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The Mimetic Series of the Body: Memory, Narrative, and Time in Somatic Psychology[1]

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Abstract
Memory is a corporeal paradox: two temporalities are folded together in the body. In the grip of memory, the body finds itself attuned to a past reality even as it is attuning itself to the present one. This corporeal coup asserts the pertinence of the past to the present in the body by mimesis. The body copies the past into itself as movement, sensation, emotion, perception, and awareness, changing its experience of the present. Narratives of memory kindle and are kindled by the bodily attunement temporal doubling brings about. In a trauma narrative told during somatic therapy, this temporal chiasma grants the somatic therapist access to the narrator's past as to her present, making it possible for him to change her experience of the past. As the analysis of the therapeutic session makes evident, memory is not a way to reach from the present into the past; it is the way the past reaches into the present in order to influence it.

Keywords: Corporeal mimesis; embodied narrative; traumatic memory; somatic temporality

> If any one faculty of our nature may be called *more* wonderful than the rest, I do think it is memory. There seems something more speakingly incomprehensible in the powers, the failures, the inequalities of memory, than in any other of our intelligences. The memory is sometimes *so* retentive, *so* serviceable, *so* obedient – at others, *so* bewildered and *so* weak – and at others again, *so* tyrannic, *so* beyond control! – We are to be sure a miracle every way – but our powers of recollecting and of forgetting, do seem peculiarly past finding out. (Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park*. Jane Austin 1966 [1814], 222)

Three Mysteries

This study brings into question assumptions about memory, narrative, and time: the assumption that memory reaches back from the present into the past; the assumption that narrative is the repetition of events in words; and the assumption that time falls into the past as it moves toward the future, leaving the body in thrall to the present.

Memory is not a reflection on the past from the present; it is an incursion of the past into the present in the body by what I call *corporeal mimesis*. As the body remembers, it is possessed by tactile, olfactory, gustatory, auditory, and visual experiences of the past, along with the moods, dispositions, sensitivities, modes of attention, orienta-

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tions to space, objects, and others that constitute the body's perceptual engagement with that reality. This possession might be faint or vivid, brief or prolonged, concentrated or diffuse. If it comes to my awareness, I experience it as memory, but most of the effects the past has on the body take hold of it out of awareness. I simply find myself in a mood or with a preference or attentive to an odd bit of my surroundings. Memory makes the body into a copy of its prior self.

Narrative configures my corporeal mimesis of an actual or virtual past. I do not just hear the words; I feel the events. I enter into the alternate reality of the storyworld under the configuration the narrative provides it.[2] In narratives of memory, the temporal locus of the storyworld is my past. Memory either sparks the telling or the telling sparks memory, or both. In either instance, the narrative not only repeats the events in words but also in the body.

Time folds over on itself in memory. The body is entered into a past temporality even as it inhabits the present one. The temporal fold means that I am absorbed into the rhythms, the spurts and hesitations, the anticipations and retrospections, the very style of being shaped to another temporality made present to this one. Two temporalities collapse into each other. Corporeal mimesis reconstitutes the past body on the present occasion.

I address these questions in the study of a session of somatic psychology in which the client tells the therapist a traumatic memory. The memory takes possession of the client as she participates in a somatic practice. Because the memory is traumatic, the possession is intense. But all memory is possession of the body by the past. This possession might not come to awareness but it takes hold of the body in its course, orienting it ongoingly to its occasions in ways that may remain mysterious. My intention is not to solve the mystery but to bring forth the mysteriousness of memory, narrative, and time.

Narrative

Acts of narration alter the narrator's experience of time by obliging the narrator to embody two temporalities: the time in which the narrative is told and the time to which the narrative refers. This double embodiment is particularly vivid in *narratives of personal experience*, in linguist William Labov's term (1972, 354), in which the two temporalities narrators bring together are their past and their present. Narrators of other people's stories restore the past in the present *as if* it were their own. Storytellers bring the temporal order of the storyworld into the temporal order of the storytelling occasion, not only by devices of narrativity but also by practices of embodiment. Narrative is not just the repetition of experience in words, as Labov puts it (1972, 360), it is the repetition of experience in the body as movement, sensation, emotion, perception, and awareness as well as language. In reconstituting one reality in and for another, narrative makes co-present in the body two temporal orders. The tension or alternation between temporalities, between the rhythms of the telling and the rhythms of the events told, gives narratives their vivacity. The embodied experience of time is enjoined on the narratee as well as the narrator. Personal experience narratives reconstitute for

hearers a world to which they were not present, making interlocutors available to each other in their absence in the innumerable transformations sociologist Erving Goffman describes as *replays* (1974, 496–559). Narratologist Molly Andrews describes this capacity to shift between temporal loci as time traveling (2014, 114). Both narrator and narratee participate in the temporality of the present. The narratee participates in the temporality of the past only virtually but for the narrator, virtual participation in the present was once actual participation in the past. Personal experience narratives are of necessity narratives of memory.

Mimesis

The act of narration brings about the body's participation in two temporalities by corporeal mimesis. Perception is itself mimetic. On encountering something, the body inscribes into itself a pattern, which is how the thing is for it. By this process of mimesis, it makes a copy of the thing. Neither the thing nor the copy is immutable, but the thing's trace in the body becomes what medieval humoral theorists used to call a habit pathway or lure, the specific way the body has come to grasp the thing. The body does not perceive things afresh on each encounter; the perception of the thing tends to follow the path it previously took in the body. Anthropologist Nadia Seremetakis regards the senses as traces of the passage of things through the body, left in the material form of the sensory apparatus itself as the memory of the olfactory, gustatory, tactile, auditory, or visual things whose consumption has been deferred (1991, 217). Thenceforth, on re-encountering the thing, the body reproduces the pattern. The pattern is not the pattern of the thing but the pattern the thing elicits in the body. Properly speaking, the body does not perceive or remember or imagine things; things solicit the pattern the body has inscribed within itself, the body copy.

