), but these resources are more readily available compared to acquiring prowess in breaking into the codes of major platforms.

Digital cowpaths should not be approached with polarized goals of either dissolution or legitimation. Their existence should be perceived with attention and care, even when their subject matter is seemingly not explicitly political. Perhaps approaches to digital cowpaths provide subtler insights into power-resistance struggles than simply 'find the oddities and dispose of them.' The literal re-purposing, creating new purpose, of space and infrastructure means new meanings and connections are created. These meanings are a human resource of infinite magnitude, a renewable source of progress that exceeds the degradation of physical matter. In the present day, it is important not to dismiss physical matter in discussions of networks and connectivity. The reading of the internet as a place means theories like Augé's non-place now give potent warnings to the risks of the internet and/or its platforms becoming non-places, where the space "creates neither singular

identity nor relations; only solitude, and similitude."[22] The internet, especially as platforms are concerned, becomes further and deeper understood in terms previously confined to physical space, and the question of the immaterial meaning-making that runs through it has to be re-observed.

The politics of the internet extend beyond online activism or the pre-existing societal conditions which allow or deny access to it. The reading of the internet as a public space implies different standards of use compared to private spaces, namely greater agency and freedom to the user: this includes uses that are unconventional. Furthermore, part of the freedom related to unconventional uses is for those methods to remain unconventional: legitimation is not the only alternative to obstruction. Ultimately, accelerated development of technology relies on a linear (and preferably upward) understanding of movement, which undermines any kind of movement which defies it. Linear movement as progress relies on the removal of undesired outcomes. Embracing the kinds of sprawling outcomes that arise from playful interaction with space goes against this linearity, contributing to a more diverse understanding of progress and movement.

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[22] *Id.*, 103

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Logistics of Dispossession: A Transit through the Isthmus of Tehuantepec

Giorgio Sebastiani

Stop I: Colonia Cuauhtémoc — Where the Future Drowns

16/11/2024

"There used to be an avenue there." The sound of the wind blending with the crashing waves of the sea makes Virgilio's words—his name carrying a certain resonance as he guides me through Colonia Cuauhtémoc—feel distant, as if coming from another dimension. "It was called Avenida Cristóbal Colón. There were a dozen houses there. The sea swallowed them." I squint hard, partly to shield my eyes from the sand relentlessly whipped into the air by the wind, partly to better envision a past now erased by the sea. What I do not need to imagine, however, are the other houses still visible on the shore: crumbling, gutted, desolate. According to Virgilio, the village, which is part of the municipality of San Mateo del Mar, had been suffering for decades due to the rising sea level. In recent years, however, "The situation has become more critical, and more than twenty families had to leave." He tells me how they have been trying everything to get government assistance to relocate to another, safer area they have identified, but so far with little success.

He explains that the problem is not just the general rise in sea levels but also what locals call *mar de fondo*—a phenomenon of long, continuous swells generated by storms far out at sea, which then travel across the Pacific Ocean. This *mar de fondo*, which had always been part of life for the Indigenous Huave community living in the Colonia, has become uncontrollable in recent years. During peak moments of *mar de fondo*, the entire village is now forced to abandon their homes, leaving them at the mercy of the sea and its

Figure 1: Colonia Cuauhtémoc. Photograph by the author, November 16, 2024.

destructive force. "But none of this is a coincidence," Virgilio asserts with a resolute gaze. "All of this started getting worse when they began those works. What they did diverted the ocean current in the Gulf of Tehuantepec and made the tides worse. It is not like it used to be." We step inside what until a year ago had been a home—inhabited, alive. Now it stands as a ruin, deserted, dead. There, with his gaze fixed on the ground, somewhere between lost and incredulous, Virgilio stands in what might once have been a bedroom, a bathroom, or a kitchen (there are no clues left to tell) and finishes: "It is all because of the new breakwater."

The breakwater stands as the most significant maritime infrastructure project in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, officially inaugurated by the federal government in February 2024. According to the Government of Mexico, this new structure at the port of Salina Cruz—a coastal city in Oaxaca located approximately ten kilometers from Colonia Cuauhtémoc—is the largest and only one of its kind in Latin America, distinguished by its depth, dimensions, and construction process. Spanning 1,600 meters, its construction required 5.6 million tons of rock and generated over 500 direct

jobs.[1] The total investment is estimated at over six billion pesos.[2] Once fully operational—alongside ongoing dredging operations—it will enable the port of Salina Cruz to accommodate the world's largest container ships.

During the inauguration, Oaxaca's governor, Salomón Jara, emphasized its geopolitical relevance, declaring: "With a visionary approach and geopolitical foresight, the new breakwater and the port of Salina Cruz will become part of the logistical and industrial platform known as the Corredor Interoceánico and will turn the Isthmus of Tehuantepec into a new alternative for global trade routes."[3] This statement highlights the strategic role of the breakwater within a broader effort to modernize and expand the port of Salina Cruz—an integral part of the larger Interoceanic Corridor of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

To understand the significance of the Corredor Interoceánico, one must first consider the geography of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Located in southern Mexico, it is the country's narrowest landmass, stretching roughly 200 kilometers from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean. It spans the states of Veracruz and Oaxaca, with extensions into Tabasco and Chiapas. Beyond its

Figure 2: Breakwater of Salina Cruz. Photograph by the author, November 14, 2024.

[1] Secretaría de Marina, *Inauguración del Rompeolas.*
[2] Gobierno del Estado de Oaxaca, "Rompeolas de Salina Cruz."
[3] Andrés Manuel López Obrador, "Inauguración del Rompeolas," 06:40-06:52.

economic significance, the Isthmus is an ecologically and culturally rich region, home to diverse ecosystems and Indigenous communities such as the Zapotecs, Mixes, Zoques, and Huaves, whose presence and traditions have long shaped the territory.

The strategic value of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec has been recognized for centuries. Since the early colonial period, Spanish authorities focused on the Isthmus as a potential interoceanic route. Yet, it was only under the Porfirio Díaz regime that such a project was finally realized. In 1907, the Ferrocarril Transístmico was inaugurated, connecting the newly constructed ports of Coatzacoalcos and Salina Cruz. By 1913, over a million tons of cargo were transported across the Isthmus. However, the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914 relegated the railway to a secondary role, maintaining significance only for local trade.[4] In the following decades, various projects sought to reestablish an interoceanic corridor, but none materialized, in part due to local resistance.[5] Yet, from colonial times to the present, the Isthmus has remained a recurring target for integration into global trade networks.

In 2019, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador announced the launch of the megaproject known as the Interoceanic Corridor of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (CIIT, by its Spanish acronym), managed by a decentralized public body under the Mexican Navy. This initiative seeks to transform the Isthmus into a logistics platform, with key infrastructure projects including the rehabilitation of the Trans-Isthmic Railway, linking Coatzacoalcos to Salina Cruz and extending further to Chiapas. This railway, projected to transport around 1.4 million containers annually, will connect the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean, passing through the Dos Bocas oil port in Tabasco, and linking with the flagship Tren Maya project.[6][7] In addition, major ports—Coatzacoalcos, Salina Cruz, Dos Bocas, Puerto Chiapas—and airports in Minatitlán and Ixtepec are set to undergo expansion and modernization. New

[4] Reina, "El Ferrocarril de Tehuantepec."
[5] Ceceña et al., *El Istmo en Riesgo.*
[6] CIIT, *Estatuto Orgánico.*
[7] Secretaría de Marina, *Marina informa.*

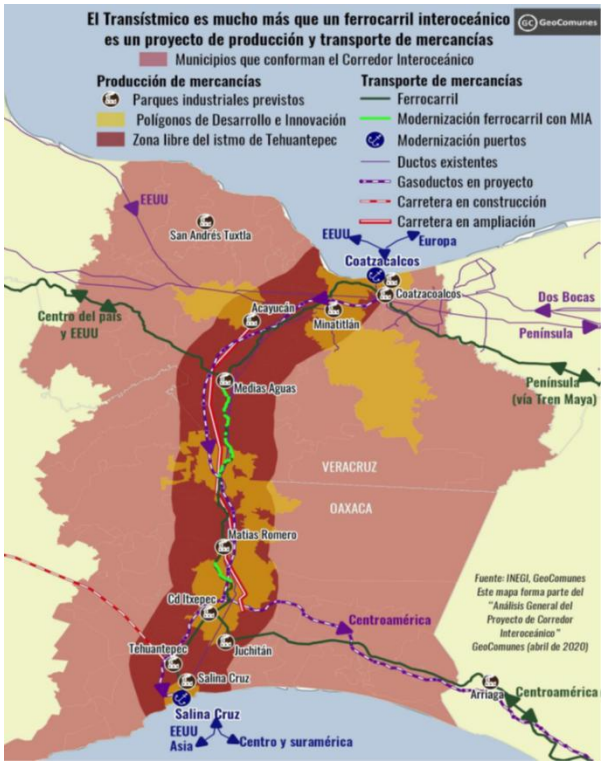

Figure 3: Map of the Interoceanic Corridor of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, developed by GeoComunes, 2020.

highways will be constructed to connect the two seas. These developments are being carried out by national and transnational private companies through competitive bidding, while a favorable legislative framework will be established for investors.[8]

The CIIT aims to enhance transport and energy networks in the region, strengthening the connection between Mexico's largest energy production area in the Southern Gulf of Mexico and key regional and international markets. The project also envisions the creation of an energy-industrial enclave to boost manufacturing and export capacity.[9] At least twelve industrial parks, known as Polos de Desarrollo para el Bienestar (Development Poles for Welfare), will be established along the Trans-Isthmic Railway route. These poles,

[8] Diario Oficial de la Federación, *Decreto.*
[9] Geocomunes, *Análisis General del CIIT.*

together with the entire CIIT project, form the core of the broader Programa para el Desarrollo del Istmo de Tehuantepec 2020–2024 (Program for the Development of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec 2020–2024), which declares its main objective as "strengthening the domestic market and creating regional production linkages to promote the well-being of the population and regional growth."[10] However, the CIIT has faced significant criticism from various civil organizations, particularly regarding the Polos de Desarrollo para el Bienestar. Critics argue that these developments are causing irreparable damage to the Isthmus's delicate ecosystem and leading to the dispossession of local communities from their land and livelihoods. As illustrated in fig. 3, created by GeoComunes, the full scope and complexity of the megaproject becomes evident.[11] The Interoceanic Corridor of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec aims to completely reshape the territorial dynamics of the region, with the intention of integrating it into global production and distribution circuits.

Stop II: Matías Romero – A Hope Riding from the Past

23/11/2024

I had never tasted a more tender chicken, I think, my head bowed over a plate at the market in Matías Romero, the last city of the Oaxaca Isthmus before entering the Veracruz region. I was there with the goal of taking the new passenger train, the renovated Ferrocarril Transístmico inaugurated in December 2023, which ignites the dreams of many of the locals. My initial plan had been to take the train the week before, while I was in Salina Cruz. However, I found out that the passenger train had been out of service for nearly a month due to track issues. But this Saturday, finally, the train would be running again, departing from Coatzacoalcos (Veracruz) to arrive, after several stops, including one in Matías Romero, at Salina Cruz, on its only daily journey.

The city of Matías Romero has, since its origins, been deeply connected with the interoceanic railway. The previous day, Dr. Carrasco Toledo, Director of Education of the municipal

[10] Gobierno de México, *Programa para el Desarrollo*, 6.
[11] Geocomunes, *Análisis General*, 4.

government, told me a bit about the city's history. Since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the construction of the Trans-Isthmic Railway profoundly transformed life in Matías Romero. What was originally the settlement of Rincón Antonio Nuevo, thanks to its strategic location almost halfway between the two main ports of the region (Salina Cruz and Coatzacoalcos), became a prosperous city due to the railway boom in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, earning the title of "railroad city."

Its workshops grew to be among the most significant in the country, offering employment to nearly a thousand people. For much of the twentieth-century, the trains governed the rhythms of daily life in the community, shaping everything from the economy to politics. The railway became more than just a mode of transport—it was a physical embodiment of a national vision, one that aimed to turn the Isthmus of Tehuantepec into a key artery for global trade, a vision championed by diplomat Matías Romero Avendaño, after whom the city is named. However, by the 1990s, with the privatization of national railroads, the workshops closed, passenger trains ceased to operate, and of the nearly three thousand railroad workers in Matías Romero, only fifty were hired by the new company. In 1999, the Matías Romero railway station closed permanently.

"This chicken is something special, seriously." I cannot help but compliment the woman running the small eatery where I stopped for lunch inside the market. "*Gracias, m'hijo.*[12] And you haven't even tried the *mondongo* (tripe) yet—that's my real specialty!" she replies, busy at the stove. It is 12:30 p.m., supposedly the busiest time of the day, but I am the only customer. She tells me she is getting a head start on preparations for the following day. I take the opportunity to ask how work is going, how long she has run her food stall in the market, and similar questions.

"Ahh, *m'hijo*, I've been here since I was young."
"But you're still young," I interrupt.

[12] Contraction of "mi hijo," literally "my son," used affectionately.

> "*No digas mentiras*,"[13] she laughs heartily. "I've been here since the town was bustling. You wouldn't believe how much traffic there was—people coming and going, customers from everywhere. I never had a moment to rest! But now . . . well, just look around." She is right—her stall is not the only one that is practically empty.
> "And it was so lively . . . because of the train?" I ask.
> "*Claro*, because of the train. But that was a long time ago, too many years. We'll see what happens now . . ."
> "Exactly," I add. "I was just going to ask—what do you think about the new project? Looks promising, doesn't it?"
> "*Bueno, vamos a ver*.[14] Politicians talk and talk, but in the end, they never actually do anything."
> "But the train is already running, right? Have you noticed any changes so far?" I ask, trying not to sound pushy.
> "*Sí, sí*, the new train is here. But I haven't seen much difference yet. A few more customers, mostly soldiers, and that's about it. They're building, doing some work back behind the new station. They say we need to wait, so we wait. But for me . . ." She pauses, then bursts into another infectious laugh: "I don't have that much time left to wait."

I glance at my watch—the train is leaving soon. I thank her and head off, not before asking for the recipe for that delicious chicken.

The newly renovated Matías Romero station gleams brightly. In the atrium, three attendants with welcoming smiles provide information to passengers. A small stand sells merchandise: pens, notebooks, and USB drives branded with the Ferrocarril Interoceánico logo. The rehabilitation of the passenger train was not originally part of the Interoceanic Corridor of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec megaproject. "It was added later, by direct order of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador himself," Dr. Carrasco

[13] "Don't tell lies."
[14] "Well, we'll see."

Toledo had explained to me during our conversation the day before. The director expressed great confidence in the success of the project, convinced it would bring renewed life to the city. "On the other side of the station, they are preparing the ground for the return of rehabilitation and repair workshops for all the trains that will pass through here in the near future. Matías Romero will become the nerve center for freight transport in the Isthmus."

Figure 4: Central Market of Matías Romero. Photograph by the author, November 23, 2024.

The Isthmus of Tehuantepec is set to become a key node in global trade, embedded within a form of contemporary capitalism that scholars like Anna Tsing have termed "supply chain capitalism."[15] This system is built on vast production and distribution networks, where commodities cross multiple continents before reaching their final destination. In such a model, the smooth circulation of goods is essential, and any disruption can have far-reaching consequences. One of the greatest challenges to this system is the presence of bottlenecks—points of congestion that slow down the flow of trade. When these occur, as seen recently with the Panama Canal due to drought, the repercussions extend across global supply chains.[16] It is in this context that the creation of a new interoceanic route through the Isthmus is viewed as a strategic necessity.

Yet a corridor is not merely a transport route. With its capacity to attract investment and form industrial clusters and logistics hubs, it is considered a key instrument of economic development and regional integration. These corridors do not just alter infrastructure and trade routes; they profoundly reshape the territories they

[15] Tsing, "Supply chains."
[16] Delcas, "How drought is Forcing."

traverse—socially, legally, politically and environmentally. [17] However, as scholars have pointed out, corridors are far from neutral development tools—they often reinforce existing inequalities, benefiting some while displacing and marginalizing others.[18] These megaprojects embody "supply chain capitalism," a system in which supply chains strategically expand to maximize profit by exploiting diversity in areas such as raw material costs, labor, legislation, and infrastructure. As Tsing argues, this form of capitalism fosters both global integration and growing disparities, reinforcing gaps between rich and poor, and North and South.[19]

The whistle of the train echoes faintly in the distance. I quickly make my way to the platform—the only one. As I glance around, the scene strikes me as somewhat peculiar. About fifteen people are waiting, presumably more for the novelty of tourism than out of any real need to travel. I can see the excitement on the faces of two elderly women, probably in their seventies, who seem to be emotionally carried away by the sight of the train—an image that, perhaps exaggerated by nostalgia and propaganda, evokes the city's long-lost prosperity after more than twenty years of absence. Nearby, younger passengers smile as they snap photos and record videos of the approaching train on their smartphones. There is a festive, lively atmosphere among the passengers. A child jumps with relentless energy on the platform, filled with excitement, while his mother stands, torn between the joy of his happiness and the fear that he might stray too close to the edge.

What truly stands out, however, are the four heavily armed soldiers stationed on the platform, fully equipped, wielding assault rifles. I am unsure of their exact purpose here, guarding a quiet passenger train on a lazy Saturday afternoon at a modest station like Matías Romero. Still, I am not entirely surprised. Every interview I conducted during my journey through the region highlighted the increasing military presence in the Isthmus in recent years.

[17] Grappi, "Asia's era of infrastructure."
[18] Enns and Bersaglio, "On the coloniality."
[19] Tsing, "Supply chains," 150.

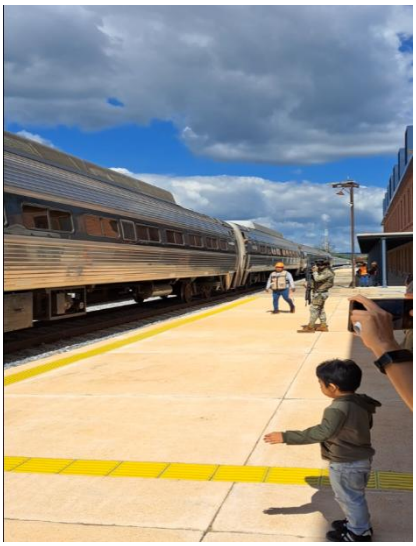

Figure 5: The arrival of the train at the Matías Romero station. Photograph by the author, November 23, 2024.

Figure 6: View from the Ferrocarril Transístmico. Photograph by the author, November 23, 2024.

At its core, supply chain capitalism depends on the seamless movement of goods—a process fundamentally driven by logistics. And it is precisely a logistical vision that seems to propel this megaproject forward. But what do we mean by logistics? The term originates from the Greek *logistikē*, initially referring to practical calculations applied to tangible matters, particularly in administrative functions.[20] In the nineteenth century, another meaning emerged in France, where *logistique* described the military art of organizing and managing supply and transportation for armies.[21] In this context, logistics was not merely about moving goods—ranging from vital supplies like food to lethal ones like ammunition—but also about determining mobilization, positioning, and timing.[22] These definitions emphasize logistics' fundamental components: calculation, movement, space, and the management of materials or bodies, all crucial for executing specific activities.

Today, logistics is primarily associated with the business world. In contemporary capitalism, it orchestrates and mobilizes

[20] Chua, "Logistics."
[21] Grappi, *Logistica.*
[22] *Ibid.*

global production.[23] The uninterrupted circulation of goods has become so vital that states treat it as a matter of national security, adjusting laws and operations to ensure its protection.[24] Any disruption to this flow is perceived as a direct threat to trade itself, and those who interfere—whether through strikes, blockades, or resistance—are cast as enemies.[25] In logistics, the boundaries between civil and military domains are exceptionally blurred and often indistinguishable. More than just a technical system, logistics operates as a form of power—through strategic calculation, it generates measures, facilitates circulation, and incessantly reshapes space to serve the supply chain.[26] Yet, in doing so, its violent dimension emerges—one that extends beyond its deep ties to military practices. As Chua et al. emphasize, logistics "marks the continuation of centuries old processes of imperial circulation and colonization."[27] Stefano Harney and Fred Moten trace the roots of modern logistics to what they call "the first great movement of commodities, the ones that could speak"—a direct reference to the transatlantic slave trade.[28]

The logistical rationality underlying projects like the Interoceanic Corridor of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec echoes these historical patterns. It conceives of space as a *terra nullius*, an empty landscape onto which its logic of seamless circulation and production can be projected at any cost. But logistics does not simply reconfigure territories—it dispossesses them. And those who resist are left with only one role in this framework: that of an obstacle to be eliminated.

Stop III: Puente Madera — A Present of Dispossession

25/11/2024

Even if the people of Matías Romero hold a faint glimmer of hope for the megaproject, this does not apply to other parts of the Isthmus population. Several communities, mostly in the Oaxacan region, are

[23] Cowen, *The Deadly Life of Logistics.*
[24] *Ibid.*
[25] *Ibid.*
[26] Neilson, "Five theses."
[27] Chua et al., "Turbolent circulation," p. 619.
[28] Harney and Moten, *The undercommons,* p. 92

openly opposed to the initiative. One of them, Puente Madera in the municipality of San Blas Atempa, has been resisting against the imposition of one of the twelve industrial parks planned as part of the Interoceanic Corridor for more than three years. This park is slated to be built on their communal land, known as El Pitayal.

I am on my way to meet David, a community leader from Puente Madera who, in January 2024, received an astonishing 46-year prison sentence. David is an active member of both the Asamblea Comunitaria de Puente Madera and the Asamblea de los Pueblos Indígenas del Istmo en Defensa de la Tierra y el Territorio (APIIDTT). I have already spoken with a representative of the latter, who explained their critical stance on the megaproject. Their concerns are less about the core infrastructure itself and more focused on the industrial parks, officially called Polos de Desarrollo para el Bienestar. As mentioned before, these parks are no longer seen as external to logistical operations but as an inevitable extension of their logic and functions. The central fear among those opposing the project is that these industrial hubs will perpetuate extractivist dynamics, stripping the land of its resources while providing no tangible benefits to local communities. Even though the megaproject is far from complete, its consequences are already being felt. Indigenous communities such as Santa María Mixtequilla, San Juan Guichicovi, and Puente Madera have seen parts of their lands appropriated by the state for the Corridor without their consent. Their resistance to this dispossession has brought them threats, criminalization, and for some, even death.[29]

Figure 7: View from Puente Madera. Photograph by the author, November 25, 2024.

[29] Crail, "Defender la tierra."

"*¡Aquí, aquí!*" I shout to catch the attention of the bus driver. I get off near the entrance to the road leading to Puente Madera. The landscape is distinctly rural—scattered houses line the road on either side, but beyond them, cultivated fields stretch into the distance. Two dogs play in the middle of the road as I walk toward what, according to the coordinates David provided, should be his house. A man, likely in his sixties, says something to me in a language I do not understand. I assume it is Zapotec, as Puente Madera is primarily a Binnizá (Zapotec) community. We exchange a few words in Spanish, and he gestures toward David's home.

"*Hola, ¿qué tal? Giorgio, ¿verdad?*" David greets me. "*¡En carne y hueso!*"[30] I reply, settling into the chair he gestures toward. Before joining me in the shaded, breezy patio outside his house, he steps inside to fetch freshly brewed coffee. Without much small talk, we dive straight into the reason for my visit. David begins by speaking about the communal land known as El Pitayal, a place rich in biodiversity — the Isthmus of Tehuantepec is the most biodiverse region in Mexico. It is where they graze their livestock and collect wood to make traditional *totopo*.[31] "Those lands are fundamental to our subsistence, and they belong to the entire community," he asserts firmly. David then tells me how it all began, back in 2021. In March of that year, the municipality of San Blas Atempa convened a general assembly of *comuneros* to decide on the possibility of hosting one of the industrial parks planned as part of the Interoceanic Corridor on their communal lands—specifically, those of El Pitayal. According to Article 74 of the Federal Agrarian Law, such lands cannot be commercialized without the consent of the *comuneros*. David explains that, according to the assembly records, around 55% of eligible participants attended—968 people in total. He was one of them. "We immediately realized that this was a rigged assembly. More than half of those present were not *comuneros*. They were people paid by the municipal president, people bussed in, people who owed him favors, people threatened because they worked for the municipality and were told that if they

[30] "In the flesh!"

[31] The *totopo* is a round corn tortilla, available in different sizes, baked and toasted in an oven typical of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. For many Isthmus communities, this preparation holds not only gastronomic value but also a deep cultural identity.

did not bring at least two others with them, they would lose their jobs. And when we tried to question this, they attacked us, and we had to leave." As expected, the assembly approved the project by an overwhelming majority. Some time later, David and his comrades managed to obtain the official records, uncovering—without the slightest surprise—a massive number of forged signatures. "There are signatures of people from our community who left the meeting along with us," he tells me, adding, "This assembly, *ha revivido a los muertos*." [32] He is not speaking metaphorically. Among the signatures, they found two belonging to *comuneros* who had passed away months before.

That was the beginning of a resistance that would last three years. David recounts how he and others endured threats and attacks. At first, he says, they believed the federal government would intervene to resolve the issue, assuming that the problem was limited to corruption within local politics. But soon enough, he and his community realized they were mistaken. The forms of resistance adopted by the Binnizá community of Puente Madera against the industrial park were limited to protests and road blockades, David confirms. "But they criminalized us for this, they even fabricated crimes against us. By 2022, 17 of us had arrest warrants issued by federal courts." He recalls the day he himself was detained illegally and taken all the way to the prosecutor's office in Oaxaca de Juárez. Then, in 2023, against all odds, they managed to win an *amparo* (injunction) against the construction of the industrial park. From that moment on, repression and threats intensified even further, culminating in a court ruling against David: 46 years in prison.

By the summer of 2024, after more than three years of resistance, the community could no longer hold out against the Interoceanic Corridor and its objective of transforming the Isthmus of Tehuantepec into a global logistics platform. After years of persecution, the state 'pardoned' David and the 16 other criminalized community members—but Puente Madera would no longer be allowed to oppose the project.[33] "Wait, let me show you

[32] "Has brought the dead back to life."

[33] For a more comprehensive view of the history of Puente Madera's resistance against the Interoceanic Corridor megaproject, see Vázquez Vidal, "Defender El Pitayal."

exactly where they plan to install the industrial park," he says, stepping inside his house. He returns with an enormous map, struggling to spread it out over the table. "*Aquí, ¿ves? En nuestras tierras.*"[34]

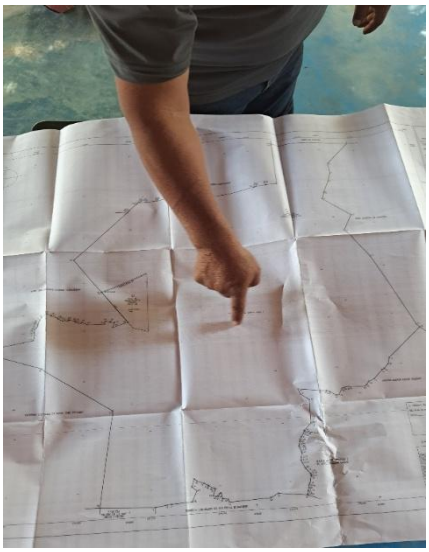

Figure 8: David shows me a map. Photograph by the author, November 25, 2024.

"*Mira*, Giorgio, we can try to understand other people's reasons, but this is not the way. This project is pure imposition. And they are all complicit—municipal authorities, the state of Oaxaca, the Navy and the federal government." I ask him to elaborate on the reasons behind the rejection of the industrial park, though I can already imagine them. "*Ves*, Giorgio, we live off our cattle, off mangoes, bananas, tamarinds. And already, at certain times of the year, they do not let us access irrigation water from the dam because they have to send it to the refinery (in Salina Cruz). What will happen when there are industrial parks everywhere around here? And what will they do with the waste? How much will they pollute our land? This park is an imposition, a land grab, and that is all there is to it."

Conclusion: A Walk Through El Pitayal

David takes me back to the bus stop on his motorcycle. We say goodbye, I wish him good luck, he does the same and ends with a firm "*ten cuidado.*"[35] The sun is scorching, but I decide to venture into El Pitayal. The entrance is only a few meters away—after all the conversations about this place, I could not leave without seeing it for myself. I cross the road, the Carretera Panamericana 185, and head in. The entrance is marked by a sign, signed by the Asamblea Comunitaria de Puente Madera, where they assert their claim to

[34] "Here, you see? On our lands."
[35] "Be careful."

these lands and reference the injunction they obtained in 2023—though it has now been revoked. The message is clear: "*¡No a la imposición del parque industrial!*"[36]

I step into these lands, communal lands. The logic that governs them feels so distant from that of the megaproject. A megaproject that appears to serve a form of capitalism built on inequality—supply chain capitalism—and driven by a logistical rationality that privileges the movement of goods above all else. It is therefore unlikely to bring real prosperity to the inhabitants of the places it traverses. And yet, the hopes of the people of Matías Romero—as well as those of many others across the Isthmus tied to the *Corredor*—are understandable. What appears to me as the most urgent issue surrounding the megaproject, however, is the dispossession experienced by the people of Puente Madera—as well as many other communities, mostly Indigenous, across the Isthmus. This dispossession undeniably reflects a colonial dynamic enacted by the Mexican government and reinforced by the logistical power that sustains and directs the implementation of the Corredor Interoceánico. Those who have dared to oppose the megaproject have faced violence and criminalization, branded as enemies, as obstacles to be removed in the name of the seamlessness that defines logistical rationality. A rationality that also manifests in the government's decision to place the project under military supervision, entrusting it to the Navy, and, above all, in the heavy militarization of the region. *In logistics, the boundaries between civil and military domains are exceptionally blurred and often indistinguishable.*

Figure 9: Entrance of El Pitayal. Photograph by the author, November 25, 2024.

[36] "No to the imposition of the industrial park!"

I look around. I see only shrubs, unfamiliar plants, and hear faint rustling in the bushes to my right. I think I catch a glimpse of a lizard's tail. The biodiversity so characteristic of the Isthmus will likely disappear once the project is fully realized. These past weeks, I have moved through an Isthmus marked by a persistent tension—one that flows like a tide, lifting some while drowning others. As the logistics megaproject comes to life, it spells the death of other projects, other ways of being, other lives. For some, it represents a new lifeblood, a force that might revitalize places long excluded and isolated. For others, it is nothing but "*un megaproyecto de muerte*."[37] A hot wind has been rising for a few minutes now. *It is time to go,* I tell myself. I take one last look at an El Pitayal that will soon no longer be the same. I squint hard, partly to shield my eyes from the dust relentlessly whipped into the air by the wind, partly to better envision a future that has not yet arrived, but that already reverberates in the present.

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'Hanoying' Traffic: Manifestations of Mobility Injustices through The Cát Linh-Hà Đông Metro Railway

Bart van Dieën

In memory of Sabine Luning. Her inspiration remains with me. I wish she'd been here to see this completed.

We were not moving. At least, not really. The taxi driver had turned on his playlist full of Western pop music, which I interpreted as a gesture of hospitality. But I had not been listening with much attention. Lost in my own thoughts, I was staring out the window, just moving my eyes every so often. I had already acclimated to the traffic jams of Hanoi, but being stuck on Phố Hoàng Cầu Street never sat quite right with me, as the elevated metro was right beside us. "Are you in a rush?" the taxi driver suddenly asked. "Not really." I replied. "Well, feel free to stay here and enjoy the music. It looks like we are not going anywhere anytime soon." I watched as another metro train passed by. It looked mostly empty.

This article seeks to understand this paradox: how Hanoi's inaugural metro project, contrary to its stated objectives, has ended up reinforcing (im)mobility injustices. Specifically, I examine the metro project through the lens of Mimi Sheller's *Mobility Justice: The Politics of Movement in an Age of Extremes*.[1] Sheller defines mobility justice as "an overreaching concept for thinking about how power and inequality inform the governance and control of movement, shaping the patterns of unequal mobility and immobility

[1] Sheller, *Mobility Justice*. Other key works on mobility injustice I engage with include Sheller and Urry, *The New Mobilities Paradigm*; Kaufmann, *Re-thinking Mobility*; Cresswell, *Towards a Politics of Mobility*.

in the circulation of people, resources, and information."[2] (Im)mobility injustice exceeds the social and spatial dimensions of mobility. Mobility is shaped by power and inequality. It is inherently political.[3]

To discuss (im)mobility in space as inherently political is to consider infrastructure within said space beyond merely its material functionality. In my analysis, I therefore consider the metro as a contested site of micropolitics. Foucault's concepts of biopolitics and governmentality are useful conceptual underpinnings for me in making sense of the metro as a site of micropolitics. In Foucauldian thought, biopolitics and governmentality refer to the ways in which the conditions of existence of a population are governed within the framework of political sovereignty.[4] Thus, the focus moves from infrastructure itself to what that infrastructure reveals about governmental practices and regulation of mobility.[5] Infrastructure is never neutral. Mobility, then, is not simply about physical movement through space, but also about how it is controlled, distributed, and experienced.

While urban mobility in metropolises of the Global South has been well studied, Hanoi remains in a comparatively early stage of development. This makes it a valuable case study for research on sustainable, future-oriented urban mobility, particularly from a policy perspective, as discussed by Hull, and by Melia, Parkhurst, and Barton.[6] This project builds on existing work examining various modes of transportation in Hanoi, including research on the politics of street vending, proposals for a sustainable 'car-free' Hanoi, and the city's Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system as a case study of the challenges facing BRT implementation in the Global South.[7] My project, however, focuses on an aspect of mobility in Hanoi that

[2] Sheller, *Mobility Justice*, 22.
[3] *Ibid*, 23
[4] Nilsson, *Foucault, Biopolitics, and Governmentality*, 25.
[5] Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure," 329.
[6] Hull, "Policy Integration,"; Melia, Parkhurst, and Burton, "The Paradox of Intensification."
[7] Eidse, Oswin, and Turner, "Contesting Street Spaces,"; Minh, "Application of 'Car-Free City,'"; Dung and Lien, "Health Co-Benefits".

Figure 1: The Cát Linh-Hà Đông metro positioned above Phố Hoàng Cầu street as seen from La Thành metro station during rush hour. Photograph by the author, February 2024.

remains underexplored in these studies: how infrastructural projects reconfigure the social world. My analysis shifts the discourse from policy frameworks to the questions of whom these policies serve and how they materialize on the ground.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, I outline the methodology. Next, I contextualize the metro's contentious legacy. The three axes structure the ethnography: the first explores contestations that emerged during the construction of the metro line; the second problematizes the metro as a flawed solution for Hanoi's urban mobility challenges; and the third examines the discourse of institutional actors. Finally, the conclusion reflects on the metro's paradox and urges future projects to learn from its failures

Methodology

Ethnographic research stands out as a particularly relevant approach for accessing the nuanced, obscured, and mundane aspects of the social world. For this reason, Tim Oakes advocates for a grounded, project-based methodological approach to studying infrastructure.[8] More specifically, I adopted a postcritical ethnographic stance toward the study of the metro line. This approach emphasizes research as an ethical and political practice, foregrounding *emic* perspectives and local knowledges.[9] Postcritical ethnographies neither emancipate nor empower; rather, they aim to envision alternatives to existing social realities.[10] In doing so, postcritical ethnographers contribute by shifting the discourse around injustices that would otherwise remain systemically obscured.

I conducted fieldwork from January to March 2024 in Hanoi. I employed purposive-stratified and convenience sampling to engage with two cohorts: (1) residents variably affected by the metro and (2) commuters, such as taxi and motorbike drivers.[11] Institutional actors—a state official and two state-affiliated journalists

[8] Oakes, "Geopolitics," 281.

[9] The term emic refers to the viewpoint from studying behavior as from inside the system. It emphasizes the interpretation of meaning. Pike, *Language in Relation*.

[10] Anders, "Post-Critical Ethnography."

[11] Purposive-stratified sampling strategically identifies subgroups relevant, whereas convenience sampling prioritizes accessibility, leveraging factors like participant availability or proximity. Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 418.

—were accessed through the kinship networks of Linh who accompanied me throughout the fieldwork. In addition to ten semi-structured interviews, the research involved numerous informal conversations with key informants, a detailed questionnaire, traffic and metro observations, and the collection of state-run news reports and official records. While state-produced documentation has limitations in terms of critical insight, it reveals the official state narrative and serves as a tool for propagandistic analysis. Interviews and informal conversations were conducted in English where possible, and in Vietnamese where necessary. Vietnamese-English translation was facilitated by Linh's kinship ties. Ethical protocols were followed, including pseudonymization, verbal consent and encrypted data storage.[12]

Finally, since postcritical ethnography is rooted in reflexivity, I openly situate my research in relation to my Western background and Linh's Vietnamese heritage and European upbringing. Tensions arose throughout the fieldwork. Some interlocutors expressed skepticism about our presence, questioning our motives for conducting politically sensitive research in socialist Vietnam. It is therefore worth reflecting on the political constraints surrounding open discourse. Interlocutors often self-censored or conformed insincerely to state narratives to avoid potential repercussions. Others, however, welcomed 'foreign' curiosity and emphasized the importance of documenting local narratives. Perceptions ranged from viewing me as a naive Western researcher to confusion about our intentions. Navigating these responses required time, sympathy, and patience, particularly as interlocutors themselves concurrently negotiated what to reveal and what to withhold.

The Cát Linh–Hà Đông Metro Railway

The Cát Linh–Hà Đông metro line is arguably one of the most prominent infrastructure projects in contemporary Vietnam. Presented by the Vietnamese state as an embodiment of modernity, it is the first of eight planned lines intended to form an integrated metro network in Hanoi and to address the city's persistent traffic problems. Yet, a closer look reveals a complex and troubled history.

[12] Chenhall, Senior, and Belton, "Negotiating Human Research Ethics,"13.

Construction began in 2011, and, despite an initial completion target of 2013, the line only became operational in 2021. The process of land acquisition contributed to major delays and substantial costs. Approximately 2,000 households across the districts of Đống Đa, Thanh Xuân, and Hà Đông were displaced to make room for the metro line. Throughout the construction process, the project was fraught with significant accidents, including fatalities. Allegations of corruption were rife. State authorities felled 6,700 trees to clear space, without notifying citizens. Simultaneously, barriers enclosing construction sites arose all over the city.

After nearly a decade of construction, Hanoi residents were finally able to make use of this new mode of transportation. The metro attracted many curious riders upon its opening. Yet public interest quickly declined, and today the metro is mostly empty. This is partly due to its failure to integrate effectively into Hanoi's broader urban mobility network. Rapid urbanization in the late 20th century manifested in a maze-like configuration.[13] Hanoi, with its intricate networks of narrow streets and innumerable alleyways had transformed into a 'motorbike dependent city.' However, the explanation for the metro's underutilization is two-fold. When the project was first announced, Hanoi residents welcomed it enthusiastically as a promising mobility solution. This early optimism soon gave way to growing criticism and declining public support. In *Part 1: Construction*, I argue that as the metro's construction progressed with all its accumulating contentions, disapproval of the metro project among residents accumulated concurrently.

Figure 2: Inside the Cát Linh-Hà Đông metro during rush hour. Photograph by the author, March 2024.

[13] Leducq and Scarwell, "The New Hanoi," 70.

Part 1: Construction

Resettlement

The democratic centralism ideology of the Communist Party of Vietnam restricts public expression of dissenting view.[14] Criticism of the political system, the party state apparatus, its policies, or the absence of democratic processes are not tolerated but treated as threats to the regime. Critical views, however, do exist. Adopting a biopolitical perspective shifts the focus from formal power structures to the everyday experiences of being governed. While many Hanoians may be alienated from political power, they are not alienated from an awareness of injustices.

I met Nguyên through my extended family. He and his family were among the approximately 2,000 households forcibly resettled to make space for the metro. Upon learning about my research, Nguyên proposed sharing his experiences. Visiting Nguyên at his new home, two weeks after our initial meeting, he made it clear that regaining a sense of stability following resettlement had been a long and difficult process. "Our moving completely disturbed our lives. We got some compensation from the government for the resettling, but we got barely any assistance with finding a new home," Nguyên explained.[15] Ever since the resettlement, he and his family have struggled to rebuild their lives. Their former home held many memories, and adapting to their new one has been a struggle. "Actually, I don't consider this place as 'home,'" he added, forming quotation marks with his fingers. Nguyên explained how he feels wronged by the government for being forcibly resettled and relocated to a smaller house. His frustration is compounded by the metro's underwhelming performance: "Actually, some local authorities from the Hanoi's People Committee (HPC)[16] told us that the project would be a great benefit for Hanoi, and that our sacrifice

[14] Kerkvliet, "Governance," 34.

[15] Nguyên, interview by the author, February 2024. Compensation details for displacements remain unclear. Vietnam's urban development has long faced criticism for inadequate compensation and forced evictions during land acquisition. Harms, *Luxury and Rubble Civility.*

[16] The HPC is the executive body of the Municipal People's Council and local state administrative authority of Hanoi.

would serve the city. The way I see it is that we had to give our home up for nothing. You can see yourself; the metro is mostly empty! But what could we have done? We had no say in the matter."

Nguyên and his family continue to negotiate their displacement. Despite official promises of public benefit and institutional support for the resettled, reality has had a disruptive impact on their lives. This case illustrates how the HPC managed to leverage on the metro as a biopolitical *dispositif*, a mechanism of governance regulating urban space and ultimately deciding who moves, when, and where.[17] It does so paradoxically: while the metro is intended to improve mobility, it has produced a coercive mobility for affected households. In doing so, who remains visible in the 'modern' city and who is relegated to its peripheries is determined by the state's imagined modernity.

Construction barriers

As mentioned above, the HPC's bureaucratic opacity has disrupted lives and revealed the metro's overt biopolitical governance. Yet, the metro line can also cause destabilization through less visible means. In this section, I trace the temporal dimension of (im)mobility injustice.

The first time Linh and I visited the Cát Linh station, we noticed a small street-side restaurant located next to the entrance station. We sat down and ordered some food. The owner recalled the commencement of the construction: "According to the project manager of the construction site, the restaurant was expected to yield higher profit and generate more sales once the metro would be implemented," she remembered.[18] She was also told that the land value of her place was expected to increase its value, perhaps even double, given its proximity to what would become the main station of the metro line. However, these promises never materialized. Shortly after the construction barriers emerged, the visibility of her restaurant diminished and accessing it became nearly impossible. The decrease in traffic due to the construction barriers obstructed accessibility to the main roads, which directly impacted the owner's

[17] Nilsson, *Foucault, Biopolitics, and Governmentality*, 96.
[18] Restaurant owner, interview by the author, January 2024.

Figure 3: The small, street-side restaurant, identifiable by its yellow chairs, is situated adjacent to the Cát Linh station. Photograph by the author, January 2024.

Figure 4: Construction barriers of the Nhổn-Hà Nội line, the sole metro project under construction at the time in Hanoi. Photograph by the author, February 2024.

livelihood. Sales dropped significantly, but still; she remained hopeful, willing to sacrifice a part of her income in anticipation of long-term benefits. However, the accumulating construction delays only worsened the situation, and the restaurant nearly went bankrupt. After nearly a decade of waiting, neither the influx of customers nor the predicted rise in land value materialized. The metro's low ridership failed to generate additional traffic for her restaurant. Despite repeated attempts by the owner and her neighbors to seek compensation, the funds disbursed remained insufficient. The restaurant owner I spoke to was just one of many with similar experiences.

Her story illustrates how infrastructure projects can slowly disrupt livelihoods. Attending to the temporal dimension of injustice reveals how the metro can materialize antithetically to the state's vision. Infrastructure often does not work out as planned.[19] The state's discursive practices of modernity and progress then contradict the lived reality of the shop owner. This injustice is systemic. Although construction barriers were removed after the Cát

[19] Appel, Gupta, and Anand, "*The Promise of Infrastructure*," 33.

Linh-Hà Đông metro commenced operations, the metro line is just one of eight future lines. Given the project's prolonged construction timelines, citizens have repeatedly voiced concerns that future metro projects may similarly disrupt the city, cutting off streets from main roads and forcing people to live under difficult conditions for many years. The state justifies this expense in the name of long-term, future-oriented modernity. This leaves many Hanoians with a dissonant sense-making of the broader metro network initiative: how to balance their desire for improved mobility with the state-imposed expense of 'progress'?

Tree Felling

In March 2015, HPC authorities started cutting down trees in Hanoi along the streets reserved for future railway lines. The project's cost was estimated at USD 3.4 million and involved cutting down 6,700 trees. The HPC failed to notify or consult citizens, justifying the initiative by claiming that the trees were old and dying, and that different kinds of trees made for "a poor aesthetic choice."[20] The tree cutting initiative quickly triggered public outcry. Citizens formed Facebook groups to collectively express their opposition, requesting the tree felling be postponed until experts could review the plans. The utilization of Facebook by citizens as a means for protesting attracted enough awareness that the HPC announced the suspension of the initiative. However, despite this suspension, tree felling continued in areas required for metro construction, sparking further controversy and public concern.

Vinh, a 22-year old student and Hanoi citizen shared his views during one of the weekly events at Puku Café & Bar where we connected over our shared interest in anthropology. When I told him that I was researching the metro, he opened up about how he has experienced the metro project's implementation. Vinh explained how he could not possibly grasp the irony of cutting down trees for a 'greener city'. "Look at the mess they have made! How can the government promise us progress, while destroying our trees? They should know how dependent we are on these trees, given the

[20] Clark, "Hanoi Citizens."

extreme air pollution."[21] For Vinh, the issue went beyond the environment, it concerned public well-being: "You have noticed the people outside wearing masks, right? It just shows how disassociated the government is from the public: cutting down trees, ignoring environmental concerns, while arguing to 'greening' the city. Meanwhile, the metro line has failed to attract people, and I would argue, worsened traffic, leading to even more pollution. 'Graying the city' would be more appropriate, I would say," Vinh concluded cynically.

While some Hanoians referred to the tree felling as a necessary sacrifice for the city's development, most interlocutors expressed their frustrations with the initiative, citing concerns over the loss of fresh air. Vinh's critique, and others like him, like the Facebook protests, illustrate a form of resistance within the mechanisms of the state power. No outright rejection of governance but a refusal to accept its terms: *counter-conduct* in response to the state's biopolitical violence.[22] Yet, the state's response of reinforcing its authority in continuing cutting trees reveals the limitations of such counter-conduct.

Part 2: Traffic

'Motorbike Culture'

Having moved beyond its contentious construction phase, Hanoi's inaugural metro line revealed a new friction: its ineffective integration into the city's mobility fabric. This section shifts from the politics of *building* infrastructure to the vexing paradoxes of *using* it —or not. I focus on *non-users* whose mobility routines persist unaltered despite the metro's three-year operational history. Many interlocutors have framed their resistance through what they referred to as 'motorbike culture.'

[21] Vinh, informal conversation with the author, January 2024.

[22] Counter-conduct . . . signals "a perpetual question" . . . which asked, "how not to be governed like that, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them." Odysseos, Death, and Malmvig, "Interrogating Michel Foucault's,"153.

Figure 5: Hanoi citizens buying goods while on their motorbikes, resembling 'motorbike culture.' Photograph by the author, March 2024,

Duy, a friend of Linh's cousin, joined us on a Sunday morning to play football at Hanoi University's sports field. During a break, I asked him about the metro. Although the field is one of the stops of the Cát Linh-Hà Đông metro, Duy commuted by motorbike. "To use the metro, I'd need a motorbike just to reach the station," [23] Duy laughed. Like many Hanoians, his home is too far away from any of the stations. But the issue runs deeper than that: "The metro clashes with our 'motorbike culture'." To illustrate, Duy described his childhood commute: "When I was young, my mother would take me on her motorbike to work. First, she'd stop at a street vendor to buy me snacks, then drop me off at school. Only after that would she head to her job." Duy continued explaining that Hanoians' reliance on motorbikes is rooted in systemic barriers in alternative transport—absent bike lanes, hazardous interactions with motorized traffic, a lack of public transportation, and the maze-like urban layout where motorbikes are often the only practical option. "One metro line won't change much. Maybe when all the other lines are there," he concluded.

This systemic dependence on motorbikes is further compounded by perceived governance failures. During a visit to a nail salon for Linh's manicure, we met Điều, the nail technician working that day. The salon lay unexpectedly near the Nhổn-Hà Nội metro construction site, which at the time was the sole metro project under construction in Hanoi. "The construction has been ongoing for more than a decade. And from what I understand, due to funding issues, they are not even constructing anymore. ... I used to

[23] Duy, informal conversation with the author, February 2024.

dream of commuting by metro, but I've lost hope,"[24] she explained. Điều went on: "I hate traffic here. Every day I am stuck, and the air is extremely toxic. But what choice do I have? On top of that, now the government even wants to ban motorbikes.[25] It's absurd. It's impossible. I say: continue building the lines, educate people on using the lines, *then* implement a motorbike ban. Hopefully in the future, we can phase out 'motorbike culture'. . . no kill it. Please kill it!"

Interlocutors' resistance to the metro does not reflect an anti-modernization sentiment but rather its misalignment with Hanoi's socio-spatial realities. The proposed motorbike ban illustrates this disconnect. While the motorbike ban has been described by many interlocutors as necessary, it is simultaneously premature. Such fragmented interventions highlight a fundamental gap between technocratic planning and Hanoi's emergent urban mobility practices. For the foreseeable future, motorbikes will remain essential tools and sustain Hanoi's 'motorbike culture.'

Xe Ôm

While the prior section detailed the metro's inequitable impacts on Hanoi's residents, this analysis foregrounds a critical yet understudied group: motorbike taxi drivers (xe ôm). Their livelihoods are uniquely threatened by the state's modernization agenda. In line with the proposed motorbike ban, authorities have labelled the xe ôm as 'unfit' for Hanoi's future urban mobility and have escalated efforts to regulate and police them.[26]

The Vietnamese government frames modernization as 'essential to the capital's future.' When I asked a xe ôm driver about this notion of modernity in relation to the Cát Linh-Hà Đông line, he expressed a sceptic viewpoint. "In my opinion, this metro is not 'modern proof'; people barely use it, and it completely disrupted traffic flow. It feels like a step backwards. I wish the metro was a

[24] Điều, informal conversation with the author, February 2024.
[25] Hanoi officials have introduced a stepwise ban on non-electric motorcycles from inner-city streets by 2030. The city officials actively endorse modern mobilities such as the implementation of BRT systems and metro systems over motorbikes. See: Kieu et al., "Evaluating Public Sentiment."
[26] Minh, "The Transformation of Mobility,"130.

success story though," he noted.[27] "How come? Is the metro not your competition?" I asked him. "I think my business will be safe!" he replied, laughing. The xe ôm driver had initially welcomed the metro's announcement, hoping it would reduce traffic congestion and improve his working conditions. "But the metro turns out to be mostly empty," he noted. "I am still trapped in traffic congestions daily, which limits me a lot in earning money," he added. I followed up by asking how his working conditions had been affected during the construction of the line. "It was even worse than it is now. Some roads were constantly blocked, and some places got extremely overcrowded due to the limited space available on the road caused by the construction sites," he explained. "Even now, the metro line itself obstructs us from doing our work properly, because there are fewer turning points because the metro line and the support pillars of the metro line are in the way."

Figure 6: The support pillars of the Cát Linh-Hà Đông metro placed on Phố Hoàng Cầu street, thereby impeding with traffic flow. Photograph by the author, March 2024.

Xe ôm drivers consistently criticized the metro's elevated tracks and prolonged construction for worsening traffic and obstructing their work. When asked about the line's symbolic modernity, many highlighted contradictions. One driver noted, "Metro commuters ironically breathe in more smog than people on street level." Others critiqued its bulky, outdated design, making the city appear 'messy,' alongside observations of 'visible cracks' and early deterioration. While xe ôm drivers may sincerely find the metro line unattractive, their comments on its aboveground structure often quickly shifted to practical concerns: how the support pillars directly obstructed their mobility. Since few other

[27] Xe ôm driver, informal conversation with the author, March 2024.

interlocutors mentioned the aboveground sections, their perspectives seem particularly influenced by its effects on traffic and their livelihoods. At the same time, their perspectives reveal a deeper flaw in Hanoi's urban vision: the state dismisses xe ôm as 'unfit' for modernity, yet their experiences expose a modernity that fails to fit the city itself.

Part 3: State Discourse

Propaganda

Behind the metro's shortcomings lies a regime of discursive production. While state propaganda distorted the metro's realities, urban youth has increased information access and political awareness. This epistemic shift compels the state to negotiate between changing civic expectations and institutional hegemony. Nevertheless, the socio-political environment left little space for substantive engagement in the planning and decision-making process of the metro. Through state-managed monthly meetings, the government staged a semblance of democratic engagement. Yet, these forums functioned at best as controlled channels where citizens could express concerns and at worst as a tokenistic exercise under the guise of democratic inclusion.

I talked with Vương at his residence in the Đống Đa district. He studied Journalism simultaneously with the cousin of Linh, and after completing his studies he became a journalist and news reporter in Hanoi. "I strive to report as neutrally as possible, but my information must always first pass an official that can approve the message," Vương explained.[28] He further elaborated on the monthly public meetings organized for the construction of the metro line: "The HPC would gather citizens and journalists in a conference room for them to ask questions or express concerns on the progress of the line." "Could people *really* voice their concerns?" I asked. Vương replied: "criticizing the state carries risks. People come, they listen, but most keep their doubts to themselves. Still," he added, "the government cannot simply throw a blanket over the

[28] Vương, interview with the author, February 2024.

construction site and then lie about the progress. Citizens can see the construction sites with their own eyes."

As we concluded, Vương admitted that he had to watch his words as he was still an employee of the state. Then he suggested meeting his retired uncle Huy, a former investigative journalist, who was freer to talk. We returned two weeks later to interview Huy at the same table.

"In Vietnam, true transparency is elusive. But I think journalists can play an important role in seeking out the truth." Huy began thoughtfully.[29] I asked Huy whether he had investigated the metro project. "I tried," Huy said. "But the HPC redirected me to the Vietnamese Ministry of Transport (VMoT),[30] who then warned me to back off. It wasn't safe to push further." Huy continued explaining the state's influence on media: "It's hard to know for the people what to believe. Different outlets report conflicting stories. Some follow state narratives, others push a journalist's or politician's agenda. I have seen many journalists get bribed into 'playing games' with politicians or businessmen." I followed up by showing Huy a news article titled 'Công ty vận hành đường sắt Cát Linh-Hà Đông lãi đậm' ('Cát Linh-Hà Đông railway operating company makes big profits'), that reported a six-fold increase of profit.[31] "Impossible!" Huy laughed. "The metro has structurally been losing money." He added. As I shared more similar articles, to which he continuously responded with laughter and ridicule, his laughter faded. "These reports are just smokescreens to deceive the public. Nobody in the government even knows what we're building or when."

Deflection

Throughout the three months of fieldwork, I have made persistent efforts to establish contact with government officials affiliated with the VMoT or the HPC. Shortly prior to departing for the Netherlands, I was fortunate enough to finally secure an interview with Trần, a deputy director of the HPC involved in the Cát Linh-Hà

[29] Huy, interview with the author, March 2024.
[30] The Vietnamese Ministry of Transport was the overseeing governing body responsible for investment and coordination with the contractors.
[31] VnExpress, "Cát Linh-Hà Đông."

Đông metro project, through a personal connection facilitated by Linh's uncle.

The interview proved far from smooth. While Trần predictably stuck to the state's narrative, his dismissiveness grew frustrating. I started by asking about the state's view on citizen complaints, such as inactive sites causing mobility issues during the metro's construction. Trần insisted that unforeseen challenges were inevitable.[32] After some back-and-forth, he admitted the government's inexperience, calling the project a "baby step" and a learning process, since this was the first project of its kind in Hanoi. Trần also admitted, as aligned with newspaper reports, the HPC's role in land-clearance missteps, but he swiftly shifted most blame to the contractor. Then I asked Trần whether he thought the government-facilitated platforms, where citizens could voice their concerns were adequate. "Construction standards are followed strictly. People will be able to handle it," he said. "I have spoken with many Hanoians who faced serious problems even when standards are supposedly met." I explained, to which Trần replied: "In Vietnam, solidarity with the country is deeply valued. Our people are ready to endure for Vietnam to achieve its common goal. If the Cát Linh-Hà Đông Dong metro will improve Hanoi, then citizens will take pride in making sacrifices."

Trần's concluding remark exemplifies the dismissive posture of the state toward citizen concerns. Much like Nguyên, who was told that sacrificing his home would 'serve the city', or Vinh, who could not possibly grasp the government's promises of 'greening' the city through felling trees, and Điều's disbelief at the government's proposal to ban motorbikes with no alternatives in place, I observe a detachment between governmental attitudes and the lived realities of Hanoians. Simultaneously, Trần rightly cites the state's inexperience. First-of-their-kind projects inevitably expose systemic learning curves.[33] Yet, inexperience cannot fully rationalize the government's failures.

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[32] Trần, interview with the author, March 2024.

[33] High-modernist projects driven by an "aspiration to the administrative ordering of nature and society" often arise from a triad of conditions: utopian faith in rational design, the unrestrained power of the modern state, and a civil society too "weakened or prostrate" to resist. The Cát Linh-Hà Đông Dong metro reflects these three conditions. Scott, "Authoritarian High Modernism," in *Seeing Like a State,* 88-9.

Finally, while my frustrations with Trần, shared by many Hanoians, are valid, they must be contextualized within Vietnam's authoritarian governance. Much like the tokenistic monthly meetings, the interview was preordained as a performative exchange. Its value lies not in genuine dialogue but as a case study exposing the regime's propagandistic mechanisms.

Conclusion

The above narratives of (im)mobility injustices exemplify how the Cát Linh-Hà Đông Dong metro embodies a paradox: while ostensibly designed to improve mobility, its implementation impeded with mobility more often than not. The focus on (im)mobility injustices helped examining how injustices manifested throughout and after construction. By moving away from viewing infrastructure as simply material manifestations conventionally enhancing mobility, this study revealed how superimposed technopolitical visions of mobility can collide with the ways people experience mobility. The identified gap between the state's strategic intent and the 'on the ground' effects is rooted in the strict exercise of control over mobility by those in positions of power, as evidenced by the forced evictions, disruptive construction barriers, tree felling, and proposed motorbike ban. Here, the railway and the state apparatus become so tightly interconnected that it becomes impossible to separate the railway's power from the government's. Thus, the Cát Linh-Hà Đông Dong railway manifests as more than just a transit system: it evolved as a force that reshaped the urban landscape and daily life—an important reminder that infrastructure's transformative power arises not from intention, but from how it materializes once it enters the everyday world.

Was the project then a failure? By its own metrics, yes. Yet, its existence is not an endpoint—a nuance often also recognized by interlocutors. When asked about the future prospects of Hanoi's urban mobility, many replied: "We must keep faith in our leaders." Such responses left me with mixed feelings. On the one hand, I have a sense of admiration for all of those who remain faithful in their government and its plans for improvement. On the other hand, these responses betray a sense of resignation: "We can do nothing but hope." More than anything, the railway should be taken as a

point of departure for future metro lines. Whether Hanoi's mobility advances depends on whether the state recognizes and addresses past mistakes, or continues reproducing them in the pursuit of 'modernity.'

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The Liminality of Early Modern Japanese Roads: Physical and Social Mobility in Utagawa Hiroshige's *Fifty-Three Stations of the Tōkaidō*

Steven Hoekstra

The key to travel is to make the most of its pleasures and to minimize the difficulties you may encounter.

Asai Ryōi 浅井了意, *Tōkaidō Meishoki* 東海道名所記 (1661)

In the middle of a dimly lit thoroughfare, two travelers are being assaulted by the staff of an inn. Tugging and pulling on the travelers' sleeves, the staff try to get them inside. The foremost man is gasping for air as he is being strangled by one of the staff; the other desperately tries to free his arm. On the right, a mean-spirited woman watches the spectacle, while a somber-eyed girl leans out the window of the inn, her head cupped between her hands, gazing downwards. The two women's faces are painted with a thick layer of white dust, as though they are wearing masks. Inside the inn, a man is taking off his worn sandals and preparing to wash his feet after a long day of walking. An elderly lady puts down a wooden tub filled with clean water for the weary traveler.

Utagawa Hiroshige's 歌川広重 (1797-1858) woodblock print depicting Yajirobē and Kitahachi's travel experience from Jippensha Ikku's 十返舎一九 (1765-1831) famous novel *Shank's Mare* (fig. 1), perfectly illustrates how travel, despite its many pleasures, can also be difficult and distressing.[1] The scene portrayed in this print is set in early modern Japan (1603-1868)—also known as the Edo period—in the 35th post town along the Tōkaidō 東海道

[1] Ikku, *Shank's Mare*, 141. The original title in Japanese is *Tōkaidōchū Hizakurige* 東海道中膝栗毛.

Figure 1: Utagawa Hiroshige, *Goyu: Women Stopping Travelers*, 1833-1834. Wereldmuseum Leiden [Coll.nr. RV-1327-12].

(Eastern Sea Route), one of the five national highways in the archipelago. By integrating the travel experience of commoners with the surrounding environment, prints like these exemplify early modern travelscapes, a sub-genre of landscape imagery, to which Hiroshige was arguably the greatest contributor.[2] Unlike the ferocious fervor of warrior prints or the transient tenderness of *bijin-ga* 美人画 (pictures of beauties), landscapes typically evoke a sense of calmness and contemplation. While these landscape prints, of which Hiroshige's Yaji and Kita is a classic example, often depict an immaculate coalescence of visual lyricism, their proximity to reality also offers tantalizing insights into the sociopolitical climate of early modern Japanese travelscapes.

This article argues that the depictions of roadsides in Hiroshige's 19th-century woodblock print series the *Fifty-Three Stations of the Tōkaidō* can be understood as representations of liminal spaces, temporarily challenging the social boundaries of Japan's rigid urban society. By closely reading several prints in both the *Great Tōkaidō* (1831-1834) and *Vertical Tōkaidō* (1855),

[2] Jansen and Poysden, *Hiroshige's Journey*; Forrer, *Hiroshige*; Ōkubo, *Hiroshige*; Uhlenbeck, *Shaping the Image*.

respectively the most well-known and most undervalued of Hiroshige's Tōkaidō series, I demonstrate how Hiroshige's approach to visualizing roadsides reflects the way in which travel in the Edo period was experienced. This experience, by pushing people to engage in activities outside their normal societal role and to share in the hardships of the road, created an ambiguous and fluid space in which the rigid urban rules around class and status could be questioned and explored.

In recent decades, Hiroshige's landscape prints have been widely debated in English and Japanese literature by scholars, including Matthi Forrer (2017), Ōkubo Junichi (2007), Nagata Yujirō (2004).[3] These scholars, however, have primarily examined Hiroshige's Tōkaidō prints in relation to their technical qualities and their literary references, or in historicist terms as visual manifestations of Japan's early modern travel culture. Research on the intertextual references with Ikku's *Shank's Mare*—with which I began this introduction—and the poems of Matsuo Bashō 松尾芭蕉 (1644-1694), for example, has largely been exhausted.[4] Art historians, however, have not yet examined Hiroshige's Tōkaidō prints as visual representations of spaces that question the parameters of physical and social mobility from a sociopolitical and institutional perspective. While the social fluidity of travel spaces–namely, the mingling of classes on the road–is often acknowledged, little attention is given to the laws and norms that underpin these interactions.

Historians of early modern Japan, most notably Laura Nenzi (2008) and Constantine N. Vaporis (1994), have provided valuable accounts of early modern travel during this period, which inform this project both in terms of its historical accuracy and in framing roadsides as spaces that question social parameters.[5] In this article, I take the conceptual framework developed by Nenzi and Vaporis and apply it to the 19th-century pictorial traditions of Japan. In so doing, this article fills these significant gaps in both the scholarly

[3] Forrer, *Hiroshige*; Ōkubo, *Hiroshige to ukiyo-e fūkeiga*; Nagata, *Utagawa Hiroshige*.

[4] E.g., Ehmcke, "The Tōkaidō"; Clark, "Utagawa Hiroshige"; Sasaki, "The Realm of Color." Other works include those of Forrer, Ōkubo, Jansen, and Uhlenbeck.

[5] Nenzi, *Excursions*; Vaporis, *Breaking Barriers*.

literature on the work of Hiroshige and in understandings of the relationship between travel and the shifting social order of Japan during the 19th century.

Woodblock Prints and Travel in Early Modern Japan

During Japan's medieval era, physical movement within the country was severely impaired by the dangers of the fragmented provinces waging war over political dominance.[6] When Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1543-1616) unified the country in 1603, however, a period of peace and prosperity commenced. This catalyzed the emergence of a "culture of movement," where people from all social classes took to the road for weeks, and sometimes even months, on end.[7] To maintain this newly acquired peace, the Tokugawa *bakufu* 幕府 (the military dictatorship of the samurai led by the shogun) moved the capital to Edo and forced all its *daimyō* 大名 (feudal lords), including their entire entourage, to reside there for half of the year. This way, disloyal *daimyō* were forced to spend all their money on travelling, instead of levying armed forces against the shogun. The *Gokaidō* 五街道 (the five national highways) were created to facilitate this new mass movement of people, leading to a vast network of supportive infrastructure across Japan. Besides the *daimyō* processions moving to and from the capital, the roads were also filled with merchants, transport workers, nuns, beggars, and pilgrims.[8]

Religious pilgrimage was the earliest form of recreational travel in early modern Japan. Even though the *bakufu* tried to regulate movement as much as possible, for example by constructing *sekisho* 関所 (barrier posts) at provincial borders where travel permits were checked, their efforts were largely in vain.[9] Many people would acquire travel permits under the pretense of pilgrimage, which the *bakufu* more easily granted due to its sacred nature as a religious act, while in reality using these permits for their

[6] Nenzi, *Excursions*, 79.
[7] Vaporis, *Breaking Barriers*, 249.
[8] *Id.*, 13.
[9] *Id.*, 215.

own personal activities.[10] Although there were certainly genuine pilgrims, these "proxy-pilgrims" would indulge in the hedonistic pleasures offered by brothels, inns, and gambling dens found along the road.[11] With the improved socio-economic situation of so-called 'commoners' in the late Edo period, roughly from 1800 to 1868, a "travel boom" occurred.[12]

The rising interest in travel was partially catalyzed by the democratization of knowledge in the second half of the Edo period. Education was no longer restricted to samurai and village leaders but became available for people from all social backgrounds.[13] In *terakoya* 寺子屋 (temple schools) commoners learned how to read and write, which led to a remarkable rise in literacy across Japan. In combination with the rapidly advancing woodblock printing technology, classical stories became widespread knowledge.[14] Many more commoners were now able to read the manifold printed guidebooks, travelogues, and handbooks that appeared on the market. These physical manifestations of Japan's travel culture, not only listed practical information such as distances and prices, but also functioned as a crash course educating the wayfarer on the historical, literary, or religious pedigree of *meisho* 名所 (famous sites) they would find along the way.[15]

Hiroshige's Tōkaidō prints operated in a similar manner—as commercial goods that stimulated travel. They could be bought at publishing houses scattered throughout the city, as well as in remote villages along the road itself. Landscape prints flourished in the late eighteenth and early 19th centuries, as the popularity of travel grew and a sense of urban identity took root in the hearts of the Edoites. Additionally, the prints were a relatively safe investment for publishers; unlike actor prints, landscapes did not age, nor did they draw the attention of censors.[16] Censorship in the Edo period was a

[10] *Id.*, 4; 202.
[11] Nishiyama, *Edo Culture*, 133.
[12] Vaporis, *Breaking Barriers*, 218.
[13] Nenzi, *Excursions*, 126.
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] *Id.*, 122-13.
[16] Paget, "Hiroshige," 13.

Figure 2: Utagawa Hiroshige, *Nissaka: The Sayo Mountain Pass*, 1831-1834. Wereldmuseum Leiden [Coll.nr. RV-1353-25-26].

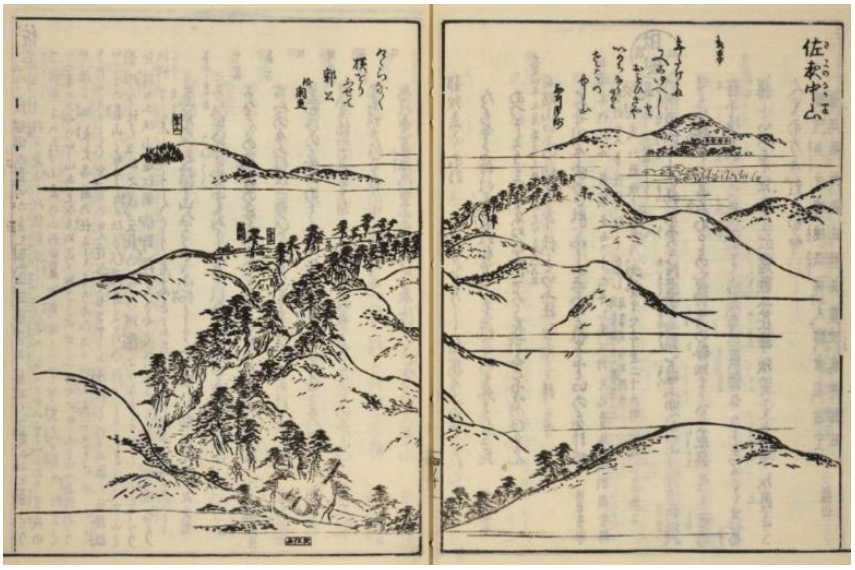

Figure 3: Akisato Ritō, *Tōkaidō Meisho Zue*, 1797. Wereldmuseum Leiden [Coll.nr. RV-17-1b].

difficult obstacle that artists and publishers constantly had to navigate—sometimes even leading to incarceration.[17] As products of mass production and consumption, woodblock prints were naturally used to circulate current events or critique the authorities. While the government tried to regulate prints as strictly as possible, what was prohibited one day would often reappear the next in a new guise. Hiroshige's travel prints largely evaded censorship, as they were more concerned with storytelling than with political commentary.

In *Nissaka: Sayo Mountain Pass* (fig. 2) from the *Great Tōkaidō* series, Hiroshige's rendition alludes to the illustrated guidebook Tōkaidō *meisho zue* 東海道名所図会 (*Illustrated Collection of Famous Places on the Tōkaidō*) by Akisato Ritō 秋里離島 in 1797, which describes the legend of the conspicuous "rock that wails by night" (*yonaka no ishi* 夜那賀石) in the middle of the road (fig. 3).[18] Venturing further into Ritō's guidebook, readers would learn that Prince Munetaka 宗孝親王 (1242-74), the sixth shogun of Japan, travelled along the same road as they were walking.[19] Such stories and history lessons did not only stimulate the recreationalist to head out, they also helped the "armchair traveler" to enjoy imagined travel from the comfort of their home.[20] With more money in their possession, printed guidebooks to lead the way, and relaxed regulations, travel became accessible for a large number of people in early modern Japan.[21]

The Road as a Social Mirror: Interpreting Class and Identity

Society in the Edo period was organized according to neo-Confucian orthodoxy into four estates, known as the *shi-nō-kō-shō* 士農工商 (samurai, peasant, artisan, merchant) system. This class system was based on a person's contribution to society, rather than their

[17] Davis, "The Trouble with Hideyoshi," 281.
[18] Ehmcke, "The Tōkaidō," 114.
[19] Ritō, *Tōkaidō meisho zue*, 29.
[20] Vaporis, "Caveat Viator," 464.
[21] *Id.*, 463.

Figure 4: Utagawa Hiroshige, *Okitsu: The Okitsu River*, 1831-1834. Wereldmuseum Leiden [Coll.nr. RV-1353-25-18].

economic situation.[22] This meant that poor peasants, who provided the nation's food supply, were technically of a higher status than rich merchants, who profited from others. The samurai justified their position through the productivity of their land, which compensated for their personal lack of contribution.[23] However, this social structure is much more ambiguous than it initially appears.[24] In reality, a person's position in society was mostly based on their financial situation, irrespective of their formal status. While it is true that the samurai class was generally more affluent, well-to-do merchants, village leaders, or artisans could live similarly comfortable lives with servants, schooling and luxury. In addition, samurai from low-ranking families could sometimes live in conditions comparable to those of the average commoner.[25]

The inconsistencies between wealth and status are often evident in Hiroshige's Tōkaidō. In *Okitsu: The Okitsu River* (fig. 4) from the *Great Tōkaidō,* a group of people has just come around a

[22] Totman, *A History of Japan*, 228.
[23] Neary, "Class and Social Stratification," 390.
[24] *Id.*, 391.
[25] Totman, *A History of Japan*, 228.

bend, following the curvature of the river. In the background we see a misty landscape that seamlessly blends with the water of Sagami Bay. White rectangles in the distant indicate ships departing, presumably to Edo. A heavy looking man in a *kago* 駕籠 (open palanquin) is being carried by four toiling carriers.[26] Behind them, a horse led by a post boy carries a second traveler, his belly also exposed to the humid air. These men, although travelling luxuriously, are no samurai. They each wear a single *wakizashi* 脇差 (short sword) on their waist sash, an indication that they are commoners, who were only allowed to carry a single sword during the Edo period.[27] Samurai, on the other hand, wore *daishō* 大小, a pair consisting of a long and a short sword.

Despite the lower status of these two men, they were still able to travel in a fashion similar to their social betters. On the highway, a person's mode of transportation was determined by their purchasing power rather than their social status.[28] In this instance, roads functioned as a space outside the lawful norm, since commoners were legally prohibited from riding horses during the Edo period.[29] Therefore, once a commoner drew near enough to Edo—and re-entered the realm dictated by these norms—they would again be subject to the strict regulation of urban society, and not be allowed inside the city on horseback.[30] Why exactly commoners were allowed to ride horses on the road but not in the city is difficult to determine.[31] One possible explanation is that the rider was not actually controlling the horse; rather, they merely sat on horseback while it was being led by a footman.[32]

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[26] A *kago* was a triangular shaped, open box swinging from a horizontal pole. During his travels in Japan, Major Henry Knollys (1886) states that they were "the most clumsy, heavy, and uncomfortable means of transport which could be devised," quoted in Vaporis, *Breaking Barriers*, 221.

[27] Fujiki, *Katanagari*, 142-3.

[28] Vaporis, *Breaking Barriers*, 10.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] *Id.*, 221.

[31] Vaporis only briefly mentions this law in *Breaking Barriers*, 221, but does not go in much further detail. His reference, the *Kinsei kōtsū shiryō shū* 近世交通史料集 vol. 9, no 896, 388, likely sheds more light on this issue.

[32] Vaporis, *Breaking Barriers*, 221.

Figure 5: Utagawa Hiroshige, *Narumi: The Famous Local Shibori Cloth*, 1833-1834. Wereldmuseum Leiden [Coll.nr. RV-1353-25-41].

Another example of nonconformist transport can be seen in *Narami: The Famous Local Shibori Cloth* (fig. 5). Two groups of travelers are walking down the sloped thoroughfare of Narami. The foremost group consists of three women, two walking and one being carried in a small *kago*. Unlike the previous print, this time only two carriers are needed. It is clear these women are travelers, as walking canes, straw hats and sandals are all iconographic indicators. Behind them, a hunched over woman sits on the back of a horse, led by a post boy. Travelling alone, she has hired a porter to carry her luggage. Inside the small shop on the left we see two men chatting over a cup of tea. On display for sale are the famous Arimatsu *shibori* 絞り (knotted and then dyed textiles). Every post town was known for their famous local product, *meibutsu* 名物. In the Late Edo period, *meibutsu* became extremely popular, with travelers buying these items while passing through towns as tangible memories of their journey.[33] These items included products such as

[33] Nenzi, "Cultured Travelers," 301.

comestibles from locally harvested produce, woodblock prints, fans, or other random paraphernalia that served as a viable souvenir.[34]

At a glance, it seems as though the woman inside the *kago* might be of noble status, perhaps a samurai's wife travelling with her two maidservants. In reality, it is more likely that she is the wife of a wealthy merchant or village head. Aristocratic women in the Edo period travelled inside personal *norimono* 乗り物 (enclosed palanquins) carried by several servants.[35] In contrast, *kago* were often rented out at rest stations or post towns. The two women in front also raise questions about their status. Their short-sleeved kimono's (*kosode* 小袖) indicate that they are married.[36] Yet, according to the state's ideology, married women were bound to the household, expected to conform to family obligations and not leave their village.[37] Only after becoming a mother-in-law, and being mostly released from family obligations, did commoner women have the option to leave the house more often and for longer periods of time.[38] Lastly, it was unusual for women to travel alone in the Edo period, making the woman on horseback a rare sight.[39] It is hard to determine exactly what place in society these women occupied, but their participation in travel exemplifies how Hiroshige portrays the ambiguous social nature of travel spaces, allowing women to re-create their identities in this liminal space.

Obstacles on the Road: Nature's Role in Early Modern Travel

As quoted by Asai Ryōi in the beginning of this article, the wayfarer had to "minimize the difficulties" of travel in order to enjoy it. The difficulties a traveler might encounter along the Tōkaidō manifested itself in different forms. Although the roads were maintained very well, they followed the natural contours of the landscape.[40] This

[34] Vaporis, *Breaking Barriers*, 223.
[35] Nenzi, *Excursions*, 80.
[36] Vaporis, *Breaking Barriers*, 156.
[37] Nenzi, *Excursions*, 54.
[38] *Id.*, 85.
[39] Vaporis, *Breaking Barriers*, 155.
[40] *Id.*, 38. Many European visitors commented on the state of the *Gokaidō* roads. During the 19th-century, the Swiss envoy Aimé Humbert wrote, "[the Tōkaidō] is in certain respects, superior [to the great roads of Europe]," quoted on page 40.

Figure 6: Utagawa Hiroshige, *Hakone: View of the Lake*, 1833-1834. Wereldmuseum Leiden [Coll.nr. RV-1353-25-11].

resulted in many steep mountain passes, dangerous cliffsides and wide rivers that needed to be traversed. It is for good reason that Yasumi Roan 八隅芦庵 gave several precautions to travelers when crossing rivers in his handbook *Ryokō Yōjinshū* 旅行用心集 (Precautions for Travelers).[41] The roads became especially dangerous after long spells of rain or when the winter snow began to melt, which resulted in the rivers getting wider, temporary bridges getting washed away and the currents rushing through with unexpected strength.[42]

Hiroshige's Tōkaidō depicts a great number of scenes where travelers are dwarfed by the surrounding landscape. This compositional strategy metaphorically alludes to how people are always at the mercy of nature. Moreover, it emphasizes the solitude of the many undeveloped areas of the road and the incredible length of such journeys. In *Hakone: View of the Lake* (fig. 6) from the *Great Tōkaidō*, the center of the pictorial plane is dominated by a large mountain of various colorful rocks. The fading blue water on

[41] Vaporis, "Caveat Viator," 475-6.
[42] *Ibid.*

the left leads the eye upwards to a vast mountain range, towered by an impressive snow-covered Mount Fuji. Besides the steep cliffside, we catch a glimpse of Hakone, deeply submerged in the forest and the surrounding mountains. On the right, the unusually large quantity of tiny straw hats and hardly noticeable banner poles waving in the air indicate a *daimyō* procession moving down the mountain pass. Engulfed by the dominating landscape, the samurai are barely visible, their significance put into perspective against the enormity of nature. This steep and crumbling mountain passage does not differentiate between samurai and commoner.

The *Vertical Tōkaidō* lends itself especially well to depicting large stretches of overwhelming nature. In *Kanaya: View of the Ōi River* (fig. 7) we see one of the largest rivers of the *Gokaidō*. Hiroshige places the viewer in the middle of the road, at the apex of a steep hill. The viewer's gaze is directed upwards by a bending line of thatched roofs that gradually turns into hints of people who get smaller and smaller, finally marked as mere dots on the horizon. In contrast to these faint traces of human presence, the river dominates the picture plane, consuming the travelers trying to cross. The river

Figure 7: Utagawa Hiroshige, *Kanaya: View of the Ōi River*, 1855. Wereldmuseum Leiden [Coll.nr. RV-2525-221].

Figure 8: Utagawa Hiroshige, *Shimada: The Suruga Side of the Ōi River*, 1855. Wereldmuseum Leiden [Coll.nr. RV-2525-222].

was too wide and voracious for bridges or ferryboats. Instead, travelers had to rely on locals to transport them across or risk their lives by wading through the heavy currents themselves.[43]

In *Shimada: The Suruga Side of the Ōi River* (fig. 8) the previous scene is shown from the other side. Porters are slowly transporting a *daimyō* procession across the river. The wealthiest samurai are carried in enclosed palanquins, while the less wealthy ride piggyback, elevating them to the same level as commoners who would cross in a similar manner. The fact that rivers caused difficulties is not only noted in Yasumi's previously mentioned handbook, but also by several Westerners who traveled through Japan during the Edo period. On his way to an audience with the shogun, the German scientist Engelbert Kaempfer (1651-1716) wrote about the Ōi river, noting that:

> In the bottom of the river are large, moving rocks. Its waters gush with the speed and power of an arrow, and it cannot be crossed on horseback without knowledgeable, specially appointed guides (of which five have to guide one horse when the water is low, that is, knee-deep). If they lose their passenger, they lose their lives.[44]

By depicting the Ōi river in all its overwhelming vastness, Hiroshige emphasizes what little control people had over nature. The vanishing viewpoint further exemplifies how long this uncomfortable crossing must have been. As seen in the aforementioned example of *Okitsu* (fig. 4), people of low status could still travel relatively luxuriously, which made the river crossing less troublesome. While samurai were generally more affluent and could afford the luxury of an enclosed palanquin (*norimono*), crossing by ladder, platform, or *kago* was available to anyone with the means to pay, whether samurai or peasant.

Other difficulties travelers might encounter during their journey were unexpected weather patterns such as harsh winds, heavy downpours, extreme heat and thick layers of snow. Kaempfer

[43] Kaempfer and Bodart-Bailey, *Kaempfer's Japan*, 56.
[44] *Ibid.*

Figure 9: Utagawa Hiroshige, *Shōno: Sudden Rain*, 1831-1834. Wereldmuseum Leiden [Coll.nr. RV-1353-25-46].

noted that "[t]he wind, however, is very strong and always cold and carries a lot of snow in winter, but in the dog days it is unbearably hot. Throughout the year the heavens are generous in their supply of water . . ."[45] In *Shōno: Sudden Rain* (fig. 9) of the *Great Tōkaidō*, two groups of travelers are surprised by a sudden shower. Two people are running downhill against the mighty wind, hoping to find cover in the village below. The other group, making its way up the steep mountain, is led by a man clad in a raincoat made of straw, followed closely by two barely dressed porters carrying a *kago* covered with oiled paper to keep out the rain. The trees in the background bend so low, as if about to snap. Rain cascades from the sky in tightly drawn lines, evoking an unpleasant experience. After rain, however, comes sunshine, and in the next print of the series a beautiful, tranquil winter scene is shown in *Kameyama: Clear Weather after Snowfall* (fig. 10). Much like the scene from Hakone, here too we barely see the hats of a passing procession, engulfed by the surrounding icy winter landscape. The rooftops in the background are indicated by a singular line, with no further detail

[45] *Id.*, 55.