The body sustains its objects of interest by repeating them to itself, by making copies, that is, by perceiving, remembering, or imagining. Narrative is an elaboration of this copy-making activity of the body. The narrative is not a copy of the events; it is a copy of the body, of how the event solicits the body by *perceptual mimesis*, in literary theorist Elaine Scarry's term (2001, 6). The text tells the reader or hearer how to perceive the storyworld, that is, how to make a corporeal copy. The copy is part of a mimetic series, a series of copies, that pass through the body. Mimesis does not repeat an event that precedes it in time, working backward toward an original; the original event repeats itself in the body, working forward in time toward the present. In acts of narration, the event reiterates or reconstitutes or reinvents itself for different perceivers, in different circumstances, on different occasions, through different materialities. Corporeal mimesis affords both narrator and narratee participation in the event the narrative conjures up. Mimesis is an act of repetition, a taking up or taking into oneself the rhythm or contour of something else in order to make it present by embodying it. It is this mimetic investment that makes it possible to invoke the event in its absence. Mimesis effects the captivation of the body by narrative.

Memory

The body re-enters into itself things in which it takes an interest; other things fade out. Perception, memory, and imagination are all re-entries. The world is always the world according to me, as it happens to be for me at this moment, my world. This is not to make the idealist claim that reality is subjective, that each of us has her own idiosyncratic hold on things such that we could not possibly participate in a shared world. It is to say that I am invested in my world and that what we participate in together is not a world of things but a world of meanings.[3] Narrative negotiates meanings. Things never come to me as bare facts stripped of meaning—the realist claim—they solicit my participation in significance.

Body copies are not imprints of the world on the body; they are investments of the body in the world. The body has no interest in accuracy, in duplicating the real; my interests are vested. I deform the real to my purposes. The interest an event has for the body is a present interest. Copying is motivated. Copies are not only copies-*of*; they are copies-*for*. They are calibrated as closely to the present as they are to the past. The result of this is that with respect to the past, the copies are imperfect. I shall argue that the imperfection of body copies, of narratives, and of memory itself, is not their failure but their point. Perfect copies, what we would think of as accurate memories, are pathological. In post-traumatic stress disorder, for instance, the body is forced to repeat the traumatic event in unaltered form (Foa & Rothbaum 1997, 159). Literary theorist Cathy Caruth describes PTSD as *possession by the past* (1995, 151). As folklorist Amy Shuman and lawyer-sociologist Carol Bohmer put it, "Remembering trauma requires the victim to relive it," (2004, 411, footnote). The neuropsychologist A. R. Luria studied a man with absolute recall, the mnemonist Simon Sherashevsky. Sherashevsky's problem was that every present moment was laden with a synaesthetically entangled flood of memory. Each memory proliferated other sensations and memories. He found it difficult to keep track of them. As Luria writes, "The biggest question for him, and the most troublesome, was how he could learn to forget" (1987, 67). Just so with traumatic memory: it is not a disorder of remembering but a disorder of forgetting. Memory is confabulation, an act of the imagination at the juncture of perception, the body's hook to the present, and memory, the body's possession by its past. Narrative is the perceptible occasion of this confabulation.

We conceive memory as volitional, as if we were doing it on purpose. We can remember on purpose, but that is the perverse instance of memory: *trying* to remember is like aiming for a target in the dark. The effortless instance is memory that arises unbidden, popping into our heads, taking us unawares, pouncing out and grabbing our attention. None of us can will the ambush of memory. As aesthetician Richard Wollheim insists, memory is not a way to reach from the present into the past; it is the way the past reaches into the present *in order to influence it* (1984, 130). Memory announces itself. I do not turn my attention to the past; the past asserts its pertinence to the present through the body. Narrative proceeds as if it were making this assertion of the pertinence of the past to the present; it merely makes the assertion articulate. The effect of this articulation is to make the assertion insistent for the body of the hearer or the reader as well as of the narrator.

Somatic Psychology

I would like to introduce an instance of memory arising unbidden. The memory is a perfect memory, a perfect copy, which is to say that it is in a certain sense pathological. It arises during a group therapy session in somatic psychology.

Somatic psychology is an alternative medical practice in which the somaticist does not intervene at the level of narrative, as a psychoanalyst does, but at the level of the body doing the narrating. I took up the study of somatic psychology to extend the analysis of narrative from the words to the body. The somaticist whose practice I study, Stanley Keleman, was the founder and director of the Center for Energetic Studies in Berkeley, California. I observed occasions of his somatic work over two decades, beginning in 1994. For own his purposes, Keleman made videotapes of individual participants in group therapy sessions. For my purposes and with their written consent, I transcribe the participants' words and gestures during the therapeutic dialogue. In published material, the names of all participants except Keleman are fictitious. The following analysis is based on a transcription from the Winter Institute of 1994. On this occasion, the story's grip on the body is evident.

The Ambush of Memory

At the moment the transcription begins, Keleman has just had the therapy group do a somatic exercise in which they make themselves bigger and then make themselves smaller. As she is doing the exercise, one of the participants, whom I call Deborah Abrahamson, becomes aware of a turbulence of her interior, a sensation of flux. She describes it as "this pulsing that just goes through me." She realizes that it is a memory, a memory of being small and acting big. That is, it is a memory of the pattern the exercise traces. As therapists David Hartman and Diane Zimberoff write, "This is a body memory. This memory carried somatic energy which lives in the system and resonates and attracts whatever is similar in the system" (2004, 33). The somatic exercise happened to be a body copy.