Figure 10: Utagawa Hiroshige, *Kameyama: Clear Weather after Snowfall*, c. 1831-1834. Wereldmuseum Leiden [Coll.nr. RV-1353-25-47].

needed as they are completely covered by snow. The image has a dramatic downwards flow to it, emphasized by the parallel lines of trees, slopes and rooftops.

As opposed to in western traditions, Japanese texts are read from top to bottom, and right to left. The Japanese eye is thus accustomed to start reading in the top-right corner. This method alters the way one 'reads' an image.[46] In *Kameyama* the trajectory of the eye moving across the image follows a steep downhill motion. Starting at the castle on top of the hill, the viewer's journey down the mountain is less strenuous than that of the procession moving up. For the contemporary viewer, this is not an upward struggle but rather a pleasant descent, contributing to the image's overall tranquil appearance. In contrast, the sense of urgency in the previous image of *Shōno* is heightened by its diagonal movement up and to the left.[47] The steep road leading up the mountain moves away from the

[46] Jullie Nelson Davis explains this concept in more detail in Davis, *Picturing the Floating World*, 5-8. She uses Hokusai's *Great Wave* and *Red Fuji* as examples to illustrate how one's perception of the image completely changes once read from a different direction.

[47] Ōkubo, *Hiroshige*, 224.

sheltered houses in the valley, finally culminating in a merciless onslaught of wind and rain. The composition plays an important role in conveying the tension or calmness of travel and can therefore severely alter the viewer's perception of the image—and in our case, the road.

The Road from Above: A bird's-eye View of the *Tōkaidō*

Another compositional strategy Hiroshige frequently employed was the bird's-eye view, especially in the *Vertical Tōkaidō*. Some critics of Japanese art contend that such an aerial perspective makes the landscape look flat and ordinary, lacking the emotion and dramatic movement seen in the *Great Tōkaidō*.[48] Nagata Yujirō 永田之次郎 (2004) exemplifies this criticism by arguing that the bird's-eye perspective in *Shirasuka: View of Shiomizaka* (fig. 11) makes it unclear what is the focus of the print.[49] I want to suggest, however, that Hiroshige's bird's-eye view is a compositional strategy that accentuates the social impartiality of travel spaces. By observing from above, the viewer sees the road from a broader perspective. Singular details become harder to distinguish, and the travelers look like ants, trudging along the same road in similar conditions. Considering that the *Vertical Tōkaidō* was published at the end of the Edo period, 20 years after the *Great Tōkaidō*, it makes sense that Hiroshige shows the Tōkaidō from a different angle, since that period saw significant political change in Japan.

The bird's-eye view in *Shirasuka* shows the Tōkaidō winding around a steep, grass-covered hill. The background is largely dominated by a vast expanse of light-blue water, occupied by only a few boats. A variety of travelers are walking up and down the road. Easily recognizable are the porters carrying large boxes of goods from one town to the next. Further up the road two samurai can be spotted, barely identifiable by their two swords drawn as mere lines. Approaching them is a person carrying heavy luggage, followed from a distance by someone clad in a straw raincoat. Faces are

[48] Nagata, "Utagawa Hiroshige," 12.
[49] *Id.*, 11.

Figure 11: Utagawa Hiroshige, *Shirasuka: View of Shiomizaka,* 1855. Wereldmuseum Leiden [Coll.nr. RV-2525-218].

Detail of figure 11

indistinguishable and at a glance these are all 'just' people walking along the road. Especially the two samurai, depicted without porters, fancy transportation, or a large entourage, embody the common traveler, hinting at the politically unstable future that lies ahead.

When Japan was forced to open its borders to foreign trade in 1853, the nation was hit with a period of domestic turmoil.[50] The edifice of the Tokugawa *bakufu* began to crack and people started to criticize the Neo-Confucian political and social frameworks that had structured Japan for the previous two and a half centuries.[51] These events, in combination with several other internal conflicts, caused the military government to collapse several years later in 1868. The *Vertical Tōkaidō* encapsulates these changing times well. For example, this is exemplified by the relative lack of portrayed *daimyō* processions compared to the *Great Tōkaidō*. This was the

[50] Walker, *A Concise History*, 145.
[51] *Id.*, 154.

Detail of figure 12.

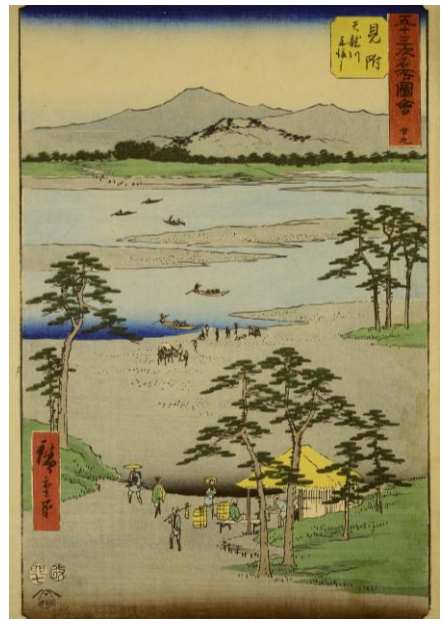

Figure 12: Utagawa Hiroshige, *Mitsuke: Ferry on the Tenryū River*, 1855. Wereldmuseum Leiden [Coll.nr. RV-2488-29].

result of eased regulation by the government, allowing the *daimyō* to reside in the capital, causing less movement of large entourages of samurai between the provinces and Edo.[52]

The trend of lone, traveling samurai continues in several other scenes from the *Vertical Tōkaidō*. In *Mitsuke: Ferry on the Tenryū River* (fig. 12) we see groups of people traversing a wide river via long and narrow, pole-pushed boats. Slightly obscured by a few pine trees, a small teahouse is visible in the foreground. A weary traveler sits on a simple bench, about to be served a rejuvenating beverage. A few other travelers occupy the scene. A porter with heavy cargo, a pilgrim with knapsack, and on the left a lone samurai, his swords (*daishō*) protruding from his waist sash. No one seems to notice his presence; he is just one amongst many. Such a site was uncommon a few decades earlier as is apparent when Yaji and Kita tried to cross a river during their shank's mare. Yaji tried to impersonate a samurai to get a discount, but when the ferryman asked: "Is your honour travelling in a *kago* or on horseback? How many pack loads of

[52] *Id.*, 156.

baggage have you? . . . And your attendants?"[53] Yaji stumbled his words and exposed himself. Besides, the ferryman was not going to give them a discount anyway: "We don't make any reduction in our charges."[54]

The many difficulties encountered along a journey often disregard whether a traveler is of high or low status. What is more important is this person's financial situation. For money, not status, buys one temporary relief from aching feet, grants safe passage across rivers, fills bellies, and buys a soft bed at night. Even so, as Yasumi Roan aptly states: "At breakfast and dinner they [those with servants (i.e., the rich)] should put up with what does not appeal to them and eat it . . ." In other words, the wealthy must humble their expectations while traveling. Unlike their comfortable urban homes, where everything is orderly, travel spaces are impartial, and even the wealthy are at the mercy of the road. The bird's-eye view, so often employed by Hiroshige, accentuates the engulfing environment and changing social landscape of the Edo period. Samurai no longer travel in luxury and are simply portrayed as one amongst many. The perception of travelers in the *Vertical Tōkaidō* as a collective of ants on shank's mare accentuates the declining social order of the late Edo period.

Conclusion

This article has explored evidence that Hiroshige's prints of the *Fifty-Three Stations of the Tōkaidō* offer a vivid portrayal of late Edo period travel spaces, revealing how roadsides were consciously perceived—and actively utilized—by travelers as liminal spaces beyond the structured urban environment regulated by the Tokugawa *bakufu*. Through a close reading of several prints from this artist's *Great* and *Vertical Tōkaidō* series, it becomes evident that a traveler's status held little significance on the road; instead, financial means played a more crucial role. The depiction of women and commoners engaging in modes of transportation that were theoretically only available to samurai, illustrate how travel spaces were indifferent to the Neo-Confucian status system. By stepping

[53] Ikku, *Shank's Mare*, 99.
[54] *Id.*, 100.

beyond the normative realm of urban society, travelers were able to reshape their identities and challenge social hierarchies. Furthermore, I propose that Hiroshige underscores the road's impartiality through clever compositional strategies. By depicting travelers immersed in the surrounding landscapes and employing a bird's-eye perspective, he blurs the distinction between samurai and commoner, reducing all to mere travelers—vulnerable to both the perils and occasional pleasures of the journey itself.

Despite its relatively small corpus of prints, this article highlights a previously unexplored area in scholarship on Hiroshige's *Fifty-Three Stations of the Tōkaidō* prints. While previous studies have examined the Tōkaidō series as general visualizations of Japan's early modern travel culture, this article delves deeper by uncovering their institutional and sociopolitical foundations. In doing so, it reinforces the liminal nature of roadsides and their relationship to the fluid social dynamics of early modern Japan. A more extensive analysis of Hiroshige's multiple Tōkaidō series will certainly uncover the many more potentialities still buried within the undulating landscape of his oeuvre.

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Identifying Sounds: Comparing Interpretations of Sonic Histories of East Javanese *Ludruk* Folk Theater Performances

Sonya Condro Lukitosari

As you walk along the dusty, windy roads of an East Javanese village, the blare of twin sound systems resonates in your chest, competing with the incessant noise of hundreds of scooters buzzing along packed roads. *Cek . . . cek . . . 'ji . . . 'ro . . . lu* . . . Amateur sound engineers test the microphones while setting up two massive speakers, each framing a large wooden platform that has been built to span the village road in anticipation of a *ludruk* folk theater performance.[1] Come nightfall, the streets will fill with new sounds: the melodies of traditional Javanese Gamelan, the sonorous singing of performers, several overlapping strands of dialogue vying for dominance, the shouts of vendors and laughter of excited villagers, and the jokes of a comedian who doubles as the emcee welcoming everyone to the show.[2]

[1] *Ludruk* is a folk performing art that is believed to have developed in the villages near the East Javanese port city of Surabaya roughly around the 12th or 13th centuries (fig. 1). Although it has experienced multiple iterations over time, it is arguably most well-known for the version performed on a raised stage, with Gamelan musicians spread across the front of the stage (on a lower platform). The live theater performance is preceded by various opening acts (fig. 2) including traditional welcoming dances (*remo*) with live singing accompaniment, followed by a mix of traditional and popular songs performed by transgender performers, as well as men in drag. This is subsequently followed by an interlude by comedians, warming up the crowd, before the theater performance properly begins, lasting several hours (fig. 3).

[2] This is an example of how societies across Indonesia are extremely sound-saturated. As explored by Novak in *Keywords in Sound* (2015), the word *ramé* in Bahasa Indonesia refers to ". . . the clamorous noisiness of social life in festivals and marketplaces and imply a healthy and lively atmosphere." (126)

Figure 1: Map of East Java, Indonesia. 15 January, 2010, Wikimedia.

Figure 2: A Ludruk performance by Taruna Budaya in Malang, East Java. Photograph courtesy of Karen Elizabeth Schrieber.

Figure 3: Five comedians on stage at a Taruna Budaya ludruk performance. This comedic interlude is known as dagelan. Photograph courtesy of Karen Elizabeth Schrieber.

East Javanese folk theater, known as *ludruk*, has a long and storied history within the region. Its fame has invited scholars from around the world to analyze its richly layered performances through the lenses of history, semiotics, political science, ethnography, and anthropology. Although its appearances are humble, with a stage decorated with simple plywood painted backdrops, the sonic environment of *ludruk* is rich and has deep roots in the culture of the region. This article will explore the history of scholarship on *ludruk* through five differing authors, selected to give a sense of the evolving focus of the scholarly field between 1960 and the 2020s. Despite *ludruk* having been studied by numerous scholars from different disciplinary perspectives, this work has typically not centered its investigations specifically on the sounds that are inherent, and unique, to individual *ludruk* performances.[3] As much as movements, plot, costumes, and visuals make a *ludruk* performance, so do songs, ambient audience noise, call-and-response between performers and audience, and music. I therefore aim to examine the concept of movement through space in relation to *ludruk*. I do so by identifying the sonic resonances emanating from the stage, the shifting interplays between performer and audience, as well as the types of listening—such as passive or active—that audiences are noted to employ in five writings on *ludruk*. By cataloguing these sounds, or indeed their absence, I aim to emphasize that while analyzing *sound* is significant to ensuring a deeper understanding of the art medium, it has not yet been given the due it is owed in current scholarship.

The field of sound studies explores how concepts such as sound, music, noise, and listening can be understood as relational to space, especially within specific cultural and societal contexts. A significant contribution to the field is David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny's *Keywords in Sound*.[4] In chapter 6 of this text, Jonathan Sterne investigates the concept of 'hearing' and argues that, "[t]o

[3] This concern is not unique to *ludruk*, but also theater in a broader sense. See: *Theater Noise: the Sound of Performance*, edited by Lynne Kendrick and David Roesner, for explorations of sound and its lack of notice in scholarly analysis. The authors included in the collection expand on several case studies within 'Western' theatrical contexts.

[4] Novak and Sakakeeny, *Keywords in Sound*.

study hearing is to study the making of subjects, which means it is also to study the denigration and unmaking of subjects."[5] By this logic, scholars have inadvertently ignored a key element in the creation or unmaking of certain subjects within this art form in failing to give significant attention to the sounds that are at the heart of *ludruk*. In chapter 17, Andrew J. Eisenberg writes about notions of 'space.' In discussing the phenomenological and ontological interweaving of sound and space, he argues that "[s]ounds, after all, are always in motion; they emanate, radiate, reflect, canalize, get blocked, leak out, and so on."[6] Therefore, the movements of sound as tied to the interactions of performers on stage, as well as audience members, create a "spatial narrative" that must be considered in comprehensive analyses of *ludruk*.[7]

No *ludruk* performance is complete without the vast and competing sounds elicited by performers, musicians, and attendees alike.[8] The myriad sounds and noises of a *ludruk* performance are diverse and can be divided into several categories: commercial noises, sounds associated with the movement of bodies in differently textured spaces (both on and offstage), musical sounds, and dialogue. *Ludruk* performances typically begin in early evening, pausing to accommodate the calls to prayer; peddlers come from near and far to sell snacks such as steamed peanuts or light-up and musical toys, as well as hawkers selling steaming bowls of noodles and meatballs from their wheeled, movable stalls. Throughout the performance, people are up and about buying and eating snacks, while children play with their toys, and performers on stage continue their practiced production. By understanding the types of sounds that are elicited during any individual *ludruk* performance, readers can better appreciate how refocusing current scholarship around *ludruk*'s

[5] Sterne, "Hearing," 73.

[6] Eisenberg, "Space," 193; Phenomenology, according to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, refers to the "study of 'phenomena'": appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience."; Ontology refers to the branch of metaphysics dealing with the 'nature of being.' (See: Smith on Phenomenology.)

[7] Altman, "Sound Theory," 19 in Eisenberg, "Space," 193.

[8] The following paragraph's observations are based on my own experiences as the daughter of two traditional Javanese arts practitioners. I regularly attended music, dance, and *ludruk* performances growing up in Tumpang, Malang, East Java.

sonic landscapes adds meaning and context essential to a true understanding of this traditional art form.

This article takes a comparative and analytical approach to understanding how sound has been discussed in scholarship. Through highlighting five perspectives on *ludruk*, it offers insights into the difficulties scholars may face in not only writing about local cultural heritage, but also given the depth of context needed concerning not only the art form, the peoples, the nation, and its histories.[9] This paper puts existing visually-rooted scholarship into a dialogue with sound as a way of exploring the field's elisions and to point towards an approach that will emphasize sound as an important focus for scholarly analysis on the same level as the visual, cultural, and lyrical elements of this folk theater.

Scan the QR code to see an example of a ludruk performance by the Armada troupe based out of Malang. By skipping through the video, a few seconds or minutes at a time, the audience can get a sense of the structure, as well as visual and sonic elements, of a typical ludruk performance.[10]

The History of Scholarship on *Ludruk*

The following section of this article is broken down into three parts, each respective division offering: a brief biographical introduction to the authors chosen, contextualizing the time periods within which they were writing, as well as analyzing their approaches to the study of *ludruk*. The first division analyzes James Peacock's work, based on his anthropological observations from the 1960s.[11] The second, in turn, focuses on the 2009 work of Malaysian scholar Muhammad Febriansyah, discussing *ludruk*'s political history.[12] Given similarities in discussing the lyrics and song structures unique to *ludruk*, Febriansyah's work will be analyzed in conjunction with a chapter

[9] Typical plotlines and jokes performed on stage may reference: Indonesia's long history with colonization under Portuguese, Dutch, British, and Japanese occupation; concepts of freedom and self-sovereignty; as well as various contemporary political and socioeconomic situations experienced by the 'common man.'

[10] Kesenian Indonesia. "Ludruk Armada Malang—Walikukun."

[11] Peacock, "Comedy and Centralization," 345–56.

[12] Febriansyah, *Performing Arts and Politics*.

from a 2024 book focusing on insular Southeast Asia, titled *Oral Traditions*, written by Tom Hoogervorst and Rully Aprilia Zandra.[13] Finally, the article concludes with a discussion of Riksa Afiaty's interview with artist Moelyono, offering insider perspectives on how arts practitioners themselves view and write about *ludruk*.[14]

All of these authors wrote for an English-speaking audience, therefore allowing for a comparison in approaches in language use, descriptions, and topics of focus within *ludruk* performances. The subheadings utilized in this paper signify how these authors offer differing perspectives on the art form (observer, lyrical, and dialogic), offering the reader different approaches to how sound may, or has not yet been, referenced in their scholarship. Throughout each analysis, I direct attention to where sound and sound-related interactions are noted and where they could have been further highlighted. By doing so, I aim to show how this information already exists in many scholars' field notes, though perhaps not yet sufficiently identified or featured in their main writing.

An Observer's Perspective on *Ludruk*

James Peacock is an American psychologist and anthropologist whose academic career began in the 1950s.[15] His work predominantly focused on the anthropology of religion, studying Southeast Asia and southeastern United States. His work on *ludruk*, which he frames as "Indonesian Proletarian Drama," is based on his own anthropological work in Java in 1962-1963.[16] He focused on noting observations as a self-proclaimed 'outsider' to the performances, utilizing local informants to aid in note-taking and translation.[17] In addition to unpacking the plots of a series of *ludruk* performances, Peacock was also interested in the relationships these performances had to society.[18] Therefore, Peacock has contributed to scholarly

[13] Hoogervorst and Zandra, "Humor, Irreverence, Plurilingualism," In *Oral Traditions*.
[14] Afiaty and Moelyono, "Reklindling the Spirit."
[15] Carolina Story: Virtual Museum of University History, "James L. Peacock III."
[16] Peacock, *Rites of Modernization*.
[17] In the field of anthropology, this is considered as an 'etic' perspective of a culture, offering the viewpoint of an outsider looking in on a culture without taking part in it (reliance on observation instead of participation). (See: "Etic and Emic" by Study.com.)
[18] Junus, "Review: Rites of Modernization," 171–82.

writings on a sonic heritage of *ludruk* by focusing on language and performer-audience interaction, with his main contribution to scholarship on the art form being his in-depth explorations of plotlines.

In his 1967 article, "Comedy and Centralization in Java: the *Ludruk* Plays," Peacock offers descriptions of what he and his fieldwork informants observed over the course of eighty performances.[19] Peacock alternates between describing movements and rhythms of stories in broad strokes, to very detailed unpackings of the theatrical structure of a *ludruk* performance. Halfway through the article, Peacock spends time discussing the use of space within the theatrical performance and how the pacing and sounds used by the performers aid the audience in being transported into distinct environments. These environments reflect the daily lives of working people, harking back to *ludruk*'s humble origins and popular use of local vernacular that has made this art form (largely) stand the test of time.

> The rhythm of the dialogue parallels the rhythm of Surabaja commercial encounters rather than that of domestic visits. Domestic visits, among Javanese, are marked by a slow, smooth, crooning kind of rhythm. The rapid-fire thrusts and retreats of the duel are much more like the rhythm of bargaining in the marketplace.[20]

The previous passage demonstrates Peacock's efforts to describe his conceptions of space-making during a particular theatrical performance, highlighting how sound and rhythms are inherently tied to space. Due to this relationship, space therefore shapes individuals' or communities' actions and interactions with one another. This includes the pacing and volume of conversations, highlighting how certain outside factors relate to Sterne's subject-making.[21] Peacock also makes note of the impact of sound in helping engage with and create an empathetic audience through the

[19] Peacock, "Comedy and Centralization," 345–56.
[20] *Id.*, 350; Surabaya is a large port city in the northeast of Java.
[21] Sterne, "Hearing," 73.

evocation of familiar sound sensibilities.[22] In other words, by using pacing, a quick change in backdrop, as well as interspersions of musical hits to emphasize comedic moments, the audience is encouraged to use their imaginations to fill in additional sensory information from their own experiences. This allows each audience member to visualize, auralize, and thereby create a more personal connection to what is said on stage.[23]

What Peacock's passage most prominently highlights is how *ludruk* is created by and meant to appeal to the working classes. Elites would not be going to the markets themselves, as the market is dominated by the working class. The locality of the market-place and the sounds inherent to money-making in these specific spaces emphasize how cultural awareness is not only utilized, but also monetized, by hawkers in order to gain access to their targeted consumer-listeners.[24] This is reflected via market-scene or dialogue on-stage, where performers make the assumption that the listeners are aware of the cultural implications and sonic environments of the simulated, theatrical marketplace.

Peacock goes on to emphasize a character (a comedian) who best encapsulates, and employs, this connection with the audience. The author does so while also making brief notes of the call-and-response nature inherent to *ludruk*, especially in the portion of these performances that most closely resembles what a 'Western' audience may understand to be a stand-up comedian routine.

> He [the lone clown-comedian] sings a song which laments the plight of the common man: the government is corrupt, prices are rising, wages are dropping. While the clown sings, spectators, who address him by nick-name or other familiar term, tell him that they agree with what he sings: 'True, brother,' 'That's the way it is, Pak [Sir].'[25]

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[22] Eisenberg, "Space," 193-207.
[23] 'Auralize' and 'auralization' can be understood as counterparts to 'visualize' or 'visualization,' used to describe the imagining(s) of sound.
[24] Stevens, "Irasshai! Sonic Practice," 82–99.
[25] Peacock, "Comedy and Centralization," 345-56.

Continuing this analysis, Peacock provides a few more examples of the types of responses he heard and observed. The frequency and almost universality of audience interactions with the comedian at *ludruk* performances is reflected; the exclamations not quite harsh enough (and often too joyous) to be considered heckling. This audience participation is often humorous in nature, not only coming from the performer on stage, but also from the audience calling out. "He says he looked for work and found no vacancies. A listener tells him, 'Go on out, pal. Stop by my place. Not enough workers there to kill the mosquitoes.'"[26] After the performer further bemoans his low salary, which is meant to feed a family with four children, Peacock notes that a "listener responds sarcastically, 'Just buy an ounce [of rice] and eat it a grain at a time...'" Soon after, another listener "says cynically, 'Just eat *bubur* [porridge given to children] and drink a lot, then you'll be full.'"[27] This informal call-and-response reads as a cathartic experience where several audience members can not only air grievances, but also feel a sense of kinship and community with fellow audience members.

Peacock's inclusion of these conversations helps readers understand a few of the significant vocal elements of a *ludruk* performance, occurring on- and off-stage. However, what remains unmentioned is how the musicians, who are always listening and looking for moments to add to the comedic effect, may introduce sound effects and musical accompaniment signifying a joke that landed particularly well or shifts in topic and 'scene.' Additionally, despite the time period during which Peacock observed and wrote this article on *ludruk*, there is very little mention of the politics of the time, which is unusual for this comedic portion of the performance. [28] Given the secrecy and real consequences surrounding the events of the mid-1960s, the researcher likely

[26] *Id.*, 347.

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] The mid-1960s signified a shift from the so-called 'Old Order' led by President Sukarno, to the rise of strongman President Suharto and his 'New Order' Indonesia. The main event attributing to this change in leadership is known as the September 30th Movement (*Gerakan September 30, G30s)*, which resulted in mass anti-Communist violence that began in 1965 and whose legacies reach into the present day. For more information, see Robinson, *The Killing Season* and Roosa, *Buried Histories*.

omitted this commentary for practical and safety reasons.[29] In summation, Peacock's fieldnotes consist of many mentions of sound-related elements of *ludruk*. However, although referenced, these sounds are not given the same level of attention as his descriptions and explanations of ludruk plotlines and characters.

Scan this QR code to see an example clip of the musical interplay between musicians, performers, and audience: around 19:15-21:57.[30]

A Lyrical Perspective of *Ludruk*

Muhammad Febriansyah, a political science senior lecturer at the Universiti Sains Malaysia in Pulau Pinang, introduces a broad history of Indonesian performing arts, including *ludruk*, under Suharto's New Order period.[31] In his 2009 working paper titled *Performing Arts and Politics in New Order Indonesia: Compromise and Resistance*, Febriansyah focuses on the impacts of politics on society, including analyses of their influence on song lyrics.[32] This article can be usefully read in tandem with Tom Hoogervorst and Rully Aprilia Zandra's chapter in Aone van Engelenhoven's 2024 book, *Oral Traditions in Insular Southeast Asia*, as each focuses on the lyrics and song structures unique to *ludruk* known as *parikan*.[33] Their differing perspectives on *parikan*—Febriansyah taking a more political history stance, while Hoogervorst and Zandra unpack the structure and impacts of these songs—allow readers to develop a deeper understanding of *ludruk* as a multi-layered performance art, with sound at its heart.

Although Febriansyah includes references to how performers utilized lyrics of traditional songs to resist or push back against authority, unfortunately, no audio of the performances of these

[29] Benedict Anderson, renowned scholar on Indonesia, was himself banned from entering Indonesia (from 1975 until the fall of Suharto in 1998) for his role in discussing the coup in the "Cornell Paper" (1971).
[30] Movie Multimedia, "Ludruk Armada Lawak."
[31] This New Order regime lasted from 1966 until Suharto's fall in 1998. This regime was one of authoritarian leadership, military dominance, economic stability, and socio-cultural censorship.; "ORC*ID*."
[32] Febriansyah, "Performing Arts and Politics," 1-38.
[33] Hoogervorst and Zandra, "Humor, Irreverence, Plurilingualism."

songs is provided. It is notable that an article focusing on performing arts, especially ones that heavily rely on sound to create connections with audiences, does not include lyrics or sound clips from any of the theater performances discussed. This is likely a result or by-product of the types of technology commonly available during the time period of his writing. This is in direct contrast to Hoogervorst and Zandra's "Humor, Irreverence, and Plurilingualism," where lyrics to particular performances have been included in the text and then analyzed for the meanings, language, and structure of this sung poetry.[34] In this latter text, it is a rather missed opportunity to provide readers and listeners with access to sound clips of these songs and lyrics performed within or even outside the context of *ludruk*. Although, again, this may be due to limitations regarding access or availability of performers and/or recordings of these specific *parikan*.

Ludruk songs and sung poetry, known as *parikan* and *kidungan*, follow a prescribed rhythmic and melodic scheme.[35] Bringing contextual knowledge into the study of these songs allows the reader to envision how (improvised) lyrics may be performed on top of this same melody. This allows for the creation of new sonic narratives, such as the musical conversations with the troupe's Gamelan musicians performing the traditional song *Jula Juli* in tandem with the singers, as well as with the reader who is auralizing their experiences in reaction to what they are reading. This ability to bring additional contextual knowledge is certainly not a universal experience among readers, further confirming the benefits of providing examples of audio, accessible through sites such as YouTube.[36]

Scan the QR code for an example of these song forms and their respective accompanying music. For an example of 'Parikan', see clip 0:17 to 1:00. For an example of 'Kidungan', see clip 1:16-2:15.[37]

[34] *Id.,* 28-9.
[35] *Ibid.*
[36] Follow this YouTube link to see a playlist of a variety of *ludruk* performances: "Ludruk Compliation," https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLsZgyq5eDgm749mIDcJ7_tdT57lF-TdEY&si=LDwX3rfllb06-JMrh.
[37] Budaya Kita, "Jula Juli Jawa Timuran—Cak Yudho Bakiak—Sekar Budaya."

A difficulty in highlighting sonic histories is the reality that recordings of performances of the particular songs noted in the sources may not exist or were poorly recorded, rendering them unusable to the authors. This possibility in itself is not addressed in Hoogervorst and Zander's article, which is likely due to the text's overarching focus on semiotics rather than sound studies. What is emphasized in both these sources, however, is *parikan*'s inclusion of socio-political commentary, sexual innuendos, and in certain historical instances, critiques of colonization and the state. For example, both Fabriansyah and Hoogervorst and Zandra discuss one of the so-called 'founding fathers' of *ludruk*, Cak Durasim, and his now famous one-liner, "*Pagupon Omahe Doro. Melok Nippon Tambah Sengsoro*" ("Pagupon is a box where pigeons live. Working for the Japanese fills [our] own lives with more suffering").[38]

Durasim's verse is an excellent example of how Indonesian politics coincide with the metaphorical language of *ludruk parikan*. By framing Japanese occupation of the Javanese, during the early to mid 1940s, as a dove in a cage, this sentence references issues of freedom and agency.[39] However, this is not the only context or translation of this lyric that exists. Each translation often varies in levels of clarity, in part due to differing levels of language fluency in translating from one language into another. For example, Hoogervorst and Zandra translate Durasim's line differently as well as using the phrase to conclude their chapter.

> Certain one-liners—such as *Pegupon omahe dara, melok Nippon tambah sara* "A dovecote is where the pigeons live, joining the Japanese leads to more misery"—have become so iconic that many contemporary

[38] Febriansyah, "Performing Arts and Politics," 10.; Hoogervorst and Zandra, "Humor, Irreverance, Plurilingualism."

[39] The Japanese occupation of Indonesia began during World War II, beginning in 1942 and ending in 1945. The Japanese were initially welcomed as they claimed to be creating an "Asia for Asians," offering support in overthrowing Dutch colonization. However, it soon became clear that this occupation was not for the benefit of the Indonesians themselves, but as a means of meeting the Japanese Empire's ambitions.

> speakers still remember them, even without knowing their historical trajectory.[40]

Unfortunately for Durasim, he made the political subject of the lyrics undeniable and resultantly faced severe consequences. Febriansyah uses the phrase to highlight the potential dangers of challenging authority under Japanese occupation while Hoogervorst and Zandra position this phrase to highlight the impact of language on history and vice versa. Both texts overarchingly emphasize the political ramifications and bravery required of Durasim to speak the above words on a public stage, but no mention is made of the sonic quality or impact of the words themselves on a live audience. Given how *ludruk* performers, especially its comedians, rely on audience interaction (as shown through Peacock's work), it is difficult to imagine that there would have been no audience reaction to this phrase. This again exemplifies how—despite the reality that a true understanding of *ludruk* must include the reactions of audiences, musicians, instruments, as well as the ambient noise of the event at large—most scholarship on *ludruk* has not sufficiently given sound its due. By not acknowledging the wider intertwining of sound with subject-making, particularly among audience-members, the reader is not provided the chance to fully immerse themselves in the noisy decadence of this art form.[41]

A Dialogic Perspective on *Ludruk*

After considering outside perspectives on *ludruk* and how this folk theater is addressed in more scholarly contexts, it is important to consider the views and discussions of a few Indonesian arts practitioners themselves. In contrast to the two previous case studies, *Rekindling the spirit of resistance in Ludruk folk art* is an article structured around an interview between self-named "arts worker" Riksa Afiaty and artist-activist Moelyono.[42] This article was published in 2023; its interview, thus dialogic, structure unique as it spotlights the voice of an actual artist and his work supporting *ludruk* performances in local communities. It is also the most overtly

[40] Hoogervorst and Zandra, "Humor, Irreverance, Plurilingualism," 48.
[41] Eisenberg, "Space," 193.
[42] Afiaty and Moelyono, "Rekindling the Spirit."

sonically driven, given its format. However, despite providing a brief biography of Moelyono and his own artistic pursuits (focusing on his work with the *Ludruk Budhi Wijaya* theater group in Jombang, East Java), there is very little included in the article about the sounds, music, and vocals inherent in the art form.

Afiaty's interview is rather ambitious, covering several topics such as the traditional inclusion of transgender women (known by the portmanteau of *transpuan*) in these theater productions and community engagement.[43] It also discusses the creation of scripts, touching on various social and political histories of Indonesia (Java in particular), as well as Moelyono's community consultation with the *Budhi Wijaya ludruk* troupe.[44] However, despite the focus on performers' identities and performance of identities, neither interviewer nor interviewee discusses how identity may affect the timbre or sonic quality of a singing voice. These qualities are significant for *ludruk* performers: female-identifying voices typically sing in high registers, with the near-operatic vocals both including set pieces as well as improvised lyrics overlaid on strict melodic parameters. The vocal and word-choice variations also showcase how regionality plays a significant role in shaping the choices of individual singers in approaching certain improvisations.[45] Although this source contains a bounty of anecdotes and the identification of significant stakeholders in *ludruk* today, it does, however, require the reader to have some knowledge of Indonesian history and Javanese socio-cultural dynamics. As a written recording and translation of a spoken exchange, this article additionally offers a distinct voice (although not in the literal sense, in the case of *ludruk* performers themselves) to the exploration of the sonic history of *ludruk*.

Although able to follow along with a transcription of the interview, the reader is not offered the opportunity, via link or QR code, to listen in on the conversation, thus creating a distance between interview and audience. In seeking to understand the sonic landscape of contemporary *ludruk* performers, it would have been helpful to actually hear the conversation between the two in addition

[43] *Id.*, 2-3.
[44] *Id.,* 3-7.
[45] Belinda, "Singing On."

to reading the transcript, as explored in the following paragraph. There is additionally no mention of how the interview was edited or spliced together from the recordings of the conversation between Afiaty and Moelyono. This, therefore, speaks to Afiaty and Moelyono's focus on the artists themselves, rather than the artform, which is a compelling perspective, but arguably is narrow in scope.

Even more broadly speaking, there is very little description and language associated with sound, noise, or recording within this interview. Having access to the actual recording would have shed more light on the sonic environment of the interview itself, such as whether or not it was interspersed with pauses, breaths and inhalations, or background noises. There is, however, an inclusion of several visuals: photographs of Moelyono's paintings and a screenshot from a related video of Moelyono speaking. This highlights certain sound study scholars' arguments about the supremacy of sight over the other senses in academia, especially over sound.[46] This perhaps caters to Moelyono's preferred artistic medium, as a visual artist. There is a moment, towards the end of the article, where brief mention is made of how artists were able to adapt and utilize the medium of video in order to capture not just the visuals but aural intricacies of their performances and to share them with an audience, even if from a distance. Unlike the previous sources, Afiaty's article is able to bring the reader into the present day experiences of several arts workers. Yet, it is another example how sound is treated as mere background in the study of *ludruk*, rather than an integral element of the lives of *ludruk* performers and the art form that is worthy of analysis in its own right.

Conclusion

The structure and purpose of a publication plays a significant role in whether or not the sonic heritage of a performing arts tradition is highlighted or even acknowledged. In the sources selected for this paper, there is a range of recognition— but predominantly subtle— references to *ludruk*'s sonic heritage and its significance to Indonesian, particularly East Javanese, history. A general takeaway

[46] "The hierarchy of senses, and of authoritative sources, that positions sight at the top—epistemically and morally—is not neutral . . ." in Lorea, "Sonic Matters," 849.

derived from these sources is how dominant visual descriptions and linguistic analyses of a performance art have been in scholarship. In a positive turn, however, as of the 2010s, new technological developments have aided in popularizing and easing access to sonic materials; hopefully soon making their way into broader scholarship.

Beginning in the 1960s, James Peacock's work provides an insight into *ludruk* via an anthropological lens, completed during a time when *ludruk* was facing an uptick in popularity. This work also most directly includes an analysis of how sound and space are evoked by *ludruk* performers to create empathetic audiences who are open to receiving the messages of the plotlines and commentary. Febrainsyah's work, read together with Hoogervorst and Zandra's 2024 analysis of East Javanese sung poetry (*parikan*), highlights the tense political and social turmoil of the intervening decades, leading *ludruk* to be placed on a scholarly backburner. By being introduced to the last source from 2023, a conversation between two Indonesian arts workers, readers are provided with a somewhat insider perspective into the life of an artist and how *ludruk* has long intersected with key social justice issues of gender, sexuality, and freedom of expression. However, the fact that sound is treated as a 'given' in all the sources, rather than an incredibly significant part of any *ludruk* performance, means that the audience never actually hears—in a literal sense—from *ludruk* practitioners themselves.

Ludruk performers have used the art form as a means of expression, resistance, and agency through history; the rich sonic environments of specific performances shaping, and in turn used, as a means of community-building and collective catharsis. These sounds, spaces, and individuals have, up to this point, not been the key focus of academic scholarship, to the detriment of the fields of history, area studies, and sound studies. The unfortunate reality is that there has been waning interest in this particular form of live theater over the past several decades, as well as in the traditional arts more generally speaking. This is particularly the case among Indonesian youth and *ludruk*'s continued success was made even more difficult by the realities and constraints of COVID-19. However, given the growing availability of new sonically-related technological developments, this is perhaps the moment to help move this scholarship into new sensory spaces. By adding this key sonic layer to

the current visually- and politically-focused academic scholarship on this tradition and its resilient practitioners, researchers may continue to support the conservation and continuation of *ludruk* folk theater into the future. Although sounds may be ephemeral, the impacts of their resonances continue to echo today.

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PART TWO

MOVEMENT THROUGH IDEAS

Grammaticalization and Cognition: A look at the Periphrastic Past in Catalan

Theocharis Tzimas

Language is the formative organ of thought . . . Thought and Language are . . . one and inseparable from each other.

Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) as cited in "Linguistic Relativities" by John Leavitt, 2006.

Movement in linguistics is omnipresent. More broadly, languages can stir movement, but languages are also in motion. One of the best ways to track this movement and growth is by examining the evolution of various phenomena diachronically. By looking at how the verb *go* shifted from a motion-spatial verb to a temporal one, we can trace Catalan's movement and growth throughout the centuries.

With that being said, movement itself is also important in languages. As cognitive and cultural elements feed into the language we speak, the notion of movement can change, shift, and transform into expressing other notions, such as time. After all, a large branch in the field of linguistics explores and examines conceptual metaphors, conceptualizations of abstract ideas in something more directly accessible. Language use therefore reflects that the one aspect that has not changed a lot since time immemorial is movement.

It is widely known that in most languages of the world, the grammaticalization process is majorly polygenetic, meaning that it does not have one source as its origin but multiple.[1] Grammaticalization in Linguistics refers to the process according to which a lexical unit—a word or phrase—acquires a new, grammatical meaning.

Then, in many seemingly unconnected languages of the world, grammatical expressions are fuelled by semantic units with similar metaphoric meaning. One of the best examples to

[1] Detges, "How Cognitive is Grammaticalization?," 1.

demonstrate this is the *go (to)*–periphrasis. This grammatical expression acts as a future marker not only in English (e.g *she is going to sing*) and the dominant Romance European languages (SP. *Ella va a cantar* and FR. *elle va chanter*) but, as Bybee et al. cite, it also occurs in languages such as Margi (Afro-Asiatic, Nigeria), Cocama (Tupi, Peru), Maung (Yiwaidjan, Australia), Atchin (Austronesian, Vanuatu) and others.[2]

The above finding is traditionally interpreted as the universal tendency to associate a grammatical function with the verb *go.* This verb is usually interpreted as movement forward, transitioning many times into a marker of the future tense. In other words, across many languages, the use of *go* in narrative contexts caused a loss of lexical meaning ('bleaching') and, in turn, a semantic shift from spatial to temporal movement.[3] It is visible, therefore, that movement in space and movement in time can also be connected cognitively, and a link between movement and linguistic change can be established. Due to being a "highly anomalous" case of grammaticalization, the Catalan feature of the periphrastic past (*passat perifràstic*) has attracted a lot of scholarly attention, seeing that in contrast to the languages mentioned earlier, Catalan's go–periphrasis is a past marker, a preterit (1).[4]

(1) Vaig comprar un llibre
GO$_{PR.1\text{-}SG}$ BUY$_{INF}$ a book
I bought a book.[5]

Apart from this peculiarity in the Catalan grammaticalization process, similar phenomena of constructions with *go* not following its 'moving forward' paradigm are attested in different languages

[2] Bybee et al., *The Evolution of Grammar,* 112.
[3] Cruschina & Kocher, "A Surprise in the Past," 162.
[4] Pérez Saldanya & Hualde, "Origin and Evolution," 49.
[5] Cruschina & Kocher, "A Surprise in the Past," 182.

globally and have been discussed by a multitude of scholars.[6] Despite the plethora of studies, there have been, to my knowledge, no efforts to connect this shift to universal notions such as cognition and its reflection on culture.

The present article aims to study the motion-verb periphrases, such as the Catalan go–past from a cognitive and cultural perspective. The purpose of this study is to highlight the cognitive and cultural processing that takes place diachronically during the different grammaticalization stages of a grammatical phenomenon. To explore that, the cultural and cognitive significance of the grammaticalization of the Catalan *passat perifràstic go + infinitive* is analyzed and the implications of applying cognitive theories, such as *Linguistic Relativity*, to studies of historical perspective are discussed. Thus, the main question asks if and to what extend this phenomenon owes its appearance to cognitive behavior and whether it reflects a degree of cultural predispositions.

This paper is organized as follows: first, I will delve deeper into the existing literature focusing on the grammaticalization of the *passat perifràstic* in Catalan as well as the general theories of language, culture, and cognition. Secondly, after analyzing the methodological aspect of this study and conducting a limited corpus research, I intend to apply my chosen theoretical framework on the results. With the final goal of exploring the grammaticalization process from a different perspective compared to the narrative, pragmatic and linguistic ones that have appeared in the academic literature already.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Traditionally, two major studies have been pivotal in the study of the provenance of the *passat perifràstic*. Both Pérez Saldanya & Hualde

[6] De Vos, *Verbal Pseudo-coordination*, 3; Wiklund, *Dependent Verb Second*, 29; Joseffson, *Pseudocoordination in Swedish*, 30; Ross, *Going to Surpise*, web conference; Cruschina, *Gone Unexpectedly*, 133.
For Sicilian see: Cruschina & Kocher, "A Surprise in the Past." For English see: Carden & Pesetsky, "Double-verb Constructions." For Spanish see: Arnaiz & Camacho, "A Topic Auxiliary in Spanish." For French see: Tellier, "French Expressive Motion Verbs as Functional Heads." For Italian see: Cruschina, "Gone Unexpectedly." For Swedish see: Josefsson, "Pseudocoordination in Swedish."

and Detges, connect the origin of the formation to narrative contexts.[7] According to Pérez Saldanya & Hualde, the semantic change is linked to an inference suggesting that the action that follows 'go' has already been completed. This inference of a complete action, as time passed, became generalized through a process of conventionalization, appearing in contexts irrelevant to narratives, simultaneously shifting the semantic load of the original motion verb.[8] Therefore, during storytelling, in the example of (1) *vaig comprar,* the verb *vaig* (=go), firstly denoted that the action of the following infinitive—*comprar* (= to buy)—has already been completed. An English equivalent, for example, would be 'I went and bought'. This newly formed expression in Catalan started appearing in contexts outside of storytelling until it became prevalent everywhere.

On the other hand, Detges follows a more pragmatic approach to reach a similar conclusion.[9] He claims that when the speaker mentions that the agent is moving to some place to do an action, they also denote the intention of doing that action and hence the beginning of the action itself.[10] Movement and beginning are therefore closely related and such actions are considered more "dynamic" and "spectacular" than aspectually unspecified ones.[11] It, therefore, becomes a narrative strategy to use such constructions in order to make storytelling more appealing. In English, (2) is less "dynamic" and "spectacular" than (3):

I went to the supermarket and bought tomatoes.[12]
I bought tomatoes from the supermarket.

[7] Pérez Saldanya & Hualde, "Origin and Evolution," 57; Detges, "How Cognitive is Grammaticalization?" 220.
[8] Bybee et al., *The Evolution of Grammar,* 112*;* Nagy, "The Pragmatics of Grammaticalization," 90.
[9] Detges, "How Cognitive is Grammaticalization?" 211.
[10] Meyer-Lübcke, *Das Katalanische,* 12; Colon, "Sobre el Perfet Perifràstic," 133.
[11] Cruschina & Kocher, "A Surprise in the Past," 163; Detges, "How Cognitive is Grammaticalization?" 214.
[12] In English we need to insert 'and,' in Catalan it is not necessary.

The second step involves the gradual conventionalization of this practice by structuring the past event in such a way that the turning point—or a noteworthy action—is foregrounded.[13] According to Detges, this phenomenon does not follow regular grammaticalization patterns but is forged under the pressure of narrative strategies and rhetorical techniques that would improve storytelling.[14]

Other views include Jacobs, who—based on previous literature—claims that go-past is an influence from Old Occitan, and Juge, who dismisses Pérez Saldanya & Hualde and Detges, felicitously saying that this is not a phenomenon of go-past but a phenomenon of went-past.[15] Conducting a corpus analysis, he suggests that the phenomenon was conjugated using past forms of the verb anar (=to go) and later transformed to its modern state, thus disconnecting itself from any previous theories of narrative present that the aforementioned authors had used.

A cognitive approach to *passat perifràstic*

Moving on to the cognitive-cultural aspect of time that falls under the scope of this paper, it appears valid to explore the go-past periphrasis and the effects it has on speakers' cognition and identity. After all, it is said that when speaking about abstract notions, speakers often make use of metaphors that come from more concrete domains.[16] Extending that thought even further, it can be argued that people prefer spatial metaphors when they talk about time. From a cognitive approach, therefore, the grammaticalization

[13] Colon, "El Perfet Perifràstic Català," 120; Colon, "Sobre el Perfet Perifràstic," 133; Perez Saldanya, *Del Llatí al Català,* 43; Perez Saldanya & Hualde, "Origin and Evolution," 56.

[14] Detges, "How Cognitive is Grammaticalization?" 226.

[15] Jacobs, "Present and Historical Perspectives," 231; Juge, "Narrative and the Catalan Go-past,"; Perez Saldanya & Hualde, "Origin and Evolution," 56; Detges, "How Cognitive is Grammaticalization?" 226.

[16] Clark, "Space, Time, Semantics," 27; Gruber, *Studies in Lexical Relations*, 15; Jackendoff, *Semantics and Cognition*, 17; Lakoff & Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 21; Pinker, *How the Mind Works*, 23; Talmy, "Force Dynamics in Language and Cognition," 50.

process of temporal phenomena using motion—and in this case spatial—verbs, is to be expected.[17]

With that being said, the relation between space and time in languages is asymmetrical as speakers talk more about time using space than vice versa.[18] As Sweetser has discussed and this paper aims to prove, historical language change has evidenced that "spatial representations are primary, and are later co-opted for other uses such as time."[19] Interdisciplinary evidence from psycholinguistics seems to support this claim.[20]

Langacker's Cognitive Grammar theory sets the background for one aspect of today's cognitive linguistics.[21] He claims that "language is neither self-contained nor describable without essential reference to cognitive processing" and views linguistic aspects, such as syntax and lexicon, as a continuum of symbolic units that symbolize conceptual content.[22] In addition, Talmy views structural properties—such as perception, or reasoning—as factors that influence how language organizes and shapes conceptual content.[23] Therefore, the combination of Talmy's and Langacker's theories suggests that language evolves in ways that align with the shared cognitive frameworks of a speech community, denoting a sense of linguistic identity, as languages differ among ethnic groups. In more precise terms, the local community can affect the way language encapsulates and explains conceptual meanings—such as time—around it.

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[17] Alverson, *Semantics and Experience*, 45; Clark, "Space, Time, Semantics," 27; Traugott, "Spatiotemporal Relations," 370.

[18] Lakoff & Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By,* 21; Lakoff & Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 34.

[19] Sweetser, *From Etymology to Pragmatics*, 39; Cassanto & Boroditsky, "Time in the Mind," 580.

[20] Boroditsky, "Metaphoric Structuring," 20; Boroditsky, "Does Language Shape Thought?" 18; Boroditsky & Ramscar, "The Roles of Body and Mind," 187; Núñez & Sweetser, "Looking Ahead to the Past," 443; Piaget, "The Child's Conception," 45; Torralbo et al., "Conceptual Projection of Time," 751; Tversky et al., "Cross-cultural and Developmental Trends," 551.

[21] Langacker, "Cognitive Grammar," 1.

[22] *Ibid.*

[23] Talmy, *Cognitive Semantics*, 45; Talmy, *Vol II*, 13; Marchetti, *A Criticism*, online webinar.

Linguistic Relativity

The term 'Linguistic Relativity' refers to the influence of the language we speak on our perception of reality and is the subject of one of the most heated debates in the field of anthropological and cognitive linguistics. Philosophers and other educated individuals such as Locke, Condillac, Diderot and Herder had formulated ideas close to our modern ones since the seventeenth and eighteenth century.[24] In the nineteenth century, Humboldt and Saussure set the ground for the next century's formulations.[25]

It was not until the middle of the 20th century when anthropological linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf emphasized the need to steer away from hierarchical—arguably, colonial ranking—of the world's languages or the obsession with considering inflectional languages as superior.[26] While it is not easy to provide one specific definition of *Linguistic Relativity*, the different proposals based on this theory share one common axis: "They all claim certain properties of a given language have consequences for patterns of thought about reality. . . Language embodies an interpretation of reality and language can influence thought about that reality."[27] This theory has alternatively been termed the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. Therefore, the study of the grammaticalization of the Catalan preterit periphrasis merits research from a cultural and anthropological perspective as it can lead to interesting insights on the culture and cognition of the Catalan people.

Bad Data

As this paper concerns material that falls under the scope of historical linguistics and sociolinguistics, it is deemed necessary to

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[24] Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure*, 78; Aarsleff, *On Language*, 56; Gumperz & Levinson, *Rethinking Linguistic Relativity*, 40; Friedrich, *The Language Parallax,* 76.
[25] Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure*, 92; Aarsleff, *On Language*, 41; Lucy, "Linguistic Relativity*,"* 302.
[26] Sapir, "The Grammarian," 151; Sapir, "The Status of Linguistics," 161; Sapir, "Conceptual Categories," 128; Whorf, "Habitual Thought and Behavior," 135; Whorf, "Science and Linguistics," 210.
[27] Lucy, "Linguistic Relativity," 294.

address the difficulty inherited by such an endeavor. In order to study from a holistic perspective—cognitively or linguistically—the grammaticalization process of a phenomenon like the *passat perifràstic,* much more data is needed than mere written, usually literary language. In other words, a major part of everyday communication, that is, spoken discourse, is omitted from relevant studies due to the scarcity, if not unavailability, of useful data. This is what Labov termed *bad data*. As he explains, data is "rich in so many ways and impoverished in others. Historical documents survive by chance and not by design and the selection that is available is the product of an unpredictable series of historical accidents."[28] Therefore, it should always be kept in mind that what we study is just a window that has been physically provided to us by history, and one that we owe to protect for future generations to study too. With regards to this study, inclusion of spoken discourse would provide a better overview of the speakers' linguistic habits diachronically.

Methodology

The primary methodological approach followed in this article is based on a corpus analysis. It consists essentially of a qualitative analysis of primary sources on which I aim to apply the theoretical framework of Linguistic Relativity, Cognitive Grammar and Talmy's views on conceptual contents, all of which have been established already.[29] This provides a new perspective on the study of linguistic ideologies, cognitive and cultural linguistics.[30]

On Catalan historical data

In a general sense, scholars interested in historical research of the Catalan language are in the unfortunate position of not having access to the wealth of primary data available to their colleagues in other European languages, such as English. The primary source of

[28] Labov, "Linguistic Methodology," 100.
[29] Sapir, "The Grammarian," 151; Sapir, "The Status of Linguistics," 161; Sapir, "Conceptual Categories," 128; Whorf, "Habitual Thought and Behavior," 135; Whorf, "Science and Linguistics," 210; Langacker, "Cognitive Grammar," 1; Talmy, *Cognitive Semantics*, 45; Talmy, *Vol II*, 13.
[30] Sharifan, "Cultural Linguistics," 2.

diachronic linguistic data in Catalan is the *Corpus Informalitzat del Català Antic* (Digital Corpus of Old Catalan, henceforth CICA), created by Toruella, Pérez Saldanya and Martines.[31] This corpus contains religious, historical, literary and other documents as well as correspondence covering from the early years of the 12th century until the second half of the 18th century.

Previous scholarship, such as the previously mentioned Detges and Pérez-Saldanya & Hualdez, has meticulously mapped the grammaticalization process in diachrony using corpus data.[32] I aim to complement this data with my own research, focusing on *temporal sequencing*, that is, the order the events happen on the time continuum, and *action completion,* whether an action has been completed or not. The application of the established frameworks on my results will yield significant insight on the cognitive use behind such constructions diachronically.

To gather the necessary data, an electronic search in the environment of CICA was conducted, searching for occurrences of *va*, *van* or *varen*, respectively, along with an infinitive ending in *-r(e).* I focused only on the third person since prior literature suggests that the grammaticalization process is closely connected to narrative contexts in which the third person prevails.[33] Therefore, the search string I used parsed all co-occurrences of 'go' third person present singular and plural along with words that include an indefinite amount of unknown characters but end in -r or -re, which are the typical endings for Catalan infinitives. After retrieving these tokens, all non-complying ones were manually reviewed and discarded as irrelevant (e.g *va sobre* where *sobre* is an adverb). Finally, the phenomenon's co-occurrence with temporal adverbs or sequential markers was examined to study temporal framing and action completion.

[31] Torruella y Casañas, "Los ejes Principales," 23; Masanell i Messalles, "Beneficios de los Corpus Informatizados," 151.

[32] Perez Saldanya & Hualde, "Origin and Evolution," 57-58; Detges, "How Cognitive is Grammaticalization?" 228-30.

[33] Gandarillas, "Catalan Anar," 30; Pérez Saldanya & Hualde, "Origin and Evolution," 58.

Results and Discussion

Out of 8.656.847 tokens, 504 instances related to the search query I had entered. From these, 310 appeared as characteristic cases of the go-past phenomenon, as it is described in existing scholarship provided earlier. From the results, the complete absence of the phenomenon is visible until the first half of the 13th century, when the instances started to multiply. For an analysis and exploration of these results I refer to Gandarillas, as a historical-linguistic explanation of the grammaticalization process is beyond the scope of this article.[34]

Regarding the literary genre the instances are found in, 116 out of 310 (37%) instances are found in chronicles and historiographic works while 68 (22%) come from letters and diaries. Thus, 59% of the results come from works which, probably, employ more narrative tools than other works present in the corpus (such as religious or administrative texts). Out of the 310 results 72 (24%) were in the context of a sequential marker or temporal adverb. The more characteristic examples can be found in (a), (b) and (c) where the phenomenon is bolded while the sequential marker is underlined.

a. *E <u>quant</u> los marcelesos les viuren ferir,* ***van metre*** *l' estandart de sen Victor a bayx molt vilment (and <u>when</u>* the Marseillians saw them hurting, they **put down** the standard of Saint Victor very vilely) *[Crònica B. Mesclot, 13th century, p. III.121 line 15]*

b. *Cor, <u>primerament</u>* ***va donar*** *preu sufficient, e puys resebé lo caval qui li era offert (Because, <u>first</u>* ***he gave*** *sufficient compensation, and then received the horse that he was offered) [Diàlegs St. Gregori, 14th century, fol. 14v lines 16-17]*

c. *[...]cridaren: - Desperta, ferres! Desperta! -, et <u>tots a colp</u>* ***van ferir*** *dels ferres de les lançes en les pedres... ([...] they shouted: - Wake up, fires! Wake up! – and <u>suddenly</u> they* ***were hurt*** *by the fires and the spears and the rocks...)* [Crònica R. Muntaner, 14th century, fol. 103vb, lines 12-13].

[34] Gandarillas, "Catalan Anar," 30.

Sapir–Whorf Hypothesis and the *go-past* periphrasis

The results above highlight a trend for the phenomenon to be present in contexts of temporal sequencing. We see that the *go–past* periphrasis is, indeed, used in narrative contexts when one event happened immediately after another, confirming previous bibliography. Despite the existence of another grammatical phenomenon with similar semantic meaning during that period, the gradual grammaticalization of the periphrasis under study prevails and, diachronically, eradicates the simple past, which is also visible in the examples I provided (*viuren* in (1), *resebé* in (2), and in (3), *ferren).* In Gandarillas, the gradual phasing out of that tense is more meticulously analyzed.[35]

By applying the notions of *Linguistic Relativity*, one can argue that the periphrastic past was associated with events structured in a linear, explicit manner. Since this can indicate a cognitive framing of time as a continuum, it shows that Catalans expressed events in a discrete, complete way. By emphasizing this tendency with the use of periphrastic structures, it is evident that for Catalans being explicit with time-placement on that continuum was paramount.

Also, the emergence of such a phenomenon may indicate a cognitive-cultural tendency for explicit and sequential representations of actions, seeing that the grammaticalization of this structure prevails over other past forms.

Lastly, Catalan speakers may have cognitively prioritized the go–past periphrasis due to its alignment with straightforward and analytic structures. In the context of narrative scenarios, it is possible that a preference for clarity and simplicity in temporal distinctions was preferred.

Another thought: Language as identity

Talmy's and Langacker's theories suggest that languages evolve in ways that align with the shared cognitive framework of a community and can thus become a differentiating, symbolical factor, of that community.[36] As the grammaticalization of this phenomenon is profoundly different from the processes followed in other Romance languages, it has, perhaps, led to Iconization and the assertion of

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] Talmy, *Cognitive Semantics*, 45; Talmy, *Vol II*, 13; Langacker, "Cognitive Grammar," 32.

distinctiveness and ethnical continuity through language. Catalans needed this continuity in order to keep their language alive during times when Madrid's authority was strict.[37]

Therefore, one can claim, that ethnosyntax, meaning the study of how a community's cultural norms and worldview shape the way language is constructed and meaning is conveyed, can be a critical factor in the linguistic identity of a national language and its fight for survival among dominant languages. [38] In our case, the grammaticalization of this go–past periphrasis in a totally different way, made Catalans feel their language was different and had different features than the dominant Spanish variety.

A cognitive–cultural approach on periphrastic structures

"So what?" might be the question of this journal's readers. Why are the results found in this study important and how can they contribute to the connection between language and movement?

The answers to the research question provided herein showcase that language shift is not motivated only by purely internal linguistic actions but can also be influenced by cognitive and cultural processes. While cognition is universal, the cultural elements that govern linguistic choices can differ, enabling modifications to the existing language used and giving birth to linguistic and dialectal variation.

Taking a step back, earlier I showed that cognitive universals have made parallels between movement and time explicit. Therefore, the paradigm followed for this paper's case study can be used for other temporal constructions as well. The results of this study are not confined to the Catalan language but work as a framework of how these theories can be applied elsewhere.

Conclusion

This study aimed at highlighting the cognitive effect of the Catalan *go–past* periphrasis (*passat perifràstic*) to the speakers of the language from a historical perspective, that is during the first years of its grammaticalization. After presenting the relevant linguistic

[37] Irvine & Gal, "Language Ideology," 51; Andronis, "Iconization, Fracral Recursivity and Erasure," 267.
[38] Wierzbicka, "Ethno-Syntax," 314; Wierzbicka, *Chapter 2*, 14.

debate on the origins of the periphrasis, this study used a small-scale corpus search to identify the role the phenomenon had inside the language. By filtering the results through the theories of *Linguistic Relativity* and the claims of Talmy and Langacker, the cognitive-cultural profile of the phenomenon was emphasized.[39] Lastly, it was argued that this could have played a role in the survival of the minority language through the centuries, based on Irvine & Gal's theory of Iconization.[40]

With this study concluding, a lot still remains to be answered. Further studies on the cognitive semantics and cultural aspects of this peculiar grammatic phenomenon with special regards to its past meaning could shed further light on the reasons behind its eventually successful grammaticalization. Furthermore, synchronic studies on the cognitive load of users of the *go–past* periphrasis during use can yield information on the cognitive effect the outcome of this grammaticalization process has on native speakers when they speak Catalan and other languages (e.g Spanish), but also during second language acquisition by non-speakers. In diachrony, the application of *Linguistic Relativity* to other historical varieties can reveal a lot about the world's languages.

Of course, lack of historical material plays a pivotal role in any historical study, especially ones that deal with minority languages and entail unavoidable limitations. The fact that we do not, to my knowledge, possess any material that could potentially verify the claims of this article makes them linger between the sphere of hypothetical theorizing and reality. What's more, the very essence of grammaticalization processes in a historical perspective can easily become a topic for academic debate, adding to the uncertainty of the nature of the phenomenon.

In any case, this study showed that, apart from linguistic, other factors such as cognition can also play a major role in the grammaticalization of various phenomena. It is added to the toolbox of every scholar wishing to purposefully study the grammaticalization process of *passat perifràstic* in Catalan as well as to anyone interested in cognitive and cultural studies.

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[39] Talmy, *Cognitive Semantics*, 45; Talmy, *Vol II*, 13.
[40] Irvine & Gal, "Language Ideology," 51.

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INTERVIEW

Interview with John Dupré and Liedewij Laan: Reflections on a World that is Movement all the Way Down

Myrthe den Boestert

As a philosophy student on the one hand, and a natural science student on the other, I often have to move. Quite literally: one study programme is in Leiden and the other in Delft, but the difference in topics, ideas, and methods also require a flexible academic position. Natural science and the humanities are often contrasted with. In my experience however, they are more alike than people think. Nanobiology led me to a view of the natural world as inherently "moving", which is a philosophical and metaphysical claim. I am not the only one that interprets science philosophically. In this interview, I sit down with philosopher of science John Dupré and Nanobiology professor and researcher Liedewij Laan, not to think about a specific movement, but, rather, to investigate what it means to think about the world in terms of movement.

John Dupré co-edited the 2018 book *Everything Flows: Towards a Processual Philosophy of Biology*, in which he examines the life sciences to conclude we should instead think the world around us in terms of processes. Taking after Ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus' supposed famous statement *panta rhei* ('everything flows' or 'everything is in movement'), the world is characterized not by independent, rigid objects, but rather by fluidity and change: the world cannot exist without movement. This view of a world that is movement all the way down is recognized by Liedewij Laan, who draws the same conclusions from her research. But as a practitioner of natural science, Laan faces a different challenge than Dupré: translating philosophical abstract thinking into the every-day work of a researcher.

John Dupre is a Professor of Philosophy of Science at the University of Exeter in the UK and is part of the Santford School of philosophy of science. His interests include metaphysics of biology, alternatives to determinism and reductionism, and general philosophy of science. The process ontology set out in *Everything Flows* finds its follow-up in *Everyone Flows* (2025), Dupré's most recent book. Here he expands his ideas to fundamental questions concerning topics like human freedom and personal identity. His work on Darwinism has earned him in 2010 the election of Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He has been president of several societies and associations related to philosophy and was elected a member of the American Philosophical Society in 2023.

John, if I understand it correctly, in Everything Flows you talk about two contrasting world views: one that focuses its perception on objects and one that focuses its perception on processes and the flow of things. Could you explain a bit more about what you call a substance ontology and a process ontology?

"I generally like to begin with the Presocratics: already at that time you had a camp that says 'everything changes'—Heraclitus—and 'nothing changes'—Parmenides. I argue that most people follow Parmenides: for example our view of atomism reflects his philosophy. Atomism suggests that while atoms may change their relations to each other, they are themselves unchanging objects. The appearance of change is then just the consequence of different relative positions. That view has worked quite well for the physical sciences over a long period, but it works less well for the life sciences, where movement and change are explicitly abundant. An example from my book is that an animal, which we usually think of as an object with a fixed set of properties, has a whole lifecycle. While we tend to see the adult stage as the true representation of the animal, we should not forget that it isn't any less of an organism in the other parts of the life cycle. Actually, it is the lifecycle itself that constitutes the organism: the animal needs all the stages to exist. On a smaller scale, metabolism is a great example: material constituents are continuously exchanged, and only because of this movement can the organism exist.

Process ontology is the opposite of the more traditional substance view: what we think of as stable things are in actuality

temporarily stabilized bits of process. An example is an eddy in a river. Eddies are reversed currents that appear behind large stones. It seems like a stable pattern, but the stability is a consequence of the dynamics of the river. The actual water that makes up the eddy is also constantly changing, just like organisms and their parts. Life is a complex set of flows, and you and I are eddies in that flow."

In current times, we see a rise in popularity of political parties that seem to view movement and a flowing world as dangerous. Do you think processual thinking can help to give us language to understand those topics differently?

"I would love that to be the case. On the 16th of April (2025) the Supreme Court in the UK gave a ruling that man and woman refer to biological categories[1]. I don't disagree with the argument that biological categories have significance, but the idea that people take from that is: "We found out what things are, what kind of things they are, and what essential property they possess." The essential property, then, should pretty much determine a set of related properties throughout the life history. But when you think in processual terms, you don't have to pin things down that way. You can think that there are these different starting points that many humans have one or another of. These starting points in a social context tend to produce a lot of characteristic outcomes for people in these categories, but the diversity of these processes is enormous. Categories such as biological sex are very limited in telling us where people end up. So yes, a fluid view of human life as opposed to an essentialist view helps: it assumes movement is a norm instead of something to act against."

Substance ontology is more widespread than process ontology. You already mentioned the philosophical and scientific history behind this, but do you think there is something from a socio-political standpoint that makes substance ontology more attractive to people?

[1] For Women v The Scottish Ministers. 16 April 2025. Supreme Court

"This is very speculative, but one thing that is often said is that people tend to look for certainty, security, and predictability. It is true that we live in a chaotic and dangerous world, so it seems logical that people would like to say 'this is how it is' and 'if we understand it fully we can manage it fully' and so on. Foregrounding movement is threatening to that line of thinking: suddenly things change, there is novelty and difference. To overcome that fear, one must make people's lives safer, but that is a big task.

"Don't look for a stable world. Accept that the world is moving, and try to make it better."

Another part of the solution is more education: we need to encourage people to be more open-minded, to learn about different ways of being. That is exactly the opposite of the current response now, especially by right-wing politicians. I certainly do not always think that things get better when understood as a process, but I would say: don't look for a stable world. Accept that the world is moving, and try to make it better."

Usually, we talk about movement as if an object undergoes a positional change. But in a process ontology you don't have that 'object' in the first place. How would you reconceptualize movement in process ontology?

"As a process philosopher, the first thing you do is look at the things—or in philosophical terms, substances— that we used to think made up the world. In the process view, such things are stable structures that must be actively maintained by processes. You see this everywhere in biology: much of what organisms do, such as a bacterium following a chemical trail to food, is needed to continue living. They need to move to stabilize themselves, and when they are stable, they can again act and interact with other things, much of which in turn is required to maintain their stability."

If change is the norm, then stasis becomes interesting. In the book stasis is described as needing activity to become and to be, but it

might also be conceived as being in a dichotomy with movement. How do stasis and movement relate to each other in the process ontology?

"They are certainly not in opposition; there is no dichotomy because there is only change. Out of these processual movements emerge stabilized structures. Think again of the eddy. Eddies are not stable structures in the sense that they just sit there, like a piece of machinery you put in your attic—although even there I would say there are atomic or subatomic processes that maintain the machinery. The stable things I am interested in are only stable because they work so hard to be stable, on so many levels. For example, finding food to eat: an animal needs to move around the world to find all the resources to maintain itself as a stable structure. And that structure is constantly maintained by trillions of metabolic events. So, it really is the eddy situation, but vastly more complex."

Some of the processes are random, but in some cases a process moves towards something. What is the role of purpose in your ontology?

"For living systems, if a system does not have the tendency to do the activities that keep it stable, it would not even exist. At the beginning of life, you have only organisms that have a tendency towards certain things: we can hardly speak of purpose there. But as animals get more complex and develop more adaptable ways of dealing with changing environments, it becomes more natural to talk about agents that make decisions. In my new book *Everyone Flows* I try to talk a bit more about the difference between free choice and a preconditioned response to a predetermined set of conditions. With humans, it is clear we have all kinds of acts beyond just surviving and reproducing. The ability to do this is fundamentally dependent on making choices. We constantly achieve stuff as humans. Who accomplishes these achievements, though, becomes vague: the boundary between the social and the individual fades once you get to the point of organizing your world around long-term goals. Part of the evolution of stability is the evolution of ways of

creating stabilities that transcend what is implicit in the ability to survive."

* * *

Liedewij, can you explain briefly what you do as a researcher, to give a bit of an introduction to the humanity scholars?

"I am a physicist particularly interested in the physics of life, with a focus on the remarkable resilience and adaptability of living systems. I study how these properties arise from molecular interactions. We do experiments and theoretical work to see how cells and proteins behave. We also try to mimic these processes with computer simulations to understand on a more abstract level what is going on. And then we think about all these topics through philosophy!"

I have already spoken to John Dupré, whose work you introduced me to. He proposes a process ontology, that contrasts with the dominant substance ontology and views the world as fluidic instead of rigid. What is the relation between these philosophical views and your background as a scientist?

"When I studied physics, I had never thought about this kind of philosophy, and there was also no discussion on the topic. But when I started coming into biology, especially biology on the nanoscale, I realized everything is dynamic and nothing is static. The world of small-scale objects is full of little dances. However, in textbooks of biology, objects are portrayed as rather solid-like and people also talk about biology in this kind of static way. Through my research I realized that this view does not match reality. Instead, the idea that reality is determined by moving processes, became more

"The world of small-scale objects is full of little dances"

Liedewij Laan is an Associate Professor at the Technical University of Delft. Since 2014 she has been the Principal Investigator of an independent research group (https://laanlab.tudelft.nl/). With a PhD in experimental biophysics, her work focuses primarily on understanding the networks and processes of small-scale living systems such as yeast. In addition to this, she is also part of the national EVOLF program (2024) that aims to recreate the fundamental functionalities of life bottom-up. Laan is a member of the Dutch Physics council, a vocal ambassador for Women in Science, and set up the national initiative Beta in Bestuur Beleid (BiBB) to bridge the gap between science and politics.

and more prominent in my thinking. And when you realize you should think differently, you will end up in philosophy."

Can you give an example of how your research points to movement as fundamental?

"Some time ago, we were studying the prevalence of specific proteins across species, and when we compared species, we could not always find certain molecules. At that time, I was still asking myself the wrong questions. I was wondering 'How is it possible that those proteins got lost during evolution? They should not get lost.' We ran conceptual simulations and from that we figured out it is actually very easy to lose proteins during evolution; the real question is to keep them where they are. And that is because ultimately, things will move. You cannot stop that. It is the same in the systems we see around us: at university, people leave to get jobs, and new people come in. To make something stay, you have to put a lot of constraints. But for some reason, we have the notion that it is the opposite: that it takes energy to change something."

Given this processual view, you approach your research differently. For example, instead of studying single molecules, you study processes. How do you set up your research in a way that does justice to that view? And which challenges does this introduce for you as a researcher?

"The biggest challenge is that the tools we have so far are not designed with a processual view in mind. In substance ontology, you

might want to label an individual object. That we can already do. But a process can continue to exist even when its specific objects change over time, so this old way of working is not useful anymore in that case. In my lab, we try to set up research tools, for example with computer simulations that allow you to look at collectives that have properties that are not specific to the single elements. There are also experimental techniques that make proteins label other proteins when they encounter them, so they are marked in a detectable way. It is a bit like Google Maps, which is a map that is fluidic: it is different every day. You can see where it is busy at a certain time, and you use that knowledge to change your movement. We try the same thing with the proteins labelling each other; then you see something is going on, because there is a lot of movement. It is like a traffic jam. With this method, you do not have to focus on selecting a specific protein beforehand. You do not even have to know what molecules are in the process; everything that moves in certain space during a certain time period becomes visible. As a researcher, you do not always know what you're following, so as the process goes on, you follow different players.

No one doubts that Google Maps should be a fluid map, because we assume a moving world behind it. A processual view takes movement as a fundamental thing that is not something to be scared about: the method cannot be static."

And what does that do for the certainty of your data? Often, science is expected to yield very certain answers, but in this case your method is not tied down to a static thing.

"If you accept a different philosophical ontology about life than is the norm in the field —which is a challenge, but an important step to take— it automatically means you ask different questions. If you hold on to questions like 'Which specific molecules are involved?' then you are horrified by this different approach. It will not give you an answer to that question because it focuses on other information. This approach lets the process determine the objects of interests, and the process is always different. Even if it is less specific on certain questions, it is still precise in its own domain; but about new aspects of the problem."

Most data in science appears set in stone: you get a number that represents something, and you have to pin down your results to be able to work with it. How do you reconcile this with doing justice to the moving world the data represents?

"Data may seem rigid, but it always exists in a context. A researcher should therefore think dynamically about data because the interpretation changes depending on context. In the process of doing science, the numbers may seem like fixed 'rocks', but you have to move around them and play with them in your head. Also, there is often data that does not directly fit. To make sense of this, you also have to move positions: standing still does not work. The data gives some constraints, but this does not mean the position and the role of the object do not change over time.

In the end you can say 'everything is static' or 'everything is flowing' depending on the time scale you look at it. If you look at very small timesteps, then everything is static, because you look very shortly. But if you look very long, everything is dynamic. Some parts are more static than others, and some parts are more fluidic. But in biology, almost nothing is always static. In the end everything moves, but just at different speeds."

The papers in this journal are all work on movement by the humanities and social sciences. Often some split is made between them and the natural sciences, in which the latter is often seen as more certain or less flexible. How do you feel about this?

"I think that is a misconception that natural science studies things that are very deterministic and rigid. But we are not so different from the humanities, we all study complex systems. It is just that our objects are a bit more controllable. You can't do that with human culture. In nanobiology, we can at least paralyse things temporarily to look at them. But that shouldn't lead to the assumption that things do not move in natural science. In the end, we all live in the same world: and that is one of movement."

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Modeling the Movement of Beliefs: Understanding Epistemic Bubbles and Echo Chambers

Dana Bouwknegt

In our current society, the gathering of knowledge and information is a very social matter. We constantly rely on information that we get through other people, and others have to rely on us. This reliance on each other is very useful: I do not have to become a doctor myself to get the right treatment if I am ill, and I can get information about the state of the world from reading a newspaper, which I then discuss with my friends who do not read newspapers. Scientists can build on the findings of other scientists, and in turn share their own results that can again be used by others again. In this sense, we can think of our society as a network[1] of people and organizations in which beliefs and information are exchanged with the ones we interact with.

However, being part of such a network can also make us vulnerable. Maybe the newspaper I read is only highlighting a single side of the story, or is even providing me with fake information. The philosophical field of social epistemology analyzes how our reliance on others influences (or should influence) our knowledge gathering.[2] This field has traditionally focused on single person-to-person testimonies, but there is increasing interest in how network-wide properties and constructs influence our knowledge gathering process.[3] In other words, there is an increasing interest in how beliefs move through networks of people.

Two social epistemological constructs that have seen a sharp rise in academic interest in the past decade, especially since Brexit and the electoral victory of Donald Trump in 2016, are the concepts

[1] Or a set of networks.
[2] O'Connor, Goldberg, and Goldman, "Social Epistemology."
[3] Sullivan et al. "Vulnerability," 732.

of 'epistemic bubbles'[4] and 'echo chambers' (hereafter also named 'bubbles' and 'chambers,' respectively).[5] This interest has transcended the field of social epistemology, and can also be found in other scientific domains like sociology and communication sciences.[6] There have been multiple papers mentioning one of these concepts in relation to polarization,[7] fake news and misinformation,[8] or the so called 'post-truth' era.[9]

While the interest in bubbles and chambers has peaked in recent years, consensus on what these concepts actually mean is missing. Systematic reviews show that bubbles and chambers have been defined and researched in many different ways (sometimes even without clearly specifying the concept),[10] leading to inconsistent and sometimes incomparable findings.[11] This inconsistency is also present in literature analyzing the effect of digitalization on bubbles and chambers.[12] One author has even called bubbles and chambers "the dumbest metaphor on the internet," while also pointing to the lack of a clear definition of these terms.[13]

Responding to this lack of consistency, philosopher C. Thi Nguyen has given a very influential clarification of both bubbles and chambers in which he advocates for a clear distinction between the terms. In short, Nguyen argues that epistemic bubbles are based on exposure to relevant sources, while echo chambers are based on trust.[14] He argues that people sometimes even end up in echo chambers through no fault of their own, but rather due to the network they are part of and their place in it.[15] Epistemic bubbles

[4] Including the related term 'filter bubbles.'
[5] Mahmoudi, Jemielniak, and Ciechanowski, "Online Social Networks," 9597.
[6] Arguedas et al., "Literature Review"; Mønsted and Lehmann, "Vaccine Discourse."
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[10] Mahmoudi, Jemielniak, and Ciechanowski, "Online Social Networks," 9600.
[11] Mahmoudi, Jemielniak, and Ciechanowski, "Online Social Networks"; Hartmann et al., "Systematic Review," 35.
[12] Mahmoudi, Jemielniak, and Ciechanowski, "Online Social Networks," 9595.
[13] Bruns, "Technology, Stupid," 8.
[14] Nguyen, "Echo Chambers," 146.
[15] *Id.*, 154.

and echo chambers are thus phenomena that are inherently social and network-related. However, while Nguyen does argue that we should look at these constructs as network problems,[16] his example-based approach impedes a more generalizable understanding of these terms and how these might be analyzed in a more systematic and network-based manner.

Analyzing the movement of beliefs on a system-based level is the domain of 'network epistemology.' Researchers in this field use models to simulate the movement of beliefs and knowledge through a network,[17] analyzing how certain factors or behaviors can influence such groups of people at large. I argue that the field of network epistemology can function as a bridge between social empirical research and 'armchair philosophy' in bettering our understanding of concepts like epistemic bubbles and echo chambers. In this article, I will therefore use insights from the field of network epistemology to expand on Nguyen's argument that people do not have to be irrational to end up in echo chambers, and to show how digitalization could possibly impact the prevalence of echo chambers separately from the prevalence of epistemic bubbles.

Bubbles vs. Chambers

According to Nguyen's influential characterization, an 'epistemic bubble' (or a 'filter bubble' if we are referring to the digital version) is "a social epistemic structure in which other relevant voices have been left out, perhaps accidentally."[18] These structures are ubiquitous and can form through the normal processes of finding friends and community. According to Nguyen, people often interact with others that are similar to them, for example in ideology. This can lead to a biased or incomplete set of information that gets shared within this network of similar-minded people.[19] The author argues that there is a lack of 'coverage reliability' in epistemic bubbles, which is "the completeness of relevant testimony from across one's whole epistemic community."[20] This lack of coverage reliability does

[16] *Id.*, 143.
[17] Weisberg, "Formal Epistemology."
[18] Nguyen, "Echo Chambers," 141.
[19] *Id.*, 143–44.
[20] *Id.*, 143.

not necessarily have anything to do with any of the single individuals in it: instead, Nguyen argues, coverage reliability should be seen as a network problem, which arises because of poor connectivity to other relevant sources. In these bubbles, therefore, relevant voices are thus "excluded by omission."[21]

At first glance, *echo chambers* might seem similar to epistemic bubbles. Just like epistemic bubbles, echo chambers are (problematic) social epistemic structures in which certain voices and knowledge are excluded. But while this happens in a bubble through (unintentional) exclusion by omission, in an echo chamber this exclusion happens through the active discrediting and undermining of other voices and sources.[22] According to Nguyen, echo chambers lead their members to actively distrust all sources outside of their specific epistemic community, making them exclude information that is not in line with the beliefs in the echo chamber.[23] Echo chamber members are thus not necessarily isolated from other information flows, like in epistemic bubbles: rather, they are isolated "credentially," in that they only *trust* and take up information that fits their beliefs.[24] In this conceptualization, echo chambers and epistemic bubbles can thus theoretically exist completely separate from each other, even though they might often overlap in practice.[25]

Of course, it is not always bad to distrust or exclude certain sources. Sometimes, this is even necessary in contemporary society since, as Nguyen puts it, "the world is overstuffed with supposed sources of information, many of them terrible."[26] Moreover, we live in a hyper-specialized world, in which it is impossible to be an expert on more than a fraction of all the knowledge out there.[27] Nguyen argues that both the mechanisms of bubbles and chambers in this sense "function parasitically" on what are in moderation healthy epistemic practices of knowledge selection.[28]

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[21] *Ibid.*
[22] *Id.*, 146.
[23] *Ibid.*
[24] *Id.*, 147.
[25] *Id.*, 142.
[26] *Id.*, 143.
[27] *Id.*, 148.
[28] *Id.*, 149.

Nguyen points out that this perversion of healthy epistemic practices can, in the case of an echo chamber, even result in a situation in which a person gets trapped in an echo chamber.[29] This means that such a person could act *epistemically virtuous* (meaning that they for example actively try to acquire new information and then critically assess this information against earlier acquired knowledge), but still reach the conclusion that all the information from outside sources is false.[30] This is because the discrediting mechanisms of echo chambers led them to have beliefs that include the (false) idea that all outsiders try to mislead them and are untrustworthy. In this sense, echo chambers "convert individually epistemically virtuous activity into collective epistemic vice."[31] This mechanism is not present in the same way in epistemic bubbles, because bubbles are only based on exposure mechanisms, not on mechanisms related to trust.