Text 1. Sensory Memory: Making Herself Big, Making Herself Small[4]

When Deborah begins to describe her response to doing the exercise of making herself bigger and smaller, the camera is directed at the somaticist, so we hear her speak but do not see her gesture. As she describes what her pulsing sensation reminds her of, the camera pans from him to her, and her gestures become visible.

Deborah says, "The feeling- what it made me feel getting myself bigger was just as inhibiting and bad as being shrunk. They were both- they were extremes that were the same somehow. They did the same thing to me. And that when I came down from being bigger and stopped in the middle," *she pauses,* "it suggested that special way- it just happened again- that this pulsing just goes through me, just staying with the feeling, belly, chest, and (joints, it's up some-) um- partly some age to that feeling that scared me a lot. It feels like the=

Stanley interpolates, "The pulse or the="

Deborah clarifies, "the pulsing- it's like when I was very very little and I was

> sick or something, something that reminds me of this place," *as she says "reminds," Deborah holds her hands curved and facing each other, and tips them from side to side, then flares them out slightly on the word "place,"* "of losing-" *she opens her hands softly out and in again,* "there's something but it's- it's not," *she curves her hands around* "something," *nodding, and then brushes her hands across the space in front of her, shaking her head as she says, "it's- it's not,"* "severe," *she folds her hands and drops them in her lap, then breaks off and starts again,* "like I never would have described it="
>
> *Stanley cuts in to say to another person in the therapy group,* "You know it's interesting um…" *When he does so, the camera pans away from Deborah and back to him.*

Gestural Holds

In the middle of this passage, the camera picks up the gestures Deborah makes as she speaks. Gestures affiliated with words configure movements to meanings in the course of speaking. The foundational gesture theorist David McNeill identifies several types of co-speech gestures, of which two are intermittently visible during the therapeutic occasion: *iconics* and *metaphorics* (1992, 12, 14). Iconic gestures represent the concrete act, event, or object speech mentions. Metaphoric gestures treat abstract ideas as if they were concrete acts, events, or objects. According to linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, metaphors structure one domain in terms of another, typically conceptualizing a vague, unstructured, or abstract idea as a precise, structured, or concrete act, object, or event (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 117). Like linguistic metaphors, gestural metaphorics instruct seers to perceive the target domain of the metaphor in terms of its source domain (Lakoff 1987, 276). Metaphoric gestures are iconic for their source domain.

The gestures Deborah makes here are metaphorics, and the first four participate in the same source domain: vaporous substance. As she says "reminds," she handles memory as if it were a light, fluctuating substance she tips from hand to hand but which floats out of her hands as she tries to "place" it, not in space but in time metaphorized as space. She metaphorizes "losing" as feeling for a substance she cannot quite get hold of and then wraps her hands gently around the still unremembered "something" she is trying to hold steady. She metaphorizes "not" as brushing these elusive substances aside. The target domains of these metaphoric gestures vary from memory itself—reminding—through when the unremembered event happened—childhood—and what the memory was like—losing—to what the sensation the somatic exercise brought about was not like—severe. In all four metaphorics, the source domain lends materiality to target domains that do not have it. When Deborah folds her hands and drops them into her lap, she quits trying to hold onto the insubstantial material she has been manipulating and, in the same gesture, relinquishes her search for the memory. In response to the gesture, not the words—she has just started a new sentence—Stanley turns to speak to someone else.

Initially, Deborah's memory comes to her only as sensory memory, literally as a sensation, the pulsing sensation, without any referential content at all. Despite the indeterminacy of the memory, she associates it with the past, specifically with childhood, and with an emotion, fear. In response to her embodied experience of this memory she does not yet fully remember, she says a curious thing. She says "getting myself bigger" and "being shrunk…were the same somehow. They did the same thing to me." So the somaticist's puzzle is to work out why these two apparently opposite things should seem the same to her. With regard to this puzzle, Keleman has a speculation.

Text 2. Somatic Interpretation: The Threat of Being Big

When Stanley turns back to speak to Deborah again, the camera is still on him, where it stays throughout this interchange. He says, "But I'm saying here maybe you were afraid of whatever is adult. And told not to be."

Deborah says, "As a child."

Stanley says, "As a child. 'What do you think you're bigger than me?- you're just a kid.'"

Deborah says, "Oh yeah."

Stanley says, "Hm? Doesn't matter how big you are. 'You just be small-' 'you be the size- uh that don't be- you be the size that I tell you to be.'"

Deborah says, "Absolutely."

Stanley says, "Right? So then. And when you get into any place that you have some sense of that- you know, that middle ground? -that wants to fill you, this is dangerous business. From- to the outside."

Deborah says, "Right. Also that was really systematically done to me, whenever I got above myself, I was-"

Stanley interpolates, "told to-"

She continues, "cut down."

Stanley repeats, "Cut down. So how did you interpret that. Otherwise when someone says, 'Cut down,' right? that's the words but what's the translation. Physically."

Narrative Realities

Narratives bring forth an alternate reality, perceived either from the perspective of a character inside that reality or of a perceiver outside it, and narrated either in the voice of a teller who is a character or of a teller who is not an inhabitant of the narrative reality. Narratologist Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan distinguishes seeing and speaking as *perspective* and *voice* (1984, 72). Narrators are more precisely narrator-perceivers. Typically, narrators who speak in the voices of characters see from an internal perspective; narrators who speak about the storyworld from outside it see from an external perspective.