As an example of such a situation where a person might act epistemically virtuous but still remains trapped in an echo chamber, Nguyen discusses the case of someone being born and raised in one.[32] The author makes the assumption that it is epistemically reasonable for a child to trust their parents, and I agree with him. In this case, the earliest epistemic contacts of such a child are members of an echo chamber, who teach the child that the only sources of information that can be trusted are the other people within this specific chamber and that 'outside' sources with a different opinion are only trying to mislead them. Even if this child would later, as a teenager or grownup, act in the epistemically virtuous ways stated earlier, they could still remain trapped in the echo chamber due to its discrediting mechanisms.[33]

Nguyen argues that there are "many cases" like these in which a person might be epistemically blameless for ending up in an echo chamber.[34] However, the only case he discusses is this example. The problem is that the example of an 'echo chamber child' is highly

[29] *Id.*, 143.
[30] *Id.*, 155.
[31] *Ibid.*
[32] *Id.*, 154–55.
[33] *Ibid.*
[34] *Id.*, 154.

specific, and due to its dependence on highly specific circumstances it does not provide an explanation for people ending up in echo chambers later in life, even though this group could be expected to be a much bigger part of the echo chamber population. In some other instances, Nguyen even mentions irrational behavior and epistemic vices like conformity as reasons for a person to end up in such a chamber,[35] while resorting to vices and irrationality is exactly the kind of individual-oriented explanation the author is trying to move away from.

Gaps like the one discussed above show that Nguyen's conceptualization is in need of some more generally applicable explanations of how we can understand bubbles and chambers as network-based problems. The question that remains is thus: Can we identify more generally applicable factors that explain how people can end up in echo chambers, without resorting to individual irrational behavior? Answering this question is exactly what the field of network epistemology can help us with. To be able to do so, I will first briefly explain the workings of epistemic network models in the next section.

Network Epistemology

Network epistemologists use models to simulate the movement of beliefs and knowledge through a network. It is a formal approach used in social epistemology, in which (mathematical) models are created that represent *agents* (e.g. persons, companies, or an organization) and their relationships to each other.[36] The goal of network epistemologists is to explore how certain factors of interest could potentially impact the spread of information on a system-based level.[37] With the use of epistemic network modeling, two things can be analyzed: one, how the *structure of a network* influences belief spreading and two, how certain *behaviors and/or rules* influence belief spreading.

[35] *Ibid.*
[36] Weisberg, "Formal Epistemology."
[37] O'Connor, Goldberg, and Goldman, "Social Epistemology."

Figure 1 is a (simplified) example of an epistemological network. The nodes represent the agents in the network and the lines represent the connections between the agents. An agent can have multiple *neighbors*, which are the other agents they are directly linked to. By communicating to their neighbors, beliefs are spread across the network.

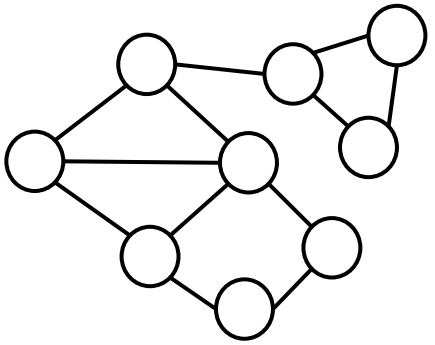

Figure 1: A simple random network model. The circles represent agents, the lines represent connections between agents.

Epistemic network models are often run as computer simulations.[38] In most models, agents are attributed a certain degree of belief (credence) about a proposition *p,* for example whether the agents believe that eating apples is good for your health. This credence can range between 0 (absolutely certain that not-*p*) and 1 (absolutely certain that *p*). A *run* of a model consists of a certain number of timesteps in which the model's dynamic is executed in each step.[39] In these steps, the agents communicate and exchange evidence, arguments or beliefs according to the setup of the model. After communicating with their neighbors, agents then update their credence about *p.* This communication and belief updating is repeated a certain number of times. A model is often run thousands of times with slightly different starting conditions, after which the results of these runs are statistically analyzed.[40]

Depending on the research, certain rules are added to the model, such as rules regarding how information is shared with

[38] Weisberg, "Formal Epistemology."
[39] Singer et al., "Epistemic Networks," 137.
[40] *Ibid.*

neighbors in the model. Sometimes, agents are built to simulate 'doing research' themselves, meaning that they acquire certain information about the true state of p in the model.[41] If we use our apple-example, agents might be thought of to have asked ten people to eat an apple each morning and count the number of people who feel fitter. Such results are then shared with their neighbors in the network (see fig. 2 for an example).[42] Another important example for this current article of a possible extra rule is the addition of a factor representing how much an agent trusts other agents.[43]

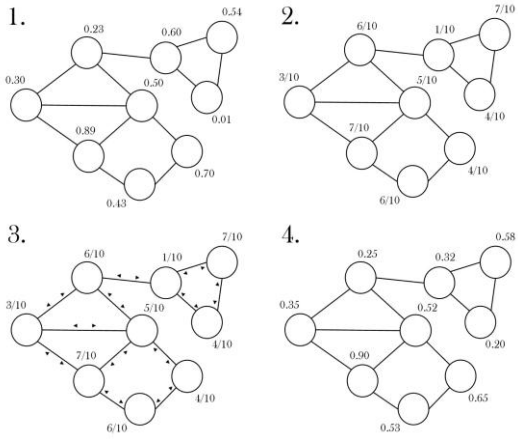

Figure 2: Example of a model run with 'testing', where agents test how many out of ten times a hypothesis yields a positive result (2). These results are shared by the agents with their neighbors (3) and used for belief updating (4)

A big focus in the field of network epistemology lies in analyzing factors leading to polarization.[44] This research is often not explicitly linked to the concepts of bubbles and chambers,[45] but their

[41] O'Connor and Weatherall, "Scientific Polarization."
[42] Variations of this mechanism have been used or discussed by e.g. O'Connor and Weatherall, "Scientific Polarization," 862; O'Connor and Weatherall, *The Misinformation Age,* 62; Hahn, Merdes, and Von Sydow, "Social Networks," 4.
[43] O'Connor and Weatherall, "Scientific Polarization," 857; Hahn, Merdes, and Von Sydow, "Social Networks," 4; Olsson, "A Bayesian Simulation Model," 118.
[44] O'Connor and Weatherall, "Scientific Polarization"; Olsson, "A Bayesian Simulation Model."
[45] Two notable exceptions are Madsen, Bailey, and Pilditch, "Large Networks"; Hahn, Merdes, and Von Sydow, "Social Networks."

findings can still be very useful for our discussion because the mechanisms underlying this polarization can sometimes be linked to one of the mechanisms underlying bubbles and chambers. Recall that the main mechanism behind epistemic bubbles is a lack of exposure to relevant sources.[46] In network epistemology, exposure to sources is represented by the connections an agent has. If an agent is only linked to a few neighbors that have highly similar views while there are also other agents in the network that have different views, then the agent can be said to sit in an epistemic bubble. Echo chambers can be studied in network epistemology by focusing on *trust* between agents in a network, since chambers are based on a difference in trust between one's in-group and others. Research on polarization where trust-factors are added to the model can thus help us better understand echo chambers.[47]

The influence of trust

Let us now return to the question that has remained after Nguyen's contribution: Can we identify generally applicable factors that explain how people can end up in echo chambers, without resorting to individual irrational behavior? When looking at the literature in network epistemology, the answer to this question is overwhelmingly: yes. Multiple studies using rational agents found that their agents could end up in what are, arguably, echo chambers. Take the work on polarization by O'Connor and Weatherall, for example.[48] These researchers created a model that runs in a way that is similar to the one explained in the previous section, including agents that 'do research' themselves: the agents start of with an initial credence about p (or not-p),[49] test their own hypothesis about p, communicate their findings with their neighbors and then update their credence about p based on their own research and the findings they get from neighbors. All agents in the model are connected to all other agents, meaning that they are all exposed to all the available

[46] Nguyen, "Echo Chambers," 143.
[47] Perfors and Navarro, "Role of Trust."
[48] O'Connor and Weatherall, "Scientific Polarization."
[49] In their research, p or not-p was replaced with a preference for action A or B, but the mechanism remains the same.

information and none of them can accidentally get trapped in an epistemic bubble.

The researchers made one important change to this standard picture: they added a rule that simulates a heuristic of trust. In their model, the evidence an agent gets from others is treated as uncertain. How uncertain this evidence is considered is based on how distant the belief in *p* of this other agent is from their own belief. In other words, the more their neighbor's belief is different from their own, the more that evidence is distrusted and vice versa.

The authors found that with the addition of this rule, polarization is very likely to occur, meaning that one subgroup of the agents in the model ends up strongly believing the true belief that *p,* while another subgroup of agents is strongly holding the false belief that not-*p*.[50] Moreover, these subgroups end up only trusting the agents that have the same belief as them, and end up strongly distrusting the agents with the other belief.[51] In these models, there would thus arise a subgroup of agents that keeps holding on to a false belief that goes against the empirical evidence, completely distrusting all agents that do not have the same belief as them. In other words, in these simulations there would arise an echo chamber. These results show that the simple heuristic of trusting a person more if their beliefs are closer to one's own beliefs is possibly enough to create echo chambers, even if the agents in the model are honest, rational, empirically test their theories against the real world, and all aim to discover the true best action.

Other authors with slight variations in their trust mechanism or network structure have found similar results,[52] making clear that O'Connor and Weatherall's findings are not just a product of their specific model settings. These researchers have, for example, used models in which agents were connected to only some of the others, not to all.[53] Another difference lies in the exact setup of the trust mechanism: for example, Perfors & Navarro created a model in

[50] O'Connor and Weatherall, "Scientific Polarization," 869.
[51] *Id.*, 869.
[52] E.g. Madsen, Bailey, and Pilditch, "Large Networks"; Perfors and Navarro, "Role of Trust"; Olsson, "Bayesian Simulation."
[53] Perfors and Navarro, "The Role of Trust"; Hahn, Merdes, and Von Sydow, "Social Networks."

which trust in another agent is not directly based on the current distance in belief, but is slightly adjusted after each interaction.[54] In the model created by Hahn et al., all agents start out believing that the chances of *p* or not-*p* are equally likely.[55] They found that even under these conditions agents could still end up in echo chambers, purely based on their coincidental position in the network, or, in the words of the authors themselves, "through sheer bad luck."[56]

One question that could arise based on the above findings is the following: is the used rule in these models a valid and rational heuristic of trust? While O'Connor and Weatherall themselves do not claim that the heuristic they introduced in their model is individually rational, they do think that it is justifiable and, in a sense, in practice even essential.[57] Moreover, Endre Begby provides good insight into why this behavior could even be considered rational. Scientists (and other people) need to make judgements about how reliable they think another person's evidence is. The author argues that it is quite common sense that one should not update their beliefs based on the beliefs of others if they have reason to think that the other person is misinformed or incompetent.[58] Most people will feel like they have a reason for their own belief in a certain fact. They do not have to be absolute experts in the respective topic for this: people might have done a little research and have drawn certain conclusions based on it that they find logical. I, for example, have learned at school that eating fruit is good for you and that they contain many essential vitamins. This has led me to believe that apples are good for you. If one has such a "reasonable starting confidence" in their own beliefs,[59] then it is only logical to be more inclined to define someone as a peer to yourself and trust their judgement more if they share your judgement, and vice versa. If I meet someone who tells me that apples are actually very poisonous and are only promoted because the government tries to make humans weaker, I have quite good a reason to trust this person's

[54] Perfors and Navarro, "Role of Trust," 2.
[55] Hahn, Merdes, and Von Sydow, "Social Networks," 4.
[56] *Id.*, 13.
[57] O'Connor and Weatherall, "Scientific Polarization," 857.
[58] Begby, "Belief Polarization," 527.
[59] *Ibid.*

judgement less. The fact that such a rational heuristic can still lead to echo chamber formation shows even more clearly how echo chambers are perversions of healthy epistemic practices, even more than Nguyen argued they are.[60]

To sum up, the literature in network epistemology points to the idea that even rational agents that are motivated to find the truth, are honest, and who are not initially put in echo chamber conditions can become trapped in an echo chamber. Factors that seem to influence these chances are reliance on what seem to be justifiable heuristics of trust, and unfortunately, also just a form of bad luck.

The role of digitalization

One aspect of bubbles and chambers that has been under dispute in scholarly debate is the possible role of digitalization in their formation and prevalence. Multiple scholars have argued that digitalization plays a significant role in a growing concern for increased polarization,[61] and/or an increase in the prevalence of both echo chambers and epistemic bubbles.[62] However, other scholars have criticized the above perspectives, arguing that new technology has not had this impact at all.[63] The questions that then arise are the following: Firstly, how can we understand where this dispute between scholars about the impact of digitalization comes from, and secondly, can network epistemology help us understand the possible impact of digitalization on epistemic bubbles and echo chambers better?

As has already been briefly stated in the introduction, the concepts of epistemic (or filter) bubbles and echo chambers have often been conflated with each other in current scholarly literature. Many scholars have defined echo chambers similarly to the way epistemic bubbles have been defined in this paper: based on exposure and communication rather than on trust discrepancies. An example of this is the article of Mønsted & Lehmann, who argue to have found evidence in support of echo chambers. They state that

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[60] Nguyen, "Echo Chambers," 148.
[61] Bennett and Iyengar, "Minimal Effects?," 720, 724.
[62] Bail et al., "Opposing Views," 9216; Sunstein, *#Republic*, 68.
[63] Bruns, "Technology, Stupid," 9; Masip, Suau, and Ruiz-Caballero, "Incidental Exposure," 59; Arguedas et al., "Literature Review," 17.

the vaccine discourse on Twitter is highly polarized, and that users on the extreme ends formed "relatively disjoint 'epistemic echo chambers' which imply that members of the two groups of users rarely interact, and in which users experience highly dissimilar 'information landscapes' depending on their stance."[64] Notice that their use of 'echo chamber' in this quote is used to refer to the low level of interaction and exposure to similar sources, which were actually identified by Nguyen as properties of *epistemic bubbles* instead of echo chambers.[65] This study about 'echo chambers' tells us nothing about how the exposed content is actually *received* and whether opposing content is actually taken into consideration or just gets distrusted and dismissed. This same mix up of the two concepts is also found in articles arguing that supposed 'echo chambers' actually make for a *bigger* diversity in exposure,[66] and in most scientific reviews about empirical evidence for echo chambers.[67]

So, it appears that most empirical literature that claims to be written about echo chambers, is not written about echo chambers at all. Instead, these papers describe mechanisms linked to *epistemic bubbles*. This is problematic, not only because these empirical articles are analyzing a different concept than they are claiming, but also because the models from network epistemology discussed in the previous section show that the incorporation of trust mechanisms in a network has a big impact on the level of polarization. Nguyen already foreshadowed this, arguing that echo chambers pose a much bigger threat to our current democratic processes than epistemic bubbles.[68]

While we might thus not be able to draw any conclusion about *chambers* based on the empirical research, this literature can tell us something about the effect of digitalization on *bubbles*. Even though the evidence is not overwhelmingly clear and there are some contradictory or mixed results,[69] there does seem to be some

[64] Mønsted and Lehmann, "Vaccine Discourse," 8.
[65] Nguyen, "Echo Chambers."
[66] Arguedas et al., "Literature Review," 17; Masip, Suau, and Ruiz-Caballero, "Incidental Exposure," 59.
[67] e.g. Arguedas et al., "Literature Review," 10; Terren and Borge, "Social Media," 100.
[68] Nguyen, "Echo Chambers," 153.
[69] Mønsted and Lehmann, "Vaccine Discourse."

evidence that the use of online environments actually leads to a *bigger* diversity in content-exposure than the use of only offline environments.[70] Let us, for the sake of the argument, follow these authors in the notion that digitalization has not led to more bubbles. The question that remains is the following: is it possible for digitalization to influence the prevalence of *echo chambers*, even if it does not affect (or even negatively affects) the prevalence of bubbles?

Since there is, to this author's knowledge, little related empirical data, we will again turn to the field of network epistemology to see if the analyses there could give us some theories about the prevalence of echo chambers in digital environments. To do that, we first need to identify ways in which digital environments differ from physical environments in their network properties. The internet has radically changed how we look for information and connect with others. First of all, it has made it possible to expand our network much more than before. In addition, agents are not only able to have a bigger network, but also to be much more targeted in their search for information.[71] To analyze the prevalence of chambers in digital environments compared to physical ones, we thus need to look at networks that, one, are bigger in size, and two, allow for some sense of 'searching' for information.

One article in which the impact of network size is discussed is that of Hahn et al.[72] The authors used a network structure in their model that they argue is similar to the structure of actual online networks on social media like Facebook. They found that the larger the network, the higher the percentage of agents that ended up polarized and believing a false belief.[73] Madsen et al. found similar results: these researchers studied relatively large networks of up to 1.000 agents, and also found that the formation of echo chambers in their model was more likely to occur with the increase of the number of agents in their model.[74]

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[70] Fletcher and Nielsen, "Comparative Analysis," 2462.
[71] Sunstein, *#Republic*, 60.
[72] Hahn, Merdes, and Von Sydow, "Social Networks."
[73] *Id.*, 16.
[74] Madsen, Bailey, and Pilditch, "Large Networks."

What makes the model of Madsen et al. even more interesting for our current endeavor is that they used a 'search parameter.'[75] In their model, an agent 'searches' across their network for people with similar beliefs, only listening to these other agents if their beliefs sufficiently align with their own. The authors ran their model using a range of different search parameters, representing how big the part of the network was the agents could search. The authors found that the formation of echo chambers in their model was not only more likely to occur with the increase of the number of agents in the model, but also with the increase of the search parameter. They argued that this is probably the case due to a higher chance for more close-minded agents with initial extreme beliefs to be able to find other agents with similarly extreme beliefs, since their pool was simply bigger. In smaller networks, they argued, these agents are more often "'starved' of sufficient numbers of like-minded agents, and therefore their belief confidence is somewhat stymied."[76] In other words, extreme agents that are able to search across a bigger number of sources are more likely to be able to find another like-minded extremists, leading to an (unjustly) higher confidence in their own beliefs.

What these results show is that what some initially believed to be the democratizing forces of the internet[77] have had different consequences than might have been expected. On a personal level, the possibility to have a bigger and further-reaching network mostly seems to mean that a person has access to much more information and can thus make more informed inferences about their belief. However, once a trust variable is added, this reasoning has been shown not to hold up on the system level; in fact, the opposite occurs and more people end up polarized and in echo chambers.

Conclusion

In this article, I have tried to show how network epistemology can help us to better understand the social epistemological concepts of epistemic bubbles and echo chambers. I started by addressing the conflation of these phenomena in the academic literature and by

[75] *Id.*, 2.
[76] *Ibid.*
[77] Waisbord, "What Happens to News," 1870.

explaining Nguyen's influential distinction between both concepts.[78] After explaining the functionality of network epistemology, I used insights from this field to address a gap left in Nguyen's argumentation, namely how we can explain that people end up in echo chambers other than pointing to their epistemic vices or to exceptional circumstances. The findings in network epistemology show that the addition of a simple and justifiable heuristic for trust is enough for rational agents to form echo chambers.

Lastly, I discussed the possible role of digitalization in the formation of epistemic bubbles and echo chambers. These findings seem to support Nguyen's statement that the biggest problem for online communication might not be epistemic bubbles, but echo chambers.[79] The network-epistemological models also clearly show what has been lacking from empirical research on these epistemic phenomena: the factor of trust. All empirical studies discussed in this paper have focused on the exposure to different content and different sources, not on how these different sources actually have been perceived and to what extent these sources are trusted differently. The models created in network epistemology show that this empirical measuring of trust could potentially lead to new and very interesting insights into why people are still polarizing. Therefore, a recommendation for future research is to find a way to incorporate a factor of trust and the perception of information in echo chamber research, so that these phenomena are really captured.

One limitation of the current article is that the models of network epistemology discussed here are only that: *models*. Models can only provide *how-possibly* explanations, meaning that they help explain how a phenomenon can *possibly* be explained. This is different from how the phenomenon can *actually* be explained.[80] Empirical evidence is necessary to link the working of a model to reality and to validate the actual explanatory power of a model.[81] While models like the network models explained in this chapter can certainly aid us in understanding the possible mechanisms behind

[78] Nguyen, "Echo Chambers."
[79] Id, 153.
[80] Sullivan, "Understanding," 112.
[81] *Ibid.*

epistemic bubbles and echo chambers, as well as give direction to empirical research, the actual empirical research is still an integral part in really understanding the real-world phenomenon in question. This limitation only strengthens the recommendation to conduct more empirical research in which factors of trust are incorporated.

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Memento Mei: The Two Thieves and the Movement of the Soul in the *Spiegel om Wel te Sterven* (1694)

Berber Kommerij

He went before thee bearing His cross and died for thee upon the cross, that thou also mayest bear thy cross and mayest love to be crucified upon it. For if thou be dead with Him, thou shalt also live with Him, and if thou be a partaker of His sufferings thou shalt be also of His glory.

Thomas à Kempis (1379/80–1471), *De Imitatione Christi.*

For centuries, emotional movement has been induced by the climax of the New Testament: the Crucifixion. Artistic representations of the Crucifixion have played an important part in stirring the souls of Christians by showing the emotional and physical suffering on the cross. This suffering is not just present in the figure of Christ. According to Scripture, Christ was crucified alongside two other convicts: Dismas, the Good Thief, and Gestas, the Bad Thief.[1] The Gospel of Luke recounts a brief yet charged interaction between the three of them as they hang on the cross. While the Bad Thief blasphemes Christ, the Good Thief contrasts this with his penitent conduct, asking simply to be remembered in Paradise: "Domine, memento mei." In response, Christ forgives him and promises him salvation.[2] The Bad Thief's last moments on earth were a foreboding of eternal damnation in hell, whereas the

[1] The Two Thieves' names have been recorded in the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, also known as *The Acts of Pilate*. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, IX & X; Merback, *The thief,* 23. Dismas is also known as St Dismas, but was never officially canonized.

[2] Luke 23:42. The full sentence reads, according to the Vulgate: "Et dicebat ad Iesum Domine memento mei cum veneris in regnum tuum." For the remainder of this article, the King James Bible will be consulted.

Good Thief admitted guilt, prayed to Christ for forgiveness, and secured himself a place in heaven.

The brief conversation between Christ and the Two Thieves has resonated deeply within Christian textual and visual culture as an example of good moral conduct in the last moments before dying. Dismas, as a model for Christians on the deathbed, plays a significant role in the 1694 work *Spiegel om wel te Sterven, Aanwyzende met Beeltenissen van het Lyden onses Zaligmaakers Jesu Christi—Alles wat een Zieke moet doen om Gelukkig te Sterven [Mirror for Dying well, Showing in Images the Suffering of our Savior Jesus Christ—Everything a Sick Person must do to Die Well]*.[3] The *Spiegel* is a richly illustrated book of 39 engravings, divided in three parts by three separate title plates, which are anonymous copies of the original etchings designed and produced by the Dutch draughtsman Romeyn de Hooghe (1645 –1708). The engravings are designed to accompany a Dutch translation of a text composed by the Franciscan friar David de la Vigne (c. 1614 –1684). He wrote the original French version, *Le Miroir de la Bonne Mort* in 1673.[4] Designed for a Catholic audience, the book aims to instruct reader-viewers on what was known to medieval and early modern Christians as the art of dying well (*ars moriendi*).[5]

This article argues that the role of the Two Thieves in the *Spiegel's* engravings and text is pivotal in eliciting the penitential conduct needed to perfect the soul before dying. This analysis sheds new light on how Catholic visual culture aimed to reinforce penitential ideals through early modern devotional literature and art

[3] Translation by the author. *Spiegel om Wel te Sterven* (Amsterdam, Johannes Stichter, 1694), Universal Short Title Catalogue (USTC), (https://www.ustc.ac.uk/), last accessed May 30th, no. 1834278. The copy this research is based on is held in the National Library of the Netherlands in The Hague, under inventory number KW 26 G 12.

[4] Coppens, *Een Ars Moriendi*, 78.

[5] Lips, "Leren Sterven," 150. The *Spiegel* could be understood by laypeople as well as clergymen, and it therefore catered to the concrete need for emotional and religious support at the deathbed. The rich illustrations and in-folio format were relatively costly and therefore the intended audience was presumably limited to the well-to-do layer of the Low Countries' society.

in the post-Trentian Dutch Republic.[6] Through depictions that emotionally 'move' the reader-viewer by visualizing pain and suffering, reader-viewers are simultaneously 'moved' to conform to the penitential conduct that the Church imposes. As Sarah McNamer states, this means that the fundamentally practical function of the *Spiegel* is to teach its readers how to feel on the deathbed.[7] The conceptual lens of 'affective piety' comes into play here. Affective piety is a copiously studied phenomenon concerning the characteristic late-medieval and early-modern Catholic practice of emotional and embodied compassion with and devotion for the suffering of Christ and Mary.[8] Art historian Mitchell B. Merback and literary historian Jan van Dijkhuizen describe the phenomenon of affective piety as 'suffering with' Christ: emotionally aiming to embody his or his Mother's hardships, often instigated by devotional texts and images.[9] Traditionally, the scholarly focus is on Christ and Mary as devotional models with whom to identify, especially in Crucifixion scenes. However, considering the *Spiegel om Wel te Sterven*, the Two Thieves offer an enriching perspective as they are mere mortals, with whom it is easier to identify than the (partly) divine figures of Christ and Mary.

To further establish the interpretation that the Two Thieves are didactical *exempla*, or models that the believer was urged to follow through imitative devotion, the visual aspects of the *Spiegel* in relation to its text will be considered.[10] The artistic motifs which Romeyn de Hooghe applies in his original etchings, are designed to move the reader-viewer into an affective devotional mode. The depiction of the Thieves in the *Spiegel* will be visually analyzed and contextualized through a comparison with a Crucifixion painting by

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[6] The term post-Trentian here refers to the period following the Council of Trent, held between 1545 and 1563. The Council of Trent was an important part of the Catholic Churches' Counter-Reformation as a reaction to Protestantism.

[7] McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 2.

[8] See also: Caroline Walker Bynum's *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982,) and Rachel Fulton's *From Judgment to Passion : Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800-1200*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.)

[9] Merback, *The Thief,* 19; Dijkhuizen, *Pain and Compassion*, 38; Karant-Nunn, *Reformation of Feeling*, 15.

[10] Zimbalist, "Medieval Affective Piety," 203-4.

the Italian painter Andrea Mantegna (1431 –1506). Mantegna's work serves as a representative example of the continuous tradition of Crucifixion painting in which the Two Thieves play a significant role. The artistic devices and iconographical aspects of the depiction of the Thieves are deeply embedded in the tradition of Crucifixion painting, which hardly changed within the two centuries between the *Spiegel* and Mantegna's painting. By contextualizing De Hooghe's depiction of the Two Thieves within this art-historical tradition, using Mantegna's *Crucifixion* as a point of reference, we can better see how De Hooghe applies a visual vocabulary for distinguishing good from bad—a moral contrast embodied in the Two Thieves. This tradition originates in both the Bible and the story of Joseph of Arimathea. These sources which will be explored briefly before focusing on the *Spiegel*. This multidisciplinary approach will lead to a deeper understanding of how emotional movement, followed by devotional action, is engendered in the reader-viewer through the depiction of the Two Thieves.

Current scholarly research on the *Spiegel om Wel te Sterven* is indebted to the work of historian Christian Coppens from 1995, whose extensive research has not been surpassed since. Coppens argues convincingly that the *Spiegel* is of a didactic-religious nature, and that the book offers the devotee a mirror or an *exemplum* to imitate.[11] Coppens refers here to the dying person on the deathbed depicted in the *Spiegel*, through which the reader-viewer could prepare for their final hour (fig. 1).[12] Coppens does not, however, explicate the role of the Good Thief as a model. This is in line with other scholarly literature, where the Two Thieves as model and anti-model in the context of *ars moriendi*-handbooks are often taken for granted. This is not to say that the Good Thief's powerful *exemplum* has never been recognized: for instance, Merback and Dijkhuizen emphasize the role of the Two Thieves in both visual art and devotional literature.[13] Additionally, Susan C. Karant-Nunn and Jussi Hanska address the role of the Two Thieves in late medieval and early modern sermons.[14] Achim Timmerman, on the other

[11] Coppens, *Een Ars Moriendi*, 89.
[12] *Ibid.*
[13] Merback, *The Thief,* 69-100, 218-65; Dijkhuizen, *Pain and Compassion*, 38-40.
[14] Karant-Nunn, *Reformation of Feeling,* 91, 109; Hanska, "The Good Thief," 36.

hand, focuses on the Good Thief as a model depicted on painted panels, which were shown to criminals on their way to their execution.[15] There is, however, no mention of the role of the Good Thief in printed books designed specifically for use on the deathbed, such as the *Spiegel*. This article is a first attempt at filling this lacuna.

The Crucifixion in Scripture

The biblical sources describing the Thieves are concise and allow for several readings. Artists have filled this room with a variety of interpretations of the scriptural sources of the scene on Golgotha. All four evangelists mention the Two Thieves, but Mark, Matthew and John do so briefly, whereas Luke offers the most elaborate and didactically rich history of the Two Thieves. As will be shown, his narration has been re-interpreted by many artists as he makes a distinction between the good, penitent Thief, and the bad, unrepentant Thief. Luke's gospel provides the following interaction between the Thieves and Christ while they are hanging on their crosses:

> And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us."
> But the other answering rebuked him, saying, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss."
> And he said unto Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."
> And Jesus said unto him, "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise."[16]

The Good Thief's reverent request to Christ solely concentrates on the eternal kingdom he is headed to, and not his earthly suffering. Hanska argues that because of this contrite conduct, and the fact that Dismas is absolved of his sins by the highest authority possible; the

[15] Timmermann, "Locus calvariae," 137.
[16] Luke 23:39-43, King James Bible.

figure of the Good Thief is the ultimate "archetype of conversion *in extremis*."[17]

Apart from this passage, the distinction between good and bad is explicated in another key historical source: the writings of Joseph of Arimathea, a man who was involved in the burial of Christ.[18] He described the appalling crimes of Gestas, the Bad Thief, who had lived a violent and ungodly life murdering travelers, hanging women by their feet and cutting off their breasts, and drinking baby blood. Dismas, on the other hand, had made his livelihood as an innkeeper, taking from the rich and giving to the poor. While he committed sins, he is not described as cruel.[19]

It is made noticeably clear in Arimathea's writings that there is a distinction between the Two Thieves, and that they both have an influence on their fate in their last moments. Dismas is self-condemning, and while there is no literal mention of his remorse, his reverence for Christ and his last-minute conversion shows us that he handles his sin in the prescribed way. He admits that he is sinful, accepts his punishment, and puts all his faith in his newly discovered God. Gestas, the anti-model, remains ignorant. He fails to recognize the significance of both the divine entity next to him and the event of his death.

The *Spiegel*

Following these Biblical and apocryphal sources, the hierarchical distinction between good and bad is apparent in the depiction and description of the Thieves in the *Spiegel*. For instance, the book tells the reader: "Where the Sick who cannot read will see what he must follow to die well. See and do after the following Examples."[20] The *Spiegel* mentions several times that one must see the images, which

[17] Hanska, "The Good Thief, 35.
[18] Metzger, *New Testament Studies*, 35.
[19] Merback, *The Thief*, 23.
[20] "Waar in de Zieke die niet en kan leezen, zien zal wat hy moet volgen om gelukkig te sterven. Ziet en doet na de volgende Voorbeelden." Translation by the author. This copy is unfoliated, and the text and images have been distributed variously in the different copies. In the edition in the National Library of the Netherlands, The Hague inv. no. KW 26 G 12, this text can be found on the folium with text bound before plate 14.

Figure 1: Romeyn de Hooghe, *Spiegel om Wel te Sterven*, plate 26, 1694, engraving, 186 x 146 mm. (The Hague, National Library, inv. no. KW 26 G 12.)

could imply that the textual sections are secondary to the images, or that the text was mainly for reading aloud to the dying person, who was physically unable to read themself.[21] To demonstrate the synergy between image and word, an analysis of the two engravings that depict the Thieves, along with their accompanying texts is presented here. The word-image interplay helped reader-viewers to be able to remember elusive and intangible concepts, making the *Spiegel* an ideal case study for exploring the didactic and devotional role of the Good Thief.[22]

Each image in the *Spiegel* is accompanied by a quote taken from either John, Luke, or Matthew. Additionally, the Bible text is elucidated by a subheading that alludes to the images and includes a lesson for the reader-viewer. These texts are printed on separate unfoliated pages and are each linked to an engraving through

[21] Coppens, *Een Ars Moriendi*, 96.
[22] Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 276. Melion, *Ekphrastic Image-Making*, 5.

numbers. For instance, the 26th engraving (fig. 1) is accompanied by the following text:

> They brought Jesus weighed down by his Cross to Mount Calvary, also known as death place. John 19.
>
> —
>
> The courage with which our Savior went with his cross to his place of punishment teaches the sick person the fortitude he must have in his ailments until he comes to the place of his rest.[23]

Plate 26 (fig. 1) shows a dying man in a luxurious four-poster bed, surrounded by an angel, female figures, a dog, and clergy. The man is meant to be a generalized model for the good, repentant sinner on his deathbed.[24] This is why the patient is a different person in each plate, and each bedroom is a different one—it highlights the universal crisis that the man is undergoing and its applicability to others preparing for death.

Included in each engraving are cherubs holding a picture frame, depicting a scene from the Passion of Christ. The attention of the dying man in his bed is often fully focused on the painting within the engraving. In other cases, such as in plate 26 (fig. 1), a parallel is drawn between Christ,

Figure 2: Detail of figure 1.

[23] "Zy brachten Iesus belaaden met zyn Kruys op den berg Calvarien, doodts plaats gezegt. Iohan 19. - De gemoedigheyd waar mede onze Zaligmaaker met zyn Kruys tot aan zyn straf-plaats ging, leert den Zieke de standvastigheyd, welke hy in zyn kwaalen moet hebben tot dat hy ter plaatse van zyn rust komt." Translation by the author.

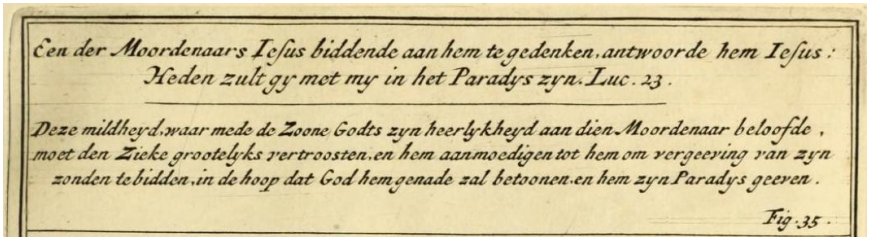
[24] The question if the *Spiegel* was used by women on their deathbed, and in how far their engagement with its message was influenced by their gender, thus far remains unanswered.

Figure 3: Romeyn de Hooghe, *Spiegel om Wel te Sterven*, plate 35, 1694, engraving, 186 x 146 mm. (The Hague, National Library of the Netherlands, inv. no. KW 26 G 12.)

the Thieves, and the dying man. The painting depicts the scene where Christ almost collapses under the weight of the cross on the road to Golgotha. Behind him are the Two Thieves carrying their own crosses—Dismas with his young, defeated face and Gestas on the left with a terrifying expression and a bald head resembling a skull. Mimicking the three men carrying their crosses on the road to Golgotha, the dying man is given his own cross to hold. The same goes for plate 25 (image is not included in this article), where the Flagellation of Christ is depicted in the picture frame. The dying man on the deathbed is depicted in the same engraving while undergoing a bloodletting. An angel points at Christ bleeding from the soldiers' instruments of torture, designating Christ as an *exemplum* of how calm and composed the dying man in his bed must be while enduring the hardships of dying.

The Two Thieves reappear in engraving 35 (fig. 3).[25] In this engraving, we see the scene at Golgotha in full horrendous splendor. The dying person on his deathbed looks up at the image with sorrow written on his face while everyone around him has fallen asleep. He is alone with the angel, who directs the man's attention to the three crosses in the picture frame. The Bible text that comes with the image derives from Luke 23, reciting: "One of the murderers prayed to Jesus to remember him, Jesus answered: today you shall be with me

[25] While the Two Thieves are not depicted from engraving 26 – 34, they are mentioned in the text accompanying the 30th engraving, in which John 19:18 is quoted. They are, however, not included in the image.


Een der Moordenaars Iesus biddende aan hem te gedenken, antwoorde hem Iesus:
Heden zult gy met my in het Paradys zyn. Luc. 23.

Deze mildheyd, waar mede de Zoone Godts zyn heerlykheyd aan dien Moordenaar beloofde, moet den Zieke grootelyks vertroosten, en hem aanmoedigen tot hem om vergeeving van zyn zonden te bidden, in de hoop dat God hem genade zal betoonen, en hem zyn Paradys geeven.

Fig. 35.

Figure 4: The text accompanying plate 35, the Crucifixion, in the *Spiegel om Wel te Sterven*. (The Hague, National Library of the Netherlands, inv. no. KW 26 G 12.)

in Paradise."[26] However, David de la Vigne's additional text in the *Spiegel* gives an enlightening perspective on the conditions of divine forgiveness exemplified by the Good Thief and the grace that Christ bestows upon him:

> This bounty, with which the Son of God promised his glory to that Murderer, should greatly comfort the sick person, and encourage him to pray to him for the forgiveness of his sins, in the hope that God will show him mercy and grant him his Paradise.[27]

This sentence summarizes the message that de *Spiegel* wants to communicate through the story of the Two Thieves: following the example of the Good Thief leads to grace. De Hooghe enriches this message in his depiction of the Crucifixion. It captures the moment in which the penitent Thief speaks to Jesus, his expression full of great reverence and awe. Jesus turns his head, surrounded by a halo of light, and he answers. The depiction of their interaction exhibits the Christian ideal of divine forgiveness and God's 'mildheyd,' mildness or mercy, which could greatly soothe the dying on their deathbed.

The message is amplified by the illustration of the contrasting fate of Gestas on the other side of the scene. The Bad Thief hangs

[26] "Een der Moordenaars Iesus biddende aan hem te gedenken, antwoorde hem Iesus: Heden zult gy met my in het Paradys zyn. Luc. 23." Translation by the author.
[27] "Deze mildheyd, waar mede de Zoone Godts zyn heerlykheyd aan dien Moordenaar beloofde, moet den Zieke grootelyks vertroosten, en hem aanmoedigen tot hem om vergeeving van zyn zonden te bidden, in de hoop dat God hem genade zal betoonen, en hem zyn Paradys geeven." Translation by the author.

there, suspended from his hands, his legs seeking for support. The wood he is nailed on is of inferior quality: while Jesus and the Good Thief are crucified on nicely cut beams, Gestas is hung on unprocessed timber. Another telling indication that Gestas will go straight to hell is the pair of flying creatures that De Hooghe chose to depict, signifying his devilish soul departing from the body.[28] The materialization of the abstract idea of the unrepentant soul in these two beings is an important aspect of the iconographical scheme in the *Spiegel*.[29]


Figure 5: Detail of figure 3.

The Iconography of the Crucifixion

An additional element of importance in the iconography of Crucifixion painting is, among others, the distinction between the left and right side of the image. In this section, the iconographical tradition that establishes this distinction will be explicated through an analysis of the central panel of the San Zeno Altarpiece (between 1457 –1460) by the Italian painter Andrea Mantegna (1431 –1506) (fig. 6). This work will be compared with the anonymous engravings of the crucifixion in the *Spiegel*.

Mantegna's painting depicts the Good Thief, Dismas, on Christ's right-hand side, on the left of the canvas for the viewer. This side is known as *dextra,* a place of honor and privilege. Gestas is on Christ's left, or *sinistra*, a place of debasement and condemnation.[30] In the *Spiegel*, however, the Thieves are placed contrary to the

[28] Admittedly, the timeline here is vague, as Gestas seems to still be alive at this point and it would be strange if his soul already departed this living body. My hypothesis is that De Hooghe wanted to emphasize Gestas' doomed soul and therefore took the liberty to play with temporality.
[29] Merback*, The Thief,* 240.
[30] Id., 23.

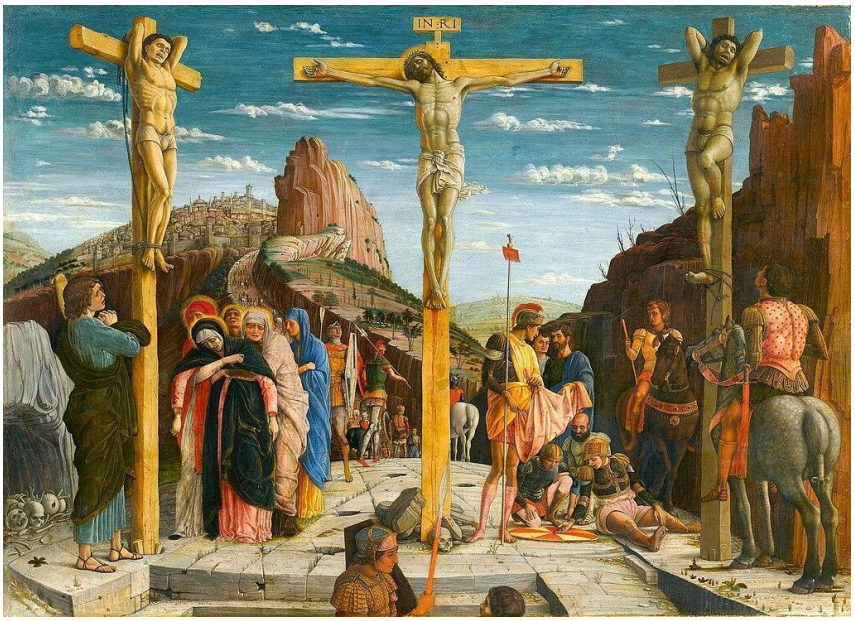


Figure 6: Andrea Mantegna, *Crucifixion, central panel of the San Zeno Altarpiece*, between 1457 and 1460, tempera and oil on poplar, 76 x 96 cm. (Paris, Louvre Museum, inv. no. 368.)

tradition (fig. 6). A viewer would expect the Good Thief to be on Christ's right-hand side, on the viewer's left. While it becomes clear that Romeyn de Hooghe was familiar with this iconographical tradition in his original French version of the *Spiegel* of 1673, his later anonymous colleague(s) copied his originals in mirror image.[31] This has to do with the medium of engraving, where the scenes that were scratched in copper appeared in reverse on the paper on which they were printed. It was possible to copy engravings by using a mirror, ironically. The unidentified engravers who copied the *Spiegel* did not make the effort to apply this technique to copy this specific print truthfully; the reason for this remains unclear.

Although scripture offers no explicit indication of which Thief was crucified on which side of Christ, tradition consistently places the Good Thief on Christ's right. This placement aligns with longstanding symbolic, anthropological, and even neuropsychological associations of the right side with virtue, moral superiority, and

[31] See for example the French version *Miroir de la bonne mort,* 1973, in the University Library in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, under signature OM 63-1499.

divine favor. In short: Dismas is at the right hand of God.[32] Mantegna's *Crucifixion* (fig. 6) is merely one example of similar scenes where this tradition is followed. However, the compositional distinction is not the only way Mantegna differentiates between *dextra* and *sinistra*. He uses several iconographical and artistic devices, which offer a fruitful focal point for comparison with the *Spiegel*.

On the dexter side of the composition, the highly emotional figures of Mary and John the Evangelist are depicted. The contrast with the sinister side of the painting is apparent: here, the groups consist of Pilate's soldiers playing dice for Christ's garments, surrounded by richly clad mounted soldiers, including two horses standing with their hindquarters towards the viewer, a—perhaps slightly farfetched—hint of the unworthiness of the Bad Thief. In the *Spiegel*, the medium of engraving does not allow for this level of detail on such a small scale. Still, the distinction is made plain by showing Pilate's soldiers on the Bad Thieves' side and having the lamenting figures on the Good Thieves' side.

This brings us to the actual sentence of crucifying. According to the Gospels, the three convicts receive the same sentence in the court of Pilate. Antithetically to this, artists vary the ways in which the bodies are fixed to the cross, distinguishing the punishment of the Thieves from that of Christ or even differentiating between the Two Thieves. According to Merback, the variations in crucifying found in the art historical tradition, denoting good and bad, can be categorized in four ways. First, the shape of the crosses and the type of wood they are made of; second, the (non-)conformity of the bodies to the shape of the cross; third, the method by which the bodies are fastened to the crosses; and lastly, the depiction of wounds.[33]

These four variations are visible in both the *Spiegel* and Mantegna's work. Although the shape of the crosses is alike in each depiction, their material qualities are different. In Mantegna's *Crucifixion*, the beamson which the Bad Thief is hung is of a significantly darker color. In the *Spiegel*, the crosses of Christ and

[32] Fabbro, "Left and Right," 174.
[33] Merback, *The Thief*, 72.

the Good Thief are of the same, processed material, while Gestas is crucified on untreated tree trunks. Concerning the second and third variations as proposed by Merback, whereas the three bodies in the *Spiegel* are all nailed to the crosses, the feet of the Bad Thief are not fastened. This is parallel to Mantegna's representation of the Bad Thief, whose leg appears to be pulled loose from the ropes. Additionally, in Mantegna's painting, the Two Thieves have not been nailed to the cross but loosely bound with ropes.

Regarding the fourth and last distinction: the *Spiegel* does not show obvious wounds or blood. This is possibly due to the limits of the medium of engraving and the size of the picture frame, which measures only a few centimeters. Mantegna does show the blood from Christ's five Holy Wounds: the wounds from the nails in his hands and feet and the wound in his side, which is wholly in line with the tradition. [34] While the Good Thief's body remains unscathed, the Bad Thief's shins are badly wounded.

Conclusion

While the traditional distinction between *dextra* and *sinistra* and the subsequent placement of the Good and Bad Thief is not maintained in the *Spiegel*, the message still comes across successfully thanks to the minute depiction of the conversation on the cross where the Good Thief receives grace. De Hooghe presents the Bad Thief as barely hanging on to the rough beams of his cross, whereas the Good Thief is nailed to similar wood as Christ. De Hooghe's use of these visual and affective distinctions in the *Spiegel*, which are in line with the art-historical motifs as proposed by Merback, explicate the importance of the Two Thieves in the didactical scheme of the book.

The engravings and texts persuade the reader-viewer to spiritually re-enact, or affectively imitate, the conduct of several figures in the *Spiegel*. The Thief is a powerful model of dying a good death through penitential conduct, which fits well in the book's aim to bring about an emotional 'movement,' in the reader-viewer, leading to a movement to action: prayer. The prospect of eternal paradise following Christ's merciful verdict made the Good Thief's

[34] Hall, *Hall's Iconografisch Handboek*, 188.

pain on the cross bearable. The visual confrontation with the specific moment in which God is forgiving a penitent sinner in the eleventh hour was a reassuring narrative for the reader-viewer and a compelling instruction for the reader-viewer on their deathbed, "encouraging him to pray to him for the forgiveness of his sins."[35]

What also has become clear in the analysis is that the Good Thief is not the only model that the *Spiegel* proposes to follow. Both the dying person on the deathbed and Christ himself are referred to in both text and image as *exempla*. For instance, the text accompanying the 26th engraving (fig. 1) encourages the reader-viewer to be 'standvastig,' or steadfast, like Christ while undergoing the pains of death closing in. The fact that there are multiple figures to 'mirror' is no surprise given the title of the book.

According to Dijkhuizen, the Good Thief often serves as a mediator between the crucified Christ and the reader-viewer.[36] Seeing only Christ suffer in a Crucifixion scene would exclude the human body with which we can relate, separate as we are from the divine status of Christ. The penitent Thief, therefore, functions as a body which the reader-viewer can relate to: a human body that indicates how pain and penance can be an instrument for salvation.[37] This notion is especially valuable in the context of a book that aims to offer consolation on the deathbed, such as the *Spiegel*. Furthermore, Merback argues that out of all the Catholic saints Dismas was the most dynamic and compelling model for the laity.[38] His last moments are the actualization of ideal penance, and his moral opposite, Gestas, makes clear what happens in the absence of this penance.

Romeyn de Hooghe, and the engraver who copied his etchings, incorporated various motifs into them, notably selecting the crucial moment when Christ speaks to the Good Thief. The Two Thieves play a humble, but significant part as model and anti-model within the didactic scheme of the *Spiegel*. Reader-viewers are encouraged to place themselves in the position of the Good Thief,

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[35] ". . . en hem aanmoedigen tot hem om vergeeving van zyn zonden te bidden." Translation by the author.
[36] Dijkhuizen, *Pain and Compassion*, 38.
[37] *Ibid.*
[38] Merback, *The Thief*, 263.

because he is a mortal just like all of us who hope to hear the redeeming words: "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise."[39]

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Figure 3: Romeyn de Hooghe, *Spiegel om Wel te Sterven*, plate 35, 1694, engraving, 186 x 146 mm. (The Hague, National Library of the Netherlands, inv. no. KW 26 G 12.)

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PART THREE

MOVEMENT THROUGH ACTION

Taiwan's #MeToo: Early Takeaways from a Late Movement

Beatrice Scali

On October 15, 2017, Hollywood actor Alyssa Milano asked people on Twitter, now X, to reply "me too" if they had ever been sexually harassed.[1] Within a day, the hashtag #MeToo had been used twelve million times, inadvertently turning "me too" from a virtually unknown movement focused on marginalized African-American women into a global movement.[2] However, even as it reached East Asia, for five years #MeToo failed to spread to Taiwan.[3] Scholars struggled to explain this delay.[4] It was not a matter of low-quality journalism or unconducive traditional values: China, which presents both a high cultural proximity to Taiwan and low press freedom, had its own #MeToo wave.[5] It was not for a lack of institutional attention or urgency around the topic, either. Taiwan had long been recognized for having a comprehensive system of laws against gendered violence.[6] Yet, this system of laws remained dramatically undermobilized, and gendered violence remained an endemic issue surrounded by a culture of silence.[7] Statistics from 2023 indicated that while 43% of Taiwanese women experienced workplace sexual harassment, only 10% reported it officially, and 40% kept it completely secret.[8] The

[1] Milano, "Write 'me too'"
[2] Fileborn and Loney-Howes, *#MeToo and Social Change*, 3; Burke, "Inception."
[3] Huang, "MeToo in East Asia," 483.
[4] Chen, "Power of Law," 483–90; Huang, "MeToo in East Asia," 483.
[5] Chen, "Power of Law," 514-18; Xiong and Ristivojević, "#MeToo in China," 490-99.
[6] See the Sexual Assault Crime Prevention Act (1997), Gender Equality in Employment Act (2002), Gender Equity Education Act (2004), and the Sexual Harassment Prevention Act (2005).
[7] Modern Women's Foundation, "Gender-based violence."
[8] Modern Women's Foundation, "90% of victims."

debate continued until May 2023, when it was put to rest by a sudden turn of events: the eruption of Taiwan's #MeToo.[9] This development retired the 'why not?' question, replacing it with a new one: why now? Why did Taiwan's #MeToo emerge five years after the movement's global peak, and what does this reveal about the movement itself, and about Taiwanese society?

In this article, I attribute the timing of Taiwan's #MeToo to the societal impact of a Taiwanese TV series, *Wave Makers,* which enabled the movement to expand the national discourse around gendered violence, incorporating new narratives and justice models.[10] The show, released on Netflix in late April 2023, is about the staffers of an imaginary left-wing political party. The main character is Chang Ya-ching, a young staffer who is sexually harassed by a colleague. After denouncing the incident, the Party fails her, but thanks to her superior Weng Wen-fang's personal investment in her story, she eventually obtains justice: she wins the support of her community, getting her life and job back. This refreshing portrayal of sexual harassment made *Wave Makers* an immediate hit, which early journalistic and academic analyses agree had a fundamental role in inspiring Taiwan's #MeToo's two real breaking cases and, by extension, the whole movement.[11] To be sure, Taiwan's recent history offers several events that could have triggered a #MeToo wave.[12] Yet, I argue that what set the debate around *Wave Makers* apart from its precedents, setting off a belated #MeToo wave, was the show's effect on victim-survivors. After anti-sexual harassment laws and Party institutions had failed them, *Wave Makers* helped them visualize an alternative outcome for themselves. Retributive justice had eluded them, but transformative justice, justice coming from community rather than courts, and delivering healing instead of vengeance, suddenly felt within reach.

This reading of events is informed by the article's larger theoretical undertaking: testing the anti-carceral critique of #MeToo.

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[9] Chen and Huang, "Taiwan's Belated #MeToo."

[10] Chien and Yan, Wave Makers; Cheng and Handley, "Wave Makers."

[11] Hsieh, "Wave Makers."; Wei, "A Netflix Show."; Xu, "Wave Makers."

[12] See for example the late 2017 controversy following the suicide of author and sexual assault survivor Lin Yi-han, or the 2020 scandal surrounding Kuomintang MP Chen Hsueh-sheng's public sexual harassment of DPP MP Fan Yun.

The term 'anti-carceral feminism', coined by American sociologist Elizabeth Bernstein, designates a strand of feminist critique against the "feminism-as-crime-control" paradigm, that is, the reliance on criminal justice tools to fight the patriarchy.[13] For anti-carceral feminists, the collaboration between feminism and the "carceral state" is a form of co-optation that strengthens the criminal justice system, further oppressing the most vulnerable segments of society and reinforcing the dynamics behind gendered violence.[14] Denouncing a discrepancy between the punitive solutions offered by the carceral state and the justice needs of victim-survivors, anti-carceral feminism advocates for transformative justice: an intersectional, anti-state, community-driven model of justice.[15] Anti-carceral feminists have often critiqued the global #MeToo movement for failing to promote long-lasting cultural change.[16] They accuse it of taking a "carceral turn," focusing on the culpability and legal prosecution of individual perpetrators rather than socializing the problem.[17] Throughout the article, I engage with this critique, finding both merits and limitations for it. On one hand, Taiwan's #MeToo confirms the inadequacy of legal tools for tackling gendered violence and confirms anti-carceral feminism's "carceral turn" prediction: as will be shown, except for survivors, all the other actors involved reacted to #MeToo by resorting to carceral tools. On the other hand, however, a close reading of Taiwan's #MeToo's breaking cases suggests that its "carceral turn" is not so much a prerogative of the movement, as a product of its immersion in a carceral society. When stripped to its core, Taiwan's #MeToo appears to be fueled by a sentiment more closely aligned with transformative than retributive justice, and thus conducive to the feminist fight as envisioned by anti-carceral feminism.

These arguments are sustained by a critical discourse analysis of online archives about Taiwan's #MeToo. The analysis comprises 48 sources, 30 of which are in Mandarin and 18 in English. These are five social media posts and their comment sections, 31

[13] Bernstein, "Carceral politics," 251.
[14] Gruber, *Feminist war on crime*, 8-9.
[15] Kim, "Transformative justice," 319.
[16] Moro, "Feminist flashpoints," 262.
[17] Taylor, "Anti-Carceral Feminism," 34; Moro, "Feminist Flashpoints," 264-5.

journalistic articles, 11 press releases by Taiwanese political parties or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and one TV series. The sources were selected to reflect early public discourse around the movement; as such, most of them were produced by Taiwanese authors between April 2023 and June 2024. As the selection is only a cross-section, however, it undoubtedly does not provide a comprehensive overview of all the actors involved in the movement, and reflects my own biases in selecting and analyzing these sources.

The article is structured as follows. First, the analysis is grounded in literature about Taiwan's feminist movements, anti-carceral feminism, and #MeToo. Next, findings from the critical discourse analysis are presented in two sections: one covering the proliferation of survivor testimonies, and the other covering the responses of the other actors involved. Finally, the discussion explains how the findings corroborate my overarching arguments about Taiwan's #MeToo, and reflects on its implications about #MeToo as a global movement.

Literature Review

Through an anti-carceral lens, a review of Taiwan's feminist literature reveals two things: that the local feminist discourse is essentially a debate between carceral and anti-carceral activists divided over tactics, and that carceral feminists are winning. In Taiwan, the carceral versus anti-carceral debate pans out as a divide between state and radical feminists. This divide traces back to 1987, when, after decades of grassroots resistance, martial law was lifted, precipitating Taiwan's democratization.[18] For feminism, this marked the end of systemic repression, but also of contingent unity. When the movement emerged from the underground, its internal differences also surfaced, leading to a gradual fragmentation that eventually produced the ongoing tactical divergence.[19] Radical feminists view patriarchal oppression as sustained by the state; therefore, they deem the law not only inadequate, but often detrimental in fighting gendered violence, and reject any institutional collaboration, privileging grassroots tactics.[20] Conversely, moderate

[18] Chang, *Women's Movements,* 118; Ho, "Social Discipline," 84-7.
[19] Chang, "Studies of Taiwan," 91-2; Chen, *Acting Otherwise*, 46.
[20] Ho, "Social Discipline," 83-106; Fan, *Social Movements*, 92-6.

feminists, often labeled "state" feminists, pursue change within the system, interacting with institutions through lobbying or direct participation.[21] This collaboration has been fruitful: since the 1990s, state feminists have dominated the Taiwanese feminist debate, playing a large policy-making role in the promulgation of Taiwan's laws against gendered violence.[22] The small body of literature on Taiwan's #MeToo, largely written before 2023 about the movement's failure to materialize, also confirms state feminism's prevalence.[23] Taiwan's anti-violence effort is primarily assessed by its legal benchmarks, with authors commenting on both the comprehensiveness of Taiwan's laws and their undermobilization.[24] Crucially, however, the law's appropriateness as a feminist political tool is never questioned. Thus, a review of Taiwanese feminist discourse reveals Taiwan as a young democracy marked by an open political environment where feminist activists make large use of institutional tools against gendered violence.[25] These features make Taiwan the ideal subject for engaging with the anti-carceral critique of the #MeToo movement.

Much like Taiwan's feminist discourse, anti-carceral literature is deeply concerned with feminist tactics; unlike Taiwanese state feminists, however, anti-carceral authors reject legal tools, often on the grounds of their incompatibility with victim-survivor needs. This rejection dates to the 1970s, when anti-carceral feminism's central ideas took shape amid the historical alliance between American POC (people of color) activists for prison abolition and gender justice. Confronted with the increasing incarceration of POC women for crimes committed while defending themselves against domestic violence, the two activist fronts joined forces, forming a "distinctive left antiviolence politics."[26] Today, their legacy of non-statist strategies survives in anti-carceral feminism's rejection of the criminal justice system's tools, which are seen as "antithetical to the

[21] Fan and Wu, "Long Feminist March," 325; Fan, *Social Movements,* 105-7.
[22] Fan and Wu, "Long Feminist March," 313-25.
[23] Huang, "MeToo in East Asia."
[24] Chen, "Power of Law."; Huang, "MeToo in East Asia."
[25] Fan and Wu, "Long Feminist March," 313-25; Yi and Chang, "Gender in Taiwan," 230.
[26] Thuma, *All Our Trials*, 2.

justice needs of victim-survivors."[27] For anti-carceral feminists, survivors rarely envision justice as their perpetrator's individual punishment and imprisonment.[28] Rather, what they seek, as prison abolition scholar Chloë Taylor compellingly conveys, is "recognition and validation of their stories, respect, dignity, voice, agency, an apology or accountability on the part of the person who harmed them, to feel safe again, and for what occurred not to happen to someone else."[29] As such, from an anti-carceral stance, a law-based approach to the fight against gendered violence is not just ineffective, but also detrimental to the cause.

This stance is also the main reason why many anti-carceral scholars are critical of #MeToo. As a movement generally recognized to trigger the promulgation or expansion of anti-violence laws, #MeToo is accused of only serving those already served by the law, which is systematically skewed against victims, especially women.[30] This point finds widespread support even among more law-positive scholars: literature generally finds that, due to the "gendered credibility deficit", female victims must fulfil impossible standards of "good victimhood" to be accorded consideration, let alone trust.[31] Perpetrators, in turn, are often served by the law twice: when they are acquitted by it, and when they weaponize it by suing the victim back for defamation, often successfully.[32] However, this is where the divide between carceral and anti-carceral views kicks in: despite the aforementioned criticisms, some scholars still deem institutional tools useful for feminism, whereas others do not. This divide has direct repercussions on each camp's appraisals of #MeToo's transformative power. Carceral scholars focus on #MeToo's "consciousness-raising effect," often describing the movement as "doing what the law could not:" getting the world to

[27] Thuma, *All Our Trials*, 122; Powell, Henry, and Flynn, *Rape Justice,* 227-8.
[28] Powell, Henry, and Flynn, *Rape Justice;* Taylor, "Anti-Carceral Feminism."
[29] Taylor, "Anti-Carceral Feminism," 41.
[30] Fileborn and Loney-Howes, *#MeToo and Social Change*, 4; Gruber, *Feminist war on crime*, 8-9; Chen, "Power of Law," 516; Taylor, "Anti-Carceral Feminism," 31; Huang, "MeToo in East Asia," 488.
[31] Fileborn and Loney-Howes, *#MeToo and Social Change*, 32; Nicholls, *Dismantling Rape Culture*, 10; Phipps, *Me, Not You*; Roshanravan, "'White Detours," 239–55.
[32] Noel and Oppenheimer, *Global #MeToo*, 497-507.

listen to women and exposing the pervasiveness of gendered violence as well as the limits of institutional responses to it.[33] For carceral feminists, this revelation only underscores the need for more, better laws, which #MeToo can help inform.[34] Taiwanese feminist scholar Chen Chao-ju, for instance, argues that privileged women's wins within #MeToo's "court of public opinion" can translate to ordinary women's wins in real courts, enabling tangible institutional change.[35] Anti-carceral feminists, in turn, often frame their critique of #MeToo through a dichotomy between the global online movement and its local offline origins, presenting them as irreconcilable.[36] 'Me too' might have been a collective exercise of empathy conducive to cultural change, but #MeToo, with its emphasis on individual culpability over cultural and institutional accountability, is structurally doomed to take a carceral turn.[37] In this view, #MeToo's call for holding individual perpetrators accountable directly triggers legal reform, which in turn expands the range of criminalized behaviors, creating more avenues to criminalize marginalized people while posing no threat to those already protected by the carceral state: powerful men who can avoid conviction.[38]

Building on this anti-carceral critique of #MeToo, Tanya Serisier takes aim at the movement's supposed strength, its taboo-breaking ability, denouncing it as tactically flawed. She argues that #MeToo, at its core, is an extreme version of the feminist practice known as "Politics of Speaking Out," which employs experiential storytelling (Speaking Out) as a political tool.[39] Each #MeToo wave codifies a new survivor narrative: an identifiable narrative genre featuring an *ideal victim*, the good victim, and an *ideal outcome*,

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[33] Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller, *Digital Feminist Activism*, 5; Nicholls, *Dismantling Rape Culture*; Huang, "MeToo in East Asia," 483–49; Chen, "Power of Law," 515.

[34] Cossins, "Feminist Criminology"; Noel and Oppenheimer, *Global #MeToo.*

[35] Chen, "Power of Law," 516; Noel and Oppenheimer, *Global #MeToo.*

[36] Phipps, *Me, Not You*; Roshanravan, "'White Detours"; Burke, "Inception."

[37] Phipps, *Me, Not You*; Roshanravan, "White Detours."; Nicholls, *Dismantling Rape Culture*, 10.

[38] Fileborn and Loney-Howes, *#MeToo and Social Change*; Phipps, *Me, Not You;* Roshanravan, "White Detours."

[39] Serisier, *Speaking out.*

consisting of the perpetrator's conviction and incarceration.[40] After starting from one story, or breaking case, the narrative is reproduced with minimal incremental variation until it strays too far from the original mold, or until the movement loses public attention; then, it stops. As such, the movement simultaneously enhances inclusion, generating a positive transformative cycle that expands the narrative on gendered violence, and exclusion, creating a new group of marginalized stories. Thus, Serisier concludes that #MeToo exposes the limits of the Speaking Out tactic.[41] This article's analysis builds on her work, applying her Speaking Out framework to Taiwan's #MeToo to assess the merits of the anti-carceral critique of the movement.

#MeToo's Explosion

An analysis of Taiwan's #MeToo's development arc reflects Serisier's conceptualization of the movement as reproducing the Politics of Speaking Out tactic, limitations included.[42] About a month after *Wave Makers* was released, former Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) staffer Chen Chien-jou used Facebook to share her own experience of workplace sexual harassment and institutional dismissal, explicitly citing the show as her inspiration.[43] Her story immediately turned into a nationwide scandal.[44] Days after her testimony, another former DPP staffer, Chen Wen-hsuan, came forward with a strikingly similar story, which became equally viral.[45] Together with Chang Ya-ching's fictional case, these two real stories acted as Taiwan's #MeToo breaking cases, inspiring hundreds more testimonies. Soon, the cases encompassed virtually all sectors, including politics, academia, entertainment, media, sports, and even activism. What had started as a political scandal had grown into a nationwide social movement that lasted throughout the summer,

[40] *Ibid.*
[41] Serisier, "Beyond Speaking Out," 209-25.
[42] Serisier, *Speaking out*; Serisier, "Beyond Speaking Out," 209-25.
[43] Chen, "Call-for-help letter."
[44] Zhu, "Sexual harassment."
[45] Sun, "Second sexual harassment case."; Chen, "Let me be brave."

only beginning to fade in late August.[46] Thus, the movement fits Serisier's conceptualization: Taiwan's #MeToo started from one story, Chang Ya-ching's fictional story, setting a new *survivor narrative* featuring an *ideal victim* and *ideal outcome*. Then the narrative spiraled out, first incorporating stories presenting striking resemblances to the initial one, Chen Chien-jou's and Chen Wen-hsuan, and then hundreds more, but without straying too far from the codified narrative, and only for a limited time period.

Taiwan's #MeToo's three breaking cases also highlight the movement's taboo-breaking and trauma-healing strengths vis-à-vis the inadequacy of legal tools to meet victim-survivor needs. At first glance, the movement's core *survivor narrative* is not that peculiar: a young woman is sexually assaulted while working for a political party, denounces the incident, and is let down by the party's response to the extent of leaving politics. However, what makes Ya-ching a refreshing *ideal victim* is that, while in a sense, being fictional, she could not be more *ideal*, she is also an imperfect victim with a "messy story."[47] She lies, manipulates, participates in an affair, and has feelings for her abuser: all behaviors that would usually taint her innocence before the court of public opinion — or any court, for that matter. Moreover, the violence she suffers consists of inappropriate comments and touching, a behavior that Taiwanese society has historically dismissed as "eating tofu," an old-fashioned expression that playfully equates women to "tofu" for men to eat.[48] I argue that these features of Ya-ching's story helped expand the range of behaviors socially recognized as violent in Taiwan, making the validation of victims less conditional on their moral impeccability.[49]

This expansion is already visible in Chen Chien-jou's story, Taiwan's first real #MeToo story. In her Facebook post, which is disseminated with *Wave Makers* references, the former DPP staffer recounts being touched inappropriately during a work commute, which would normally also be dismissed as being treated like

[46] Hsu, "MeToo Storm."; Valentine, "It's time."; Davidson, "Taiwan's #MeToo movement."
[47] Nicholls, *Dismantling Rape Culture*, 154.
[48] Chen, "Why is Taiwan late?"
[49] Valentine, "It's time."

"tofu."[50] The second person to speak out in Taiwan's #MeToo, Chen Wen-hsuan, was even more of an imperfect victim: in addition to enduring a lesser form of violence, she was also friends with her abuser, and an inefficient employee.[51] Citing *Wave Maker*s and Chen Chien-jou as her inspiration, Chen Wen-hsuan took to Facebook to recount how she, too, was the object of a colleague's "eating tofu," denounced the incident, and faced dismissal and bullying instead of redress, eventually leaving her job.

These last two details are important: unlike *Wave Makers*' Chang Ya-ching, both Chen Chien-jou and Chen Wen-hsuan could not count on the help of their superiors, who effectively acted as second-degree perpetrators. The gravity of this betrayal is evident in Taiwan's breaking cases. Chen Wen-hsuan, for instance, directly calls out both her abuser (Chen Yu-hao) and the DPP officer who failed to help her (Tsai Mu-lin) as "perpetrators."[52] Chen Chien-jou, in turn, never even names her abuser, later identified as DPP contractor Hsueh Chao-hui.[53] Rather, she centers her callout on the officer who mishandled her case, Hsu Chia-tien, whose behavior was a true masterclass in victim-blaming: she completely dismissed Chen's experience, discouraging her from activating the DPP's procedures for handling sexual misconduct.[54] Chen Chien-jou's post vividly describes the first-degree physical and emotional pain caused by the abuse, but also the second-degree pain inflicted by Hsu. "I came to the DPP with enthusiasm and left with hurt and regret. I lost the light in my eyes," she writes.[55]

Indeed, when it comes to the *ideal outcome* part of Serisier's conceptualization, reality diverges from fiction. In *Wave Makers*, Chang Ya-ching, despite her imperfect victimhood, gets a happy ending; in real life, Chen Chien-jou and Chen Wen-hsuan did not. Yet, I argue that it is precisely this divergence that prompted them to speak out. In terms of *ideal outcome*, Ya-ching's storyline set the bar quite high. Justice, for her, involved the fulfillment of both her

[50] Chen, "Call-for-help letter."
[51] Chen, "Let me be brave."
[52] *Ibid.*
[53] Sun, "Brother Hui."; Teng, "Taiwan's #MeToo reckoning."
[54] Chen, "Call-for-help letter."
[55] *Ibid.*

material and emotional needs: materially, she got her life back, keeping her job while her abusers lost theirs; emotionally, she saw her pain validated by the press, her workplace, and her family. Where institutional tools failed her, human empathy stepped in, doing "what the law could not."[56] Unlike the DPP officers from the real breaking cases, who undermobilized or weaponized the institutional tools at their disposal, the fictional party officer took the matter to heart, finding a way around institutional obstacles. I argue that this portrayal of an alternative ending to what Chen Chien-jou and Chen Wen-hsuan saw as a fictional version of themselves helped them envision a reality where they, too, could access justice—this time, by appealing to human empathy, rather than regulations.

This also explains the peculiar timing of Taiwan's #MeToo. As a movement based on Speaking Out, #MeToo can only emerge when victims perceive their environment as open to receiving their testimonies and, as such, conducive to the pursuit of justice. For a long time, Taiwanese society did not warrant that perception. Where justice is understood in carceral terms, if the legal framework to tackle injustice is already present, but ineffective, the logical conclusion is that justice is unattainable, and speaking out is useless. Realizing that justice may feel unattainable because it is being pursued with inadequate tools requires imagining society outside the carceral framework. *Wave Makers* enabled this jailbreak of imagination, helping Taiwanese sexual harassment victims envision a new way of pursuing justice. #MeToo, in turn, gave them a frame to act upon that realization, a template to operate in, a narrative to follow.

Indeed, the alternative ending envisioned by Chen Chien-jou and Chen Wen-hsuan is in line with the vision of justice promoted by anti-carceral feminism. Their posts offer several glimpses into their personal concept of *ideal outcome*, as well as what they ask to heal. Chien-jou's post, titled "a belated but worth receiving call-for-help letter," describes her realization that staying silent for the greater good "was not for her own good," and the subsequent decision to "be brave for herself for once," and become the person

[56] Chen, "Power of Law," 515.

she would have needed by her side.[57] Motivating her decision to speak out, she says, "I want to believe in the world again, in fairness, in justice, in people being understood."[58] Wen-hsuan chooses almost the same words, titling her post "let me be brave for myself for once," and explaining how her sense of responsibility towards other women ultimately defeated her fear of speaking out.[59] The posts suggest that the decision to speak out was driven by hope rather than revenge. Both Chien-jou and Wen-hsuan view the officers who failed them as second perpetrators who hurt them as much as their material abusers, if not more. However, they do not announce any legal action, indicating that their *ideal outcome* in participating in #MeToo is not their perpetrators' legal conviction, as suggested by the anti-carceral critique.[60] Rather, their focus is on their healing and that of their fellow survivors, on helping and being helped, on a kind of justice that transforms, not one that punishes. Thus, Taiwan's case suggests that survivors participating in #MeToo are not looking for justice in the legal system, contradicting anti-carceral feminism's argument of #MeToo being an inherently carceral movement. Rather, the case study suggests that #MeToo can even help promote anti-carceral practices, redirecting those who feel wronged by retributive justice to look for understanding and healing within their community.

Nonetheless, Taiwan's #MeToo's capacity to expand the local survivor narrative and inspire new visions of justice comes with several qualifications. Firstly, the fact that Taiwan's #MeToo breaking stories reflected Ya-ching's so closely, and that all subsequent major cases were also about "eating tofu," rather than, for instance, rape, suggests that the movement's dent in Taiwan's culture of silence might be more modest than it seems. This supports Serisier's critique of #MeToo as only capable of breaking so many taboos at a time, leaving out stories that diverge too much from the codified narrative.[61] Secondly, Chen Chien-jou's and Chen Wen-hsuan's avoidance of legal tools should not be misinterpreted

[57] Chen, "Call-for-help letter."
[58] *Ibid.*
[59] Chen, "Let me be brave."
[60] Serisier, *Speaking out.*
[61] Chen, "Why is Taiwan late?"

as them not demanding accountability from their perpetrators, or embracing transformative justice in an ideological way. In fact, both women highlight the injustice of their perpetrators retaining their powerful jobs, hinting that they would like that to change. Moreover, while Taiwan's breaking cases confirm that victims do not seek justice in courts, this is not necessarily due to a rejection of retributive justice per se. More likely, the reason why victims, after exposing their perpetrators, avoid pressing charges is that they do not trust the law to deliver retributive justice, either.[62] This is partly caused by the pessimism-inducing observation that even powerful women struggle to win gendered violence cases, compounded by a justified fear of legal retaliation: the accused are suing their accusers back for defamation, and they are winning.[63]

#MeToo's Carceral Turn

Indeed, when it comes to the accused, and more generally to all other actors involved in the movement, the discourse analysis partially rehabilitates the anti-carceral critique of #MeToo, by showing that in Taiwan's #MeToo did, in fact, take a carceral turn. From the alleged abusers to institutions, feminist organizations, the press, and the public, all the societal reactions to #MeToo reflect a carceral ideology.

The alleged perpetrators primarily reveal their carceral ideology through their reliance on institutional tools and avoidance of confrontation with their accusers, especially if public. Unlike survivors, the alleged abusers, mostly men, trust laws and institutions.[64] While their responses vary, they almost unfailingly handle their accusations through official channels.[65] A minority does so genuinely, recognizing their faults and accepting the legal consequences.[66] The majority, however, responds by issuing a statement, often through their lawyer, combining a non-apology along the lines of "I am sorry *if,*" with a disingenuous offer to

[62] Chen and Huang, "Taiwan's Belated #MeToo."
[63] JRF, "Post-#MeToo Era."; Xu, "Fan Yun"; Hawkins, "Taiwan's ruling party."
[64] Focus Taiwan, "Report."
[65] Chen and Huang, "Taiwan's Belated #MeToo."; Tsai, "This case."; Tsai, "Letter."; Kun-chi Fu, "Willing to accept investigation."
[66] Everington, "Mickey Huang."

cooperate with any official proceedings.[67] The offer reveals a deep sense of impunity: by publicly inviting their accuser to sue them, the accused communicate that they have nothing to fear from a trial. In contrast, data on their weaponization of the law in defamation lawsuits betrays their fear of online accusations.[68] Famous activist Wang Dan offers a case in point: upon learning that his accuser had sued him, he expressed satisfaction, because "seeking the truth through legal means is a more rigorous approach than engaging in online speculations."[69] Kuomintang legislator Fu Kun-chi offers another masterclass in impunity: knowing he had been seen forcibly kissing journalist Tung Cheng-yu, he still stated "If there is any sexual harassment case, please report it in accordance with the law."[70] Indeed, time proved his arrogance right: despite there being eyewitnesses, his political career remained unaffected.[71]

The institutional response to #MeToo was also carceral in nature, exhibiting a belief in legal reform as the primary tool for pursuing social change. At the party level, although all major parties were touched by #MeToo scandals, only the ruling party, the DPP, responded proactively.[72] One day after Chen Chien-jou's post, the DPP announced Hsu Chia-tien's resignation, internal investigations, and a reform of the party's sexual harassment guidelines.[73] The reform made the reporting mechanism more direct, the penalties stricter, and enhanced internal gender equality education programs.[74] Moreover, in early 2024, the Party announced the expulsion of fifty cadres, including Chen Wen-hsuan's abuser Chen Yu-hao and her superior Tsai Mu-lin— although it remains unclear how many others were fired for #MeToo-related reasons.[75] At the government level, the response was similarly swift, and strictly legal. By July, the "Three Gender Equality Laws" had been amended. The so-called "Three Amendments" became effective on the

[67] Pan, "Fu Kun-chi."; China Times. "Judicial justice."
[68] JRF, "Post-#MeToo Era."
[69] Hawkins, "Taiwan's ruling party."
[70] Pan, "Fu Kun-chi."; Fu, "Willing to accept investigation."
[71] Shih and Chung, "Fu Kun-chi leads delegation."
[72] Chiang, "27 cases."; Yen, "Examining the measures."
[73] DPP, "Central Party Committee."
[74] Liu, "Five major measures."
[75] Yeh and Huang, "DPP expels 50 members."

symbolic date of March 8: they introduced harsher penalties, widened the range of criminalized behaviors, raised the fines for non-compliance, and mandated workplaces to provide "sexual harassment victim services."[76]

The response of Taiwanese feminist activism, in turn, reflected its historical divisions: while a radical minority unsuccessfully sought to channel the #MeToo momentum towards a grassroots mobilization, the moderate majority aligned itself with the state's carceral response. Legacy organizations generally welcomed #MeToo as a constructive development, viewing its contribution towards gender justice as limited, but nonetheless positive.[77] Their first joint action was a press conference advocating for legal reform.[78] Additionally, they organized discussion forums, a concert, and a joint initiative to provide legal assistance to victims being sued for defamation.[79] When the Three Amendments became effective, they assessed the reforms positively, but also flagged some remaining legal blind spots.[80] Overall, while some legacy NGOs criticized the choice of continuing to expand a legal system that is not doing its job, most of them aligned with the government's carceral tactics, reflecting their historical ideological proximity to institutions.[81] Grassroots feminism, in turn, attempted in vain to mobilize the masses. In late August, in the only noteworthy attempt at taking #MeToo off the internet and to the streets, a group of university students organized a #MeToo march in Taipei to reflect on gendered violence as a systemic issue.[82] The march drew some political attention, with legislator Fan Yun joining, but ultimately only mobilized around 200 people.[83]

I argue that this scarce mobilization, which is unusual for a society that has historically and recently shown a high public

[76] GOH, "Gender Equality Laws."; Executive Yuan, "Amendments."
[77] Ng and Lu, "Taiwan's MeToo laws."
[78] GOH, "MeToo movement."
[79] Li, "Women's groups."; Awakening Kaohsiung, "Decodification/Detoxification"; GOH, "#MeToo concert."
[80] GOH, "Professional services."; Awakening Foundation, "Statement."
[81] Ng and Lu, "Taiwan's new MeToo laws."
[82] Yi, "On the streets of Taiwan."; Wu and Huang, "Demonstrators in Taipei."
[83] Yi, "On the streets of Taiwan."; Focus Taiwan, "Hundreds march in Taipei."; Wu and Huang, "Demonstrators in Taipei."

participation in protests, suggests that Taiwan's larger public, too, is deeply influenced by its institutions' carceral culture.[84] In a society where the legal is already comprehensive, and activism is primarily understood as advocacy for institutional change, people are bound to be less receptive to mobilization around a cultural issue involving no clear legal outcomes. Another indication of the pervasiveness of carceral ideology is offered by the attitude of Taiwanese netizens, who flocked to the social media profiles of the people involved in the breaking cases to praise the survivors and chastise the perpetrators.[85] This indicates a societal tendency to individualize rather than socialize the issue of gendered violence and envision justice as punishment. Nonetheless, this enthusiastic remote participation also had its silver lining, confirming #MeToo's consciousness-raising ability. By confronting Taiwan's (self-)image as a women's rights champion with the ongoing pervasiveness of sexual harassment, the movement revitalized the national gendered violence discourse, contributing to destigmatizing the issue and advance towards its elimination.[86] Evidence includes the thousands of interactions with Chen Chien-jou's and Chen Wen-hsuan's posts, the surge in media attention to the subject, and data from feminist organizations, such as the 500% increase in company requests for sexual harassment training registered by the Modern Women's Foundation by late July.[87]

Discussion and Conclusion

This article's discourse analysis of online archives on Taiwan's #MeToo has offered partial support for the anti-carceral critique of #MeToo, but also substantive vindication of the movement. The first part of the analysis has focused on Taiwan's #MeToo development arc, zooming in on its three breaking cases. In line with anti-carceral feminism's arguments, the testimonies of Chen Chien-jou and Chen Wen-hsuan underscore the institutions' continuous failure of survivors and the mismatch between the institutional paths

[84] Hale, "Thousands of people protesting"; Fan, *Social Movements in Taiwan*, 1-14.
[85] Chen and Huang, "Taiwan's Belated #MeToo."; Hsu, "The world is amazing."; Chen, "Let me be brave."; Chen, "Call-for-help letter."; Wu, "Years after #MeToo."
[86] Davidson, "Taiwan's #MeToo movement."; Wang, "Women in Taiwan."
[87] Chen, "Call-for-help letter."; Wu, "Years after #MeToo."

to justice and victim-survivor needs. However, the testimonies also project a vision of justice that is much more aligned with transformative justice than with the punitive logic that anti-carceral feminism charges #MeToo with, suggesting that #MeToo is not, in fact, an inherently carceral movement.

Similarly, the analysis found both support and qualifications for Serisier's critique of #MeToo as exposing the limits of the Speaking Out tactic.[88] On the one hand, the time and scope limitations shown by Taiwan's #MeToo's taboo-breaking action do expose the tactic's structural flaws, including its simultaneously inclusionary and exclusionary nature. Each #MeToo wave can only make so many cultural breakthroughs, and Taiwan's was no exception. However, Taiwan's breaking cases also offer partial rehabilitation for the Speaking Out tactic. *Wave Makers*' update of Taiwan's *survivor narrative*, solidified by Chen Chien-jou's and Chen Wen-hsuan's stories, expanded the national concept of *ideal victim*. This helped shift the stigma around previously downplayed forms of violence, facilitating both individual and collective advancements towards gender justice. Moreover, Ya-ching's story did more than just codify a new *ideal outcome*: it helped victims envision an alternative ending to their stories, one where human empathy succeeds where laws fail, prompting them to redirect their search for justice from institutions to their fellow survivors, and society at large. This also explains the movement's peculiar timing: the jailbreak of imagination triggered by Wave Makers and propagated by #MeToo allowed survivors to think beyond their society's carceral definition of justice, granting them a window of opportunity to speak out again, a second chance at being heard.