Narratives range from single-sentence repetitions of what happened through multiple-sentence repetitions of what happened presented as causally connected sequences of events in genres from conversational anecdotes to novels and histories. From the

perspective of its inhabitants, the storyworld is real; from the perspective of the tellers and hearers on the storytelling occasion, it might or might not be. Its reality status is not built into it but attributed to it by its tellers and hearers. The storyworld is an *alternative possible reality*, an APW, in narratologist Marie-Laure Ryan's terminology (1991, 110). Regardless of its reality status, on the occasion of its telling, the story brings forth a reality that is not there but to which tellers and hearers are granted virtual access.

On this occasion, Stanley sets up Deborah's childhood as the scene of narrative in an alternative possible world in which an adult cuts the child down. Deborah enters into that reality as a space of memory by taking over its narration. The storytelling is, in effect, a form of co-narration or joint storytelling (Young 1987, 175, 182). The narrative mutates over its course from a speculative story of what might have happened to a memory narrative of what did happen. Stanley interpolates Deborah into the storyworld as a character by speaking of her as "you," lifting her over into the APW as the character to whom he speaks; when she takes over the narration, she shifts to "I." Narratologist Gérard Genette calls narrating in the voice of a character *intradiegesisis*, the story or *diegesis* told from inside the narrative reality, and narrating in the voice of a teller outside the narrative reality *extradiegesis* (1980, 228). In his impersonation of an adult in Deborah's storyworld, Stanley counts as an intradiegetic narrator even though he is only a character in her storyworld by proxy. Both narrators implicitly disclose the perceptible world from an internal perspective: we feel the adult in the storyworld looming over the child.

Once Stanley has instantiated the scene of narrative, a character speaks. The narrative switches from description to action. In pure description, something is textualized; nothing happens–the description sets forth the scene. In pure action, something happens, exactly that is textualized–the text describes the act (Genette 1980, 93-94). Whereas description is *diegetic*—it focuses on the narrator doing the telling, action is *mimetic*—it focuses on the character doing the acting (Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 106). Narratives modulate among these representational possibilities. In this narrative, the quick switch from scene to dialogue lifts the narratee's attention out of the storytelling occasion and pulls it into the storyworld. Speaking is a form of action: it is something a character does. Speech representation—speaking about speaking—ranges from saying somebody spoke through saying what somebody spoke about to saying what the person said. Speaking as a character is the most transparent form of mimesis: the narrator's voice is silenced; only the characters' voices are audible (Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 108). We overhear the adult scolding or berating the child as if we were fellow inhabitants of the storyworld. At this moment, Deborah enters the storyworld as the child the adult harangues.

When Deborah was little, and she used to do what in her family was called "getting above herself," a member of her family would, as they put it, "cut her down" to size. When Stanley asks her how she reacted to that, she says, "Well, what came to me immediately is just uh total collapse. I was forced- actually forced to collapse. Physically forced to collapse."

Text 3. Narrative Memory: The Exterior Threat

The camera pans back to Deborah as she responds to Stanley's question. "Well what came to me immediately is just uh total collapse." *She is sitting with her arms folded across her chest. As she says, "total collapse," she nods.* I was forced– actually forced to collapse. Physically forced to collapse. *She nods as she says "forced" and "collapse," and continues nodding in the pause that follows.* "And now- I mean not always- it was emotional too but there was a lot," *she begins to gesture as she speaks, tipping her hand in and out to metaphorize alternation between the physical and the emotional and extending it outward to metaphorize the amount of physical force as spatial volume.*

Stanley says, "Yeah," *as Deborah continues,* "it was a lot of physical," *she extends her hand outward again.*

Stanley says, "Yeah, there's no difference."

Deborah continues, "um- there's a very strong reaction to," *as she says, "very strong reaction," Deborah touches her chest and then extends her hand outward. Instead of continuing in words, she sticks her chest out, pressing her arms back, elbows bent, and hands raised in fists. The movement mimics making herself big in the exercise she has just done. She folds her arms back over her chest again as she says,* "doing this."

At the same time, Deborah says, "doing this," Stanley says, "Do it. Cut down."

As a child, Deborah would get above herself—make herself big—and then she would collapse—make herself small. She is, on the occasion of the somatic therapy, invoking memory by corporeal mimesis. At the moment body memory becomes conscious memory, Deborah suppresses her bodily investment in remembering by withdrawing her body behind her folded arms even as she makes the memory articulate narratively by describing her collapse. She does not collapse as she says *collapse*; she nods. Nodding acts as pragmatic emphasis on the significance of her disclosure for her interlocutor on the storytelling occasion. It is a way of standing outside the storyworld and observing it rather than entering into the storyworld and experiencing it. The catch is that somatic therapy does not work on the story; it works on the body. To return Deborah to the embodied experience of the event she is narrating, Stanley instructs her to take up the posture she entered into when she as a child. As she returns under instruction to her corporeal mimesis, Deborah remembers what she is afraid of: she is afraid the adult will hit her.

Text 4. Sensory Memory: Cut Down

In response to Stanley's instruction to cut down, Deborah tips her torso to her right, curls her shoulders forward, tilts her head down and to her left, and lowers her eyes, pursing her lips slightly. After a moment, she looks up at Stanley a couple of times and says, "And that's," *she flips her right hand out and back horizontally at the level of her lap, then raises it and drops it back into her lap, unable to metaphorically grasp her new thought,* "that's adding to," *she spreads the fingers of both hands around a globe shape and lifts it toward her diaphragm,* "it's what the-" *she holds her hands*

open, palm up, "the image" *she rotates her hands out and downward,* "that came to me," *she repeats the gesture,* "when I frowned was just- which feels like the way the fear maybe was uh," *as she says "like," Deborah closes her fist over her own thumb, palm down, and pulses it twice, catching hold of her thought, then flips it open on "fear" and closes it again on "was uh,"* "that I was actually physically cut down," *as she says "physically cut down," Deborah swoops her left arm, flat handed, palm down, in a broad curve from her left hip to her right shoulder and back to her hip, ending in an abrupt stop. Then she returns her hands to her lap, folded over each other.*

Stanley says, "By being hit?"