Indeed, the second part of the analysis, surveying the response to #MeToo of perpetrators, institutions, activism, and the public, found that the movement did quickly take a carceral turn, as predicted by anti-carceral feminism. However, this should be read as a collateral effect of the movement's immersion in a carceral society, rather than a reflection of the movement per se. Taiwan's context, from an anti-carceral viewpoint, is the ultimate proof that no number of amendments will make the law effective against

[88] Serisier, *Speaking out*; Serisier, "Beyond Speaking Out," 209-25.

gendered violence, because it is the wrong tool. Yet, upon realizing the magnitude of its gendered violence problem, Taiwan's society still resorted to legal tools, exposing the pervasiveness of carceral ideology. Thus, in a global perspective, this research suggests that #MeToo has several structural flaws, but being inherently carceral is not one of them. To the contrary, #MeToo's contribution to the fight for gender justice is limited but meaningful, despite the reactionary force exerted by the carceral contexts it has to work within.

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Anti-Capitalist Ecology: Are Green Parties Part of a Counter-Hegemonic Movement?

Isa van Schaick

"The world is our garden." This phrase guided the exhibition "Garden Futures: Designing with Nature" in het Nieuwe Instituut museum in Rotterdam.[1] It showcased how the natural world should be understood as our communal garden, and how we should treat it mindfully and with the same care we treat our personal gardens with. The exhibition reminds us that the natural world is deeply dependent on the way we interact with it. It is affected by the way we live and how we organize our living environment in accordance with nature, especially in the case of the production systems that run our economy. To care for our personal gardens is to care for the global communal garden we share. Asking too much of our gardens, however, will eventually overburden its resources and lead to its death.

In 1968 the idea of the world being our communal garden and questions of how to communally manage our shared backyard arose amidst social movements pressing for "the search for alternative forms of social and cultural life."[2] The ecologist thinking that developed in this era argued that we must abandon the thought that the earth is a resource for us to exploit, a "common storehouse" or "gigantic warehouse" that can be used up at our demand.[3] This argument forms the basis of the 'deep' ecological philosophy developed by Arne Næss called *ecosophy.* Ecosophy, broader known as *ecocentrism*, is a philosophical approach that attributes

[1] Het Nieuwe Instituut, "Garden Futures."
[2] Touraine, "Introduction to Social Movements," 749.
[3] Tormey, *Anti-Capitalism,* 108-10.

innate value to all species on earth.[4] In his book, *Ecology, community and lifestyle* (1989), Næss displays his concept of ecosophy in the form of a manifesto divided in eight pointers. With this manifesto he argues for nature to be protected from human influence. The short document starts with pointer one: "The flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth has intrinsic value. The value of non-human life forms is independent of the usefulness these may have for narrow human purposes."[5] Deep ecology opposes a 'shallower' version of this ecological approach, *anthropocentrism*. Anthropocentric ecological philosophy is a theory that suggests that nature has value because humans place value on it.[6] Næss describes the latter movement as consisting of those "[who] fight against pollution and resource depletion. Central objective: the health and affluence of people in the developed countries . . ."[7]

The emergence and spread of these eco-philosophies were a reaction to the hyper-industrialist forms of production in both of capitalist and communist societies in the 1960s and 1970s.[8] Grassroots initiatives that first put forward these ideas soon developed into professionally organized organizations,[9] including the politically organized green parties we have today. Given that the ecological philosophies underpinning these parties describe nature as having (innate) value, some political theorists that are highlighted below have suggested that green party policy could be understood as anti-capitalist. Capitalism namely sees the natural world as a resource meant for exploitation, especially for the purpose of private (monetary) gain.[10] In its purest form, capitalism is defined as: "a system wherein all of the means of production (physical capital) are privately owned and run by the capitalist class for a profit, while most other people are workers who work for a salary or wage (and do not

[4] Burchell, "Challenge to Party Politics?" 8-14; Naess, "The Environmental Crisis," 29.
[5] Næss, "The Environmental Crisis," 29.
[6] Burchell, "Challenge to Party Politics?" 8-14
[7] Næss, "The Environmental Crisis," 28.
[8] Tormey, *Anti-capitalism*, 108-10.
[9] Gladwin, "The Theory and Politics," 60.
[10] Brand, "Beyond Green Capitalism," 96; Tormey, *Anti-Capitalism*, 108-10.

own the capital or product)."[11] The means of production are mostly objects coming out of the natural world. In a capitalist system, the value of these objects is determined on their monetary, exchange or trade-value. They are not seen as innately valuable or valued for their contribution to the surrounding habitat.

It is this contradiction in philosophy, the different kind of value nature is deemed to have in a capitalist and ecologist sense, that work from the early 1980s suggests that green parties are anti-capitalist.[12] More recent literature nuances this assumption. Tormey proposed in his book *Anti Capitalism: A Beginner's Guide* (2013) that only ecocentric green parties are often anti-capitalist, anthropocentric parties less so. Ecocentric parties are namely those groupings that are linked with alternative forms of socio-economic organization, such as anarchism and primitivism.[13] Primitivism is defined here as a social movement that wants to return to a pre-industrial society. In another recent article titled "Beyond Green Capitalism," Brand argues that Greens are at a crucial position to rethink existing modes of production (capitalism) to deal with the global negative effects of capitalism on people and nature, and how they already are a "promotor of . . . initiatives towards a social-ecological transformation."[14] Although these debates touch upon the idea of green parties being anti-capitalist, the scholarly debate does not fully substantiate these theoretical assumptions with empirical evidence. That is to say, it is difficult to trace in these works how the authors conclude that green parties are anti-capitalist.

In this article I argue that green parties are not *anti*-capitalist, as earlier scholars suggested, but are *pro*-capitalist instead. To make this argument, I have analyzed the content of the election manifestos of fourteen green parties in the Global North. With this I will demonstrate that green parties are in fact accommodating to capitalism, rather than pressuring for its demise. Depth of ecologism is not a factor that influenced this outcome, regardless of what is argued for in earlier work stated above.

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[11] Zimbalist and Sherman, *Political and Economic Systems*, 6-7.
[12] Gill and Law, "Global Hegemony," 459.
[13] Tormey, *Anti-Capitalism*, 108-10.
[14] Brand, "Beyond Green Capitalism," 96-101.

The article is divided in three parts. First, the methodology of the project is discussed, as well as the coding scheme that guided this research project. Secondly, the outcome of the analysis will be outlined. Finally, these results will be interpreted and discussed in the final section of this article.

Methodology

In this article, the content of fourteen election manifestos is analyzed of green parties that competed in lower house parliamentary elections in Western, capitalist, and highly industrialized states. Manifestos for lower houses were specifically considered as lower houses are not only often more powerful than upper houses, but are also more directly elected by the public.[15] Given the aggregative function of parties, which involves translating supporters' interest into policy, manifestos serve as central expressions of party and supporter base positions at a specific moment in time.[16] Since manifestos are designed to engage with the public during elections, and are a result of negotiations with supporters, they are thereby considered as documents that highlight the new ways of thought coming out of the *intellectual-masses dialectic*. Intellectual-masses dialectic is a Gramscian concept for the exchange of thoughts between leaders in society ('intellectuals') and the society at large ('masses') that support them. Out of these interactions alternatives to hegemonic culture in society arise, such as those that challenge capitalism.[17] Studying manifestos offers insight into the outcomes of the intellectual-masses debates between leaders and supporters.

In the case of an active intellectual-masses dialogue, and capitalist sentiments or post-capitalist visions exist within green parties, we should expect to find expressions of this in their manifestos. It is not clear if manifestos reflect the party's 'ideal policy positions,' achievable 'policy forecasts' or 'stated policy positions' that attract greater audiences, or a mixture of these three.[18] With manifestos, however, parties formulate a hypothetical policy

[15] Hague, Harrop and McCormick, *Comparative Government and Politics,* 133-4.
[16] Janda, "Interest Aggregation and Articulation," 789; Bingham Powell et al., *Comparative Politics Today*, 31-2; Eder et al., "Manifesto functions," 83.
[17] Olsaretti, "Croce, Philosophy and Intellectuals," 342-53.
[18] Laver, "Position and Salience," 67.

position, with which they try to win over an audience. Their manifestos will arguably not include all that green parties strive for when in a governmental role. Despite the above points considered, election manifestos are still the most transparent display of party policy and the most up-to-date version of the total party position on different agendas.

The manifestos selected for this research are chosen through a *diverse case selection* method. This method allows for testability of the effect of size and role in parliament matters regarding radicality of the policy position. The selected green parties show a variety of values; parties are either in parliament (in the lower house) or not, form part of the opposition or perform a governmental role. The analyzed parties are categorized according to the following formula: *Part of parliamentary body (yes/no) + Party size (% seats) + Government/Opposition = Party power potential.*

The party size of political parties is categorized based on a 10% threshold. While there is no well-rounded definition of what constitutes as a 'small party' expressed in a percentage of seats in parliament, this study handles small parties as those with less than 10% of the vote, while large parties are considered those with more than 10% of the vote. This data serves as an added independent variable in this study, as is expected that bigger parties and smaller parties react differently to parliamentary pressures. Bigger parties are expected to be more pressured by the logic of 'electoral competition' to maximalize a supporter base that is less radical than the party top (the pragmatists or Realo's). Smaller parties are expected to be more sensitive to the pressures of 'logic of constituency representation,' meaning that they stay more in line with the radical grassroot members and stay truer to their core principles (the fundamentalists or Fundi's).[19] Pragmatist-fundamentalist debates have been linked with the eco- and anthropocentric debates within green parties, where ecocentrism is linked with fundamentalists and anthropocentrism with pragmatists.[20] As party size and role is expected to influence the amount of fundamentalism and pragmatism in parties, party size was also examined in order to

[19] Doherty, "The Fundi-Reali Controversy," 96.
[20] Burchell, "A 'New' Challenge," 20.

determine whether party size influences depth of ecocentrism and thereby alter the outcome of anti-capitalist proposals.

The selected parties are all chosen based on their prevalence in advanced industrial societies. This criterion is based on the argument that green parties have the greatest success in societies where there are active post-materialistic debates that are caused by high levels of societal wealth.[21] For comparability, all parties compete in national, lower house parliamentary elections. Lastly, the election manifestos are all written in Germanic languages (Dutch, English and German), which allows for a content analysis of primary materials due to the linguistic capabilities of the researcher. The parties that were considered in this analysis are displayed in Table 1 below.

This research was conducted through a *qualitative content analysis* via a manually developed coding scheme following Schreier guidelines.[22] The content of the election manifestos was analyzed regarding the economic policy positions these parties have focusing on their positions on capitalism and possible anti-capitalistic critique. The unit of analysis were sentence-level text-excerpts. Special emphasis was put upon what kinds of concepts are used to describe alternatives to capitalism, if capitalism is described at all. The coding schemes for this research are stated in the below tables 2 to 4, shown below.

The coding scheme is based on some theoretical expectations that were stated in the introduction of this article. This framework was enhanced by inductively defined categories that were found during a pilot-run with the prototype coding scheme and were shaped by personal evaluation.

[21]Grant and Tilly, "Fertile Soil," 508.
[22] Schreier, "Qualitative Content Analysis," 121.

Table 1. Overview of the selected cases

State *Party*	Percentage in parliament (seats in lower house)	Gov./opp./no seat in nat. parl.	Year of election
The Netherlands			
GroenLinks-PvdA	16,67% (25/150 seats)	Opposition	2023
Partij voor de Dieren	2% (3/150 seats)	Opposition	2023
De Groenen	0,0% (0/150 seats)	No seat	2023
Belgium			
Groen	5,33% (8/150 seats)	Government	2019
Germany			
Bündnis 90/Die Grünen	16,03% (118/736 seats)	Government	2021
Ökologisch-Demokratische Partei	0,0% (0/736 seats)	No seat	2021
Klimaliste	0,0% (0/736 seats)	No seat	2021
MUT	0,0% (0/736 seats)	No seat	2021
Austria			
Die Grünen – Die Grüne Alternative	14,21% (26/183 seats)	Government	2019
Ireland			
The Green Party - Comhaontas Glas	7,5% (12/160 seats)	Government	2020
United Kingdom			
The Green Party (of England and Wales)	0,17% (1/573 seats)	Opposition	2019
Australia			
The Greens	2,65% (4/151 seats)	Opposition	2022
Canada			
The Green Party of Canada	0,59% (2/338 seats)	Opposition	2021
New Zealand			
Green party of Aoteaoroa New Zealand-Rōpū Kākāriki o Aotearoa, Niu Tireni	12,2% (15/123 seats)	Opposition	2023

Table 2. Ideology

Concept	Description	Examples	Rules
Ecocentrism (Deep ecology)	Displays the philosophy that ascribes innate value to the natural world, apart from the value the natural world is deemed by humans.	"Giving animals rights is not enough. In the policy choices we make, we should account for animal welfare."[23]	Places value on: - non-human objects beyond their utility or profitability in human terms; - health of the planet, biodiversity, animal rights and welfare, etc.
Anthropocentrism ('Shallow' ecology)	Displays the philosophy that nature only has value because humans place value on it.	"States in the (Global) South get the chance to process and handle raw materials into products, so that they can earn more themselves."[24]	Places value on: - non-human objects in terms of utility and profitability to humans; - utility of raw materials that provide in livelihood security, etc.
Combination	Displays both signs of anthropocentrism and ecocentrism.	"We need an extensive biomass strategy so that the production and the import of biomass for energy generation or animal feed does not destruct animal welfare."[25]	Places value on: - non-human objects beyond and within terms of utility or profitability to humans; - health of planet and animals, as well as objects for human utility.

The election manifestos were analyzed on the type of ecologist perspective that was present in the text and were divided into the categories *deep ecology* (ecocentrism) and *shallow ecology* (anthropocentrism). An additional category of 'combination' is added, as per the pilot it became noticeable that parties often merge the two ideologies into one policy that suits both philosophies.

[23] Groen, "Groen: Verkiezingsprogramma," 10.
[24] GroenLinks-PvdA, "Hoopvolle Toekomst," 17.
[25] Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, "Unsere Zukunft Wählen?" 42.

Table 3. Party stances on capitalism

Concept	Description	Examples	Rules
Criticism	Criticisms on capitalism without a policy proposal on how to alter it.	"It is an assault driven forward by corporations and the privileged few, putting profit over people and the places they love."[26]	Criticism on economic activity regarding fixation on economic growth despite: - planetary boundaries; - human health; - or, environmental damage, etc.
Endorsement	Statements that endorse the current capitalistic system.	"We advocate good conditions for small businesses and the self-employed so that they have good competition chances."[27]	Positive mentions of: - economic growth; - enhancement of market position, etc.

Table 4. Proposed party policy

Concept	Description	Examples	Rules
Alternative economic system	Policy proposals that present an alternative economic system other than capitalism.	E.g. eco-socialist policies advocating for collective ownership of means of production and ecological rationality.	Proposal of another economic system than capitalism.
Alternatives within the current economic system	Policy proposals that endorse capitalism but propose alternatives to the current system that are more environmentally friendly. Further separately defined as systemic (macro) and local (micro) proposals.	"A comprehensive development of environmental and resource taxes incl. co2 limit taxes."[28]	Macro, mentions: - de-growth; - ecological sustainable growth; - circular economies; - alternative measures of wealth. Micro, mentions: - self-governing; - localized solutions; - subsidies for national or regional organizations.

[26] The Green Party of England and Wales, "Our Political Programme," 7.
[27] Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, "Unsere Zukunft Wählen?" 68.
[28] Ökologisch-Demokratische Partei, "Wahlprogramm zur Bundestagswahl," 18.

Parties therefore often position themselves somewhere on the spectrum between the two ideologies. Besides determining the place on the ideological spectrum, party size, and position in parliament, the different types of expected anti-capitalistic positions are determined by applying the following criteria. First, the overall party stance on capitalism is determined as either 'criticism' or 'endorsement'. Note that only the overall policy position is stated here, not their specific policy proposals. Second, the material is assessed on whether the proposed policy presents an alternative economic system, or an alternative *within* the current economic system.

Results

The analysis of the election manifestos revealed varying degrees of ecocentrism and anthropocentrism among the parties. The combination of anthropocentrism and ecocentrism was the most prevalent in eight of the fourteen parties (50,77%-64,71% of the coded text per manifesto). Of these eight parties, four are considered large (occupying more than 10% of the seats in their respective lower houses), and three out of these four large parties are in government. As an example of a combination text was found in The Austrian Die Grünen–Die Grüne Alternative manifesto. The party mentions the necessity of water for both natures' and human interest in: "The protection of our soil, water and air as the basis of life must be prioritized in all forms of agricultural activity."[29]

The second most prevalent kind of excerpt was ecocentrism, predominantly found in five parties (49,65%-72,13% idem.), all of which are considered small (occupying less than 10% of the seats in their respective lower houses). The Dutch Partij voor de Dieren for example states in their manifesto: "The convictions of this program stem from our ecocentric thought: animals, climate, nature and environment form the guiding principles for the Party for the Animals."[30] These text excerpts emphasize the value of the well-being of nature and animals, independent of profitability and human utility. Least common were anthropocentric texts (0,0%-22,57%).

[29] Die Grünen-Die Grüne Alternative, "Unsere Zukunft Wählen?" 22, author's translation.

[30] Partij voor de Dieren, "Een Wereld te Herwinnen," 5, author's translation.

Text excerpts included those expressed in the Irish Green Party election manifesto: "Water is one of our most precious resources and every human has a basic right to sufficient, safe and affordable water."[31] Excerpts such as this, which denote the utility of resources for humans, were labeled anthropocentric. In short: the analysis of these manifestos demonstrated that larger and governmental parties seem to combine the two ideologies, while smaller, opposition and extra-parliamentary parties seem more predominantly ecocentric.

Many green parties criticize the current economic system, specifically, for being excessively growth- and profit-driven at the expense of human health and planetary boundaries. Out of the fourteen parties, eleven are more critical than supportive of the current economic system in theirs states, with between 73,91% and 100% of the excerpts being regarded as critical as opposed to endorsing. Party size does not influence this outcome. Regarding the capitalist economic system's wastefulness, for example, Austria's Die Grünen-Die Grüne Alternative states: "Our current economy is based on extracting resources from nature, producing excessive new products, using them for a short time and then throwing them away." [32] Criticisms are not only raised regarding the capitalist economic system's wastefulness, but also regarding the powerful role of transnational corporations in politics. Power with which they gain political influence thereby shaping the political agenda and evade taxes with that they defy social responsibility. Both the Australian Greens and the Green Party in the United Kingdom criticize donations from the wealthy to politicians, including donations from the fossil fuel industry. The UK Greens state: "Money buys power in our current system, with donations from wealthy individuals and groups shaping the priorities of establishment politicians."[33]

However, green parties are not solely critical of the capitalist economic system. Many explicitly highlight the value of medium and small enterprises, stating that these are the backbone of society. The Canadian Green Party mentions: "Small businesses are the backbone of the Canadian economy, creating more employment in

[31] Irish Green Party, "2030," 44.
[32] Die Grünen-Die Grüne Alternative, "Unsere Zukunft Wählen?" 14, author's translation.
[33] The Green Party of England and Wales, "Our Political Programme," 11.

the private sector than the big corporations."[34] This view is shared by the Dutch GroenLinks-PvdA party about Dutch small and medium companies as well.[35] The German party Bündnis 90/die Grünen endorses global capitalistic trade, stating: "Trade is an important foundation of our prosperity: Fair trade contributes to deepening of international partnerships and thus to a safer world."[36] Despite statements of support like these, only three out of fourteen parties endorse the current capitalist economic system more than they criticize it (53,33%-63,34%). The size of the party and its ideological background does not play a role here.

A thorough examination of the analyzed party manifestos reveals that no party explicitly expresses a plan for an alternative economy. Although parties often criticize the workings of capitalism, no substantive alternative economic system is proposed. Instead, parties of all sizes have proposed modifications and limitations to the current economic system while keeping the premises of the capitalistic economic system intact. For instance, the proposal of the Ökologisch Demokratische Partei: "Using instead of owning: Promoting shared use, rental and exchange,"[37] does provide an alternative to private ownership, yet does not signify a complete overhaul of the capitalist economic system.

Instead, all parties pursue alternatives within the capitalist economic system, albeit not in the same manner. Notably, micro policy proposals outweigh the macro policy proposals in thirteen out of fourteen election manifestos (46,27%-89,47%). This disparity may be influenced by the inclusion of two regional election manifestos, such as those of MUT and Klimaliste, that serve as proxy manifestos (see Discussion). The subsequent sections will provide a detailed analysis of these micro- and macro policy proposals.

In their manifesto, the Dutch party De Groenen sum up a tendency of green parties to propose governmental investment policies that stimulate sustainable innovations in the economy (e.g. an investment fund for small businesses and startups, or innovation

[34] Green Party of Canada, "Platform 2021," 18.
[35] GroenLinks-PvdA, "Hoopvolle Toekomst," 27.
[36] Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, "Alles Ist Drin," 79.
[37] Ökologisch-Demokratische Partei, "Wahlprogramm zur Bundestagswahl," 7.

in sustainable education) with the following excerpt: "[We] support stimulating the economy through low interest rates and investment as an appropriate Keynesian counter-cyclical measure."[38] Investment policy is found in all election manifestos. Not only do green parties advocate for investing in society and economy, but they also often call for ending subsidies and tax breaks to polluting organizations. Regarding such tax breaks, the Green Party of Ireland mentions in this regard: "[We propose] reintroducing the flight tax and [are] working towards a global aviation and shipping tax."[39] Additionally, all green parties propose various changes in income and wealth taxes, as well as reforms to value-added tax (VAT) and excise duties. The Green Party of New Zealand lists such a measure: "Progressively increase[ing] the landfill levy and continue to use the revenue for waste minimisation, including funding for community waste reduction initiatives."[40] By reforming the VAT and excise system, all green parties propose ways to stimulate the economy in a manner that encourages individuals and businesses to make more sustainable choices regarding their consumption and use of resources.

On a systemic level, most parties (nine out of fourteen) propose alternative measures of growth rather than measuring GDP. Terms as "Gemeinwohl-Bilanz"[41] (common good balance) and "ecological growth"[42] are used to install a measure of growth that considers human, animal and environmental well-being. Other parties either do not mention an alternative measure of growth (four), or endorse GDP as is (one, Canada). Apart from proposing alternative measures of growth, the concept of circular economy (or "Kreislaufwirtschaft"[43]/"circulaire economie"[44]) is promoted by most of the analyzed parties (ten out of fourteen) regardless of their size and role. With this, they aim to close the loop of resource usage, i.e. repurposing the resources that would otherwise be thrown away into

[38] De Groenen, "Draagkracht van de Aarde," 26, author's translation.
[39] Green party-Comhaontas Glas, "Manifesto. Towards 2030," 25.
[40] Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand, "Green Party Manifesto 2023," 40.
[41] Ökologisch-Demokratische Partei, "Wahlprogramm zur Bundestagswahl 2021," 36.
[42] Partij voor de Dieren, "Een Wereld te Herwinnen," 11.
[43] E.g. Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, "Alles Ist Drin," 8.
[44] E.g. GroenLinks-PvdA, "Hoopvolle Toekomst," 84.

new products. Not only do parties mention closing the loop, they also frequently mention minimizing the number of resources consumed. Klimaliste mentions both: "To achieve global justice, industrial countries must drastically reduce their resource consumption. We will therefore realize a comprehensive circular economy that rethinks the principle of waste and pollution."[45]

Where ten parties speak explicitly of circular economies, the Green Party of England and Wales talks briefly about a "zero-waste system."[46] The Green Party of Canada aims for a "net-zero emissions" economy.[47] The remaining parties, De Groenen and MUT, mention to aim for sustainable and efficient use of resources, but not specific policy proposals of how to achieve this on a systemic scale.

A combination of micro- and macroeconomic policy proposals was the least frequent type of text excerpt found (1,96%-21,23%). Most of the green parties that are in the European Union (nine out of ten) advocate for working together with other states in EU partnerships. By advocating for change regarding EU subsidies and international taxes, these parties can be identified as proponents of international cooperation to alter the economy. The Irish Green Party proposes: ". . . the EU [should] increase its support and funding for research and technology innovation, with a focus on environmental innovation."[48] The other parties located outside of the EU mention state the wish to invest more in international aid and green initiatives overseas.

Discussion and Conclusion

Certain choices that were made for this research project might have influenced the outcome in several ways. To acknowledge some of the pitfalls of this method of analysis, this section will start by outlining some limitations of the study. The first limitation to applies to case selection: some parties were considered for analysis but later excluded. To make a comparison between the parties that can be considered equal, only manifestos for national elections and only manifestos of parties that potentially could form a government have

[45] Klimaliste Rheinland-Pfalz, "Klimaplan Rheinland-Pfalz," 80, author's translation.
[46] Green Party of England and Wales, "Our Political Programme," 7.
[47] Green Party of Canada, "Platform 2021," 8.
[48] Green Party-Comhaontas Glas, "Manifesto. Towards 2030," 65.

been considered. The GRÜNE Schweiz/Les VERT-E-S Suisse of Switzerland was therefore excluded, since this party theoretically could not form a part of a coalition government. The Green Party of the US was removed from the analysis, as election manifestos are only published on national-level, and on nation-wide level only party principles exist. Likewise, the Green Party of Northern Ireland and the Green Party of Scotland were left out, as they only participate in regional elections, not on national-level elections. An exemption to this rule are MUT and Klimaliste, for which regional election manifestos were analyzed as proxy data, as both parties support individual candidates that compete on the national level.

Another limitation of this study is that, as a qualitative study, its results do not bear statistical significance. This brings the generalizability of the findings into question. Further research could adopt a more quantitative method, to verify the observations made in this study. Secondly, qualitative research is sensitive to the subjectivity of the researcher, potentially introducing bias into the outcomes. Repeating this study could help mitigate such bias. Thirdly, this study focuses on parties in the Global North, overlooking a multitude of green parties in other regions. This exclusion potentially introduces bias as well. Further research could investigate green party positions in countries with different industrialization levels, particularly those with histories of socialist or communist regimes or colonial pasts, as these historical contexts might influence their policy development and political strategies and alter the outcome. Lastly, as it is unclear what parts of the election manifestos are ideologically driven, what parts are written as achievable policy and what parts are designed to attract voters, true policy stances of parties remain investigable. Further research could be conducted via interviews with voters or party officials to extract the true vision of the parties in this study.

After these limitations, I come to an analysis of the data. Although the different party manifesto show a slight difference in the depth of ecocentrism, which correlate somewhat to the party's sizes, this difference of depth does not affect the economic policies they propose. No alternative economy is proposed by either large or small parties. Instead, all parties propose alternatives within the capitalistic economic rather than advocating for the economic

system's abolition or minimization, or making plans for a new socio-political movement to facilitate a just ecological society. The parties endorse a form of green capitalism by merely suggesting different taxation rules that promote sustainable behavior and investing in innovation and green entrepreneurship. This approach allows businesses and individuals to continue resource extraction with minimal consequences to their profit-making possibilities, but at great expense of human and planetary health.

These findings have several explanations. First, green parties seem to have been affected by a process called *transformismo*. Transformismo, a concept attributed to Gramsci, describes the process whereby radical parties are absorbed into the ruling class, leading to the deradicalization of radical leaders and the moderation of their criticism of the status quo.[49] Green party leaders seem to break with deep green ecological values of the social movements from which they emerged, and allow free markets to exist despite the negative environmental impacts. By becoming part of the government processes, green party leaders have potentially drastically altered their views in support of the ruling elites, which is indicated by the moderation of their economic policy. By looking at their focus on investing in green technological innovation while maintaining capitalistic principles of private property of natural resources, and not holding businesses and individuals accountable for environmental damage that causes, it becomes evident that green parties endorse capitalist market functioning.

Secondly, while green parties emphasize taxing the wealthy and criticize their tax evasion, they do not question how these individuals and organizations have accumulated their wealth. This lack of critique means that green parties endorse the current system by setting no boundaries for the relationship between nature and economic activity. Thereby they pose no limit to how much wealth an individual or business can accumulate at the cost of nature and human health. This approach arguably leads to the unchecked growth of businesses that profit from environmental destruction. These points considered: green parties cannot be considered part of the counter-hegemonic movement. In their role as organic

[49] Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 58-9.

intellectuals, instead, they can be considered part of the hegemon, preserving capitalism, albeit in a greener facade.

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Buddhists Responses to the Moral Imperative of Climate Change

Christopher Schweitzer

The central moral argument to act against climate change is that our failure to take action will harm the well-being of future generations. Despite wide-scale acceptance of this moral imperative, action to prevent harm to future generations has been far less widespread. Given the failure to act even with compelling evidence of harm we should be concerned with the reasons for this inaction. Moral psychologists and philosophers consider the failure to follow through with moral judgements to lie in problems with our moral motivations—the motivational gap between moral commitments and actions.[1] The intergenerational orientation to the moral problem of climate change further complicates the motivation problem making action to prevent harm to future generations more difficult.[2] In addressing the motivation problem, climate ethicists highlight the complexity of climate change, which strains our ethical frameworks and contributes to inaction. Philosopher Steven Gardiner argues that the moral aspects of climate change present a set of problems that together lead to the corruption of moral standards or reasoning.[3] Others describe the motivational gap as a result of selective moral disengagement based in the moral complexity of climate change and the persistence of individual self-interest.[4]

While these philosophers have outlined the problems of climate ethics from the standpoint of Western moral psychology,

[1] Brinbacher, "What Motivates Us," 274–5; Rosati, "Moral Motivation."
[2] Gardiner, *Perfect Moral Storm*, 20.
[3] *Id.*, 47–8.
[4] Peeters, Diependaele, and Sterckx, "Moral Disengagement," 425–6.

considering climate inaction from a Buddhist ethical perspective potentially provides a better understanding of the problem. The introduction of Buddhist ethics to the moral problem of climate change provides important conceptual resources, but it is not without its challenges. Therefore, my purpose in this essay is to investigate, first, what Buddhist resources help explain the Buddhist ethical commitment to climate change and, second, how these resources can help us understand the moral failure to act against climate change.

The Dalai Lama argues that our inaction comes from the "ignorance of our interdependent nature" and that the virtue of compassion should motivate us to protect the well-being of future generations from climate change related harm.[5] The Dalai Lama's declaration of universal responsibility claims that all people, not just Buddhists, have a responsibility to act with compassion towards each other and that this responsibility relies primarily on individuals.[6] Compassionately responding to climate change represents one such responsibility, a response without which "future human generations will inherit a vastly degraded planet."[7] This "degraded planet" implies human suffering, harm that will occur to future generations if we fail to act. While modern Buddhists argue for a Buddhist ethical interpretation of climate change, identifying exactly how Buddhists should respond to the moral problem of climate change is not so clear. This is partially because Buddhist religious texts are silent on moral action regarding the environment. Many Buddhist scholars highlight the relational aspects of Buddhism to provide guidance on moral action in regard to the environment. For instance, Buddhist scholar Joanna Macy appeals to the Buddhist metaphor of Indra's Net, which she describes as a web of causal connection and a multifocal point perspective of sentient life, in contrast to the single, selfish perspective of the individual that dominates Western moral thought.[8] While the interconnectedness of life might help explain our commitments to the earth and a global humanity, it seems that the ignorance of that interdependence,

[5] Dalai Lama [Tenzin Gyatso], "The Global Community," 3.
[6] *Id.*, 1.
[7] Dalai Lama [Tenzin Gyatso], "Universal Responsibility," 22.
[8] Jones, *Dharma Gaia*, 185–6; Macy, *World as Lover, Self*, 28.

referenced by the Dalai Lama, is not dispelled by simply accepting it as a fact. Philosopher Alan Sponberg argues that Buddhism's developmental aspects provide the path to dissolve that ignorance.[9] While I agree with the conclusions of scholars who focus on the relational aspects of Buddhism, I argue, like Sponberg, that the developmental aspects are crucial for understanding the failure to act in accordance with the moral imperative of climate change.

In this essay, I outline three aspects about the moral imperative of climate change that are key to applying these Buddhist conceptual resources and understanding the Buddhist commitment to the moral imperative of climate change. First, the basis of the moral imperative lies in the potential suffering of future generations caused by our inaction. This is important because Buddhist moral reasoning—particularly involving the virtue of compassion—is directed toward a much broader conception of suffering than what is typically considered in moral discussions of climate change. Second, since the moral imperative demands sustained action, current actions must not only be in line with the moral imperative but must also lead to future action. The Buddhist program of moral development links current actions with future actions through the concept of karma, where our actions contribute to our future experience of the world and the subsequent response to the moral imperative of climate change. Third, understanding how the interdependence of our actions results in karma allows us to better grasp the consequences of individual moral action. This, in turn, helps explain how the intentions of actions contribute to social movements of climate action or the countermovements of denial. For instance, actions motivated from a developed virtue of compassion, where the impact of negative reactive emotions, like anger or fear, are limited, sustain individual action and agency, while enabling shared karma and sustained social action.

Moral Agency

The first important aspect of the moral imperative of climate change lies in how we explain the harm that results from our inaction. Moral philosophers debating theories of harming make a distinction

[9] Sponberg, "Green Buddhism," 353

between the substantive component and the formal component in their accounts of harming.[10] The formal component explains how an action or event harms, for instance through a comparison between two states or a causal connection. The substantive component explains what is affected by an action or event, for instance a person's well-being or their rights. In this section, I argue that while Buddhist sources use counterfactual or causal explanations of harm similarly to the moral imperative of climate change, the Buddhist concept of suffering utilizes a broader concept of harm than is found in the moral imperative. This also means that the suffering that the Buddhist virtue of compassion, known as *karuṃā*, is concerned with is critical for the Buddhist response to climate inaction.

Not reducing emissions will cause harm to future generations in comparison to the world in which we reduce emissions. In this case, harm is caused by a failure to respond not necessarily to explicit mental or physical suffering but potential suffering that becomes apparent through comparison of future states. This comparison is based on the differences of well-being between these two states. The abstract idea of harm as a comparison of potential future states of the world does not easily align with the Buddhism concept of suffering or *duḥkha*. *Duḥkha* corrupts all experience with a pervasive dissatisfaction cyclically reproduced through mental processes. Suffering arises from the association of the subject of experience with an illusory substantial self. This illusion of a self is perpetuated through negative mental states and the negative actions that follow. In turn, these actions produce more suffering through aversion, delusion, and attachment. *Duḥkha* comes in three forms. First, explicit *duḥkha* which is the mental experience of suffering, the suffering one encounters when they break their leg.[11] Second, is suffering from the loss of a pleasurable experience, as mental states are transitory and impermanent thus attachment to them and their inevitable loss results in *duḥkha*.[12] Third, is suffering from conditions, where suffering comes from the conditioned nature of our experience and lack of stability in our mental states.[13] In the story

[10] Gardner, "What Is Harming?" 381–2.
[11] Harris, "Suffering and Well-Being," 244.
[12] *Id.*, 245.
[13] *Id.*, 250–1.

of the Buddha's first encounter with explicit *duḥkha,* he witnesses suffering in four sights: old age, disease, death and of the peaceful mendicant on a trip outside the palace grounds.[14] This encounter shows *duḥkha* not as counterfactual harm but as an inherent aspect of life. The mendicant seeks peace not simply by choosing a course of action that results in less harm but through freedom from attachment which diminishes the impact of *duḥkha* on future mental states. It is the realization of the pervasiveness of *duḥkha* in the world that motivates one to live the life of a mendicant, since suffering can only be ended through non-attachment to the transient world.

While suffering is an inherent part of our experience caused by our attachment to impermanence, Buddhist texts do not abandon comparative accounts of harm. For instance, in the Samyutta Nikaya which is part of the early texts in Buddhism, the Buddha reasons that he should return from his retreat in the forest to teach the monks, otherwise the monks may be led astray into harmful beliefs or practices.[15] It is out of compassion and concern of what will otherwise happen that the Buddha returns to teach the monks, thereby protecting the monks from wrong views, bad karma, and perpetuation of suffering. It is worth noting what the compassion motivates the Buddha to do. It is not to directly alleviate any explicit suffering that his followers are experiencing but instead at the type of suffering associated with wrong views about impermanence. Therefore, his teaching is directed at "unskillful thinking" or *moha* which is the root of this suffering.[16] Ignorance or *moha* is an unwholesome mental state that obscures the truth about suffering and results in bad karma. These unwholesome mental states are known as *kleśa*, they hinder us from seeing the truth of the world and perpetuate the cycle of suffering. *Duḥkha* is a much broader concept than counterfactual harm and a Buddhist's commitment to ending suffering and the moral imperative of climate change includes more than avoiding causing harm, it involves protecting from mental states that perpetuate suffering in the world.

These mental obstructions keep one attached to suffering and it is through the removal of these obstructions that one eventually

[14] 84000, "Play in Full," Lal 14.8-14.26.
[15] Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses*, SN 22.80.
[16] *Ibid.*

reaches cessation of suffering. The Buddha's decision not to abandon his students and the Mahāyāna tradition's turn towards the *bodhisattva* ideal is directed at the alleviation of suffering through this process motivated by compassion. In those traditions, the *bodhisattva,* who has made a commitment to end all suffering for sentient beings is portrayed as more developed than an *arhat,* who will leave the cycle of suffering and rebirth known as *samsara.*[17] Instead, the *bodhisattva* has vowed to remain and work towards the liberation of all beings. While the compassion of the *bodhisattva* is intergenerational, it is not only relevant to actions that result in explicit harm to future generations.

Since so much of our experience is hindered by these negative mental states, the Buddhist path develops harmonious mental states to counter particularly dangerous reactive emotions like hate, anger, or fear. In a text guiding Buddhist practitioners, Buddhaghosa, a fifth century CE Indian monk, directs the meditator to cultivate the four *brahmavihāra* or divine abidings: loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.[18] They are developed through attention of the meditator being directed at successively more challenging but fruitful examples of people. In the case of compassion, one starts with imagining a person explicitly suffering from illness or pain, and then cultivating a feeling of compassion for them.[19] Then one cultivates compassion for someone who causes suffering, such as a criminal. Even if the criminal is currently happy and not explicitly suffering, the criminal is bound to the suffering of impermanence and of conditions. Therefore, the meditator should consider that the criminal's happiness is temporary and, like one about to be executed, will soon be suffering from the loss of that happy state. The objective of cultivating compassion is to learn of the conditions and experiences of the object of the meditations, to see suffering not just as explicit but how it is rooted in mental processes and response to the world out of delusion, aversion, and attachment.

[17] 84000 and Roberts, "The Ten Bhūmis, i.9, 1.921,"; Harris, *Buddhist Ethics*, 116.
[18] Buddhaghosa. and Ñāṇamoli, *Path of Purification*, xxxii, 291.
[19] *Id.*, 308.

The development of compassion protects against the corrupting influence of negative reactive emotions that prevent contemplation and the dissolving of ignorance. These emotions tend to dominate the mind, crowding out the reflection necessary for moral action. Replacing hate and anger with loving-kindness and compassion interrupts the cycle of these reactive emotions. This development of compassion and its instrumental role highlights a key difference between the Buddhist concept *karuṃā* and compassion. It serves as the motivation for action, a social emotion of learning, and a mental capacity to develop moral agency.

Another Buddhist thinker who provides advice for meditators on negative mental states is Tsongkhapa, a fourteenth century CE Tibetan monk.[20] Buddhist scholar Emily McRae interprets Tsongkhapa as saying that to intervene in the perpetuation of negative emotions, we should reflect on the conditions of the person that our negative reactive emotions are aimed at.[21] The target of these emotions is often someone who has wronged us, perhaps someone who was careless or intentionally harming us. Upon closer examination, considering the third type of *duḥkha,* where suffering comes from the condition nature of our experience, we should then find that they were unable to exercise self-control. In finding that they lacked moral agency to be considered proper objects for our anger or hatred, our own delusions about causation are resolved. Śāntideva, an eighth century CE Indian monk, also encourages meditators to consider the conditions of those who do wrong, since in doing wrong demonstrate that they are unable to do otherwise. Śāntideva compares those who inflict harm on others as dominated by reactive emotions and without agency, like a fire "which hast the nature of burning."[22] So too is the nature of a mind dominated by *kleśa* —unsettled and directed by ignorance.

The tendency for negative reactive emotions to lead to suffering—for both the experiencer and the object of those emotions—binds the subject to a course of events not of their choosing. McRae argues that, for Tsongkhapa, a mind inoculated

[20] McRae, "Emotions, Ethics and Choice," 344.
[21] *Id.*, 362–3.
[22] Śāntideva, *Bodhisattva Way of Life*, 60.

against ignorance and thoughtlessness by mindfulness and knowledge is unhindered by negative reactive emotions.[23] McRae argues that we are unable to avoid experiences that trigger these negative reactive emotions and instead we "choose them" through reflection and moral development.[24] Working with Buddhaghosa, Buddhist scholar Maria Heim argues that moral agency is found not in a fully autonomous, independent, deliberating agent but in an agent that works through motivations, emotional dispositions, and conditioned behavior. She claims that, by developing the mental habits of mindfulness and the four divine abidings moral agency is developed.[25] "Genuine moral freedom," she says, "lies in peeling away layers of greed, hatred, and delusion," turning to the liberating qualities of wholesome mental states.[26] This understanding of moral agency as indirect, rather than direct, is the foundation of a Buddhist account of well-being. Compassion is like an armor for the possessor. Having developed compassion, negative emotions like ignorance, anger, pride, attachment, and envy fail to take hold. Likewise, acting out of compassion for others diminishes the potential for negative reactive emotions to propagate.

In our response to the moral imperative of climate change, those that accept and act in accordance with it often express anger or exasperation with the inaction that will ultimately harm future generations. However, the capacity for moral action should not be taken for granted and lies in the development of moral agency conditioned and protected by wholesome mental states. The motivation problem arises not because we do not have motivations for acting to protect future generations from climate related harm, but because the ability to act relies on this moral agency.

Sustained action

The second aspect of the moral imperative of climate change is that it implies sustained action rather than a single deliberate action. This sustained action against climate change is needed both over the

[23] McRae, "Emotions, Ethics and Choice," 364.
[24] *Id.*, 359.
[25] Heim, *Forerunner of All Things*, 221.
[26] *Id.*, 222.

course of one's life and across generations. The problem is that the conditions that might motivate single actions fail to motivate the sustained action that the moral imperative demands. Part of the problem with sustained action is that it requires recognizing how or when the moral imperative applies to a given situation. The Buddhist program of moral development provides key insights for moral agents to appropriately apply the moral imperative. The other part of the problem of sustained action, discussed in the previous section, is the impact of negative reactive emotions on moral agency. These negative reactive emotions disrupt the moral motivations needed for sustained action.

The problem of sustained action is directly connected to the problem as to why metaphysical knowledge of interdependence does not result in action in accordance with that knowledge. The Buddhist sources discussed in the previous section demonstrate that our actions come out of the preconditioned mind, conditioned by previous actions, intentions, or mental states. For these sources, we are the inheritors of karma*,* our past actions planted a karmic seed that ripens giving the mind its preconditioned nature.[27] This presents a problem for sustaining moral action since previous actions impact those in the future, our actions do not only need to be in line with a moral imperative they must also support further action.

In discussing intergenerational justice, philosopher Dieter Brinbacher argues a central concern of intergenerational justice is why moral motivations do not seem to reliably motivate action. He argues that for any normative ethical position an additional factor is necessary for us to act in accordance with that position. Brinbacher splits these potential motivations into three non-exclusive groups. There are the moral motivations in which a moral act performed because it is moral, which he calls moral motives. Quasi-moral motives are done in the service of a conditioned virtue independent of "the adoption of a particular system of morality."[28] Non-moral motives are done in one's self-interest which happen to coincide with the moral position. Again, these motivations are not exclusive

[27] Heim, *Forerunner of All Things*, 48.
[28] Brinbacher, "What Motivates Us," 281.

and our motivations for following any rule could include all three of them.

Not only can multiple motivations coincide, Brinbacher argues that purely moral motivations are often too weak to promote action on the part of moral agents, which means that moral motivations often must align with quasi-moral and non-moral motivations.[29] This presents a problem for acting for the normative ethical position that we should act to reduce our emissions because of climate change, since quasi-moral motives are often altruistic and more easily form between people who actually interact. The moral calculation that we are doing irreversible and undue harm to future generations through our actions might be irrefutable but the motivation to actually do something is missing since we do not interact with future generations.

The often paradoxically nature of directly trying to resolve issues that harm future generations suggest that looking towards current and near future problems might indirectly reach the same goals as our direct approaches aspired to. Direct motivations are motivations to act on a normative position, that fulfill the demands of that position. In contrast, indirect motivations are motivations that fulfill a narrower normative position yet when fulfilled provide secondary benefits that achieve what the direct motivations aimed at. In relationship to future generations, compassion is a quasi-moral and indirect motive to care for distant future generations.[30]

To see how this approach might play out we will consider the ethical position that we should reduce our emissions for the good of future generations. Instead of considering harm to future abstract generations, we should consider harm done to the generation of our children or grandchildren. The benefit of this reframing is that we have a readily comparable state at hand. Rather than approaching the problems of intergenerational justice directly through agreement on a rule that we have little motivation to follow through on, we instead care for future generations indirectly by caring for others in the present. This approach might avoid the problem of non-interaction with future generations by motivating us to act out of a

[29] *Id.*, 282.
[30] *Id.*, 285.

desire to reduce harm to the current or next generation. This proposal is referenced by Brinbacher as the "chain of love" and is a strong proposal in its own right.[31] For Buddhists, *karuṃā* functions not just as a social emotion it plays an important role in the liberation of the mind. Seen in this way it also provides increasing clarity and ability to act morally in addition to its indirect care for future people.

This indirect approach described by Brinbacher is similar to Heim's construction of Buddhist moral agency. Part of the problem with direct approaches is that we imagine that the moral agent is simply choosing the course of action based on their motivations alone. But we neglect that even if they have motivations to act on a particular moral stance their actions are restricted by interdependent social and personal conditions. The agency we have in the acceptance, adoption, application, and action of an ethical position is a qualified one. The motivations to move from acceptance to action are not always apparent.

In Heim's understanding of Buddhist moral agency, the focus is not on making decisions that result in a particular outcome. Instead, the focus is on directing the attention to the conditions, motivations, and state of mind that have a strong influence on those decisions.[32] Brinbacher argues that one reason we find it so difficult to follow through on moral principles is because of our "insufficiently developed capacity to identify situations for which these beliefs are relevant," a capacity that is explicitly developed through Buddhist practice.[33] The Buddhist concept of compassion is key to the development of this capacity for moral action. In developing compassion for others, we consider their conditions leading to a deeper understanding of interdependence and protection from the negative reactive emotions that prevent us from exercising moral agency.

Interdependence and Karma in Joint Action

The third aspect of the moral imperative of climate change is that it does not just apply to individuals. As mentioned earlier, while the Dalai Lama stresses individual and universal responsibility, the

[31] *Id.*, 286.
[32] Heim, *Forerunner of All Things*, 221.
[33] Brinbacher, "What Motivates Us," 275.

possibility of preventing harm to future generations relies on joint action and on the actions of institutions. However, it is not entirely clear how the moral motivations of individuals translate into the joint action needed to address the moral problems of climate change. In fact, many scholars argue that the problem of climate change is primarily a collective action problem.[34] While there are several formulations of collective action problems related to climate change, the general shape of the problem is that, collectively, our actions or the results of our actions are not what we intended them to be. These formulations focus on the dissymmetry between rational self-interest versus what is rationally optimal for the group. In a simple formulation of the collective action problem of climate change, while reducing emissions to avoid the harmful effects of climate change is the optimal choice, each actor acting in their self-interest ultimately does not reduce emissions. While collective action on climate change is clearly affected by this problem, it only explains our inaction through the conflict between group morality and self-interest.

The pervasiveness of *duḥkha* in our experience of the world is similar to the pervasiveness of emitting greenhouse gases. All our activity—commerce, agriculture, cultural exchange, and even breathing; essentially, our entire existence—is based, directly or indirectly, on CO_2 emissions.[35] Furthermore, the well-being of current people often relies on industries that are heavy emitters, while future well-being is threatened by these same industries. Some whole economies are based on heavily emitting industries, economies whose communities are especially vulnerable to the future effects of climate change. For instance, the island Republic of Maldives relies on tourism income to provide for its people. Without that income it would support a much smaller population, or a large portion of the island would be destitute. Tourism with private and commercial air travel is a heavy emitter of greenhouse gas, an activity that threatens their further existence on the island. One result of such a situation is fatalism about the future of the

[34] Gardiner, "Perfect Moral Storm," 400; Moellendorf, *Mobilizing Hope*, 92.
[35] Gardiner, "Perfect Moral Storm," 21.

island.[36] This fatalism is reinforced by missing emission targets and broken promises of international agreements. The impact of climate change is not limited to only the environment: it effects the way we view moral problems. Buddhism is both a potential response to climate fatalism, but it also is vulnerable to becoming fatalistic practice itself, re-enforcing patterns of thought and behavior in society that result in environmental injustice.[37]

While the moral imperative of climate change clearly requires collective action, perhaps more important is the ability to break away from conditioned responses and social patterns that lead to fatalism, denial, and ultimately inaction, in the face of the moral imperative of climate change. Socially engaged Buddhists have been especially concerned with descriptions of karma as cosmic justice, which places those that experience injustice as deserving of any suffering in light of past deeds they must be responsible for in a past life.[38] Instead, they argue for an interpretation of karma in which the world is from moment to moment created through the results of actions. This includes actions which condition social patterns of behavior as well as mental factors that influence individual responses. For socially engaged Buddhists, this has enabled reflection on the reproduction of social injustice. From this perspective, collective action problems are not due to any necessary relationship between self-interest and concern for others. Instead, they are rooted in the duality that comes out of the ignorance of our interdependent nature.

The Buddhist concept of moral agency focuses not on a person's natural state uninfluenced by others but on freedom beyond the confines of both the social and the self. People left to their own devices will not be free, but trapped by desire and suffering, seeking permanence but finding only impermanence. The freedom to act is not given, it is earned through virtuous action and meditative practice. Escape from this cycle is not granted through estrangement from the social world alone, as an ascetic. Buddhists seek this freedom through the penetration and disillusion of the subject of life, the self. To obtain this freedom it is recognized that

[36] Shakeela and Becken, "Tourism Leaders' Perceptions," 277–8.
[37] Watts, *Rethinking Karma,* 30.
[38] *Id.,* vii, 24.

the self is partly constituted by social bonds, which is why the Buddhist is encouraged to denounce those bonds as impermanent and transient. The shedding of social bonds strips away parts of and further exposes the self. But this path is not a denial of our moral responsibility to others or to future generations. Interestingly, the Mahāyāna tradition's emphasis on the compassionate bodhisattva as the spiritual and moral exemplar is not achieved through isolation or by breaking contact with others, but through compassion and the recognition of others as beings also trapped in cycles of suffering and rebirth. Relationships are contaminated with *duḥkha*, dominated by reactive emotions, and self-centered. Through *karuṃā*, contaminated social bonds are replaced with a tranquil equanimity. Harmonious relationships with people are the method to transcendence, not only the goal.

Like the development of *karuṃā* and the moral agency described in the first section, the results of group action are not just the physical outcome of that action. In discussing the fourth century CE Buddhist philosopher Vasubandhu and shared agency, Oren Hanner argues that, for Vasubandhu, what "matters in action is the long-term psychological effect on an agent's mind"[39] and that "joint action shapes our psychology and experiences" which in-turn bring "us together with like-minded agents, in whose company the cycle of joint action begins once again."[40] This shifts the moral responsibility for joint action back on the individual, whom also inherit the results of group action. But through the development of moral agency, one is able to disengage from a group action, avoiding the cycle of karma associated with the actions of the group.

The reason that individuals need not separate themselves from the rest of society, as an ascetic, in order to avoid the bad karma from joint actions is that with a sufficiently developed moral agency, individuals can avoid sharing the intentions of a joint action. In turn, it is this distinction that shapes future experiences of the world. As Hanner says, this enables those under coercion to not share in the negative karma associated with an act like murder.[41] On the other hand, it does not protect one from failure of action due to

[39] Hanner, "Not Do With Others," 13.
[40] *Id.*, 22.
[41] Id., 13.

resignation to the inevitable nor from the willful ignorance of denial. This outlook recognizes that we are often forced to participate in actions that we have moral objections to and uncovers the third reason why we fail to act in accordance with the moral imperative of climate change. The social bonds that enable us to engage in joint actions are the same bonds that also obstruct action.

The shared karma generated from responses to the moral imperative of climate change impact how agents respond to it in the future. Action taken in response to the moral imperative saturated with *kleśa* or the negative reactive emotions mentioned in the first section bring the experiencers closer together. It is not that all our actions together ultimately result in ineffective joint action, like in collective action problems, but that action motivated from unwholesome roots fail to sustain the moral agency needed break away from the inertia of harmful group actions.

Conclusion

In the first section, I discussed the claim that we harm future generations through inaction in the face of climate change. However, Future generations do not exist, they have no identity, and they do not interact with people now living therefore attributing rights, duties, harm, and well-being to them is a serious challenge in conceiving of justice for future generations.[42] Harm based approaches to these challenges assert that we can talk about future generations in terms of rights, duties, and harm and I argued that while Buddhists accept this reasoning, *duḥkha* includes important aspects of well-being that these accounts leave out, namely moral agency. In understanding our commitment to future generations beyond comparative or causal accounts of harm we are able to understand how our actions not only impact future generations through environmental cause and effect but also through their impact on our ability to act for moral reasons. The Buddhist conception of well-being is a state untrammeled by *kleśa* and free to act towards the enlightenment and alleviation of the suffering of all beings.[43] This enables us to think of environmental harm as a harm not only

[42] Moellendorf, *Mobilizing Hope*, 59.
[43] Harris, "Suffering and Well-Being," 254–5.

because of damage to the environment and by extension human well-being but a harm because it is a failure of moral agency. We do not want to disrupt the environment, yet our activity does anyway. There is a disconnect between what we want and what actually occurs. And between what we might take as a good moral reason for an action and following through on the action itself.

Buddhist principles of intergenerational justice would take interdependence as not just referring to the interconnectedness between people but also to our actions. A moral agent described in this way is not necessarily freed by interdependence, rather it acts as a hinderance on moral agency.[44] The Buddhist concept of interdependence tells us what sort of agents we are—trapped—unable to be free yet connected to each other intimately. While the Buddhist concept of compassion or *karuṃā* tells us what sort of agents we should be. It is *karuṃā* that enables our karma to be more than just the action of cause and effect. In considering the moral imperative of climate change, we should recognize that our actions in regard to climate change result in far more than average temperatures in the future, they impact our moral agency and our ability to respond to the moral imperative itself. This agency also allows us to resist the inertia of harmful joint actions allowing moral agents to avoid the harmful karma that will infiltrate future experiences of generations. The root of the social movement against climate action may very well be found in how we carry out climate action, which leads to inaction, fatalism, and eventually to denial of moral imperative of climate change.

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Moving towards Compassion: Butoh's Embodied Methods to enrich Śāntideva's 'Exchanging Self and Other' Meditation

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Together with my fellow movers, I am standing on one side of the dining room, currently functioning as a dance studio. It is 8 PM, our evening practice has just started. We have been in Hakuba for a few days now, a village in the mountains of Japan. The air is cool and pleasant. Our eyes are fixed on Maro Akaji, our butoh master, eager for his instructions. Our silence makes the excited tension tangible in the room. Then Maro's calm, deep voice starts talking in Japanese, immediately translated by the interpreter: "You will now swallow a horse." We nod, full attention. "You will first say your name, and then you will feel your sense of self dripping into the floor." We have practiced this earlier by looking at ourselves from a third-person perspective. We imagined sitting somewhere near the ceiling and looking at ourselves from there. "Then, you will close your eyes and imagine a horse hovering over you. When you are ready, you will open your mouth and slowly feel the horse entering into your body until it fills you up completely. No more you, just the horse." And so, we transform.

This exercise of becoming a horse is an example of a butoh exercise.[1] In this article, I explore how such butoh exercises, which center around ego-dissolution and embodied transformation, can be used to enrich a specific Buddhist meditation on compassion: Śāntideva's 'exchanging self and other' meditation.

[1] This is a description of Dairakudakan's Summer Intensive 2024, which took place from 27th of July until 4th of August 2024 in Hakuba, Japan.

Butoh is an avant-garde dance style that was developed by Hijikata Tatsumi, Ohno Kazuo, and their students in Japan, beginning in 1959.[2] Butoh emerged as a reaction to the cruelties of the second world war and the rapid westernization of Japan.[3] Its style is hard to characterize since its founders refused to define the dance, which nonetheless grew into a global movement, evolving different styles and ways of teaching.[4] Despite this, there are commonalities that occur in almost all strands of butoh. Visually, butoh can be recognized by its meticulously controlled, slow movements that are often very expressive, and by its use of absurd imagery. In addition, butoh dancers can often be recognized by white body paint.[5] Another commonality can be found in butoh's methods, which focus on transformation. The key idea is that the dancer undergoes a process of ego-dissolution, letting go of their experience of self, and using visual imagery to transform into something else.[6] The dancer can transform into anything: an ant, a cloud, another person, an emotion, or a whole city. This transformation is not a cognitive grasp of what being the visualized thing or person would feel like. Instead, the dancer lets their movements flow from the lived reality of having become the object of transformation. As scholar Bruce Baird puts it: the aim is to *become* someone or something, rather than to *act like* that person or thing.[7] This transformation can be seen as an "embodied transformation" in which the dance is influenced by an alteration of the dancer's inner reality.[8]

Butoh's focus on transformation and ego-dissolution aligns well with Buddhist philosophy, as has been argued by scholars such as Sondra Fraleigh, Tanya Calamoneri and Juliette Crump. These scholars have focused their research on the links between butoh and Zen Buddhism, presumably because Zen Buddhism is the most popular form of Buddhism in Japan. Scholars such as Susan Klein, Pao-Yi Liao, Tanya Calamoneri, and Juliet Crump have explicitly

[2] Vangeline, *Butoh*, 8-9, 20, 199.
[3] Calamoneri, "Becoming Nothing," 57.
[4] Fraleigh, "We Are Not," 467.
[5] Liljefors, "Butoh and Embodied Transformation," 99.
[6] Calamoneri, "Becoming Nothing," 173.
[7] Baird, *Hijikata*, 159.
[8] Liljefors, "Butoh and Embodied Transformation," 91.

addressed this link, by arguing that butoh has been indirectly influenced by Zen Buddhism.[9] Butoh emerged in mid-20th-century Japan, a time in which Zen Buddhism still played a major role in Japanese day-to-day life. This influence of Zen on Japanese everyday reality arguably also influenced butoh. The similarities between butoh and Buddhism that are explored in this article are, however, not limited to Zen Buddhism are also applicable to other strands of Buddhism.

A striking similarity between Buddhism and butoh is their shared emphasis on emptiness. In Buddhism, this emphasis is grounded in the metaphysical view that all phenomena are dependently originated and ultimately empty.[10] This means that although concepts such as the self are real on a conventional level, they are nonetheless empty on an ultimate level. Butoh shares this metaphysical conception of emptiness. This link is especially drawn by Fraleigh in her two books exploring the similarities between butoh and Zen Buddhism.[11] An example of her reflection is that she regards the exercise of the butoh walk (*hokotai*) as the embodiment of Zen Buddhist emptiness. In this exercise, the dancer first lowers their center of gravity by bending their knees while keeping their head up as if it were held by a string. Consequently, the dancer moves forward by taking slow gliding steps that barely leave the ground.[12] According to Fraleigh, this exercise enables the dancer to empty the self by getting rid of their ego and being moved by something, rather than moving themselves.[13] This emptiness in butoh should not be understood as something negative (an absence) but rather as the source of creativity. Fraleigh quotes butoh dancer Mikami, who says that "the moment the body becomes nothing, it begins to revive itself as everything universal."[14] This conception of

[9] Klein, *Ankoku Butō*, 67; Liao, "An Inquiry," 6; Calamoneri, "Becoming Nothing," 86; Crump ""One Who Hears," 68.
[10] Lele, "Śāntideva."
[11] Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic dance*; Fraleigh, *Dancing into Darkness*.
[12] Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic dance*, 28.
[13] Fraleigh, *Dancing into Darkness*, 177-8.
[14] Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic dance*, 46.

emptiness as the gate to the "inexhaustible world of abundance" is, according to Fraleigh, similar to Buddhism.[15]

Another link between butoh and Buddhism is drawn by Calamoneri, who argues that Hijikata, one of the founders of butoh, is influenced by Zen Buddhism in his position that our "domesticated body" is blocked from perceiving true reality.[16] Calamoneri's comparison can be understood in the context of the Buddhist distinction between conventional and ultimate reality. Hijikata's standpoint seems to reflect that our conventional experience of the body as domesticated prevents us from seeing "true" or ultimate reality.

A potential argument against linking butoh and Buddhism, is that it risks lapsing into orientalist views by oversimplifying the complexity of butoh. This criticism is voiced by Nanako Kurihara, who writes that butoh and particularly Hijikata's work has been "essentialized and stereotyped" by western critics who are quick to emphasize butoh's 'Japanese' elements, including its connection to (Zen) Buddhism.[17] This risk of orientalism is also addressed by Bruce Baird and Rosemary Candelario. They give the example of Ishii Mitsutaka, a butoh dancer who only started advertising his butoh as containing Buddhist, and therefore 'Eastern' elements when he moved his dance practice from Japan to France. This suggests that in catering to a European audience Ishii made his dance seem more Japanese, feeding into stereotypes about Asian dance.[18] This risk of orientalism for emphasizing the connection of butoh to Zen Buddhism is especially prevalent since neither of butoh's founders openly endorsed Buddhist influences on butoh. Hijikata even explicitly distanced butoh from religious practices: "my butoh started . . . with what I learned from the mud in early spring, not from anything to do with the performing arts of shrines or temples."[19]

Because of this risk of oversimplifying butoh by essentializing its Eastern influences, I take a cautious approach to linking it with

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[15] *Ibid.*
[16] Calamoneri, "Becoming Nothing," 91.
[17] Barbe, "The Difference," 6-7.
[18] Bruce and Candelario, "Introduction," 7.
[19] Hijikata, "Wind Daruma," 73-4.

Buddhism. The aim of this article is therefore explicitly not to argue that butoh is a Buddhist practice, or that practicing butoh can be seen as an expression of Buddhism. Instead, I aim to further the dialogue between Buddhism and butoh, by exploring how butoh's methods can practically be used to enrich Buddhist practices of enlarging compassion. To that end, I will zoom in on one example of such a Buddhist practice: Śāntideva's 'exchanging self and other' meditation (hereafter: the exchanging-meditation). In this meditation, the meditator imaginatively takes the perspective of another being, feeling their suffering as if it were their own, dissolving the boundary between self and other.[20] Comparable to butoh, this meditation practice uses visualization techniques to shift perspectives. In this article, I argue that butoh's methods of embodied transformation can enrich Buddhist meditation practice and can so be used to enhance compassion. I start off by comparing Śāntideva's exchanging meditation to butoh's techniques of embodied transformation, in order to show how butoh's approach can be an enrichment of the exchanging-meditation. Consequently, I argue that this enrichment is warranted by showing that butoh's methods align well with the existing corpus of Buddhist embodied meditation practices and that both approaches are rooted in compassion.

Comparison between exchanging-meditation and butoh's methods

Śāntideva (late 7th to early 8thcentury CE) was a monk, poet, and philosopher in the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition, more specifically of the Madhyamaka school. He is best known for the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, or "*Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life.*"[21] This text is not only a philosophical work but also contains a practical guide to attain the Mahāyāna Buddhist ethical goal of becoming a *bodhisattva*. A *bodhisattva* is someone who is committed to reaching the state of awakening of a buddha (nirvāṇa) to bring as much possible benefit to sentient beings.[22] This requires the *boddhisattva* to be compassionate, which in Buddhism entails that one is attentive

[20] McRae, "Empathy," 126.
[21] Goodman, "Śāntideva."
[22] Harris, "Śāntideva," p. 512-3.

to and feels with the suffering of other beings and tries to alleviate that suffering.[23]

One of the practical tools provided by Śāntideva to enlarge compassion that is the exchanging-meditation, found in verses 8:140–8:154 of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. The first verse of this meditation can be translated as follows: "Creating a sense of self in respect of inferiors and others, and a sense of other in oneself, imagine envy and pride with a mind free from false notions!"[24] The exchanging-meditation thus calls upon the meditator to visualize themselves as another being by making use of the visualization method of imaginative projection.[25] The later verses teach us that the exchanging-meditation consists of three such visualizations. The meditator first identifies with an inferior, then with an equal, and then with a superior. In scholarly literature, it is debated whether the meditator should identify with three different people of different social positions, or that he should identify with one person to whom he is in some respects superior, in some respects equal and in some respects inferior. In this article, I will follow the latter interpretation. The meditator then thus identifies with one other person. 'Identifying' here means that the meditator creates a sense of 'I' (*ahaṃkāra*) regarding this person in these different positions: the meditator feels as if they *are* the other person. After this, the meditator looks at themselves from the perspective of the other person, creating in them a sense of jealousy from the perspective of the inferior, a sense of competitiveness from the perspective of the equal and a sense of disdain from the perspective of the superior.[26]

A practical example could clarify this. Suppose Robin would want to enlarge compassion for Jules. Robin would sit down in a meditative posture, close his eyes, and visualize Jules. Robin would try to visualize Jules's face, her hair, how she's standing, the look in her eyes. Then, Robin would let go of the identification with himself and instead identify with Jules (create a sense of *ahaṃkāra* regarding Jules). Robin would then look at himself from Jules's perspective, shifting his sense of self. Robin would no longer identify with

[23] McRae, "Empathy," 125.
[24] Śāntideva, *The Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 100.
[25] McRae, "Empathy," 125.
[26] Lele, "Śāntideva."

himself, because he feels that he is Jules and would look at Robin through Jules's eyes. At the first part of the meditation, Robin would consider himself to be a superior to Jules, from whose perspective he's looking. This would create jealousy: "[Robin is] honored, not I. . . . [Robin is] praised. I am criticized."[27] After this, Robin would consider themselves to be an equal from Jules' perspective, creating a sense of competitiveness: "[H]owever good [Robin is] in terms of reputation and wealth, [I] will do better."[28] Then, Robin, who is looking from the perspective of Jules, would realize Robin also has shortcomings and that Jules is in some sense superior to him. This would create a sense of disdain: "Delighted we shall watch while at last [Robin] is crushed."[29]

The ultimate aim of this meditation is that the meditator no longer identifies with their sense of self and starts living completely for other people.[30] This requires compassion, which in Buddhism is means being attentive to and feeling with the suffering of other beings, and trying to alleviate that suffering. Compassion makes a direct moral appeal to the person experiencing it, and is therefore not a calm, but rather an active and intense emotion. The exchanging-meditation enlarges compassion in two ways. First, it aims to free the meditator of acting upon the egocentric mental afflictions of jealousy, disdain and competitiveness, by letting the meditator experience these afflictions regarding herself. Secondly, the practice enhances compassion by creating empathy regarding the person that the meditator identifies with. The meditation therefore makes the meditator feel with the person he is identifying with, which creates the affective response of compassion.[31]

Now we can turn to butoh's techniques of embodied transformation. One of the most influential ones is the method developed by Hijikata, one of butoh's founders. This method can be summarized with Hijikata's statement that butoh requires the dancer to be "kidnapped, killed, and reincarnated."[32] Tanya

[27] Śāntideva, *The Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 100.
[28] Śāntideva, *The Way*, 155.
[29] Śāntideva, *The Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 100.
[30] McRae, "Empathy," 126; Lele, "Śāntideva."
[31] McRae, "Empathy," 125.
[32] Cited in Calamoneri, "Becoming Nothing," 172.

Calamoneri, a butoh scholar, has reframed this statement into three steps of transformation: disorientation, saturation, and re/deconstruction.[33] I will use this framework to provide some insight in butoh's methods. Although this characterization is useful to get insight into butoh methodology, it must be noted that these steps are not always followed or cannot always be discerned in practice.

The first step is *disorientation*: shifting perception into ego-dissolution.[34] This process is described as the body becoming an empty vessel to create space to become something else. This means that the body becomes a moldable case that can be filled with any material to transform.[35] To this end, the dancer must first recognize that they usually experience the body as belonging to an "I", to consequently stop identifying with this self by use of visualization techniques.[36] Transformation therefore requires that the dancer must rid themselves from their egocentric way of experiencing the world and expand their awareness beyond this egocentric perspective.[37]

The second step is *saturation*, which means that the dancer fully embodies the transformed being, again through visualization. The dancer is instructed to visualize a certain image and allow that image to enter their consciousness without thinking about it. This requires that the dancer has full concentration on the object of transformation, and that they are open to accept anything that will happen.[38] In butoh, the dancer is not moving in a planned, cognitive manner, but is instead fully absorbed, or saturated, in the thing they have become.[39]

The last step is *re/deconstruction*. In the butoh practice, the experience of ego-dissolution and transformation gives the dancers access to a de-centered perspective, which can alter their conception of reality by making the dancer experience "multiplicity" in their

[33] Calamoneri, "Becoming Nothing," 172.
[34] *Id.*, 139.
[35] *Id.*, 99.
[36] *Id.*, 186.
[37] *Id.*, 173.
[38] *Id.*, 181-2.
[39] *Id.*, 140.

everyday life. The transformations the butoh dancer has gone through cause the dancer to experience themselves beyond their physical boundaries. The dancer has accessed an extended notion of self, which is not left in the practice, but which can be accessed in everyday life and so alter the everyday experience.[40]

To understand how this method of embodied transformation could be used to enlarge compassion we can get back to the example of Robin and Jules. First, Robin would need an instructor, because providing his own exercises could cause him to think about his movement, instead of fully saturating himself with the visualized images. The instructor starts with an exercise to alter Robin's experience of reality into ego-dissolution (Hijikata's first step: disorientation). This could be an instruction to dance in the third person, altering Robin's experience of self. After this, the instruction could be to fully focus on a visualization of Jules in order to transform into her (Hijikata's second step: saturation). The instructor could instruct Robin to open his mouth and let the visualization of Jules slowly enter his body, until Robin's body is all filled up with Jules. However, Robin should not identify with the image of Jules. Robin's experience, including the transformation, is constantly changing. Robin might even be instructed to visualize other (contrasting) images and to transform into them, to ensure that he won't identify with the image of Jules. From this transformation, emotions might arise, and Robin's body might start moving, walking, dancing. The instruction could be to visualize Robin from Jules' perspective. In this stage of saturation, it is important Robin accepts all images that are given without cognitively reflecting on them. Otherwise, Robin might start moving from a cognitive grasp of how Jules would act, instead of embodying Jules. After the butoh session, Robin's identification with himself will return, but his experience of the world will be altered (Hijikata's third step: re/deconstruction). This change in Robin's everyday perspective on reality could include a bigger sense of compassion for Jules.

After this introduction to Śāntideva's exchanging-meditation and the methods of Butoh, they can be compared to each other. The exchanging-meditation and butoh are similar in their use of

[40] *Ibid.*

visualization. Both approaches ask Robin to visualize Jules and shift Robin's perspective by trying to look at the world, and himself, through Jules' eyes. In addition, both are aimed at ego-dissolution, by diminishing Robin's experience of the world through his own eyes and shifting to Jules' perspective.

Besides these similarities, there are also differences between the two approaches which make that butoh could enrich Śāntideva's exchanging meditation. Here, I will focus on one of these differences: the meditation asks the practitioner to sit still whereas butoh asks the practitioner to move. To understand how this could be an enrichment we can turn to the distinction between top-down and bottom-up meditation practice as described by Reginald Ray. Ray describes that a meditation practice is top-down when it takes place under the "watchful and judgmental eye of executive function of the cerebral cortex."[41] Ray states that this type of meditation uses the left side of the brain to manage our meditation practice. We are thinking about what we should be doing in the meditation, and what should be coming out of it. The practitioner does have benefits of this top-down approach, such as better sleep and focus, but practicing it does not, according to Ray, usually lead to the fundamental change that the Buddhist tradition describes.[42] Bottom-up meditation practice, on the other hand, focuses on the soma. The soma can here be understood as our physical body and the neurological network in which it is embedded, which includes the right side of the brain and the neural pathways that are spread throughout the body. From Ray's experience as a meditation teacher, he finds that these kinds of meditation, which includes movement and dance meditation, can transform us and can enable us to "experience the innate goodness, clarity, and compassion that meditation is all about."[43]

This distinction between top-down and bottom-up meditation reveals how the movement that butoh adds can be an enrichment of the exchanging-meditation. The risk of the meditation is that it can be used as a top-down practice, when the meditator is too focused on the way in which the meditation should be performed and which

[41] Ray, "Somatic Meditation," 187.
[42] *Id.*, 187-8.
[43] *Id.*, 188.

outcomes it should yield. It is this top-down aspect of the meditation that risks failing to bring about the transformation of enlarging compassion that the meditation is aimed at. This risk is especially prevalent since the exchanging-meditation provides instructions (visualizations), a predicted course (experiencing the mental afflictions) and desired outcome (enhancing compassion and letting go of the experience of self), which can stimulate the meditator to think in an instrumental manner. Applying butoh's methods is less prone to this risk, since its embodied transformation requires the dancer to pay close attention to the body as experienced from within, which is typical for the bottom-up approach. The movement that butoh introduces, which is not the result of cognitive reflection but springs from full awareness of the body, could therefore reduce this risk of the exchanging-meditation becoming a top-down practice.

With pointing towards this distinction, I am not arguing that top-down meditation is undesirable by definition. The terms "top-down" and "bottom-up" are oversimplifications since practice is usually a combination of these two. In addition, research also suggests that practitioners might need some practice to regulate meditation top-down and become independent from the setting of meditation. [44] This could mean that especially experienced meditators benefit from top-down meditation. Less advanced meditation practitioners could therefore particularly benefit from butoh's addition of movement to the meditation practice. Secondly, I am also not arguing that every practice of Śāntideva's exchanging-meditation is necessarily top-down. In Śāntideva's work, the language of the mind is always intertwined with the language of the body.[45] Śāntideva's explicit attention to the meditator's experience of their body, turns the meditation itself into an embodied practice. Despite this, butoh's addition of movement is still an enrichment, because butoh encourages the practitioner to pay even closer attention to the body, promoting a bottom-up approach.

[44] Lymeus, Lindberg, and Hartig "Building mindfulness," 53.
[45] Ohnuma "Bodies," 114.

Compatibility of Śāntideva's meditation and butoh

A counterargument could be that be butoh is too different from Buddhism, so that this enrichment is not justified. In this section, I argue that this is not the case, by showing that butoh's methods align well with the existing corpus of Buddhist embodied meditation practices and that both approaches are rooted in compassion.

First of all, butoh's methods fit in well with other ways of meditating that are already part of the Buddhist tradition. Broadly speaking, meditation means taking something as the object of your consciousness and focusing on that object for the duration of the mediational practice. The aim of meditation is to change your consciousness by altering the everyday experience of a rapidly changing consciousness to a more focused consciousness.[46] Although most forms of Buddhist meditation ask the meditator to sit still, there are also forms of meditation in which the meditator moves. One such meditation is walking meditation, which Fraleigh argues to be similar to an exercise in butoh called *hokotai* (the butoh walk).[47] In this section, I compare Buddhist walking meditation to the methods of butoh, specifically *hokotai*, to argue that butoh fits in with the already existing corpus of Buddhist meditation. To that end, I will make use of Mike Ball's research on walking meditation and Juliette Crump, Sondra Fraleigh's and Tanya Calomoneri's butoh research.

Walking meditation takes as its object both the walking movement of the body and the breath.[48] The meditator is asked to go to a preferably quiet and secluded area and walk meditatively back and forth for twenty paces or more.[49] Just like Buddhist walking meditation, butoh's *hokotai* is a walking exercise. As briefly mentioned in the introduction, with hokotai the practitioner makes gliding steps that barely leave the ground, and they lower their center of gravity by bending their knees while keeping their head up as if it were held by a string.[50]

There are multiple ways in which Buddhist walking meditation practice is similar to butoh, or more specifically to

[46] Ball, "A case study," 394.
[47] Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic dance*, 28.
[48] Ball, "A case study," 395.
[49] *Id.*, 397.
[50] Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic dance*, 28.

hokotai. The first has to do with their concentration on movement. According to Ball, walking meditation aims to empirically examine and deconstruct the act of walking, an action that is usually taken for granted in our day-to-day life.[51] This is comparable to butoh, which according to Crump also aims to pay close attention to movement that we would normally take for granted. Both walking meditation and butoh do this by slowing down the activity and paying close attention to every detail of physical experience.[52] Secondly, Ball notes that walking meditation requires the meditator to be fully immersed in the moment.[53] This is comparable to Fraleigh's assertion that butoh also requires the dancer to be fully immersed in the here and now.[54] The third similarity is that both methods use the body to alter awareness. For walking meditation, Ball describes that it is through the experience of the body and its surroundings in the here and now that the meditator accesses the "ways of the mind," or that the meditator can experience how their mind creates the sense of self.[55] This relates to Calamoneri's description of butoh as also relying upon the senses and bodily experience to attain ego-dissolution and transformation, and to ultimately re/deconstruct reality.[56]

Apart from these similarities, there are also differences between walking meditation and butoh. The biggest difference might be their objective. As Calomoneri points out Buddhist meditation is ultimately aimed at reaching enlightenment, whereas butoh is a performance practice that does not share this aim.[57] Buddhist meditation is therefore aimed at the liberated body-mind, whereas butoh is aimed at the performing body-mind.[58] However, this difference in aim does not preclude butoh's methods from enriching the exchanging-meditation. Butoh does not have to be seen as an expression of Buddhism to use butoh's methods to enrich

[51] Ball, "A case study," 396.
[52] Ball, "A case study," 404; Crump ""One Who Hears," 71.
[53] Ball, "A case study," 396.
[54] Fraleigh, *Dancing into Darkness*, 140.
[55] Ball, "A case study," 398.
[56] Calamoneri, "Becoming Nothing," 173.
[57] *Id.*, 162.
[58] *Id.*, 165.

Buddhist practice. The fact that practicing butoh is not, by itself, aimed at reaching enlightenment is therefore not a problem.

The second reason why this enrichment is justified is that the exchanging-meditation and butoh share the objective of enlarging compassion towards all beings. In the exchanging-meditation, this objective is clear. As discussed before, the practice is aimed at the dissolution of the meditator's sense of self in order to start living completely for other people. This shift requires compassion, since it involves recognizing and responding to the suffering of others as if it were one's own. This objective aligns closely with the ethical framework of Mahāyāna Buddhism, in which compassion is regarded as an active call to alleviate suffering of all beings.

Scholars argue that butoh shares this aim of enlarging compassion. Juliette Crump, for example, argues that the Buddhist concept of compassion forms the core of butoh. She writes: "The [butoh] dancer in a sense becomes a modern *Bodhisattva*, ridding himself or herself of ego and compassionately embracing . . . other beings."[59] In Crump's view, the process of embodied transformation teaches the butoh dancer to see different perspectives, which enhances compassion. This aligns well with Hijikata's statement that butoh "plays with perspective" and that seeing things from the perspective of animal, insects or inanimate objects should lead us to "value everything." [60] Crump further emphasizes that both the *bodhisattva* and the butoh dancer experience compassion in a physical, embodied way rather than an intellectual way. The butoh dancer transforms into the other being, experiencing their emotions, just like a *bodhisattva* feels the emotions of the being they feel compassion for. This link between butoh and the Buddhist concept of compassion is also drawn by Fraleigh.[61] Just like (Zen) Buddhism acknowledges the suffering of all beings in nature, not limited to humans, Fraleigh emphasizes how butoh, too, asks the dancer to transform into and acknowledge suffering of all beings. [62] This connection between butoh and compassion is also reflected in the statements of butoh dancers, such as Akira Kasai, a second-

[59] Crump "One Who Hears," 63.
[60] Cited in Crump "One Who Hears," 71.
[61] Fraleigh, "Performing Everyday Things," 24; Fraleigh, "We Are Not," 484.
[62] Fraleigh, "We Are Not," 484; Fraleigh, "Butoh Translations," 70-1.

generation butoh dancer who trained with Hijikata and Ohno. In an interview with Fraleigh, he says that butoh can only be danced with the "community body:" the body should be conscious of the community in which it grew, including all things in nature, or else the dance loses its meaning.[63] I interpret this to mean that a purely individual oriented butoh is not possible, since butoh requires the dancer to acknowledge the community. This community body requires the butoh dancer to feel compassion for all living beings. This link between butoh and compassion is also drawn by third generation butoh dancers. The Motimaru collective for instance writes that the experience of selflessness in butoh leads to a "compassionate attitude towards others and the whole world."[64] In an interview with Goldberg, Vangeline says that the confrontation of butoh dancers with suffering inevitably leads to the development of compassion.[65]

Compassion as a shared root of butoh and Buddhism makes butoh a good candidate for enriching the exchanging-meditation. Just as the meditation practice trains ego-dissolution with the aim of teaching the practitioner to live for others, butoh, too, uses ego-dissolution to attain embodied transformation, which is inevitably linked with compassion.

Conclusion

In this article, I have argued that butoh's methods of embodied transformation can enrich Śāntideva's exchanging-meditation. This enrichment notably lies in butoh's introduction of movement which promotes the practice to be bottom-up, instead of top-down. The enrichment is warranted because butoh's methods fit well within the already existent corpus of Buddhist embodied meditation practice. Both approaches also share the objective of enlarging compassion towards all beings. The article aims to offer an introduction to the intersections between Buddhist compassion practices and butoh, and it must be noted that both approaches are part of a larger philosophical and practical whole. Practicing (one of) these methods with the aim of enlarging compassion, without an eye for this bigger

[63] Fraleigh, *Dancing into Darkness*, 236.
[64] Motimaru, "Universal Jewel."
[65] Goldberg, "How Butoh."

picture, might therefore not always lead to the desired effect of becoming a more compassionate person. The journey towards compassion is not linear, and performing certain methods to lead to the goal of compassion does not always yield the desired results.

Training compassion, whether by use of Buddhist practice, butoh or other means, is of crucial importance. Compassion involves feeling with the suffering of other beings and trying to alleviate that suffering. Training compassion therefore has the potential to restore and strengthen the relationships between people and other sentient beings. Especially in the current times of ecological crisis, the world calls upon us to feel with other beings and reach out our hand, to a dance partner, to a horse, to all that lives.

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