Deborah says, "Yeah," *then nods.*

In the course of her narration, Deborah introduces the term "cut down." Initially, Stanley has taken the term to describe something somebody said to her; Deborah will turn out to have meant the term to describe something somebody did to her. Both usages are metaphorical. Stanley has taken *cut down* to be metaphorical for shamed or belittled, which he talked about with another client before turning back to Deborah; Deborah has intended the term to be metaphorical for physical force. The source domain for both verbal metaphors is cutting. The metaphoric gesture Deborah makes as she says "physically cut down" participates in the same metaphorical source domain.

Gesturers typically make gestures in a sphere of space in front of the body that gesture analysts call the *gesture space* (Haviland 2000, 18). The rim of the sphere is roughly defined by the reach of the tips of the fingers. Inside the sphere, iconic and metaphoric gestures conjure up the acts, events, and objects they represent. In the course of speaking, however, the gesture space sometimes expands to enclose the body of the gesturer (Young 2002, 50). When this happens, gestures switch from external perspective to internal perspective. With iconic gestures, it is as if the gesturer inhabits the APW as the character who moves and is moved by acts, events, and objects in the other reality. The acts, events, and objects become proportionate to the gesturer's body. In metaphoric gestures, it is as if the gesturer inhabits the source domain of the metaphor iconically. From an internal perspective, in gesture as in narrative, perceivers have restricted access to the reality they perceive, emotional involvement in it, and subjective bias toward it. From an external perspective, by contrast, the gesture space contains the APW or source domain in miniature as a reality that could in principle be investigated from any angle outside and above it. External perceivers have unrestricted access to the reality they perceive, emotional detachment from it, and an objective attitude toward it (See Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 77–82). Deborah's slice downward is a metaphoric gesture, but unlike her previous metaphorics, she makes it from an internal perspective. With this gesture, Deborah has entered into the gesture space bodily.

The style of the gesture imparts to it a mood or feeling apart from its referential import. According to movement analyst Rudolf Laban, "Each movement originates from an inner excitement of the nerves, caused either by an immediate sense impression, or by a complicated chain of formerly experienced sense impressions stored in the memory. This excitement results in the voluntary or involuntary inner effort or impulse to move" (Laban 1971, 22). In terms of Laban's Effort-Shape Analysis, the

flow of the resulting movement is either *free* or *bound*. When the movement flow is free, the movement begins in the core of the body, issues from the trunk, and extends through the limbs outward into the space beyond. By contrast, when the movement flow is bound, the core of the body holds still while the limbs move independently. Free movement promises to keep extending; bound movement can be stopped at any time (1971, 21). Deborah's slicing gesture exhibits *bound flow*: the movement stops abruptly. *Effort flow*, whether bound or free, varies from direct to indirect, strong to light, and quick to slow (Davis 1977, 41). The directness, strength, and quickness of Deborah's movement, along with its sudden closure, impart to it an affective intensity that pertains, not only to the iconic movement in the source domain of the metaphor but also to the act in the target domain the gesture metaphorizes. It is as if she is trying at once to make the movement and to stop it. Deborah conducts this intensity into the only two iconic gestures she makes in the course of her storytelling.

Text 5. Sensory Memory: Beaten

Deborah says, "Beaten," *then clenches her left fist and strikes it downward.* "I mean like violent kind of psycho," *striking her fist down again on "violent" and a third time on the interjection "pstcho," then dropping her hands back in her lap.*

Stanley says, "Show me how you reacted to that." *Deborah goes still.* "Being struck."

Deborah stays still for a moment, then looks up at Stanley and says, "I used to-" *she brings her forearms up, hesitates, crosses her arms over her head, her hands still lightly closed in fists, and says,* "cover myself." *Then she lets her crossed arms drop apart a little and looks up at Stanley from underneath them.*

Stanley says, "Do it." *Deborah crosses her arms tightly back over her head, fists clenched, curling her body forward and lifting her knees up in front of her chest and belly.*

The striking fist is Deborah's first iconic gesture. The gesture animates the storyworld in the gesture space. The metaphorics she has been making up to now animated only the transient realities of their metaphoric source domains. Now she instantiates gesturally the storyworld she has been instantiating narratively up to this moment. The storyworld is given body, and she enters into it bodily. She makes the gesture from an internal perspective. Indeed, she now presents iconically the act the metaphoric metaphorized. The virtual space of the storyworld opens up around her and draws her into it as a character: she lifts a fist and pounds it to the ground. However, the character she embodies is not herself; it is her abuser. It is only when she embodies her collapse by folding her body in on itself to demonstrate her response to her abuser's blow that Deborah enters the virtual space of the storyworld as the character who is herself.

This is the pivotal moment in the somatic therapy. Over the course of the interchange that follows, Deborah realizes that she sometimes feels overwhelmed by her own internal sensation. So the somatic problem with which the session began is for Deborah a life problem: how to grow up, how to act as an adult, be the boss, run the

business. And the problem is expressed somatically as the problem of making herself big without making herself scared. The problem is how to be a person, specifically, the problem of how to make present a self to meet this occasion, the therapeutic occasion, as an *allegorical* figure, in Shuman's phrase, in her own life (2005, 59). "Allegory in personal narrative is remarkable because although it is deeply contextual, depending on its occasion, listeners, and larger communicative situation for meaning, its meaning is not restricted to or even accountable to the experiences described" (Shuman 2005, 71). Deborah can import the significance of her resolution of this problem into her future life.

Becoming Selves

Somatic therapy addresses both the philosophical problem of what a self is and the psychological problem of how to bring a self about, both moments in the Ricoeurian project of forming a self. Selfhood, the philosopher Paul Ricoeur writes, "can be articulated only in the temporal dimension of human existence" (1992, 114). It is not that I am a self or that I have formed a self over time and it is already there for me at any moment. I am forming a self in time by the double movement the phenomenologist Martin Heidegger describes as *repetition* and *anticipation*. *Repetition* is the acknowledgement of the past in the present; *anticipation* is the resolute turning of the self from the present toward its future (Heidegger 1962, 443–444). This interfolding of time in the body enters the self into the mode of existence Heidegger calls *temporal ecstasis* (1962, 377). The word *ecstasis* is formed from the roots *ek*, meaning "out," and *stasis*, meaning "to stand." In temporal ecstasis, the body stands out from itself in time. Narrative participates in temporal ecstasis when its meaning expands beyond its moment of iteration and opens up the possibility of forming an authentic self. Stories reconstitute worlds for tellers and hearers, including their own, not only retrospectively but also prospectively so that, as phenomenologist Maurice Natanson claims, we come to inhabit the realities we invent, becoming "the self constructing for itself the world it then finds and acts in" (1970, 23). Stanley Keleman's undertaking over the remainder of the therapy session will be to make available to Deborah Abrahamson in her own body enough somatic resilience to allow her to experience her interior excitement without experiencing it as fear, even to come to experience it as pleasure.

Over the course of her act of narration, the series of corporeal dispositions Deborah has been unfolding in the present open themselves retrospectively into a series of disclosures about the past. They exhibit the pattern landscape architects Matthew Potteiger and Jamie Purinton describe as the double structure of murder mysteries (1998, 43). Mysteries fold together two stories: the detective story and the murder story. The detective story unfolds forward in time as the detective discovers what happened, at the same time that the murder story unfolds backward in time as the detective story discloses what happened in reverse order. The detective story begins where the murder story ends: with the dead body. The effect precedes the cause, which must be deciphered backward by an inductive process the detective must perform forward.

In Deborah's double narrative, the narrator does not conceal the event that happened in the past from the narratee for the purposes of suspense; the event is concealed from the narrator herself—it is outside her conscious memory—but revealed in her body. This omission is not the problem folklorists Diane Goldstein and Shuman identify as *untellability* (2012, 120). It is a problem of un-rememberability, that is, of the persistence of body memory in the absence of conscious memory. The memory takes hold of Deborah in a mimetic series:

- She performs a movement— "getting myself bigger," "being shrunk."
- She experiences a sensation— "this pulsing just goes through me."
- She recognizes an emotion— "that feeling that scared me a lot."
- She becomes aware of a memory— "when I was very very little," "something that reminds me."
- And then she narrates an event— "whenever I got above myself I was- cut down."

The narrative comes out backward because the memory comes out backward. As Shuman and Bohmer point out, "trauma narratives are rarely chronological, and their complexity is often read as inconsistency. Judith Herman reports that trauma narrative is 'encoded in the form of vivid sensations and images'" (2004, 403). That is, the memory becomes embodied before it becomes conscious. Body memory precedes and underlies and outlives conscious memory.

Genette distinguishes three modes of recounting events in narrative: the *singulative*, the *repetitive*, and the *iterative* (1980, 114). In the singulative, what happens once is narrated once; in the repetitive, what happens once is narrated many times; in the iterative, what happens many times is narrated once. The iterative mode is indicated by verbs of habitual past action like *used to* or adverbs like *always* or *never*. Deborah's use of the adverb *whenever* puts her narrative in the iterative mode. It is not the narrative of any specific past event but a narrative of how things used to be for her in her childhood. In the somatic session, it becomes apparent that her habit of the past has become for her a habit of the body. Sometimes when her abuser cut her down, the person did it physically and her somatic organization to meet this event persists in her. Somatic therapy converts blind repetition into an anticipatory resoluteness that reconfigures the body for its future.

Memory, like narrative, has a dual ontological status. It is an enclave of the past *in* the present—sealed off by the act of narration as the instance of remembering. At the same time, it is an aperture into the past *from* the present—opened out to the virtual presence of the past event on the storytelling occasion so that the present becomes partially transpicuous to the past. To treat memories as enclaves is to analyze how memory works or how stories are constructed; to treat them as apertures is to investigate how the past encumbers or impregnates the present.

The Mimetic Series

The body is memory. I reconstitute a sense of the past as precursor to my present. Each present, each "I," invokes its own lineage of memories. The way I dispose my body, the postures I take up, the moves I make, or the senses that get stimulated—the taste of a madeleine dipped in tea, to take novelist Marcel Proust's instance—put me into a particular *somatic mode of attention*, in anthropologist Thomas Csordas's phrase (Proust undated: 37; Csordas 1993).

The body enters itself into whatever mimetic series bears on the present situation. This corporeal mimesis is the "hinge" of memory, in literary theorist Emma Kafalenos' term (2006), acting as both *prolepsis*, the leaping forward of memory from the body's past into its present as "the restoration of behavior," in the sense performance theorist Richard Schechner imputes to the phrase (1985), and at the same time acting as the *analepsis* of memory, dropping the body back through the membrane of time into the past via "the memory of the senses," which Nadia Seremetakis takes to be forms of memory themselves (1994). Affect theorist Anna Gibbs writes, "the self continues to undergo both analeptic and proleptic reshaping by the work of memory and anticipation" (2010, 196). The body copy is the past making itself felt in the present by an act of possession, rendering the body achronic—as if it belonged to no particular time—and at the same time, it is the trace, the residue, of the past in the present, rendering the body anachronistic—as if it were in the wrong time, to take up Genette's distinction (1980, 40, 83).

The body's rupture through the membrane of time, its refusal to anchor itself in time or its double anchorage in two different times, yields the body its sense of presence, its sense of bringing itself to this moment, swinging between its anchorages in time. The arc of each swing is a lineage of memory. These lineages hang together, not with each other but with me, with my bodily disposition in the present. There is no unified, coherent past. I make a past coherent for the occasion on which I conjure it up. Narrative is one of my ways not only of displaying this coherence but also of making it. It is not that I remember bits, fragments, of a once coherent past, but that the past assumes a trajectory, a felt consequentiality, from its organization in the present.

I am possessed by multiple lineages of memory, which is to say that I am possessed of alternative pasts. The capacity of the body to hold together its past in the present, against the present as well as with the present, is how I am a self, how I have a sense of sustaining a self over time. It is not because I am continuous with myself—the self is no more unified and coherent than the past—but because each discontinuous moment of my embodiment slings its own anchor into the past. As Shuman and Bohmer write, "Each dimension of experience – of ordinary life, persecution, and the journey – creates a different sense of self and follows different cultural conventions for representing experience. Each contains different sorts of memories and requires a different form of self-reflection and evaluation" (2004, 406). These continuities and discontinuities are instances of the multiple selfing Erving Goffman introduced into theories of personhood (1974, 516-537). Each of my multiple selves rides its own lineage of memory. The body is itself a mimetic series, an ongoing process of self-copying. It

repeats "excitatory patterns," in Keleman's phrase, which the body has maintained at low intensity levels since their inception in the past. I intend my self bodily by a series of (self-) repetitions. Narratives of the self are one of the occasions of this repetition.

Perfect copies in the body, Keleman points out, are ways to maintain an experience. The body imitates itself in order to hold onto its experience and thrust itself forward in time. But not all repetitions are exact copies, duplicates. Imperfect copies are not flaws, failures of memory; they are novas, innovations, sites for the confabulation of a new self out of memory and imagination.

The collapse of time in the body gives psychotherapies their point of leverage: they can influence the past by influencing the present, by influencing, that is, the mimetic series, the body's memory of its past. As psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud remarked, "*Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences*" (1966, 42, italics in original). He meant unconscious reminiscences, memories they could not remember but which enacted them anyway as, for example, repetition compulsions, in which, as Freud put it, "the patient repeats instead of remembering" (1914, unpaginated). These sorts of memories, memories we cannot remember but which enact us anyway, psychoanalysis understands as the unconscious. Somatically, it is sensory memory, the kinaesthetic, postural, gustatory, gestural, visual, and other mimeses whose habit pathways in the body make the senses (Seremetakis 1994, 217).

Possessed by such a memory, the traumatized body finds itself unable to stop making perfect copies. It is inhabited by a mimetic series that may not rise to awareness as memory but as a modality of embodiment. Traumatic memory is an instance of this sort of possession. Deborah's experience of the internal pulsations before she remembers her childhood abuse is body memory outside of conscious memory.

The iterativity of the narrative, to return to Genette's term, the condensation of an experience that happened many times into a single narrative act, figures the condensation of the body's response to these experiences into habitual behavior. The corporeal disposition the body formed to meet recurrent occasions in the past persists in the present for Deborah when, for instance, in order to run her company, she wants to make herself big without making herself scared. From my perspective, in these instances of corporeal mimesis, of repeating without remembering, the person is remembering perfectly but in a way protected from conscious interference, as anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu argues, by making the body its mnemonic.

> If all societies…set such store on the seemingly most insignificant details of dress, bearing, physical and verbal manners, the reason is that, treating the body as memory, they entrust to it in abbreviated and practical, i.e., mnemonic, form the fundamental principles of the arbitrary content of the culture. The principles embodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformations, cannot even be made explicit; nothing seems more ineffable, more incommunicable, more inimitable, and therefore, more precious, than the values given body, *made* body by the transubstantiation achieved by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy, capable of instilling a whole cosmology, an ethic, a metaphysic, a political philosophy, through injunctions as insignificant as 'stand up straight' or 'don't hold your knife in your left hand' … the whole trick of pedagogic

> reason lies precisely in the way it extorts the essential while seeming to demand the insignificant. (1989, 94–95)

If, as I propose, the body copies itself, then memories are always enacting us anyway. The question is not the Freudian question: Why would I repress something? It is the somatic question: Why would I ever bother to remember it, that is, to remember it consciously? What would be the point of making body memory conscious memory? And the answer to that is to interfere with it. What bids memory to arise are the exigencies of the present, the necessity that I suit myself to my circumstances, that I mold my body to its occasions, so that, as I say, memory is calibrated as closely to the present as to the past. The ambush of memory is the announcement that I intend to interfere with my past. Somatic psychology takes advantage of this property of memory to interrupt the mimetic series in which the body participates, to oblige it to make the copy imperfect.

Remembering

At the end of this somatic session, Stanley induces Deborah to experience her pulsations as if her body were a pool into which somebody threw a stone so that she feels waves emanating from the core of her body onto her skin.

Text 6. The Transformation of Memory

> *Deborah says,* "I feel this flooding-" *she pulsates her hand against her chest as if waves of water swelled and shrank inside her,* "it's like throwing a pebble in the water?" *she squeezes a pebble in her hand a tosses it out,* "and I feel the rings coming out to my surface-" *she lays out three concentric curves layered across the front of her body with the side of her arm on "rings" and then embraces the space she has just laid out on "surface,"* "the- of the flood," *she makes wavelets with the side of her hand.* "And I feel-" *she runs her right hand down her left arm,* "it happens a lot in exercise class when I get to a certain place where- I feel cool and wet," *she runs her left hand down her right arm.* "All the outside of me feels cool and wet."

She is not flooded; there is no water; there are no rings; there is nothing to embrace; her skin is not wet. But are these gestures now entirely metaphoric? Somatic therapy has returned memory to sensation in order to transform sensation into a different emotion. Keleman brings about this transformation by the process historian Frank van Vree calls "mnemonic tuning" (2013, 4) in which the shared reality he and Deborah jointly compose changes the present as well as memory. Deborah's engagement in this transformative experience is so vivid that she perceives her skin as if it were wet, flowing with water, filling her body. Thus, Deborah transforms fear into pleasure.

If all psychological disturbances are disturbances of memory, then, as psychologist Adam Phillips argues, cures are re-memberings (Phillips 1994, 69), alterations in the mimetic series in which the body participates. Deborah has not broken her body out

of the mimetic series in order to forget the past by the process of repression, nor has the past taken her over without her volition by the process of repetition compulsion. Rather each series of self-imitations results in the modulating temporal entity we call the body. The body is not an object; it is a process. The mystery is not how the process moves itself and changes; the mystery is how the process holds itself still. The body achieves the effect of stillness, of stability or constancy, by repeating itself, by what philosopher Michel Foucault calls the "impertinent vibration of identities" (1977, 183).

Acts of narration hover between this impertinence: making the copies perfect, and the impertinence of interfering with the past: making the copies imperfect. By making the copies imperfect, by interfering with my past, I break out of the thralldom of memory and fabricate the mimetic series of my body.

Time and the Body

Personal experience narratives repeat the past in the present as embodied experience. The effect is to collapse time. Corporeally speaking, there is no past, only an organization of sensory modalities in the present. The capacity of the narrating body to inhabit its past as present gives somatic psychology its chance to change experience by intervening in the body's repetition of its past. Personal experience narratives fabricate a self, not because they represent a past self, the narrator-as-character, or because they present a present self, the narrator-as-storyteller, but because narratives fold time so that the narrating body projects its past toward its ongoingly corporeally imagined future.

Notes

1 I started thinking about this material twenty years ago and presented early versions of it under various titles at the American Folklore Society Meetings in Eugene, Oregon, the Society for Visual Anthropology Meetings in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and the Modern Language Association Meetings in Los Angeles, California, in 1998 but it received its full development over the course of my residency at the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences in Uppsala in 1999 during which I presented aspects of it at as invited lectures at the Karolinska Institute for Clinical Neuroscience as well as the Department of Ethnology at the University of Stockholm. I have presented later versions as papers at American Anthropological Association Meetings in Chicago, Illinois, in 1999 and in Washington, DC, in 2001; and as invited lectures at the School of Nursing, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 2006 and at the Visions and Ventures Symposium, Nebraska Wesleyan University, Lincoln, Nebraska in 2008. Its final and most complete presentation was as an invited lecture at the Centre of Excellence in Cultural Theory, the Universities of Tartu and Tallin, Estonia, in 2013. I would like to thank the Swedish Collegium for granting me time to write and my fellow scholars at the Universities of Tartu and Tallin for deepening my thinking. My colleague, visual anthropologist Peter Biella, has kindly converted the reel-to-reel audio-video tapes into film clips for the computer, reframing the images to exclude faces in the interests of privacy, and extracting stills of hand gestures for such publications as have included them. This most recent version benefited from the salutary critiques of the two outside readers.

2 Current narrative conventions use the term *storyworld* to describe the narrative reality of the story, which I have elsewhere called the *taleworld* (Ryan & Thon 2014). This is distinct from the act of narration, which I have called the *storyrealm*, itself distinct from the larger discursive occasion on which the story is told, the realm of conversation in my earlier work (1987, viii-ix). I shall distinguish them here as storyworld, storytelling, and storytelling occasion.
3 I invoke here the phenomenological "I," not to limit the claim to my own personal experience but to acknowledge the first-personhood of anybody, of any embodied person, enmeshed in her world.
4 See Transcription Conventions in Appendix.

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Appendix: Transcription Devices

I transcribed the words and gestures of this interaction from videotapes Stanley Keleman had made by his technician Terry McClure. Publication is with the consent of both Keleman himself and his client, to whom I have given the pseudonym Deborah Abrahamson. The transcription is designed to preserve the intonational patterns of speaking rather than the grammatical patterns of writing. Sometimes, for instance, grammatical questions have down intonations at the end or grammatical sentences end in up intonations. The breaks between phrases into which I have written descriptions of gestures and postures preserve pauses in speaking.

Capital letter	Start of utterance
.	Down intonation at end of utterance
?	Up intonation at end of utterance
-	Self-corrections
=	Absence of obligatory end pause
( )	Doubtful hearings
italics	Editorial notes
line break	Pause in speaking

Responses

Reconfiguring Trauma Memories in Narrative

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My response focuses on three dimensions of Katharine Young's essay. First, she observes, memories are not perfect copies but instead, for the person remembering a traumatic experience, are inscribed in the body. More specifically, memories are produced through gestures as well as words. Revisiting memories through narrative and gesture points to larger, allegorical truths that refer to and shape existing conceptualizations of experience. Thus, interpretations of the past are open to reconsideration, reclamation, and reconfiguration. Second, Young's discussion encompasses the intersections among multiple temporalities *and* multiple spatialities in trauma memory narratives. Third, although she writes about a trauma narrative in the context of an individual somatic therapy session, Young's comments have a bearing on our understanding of narratives about cultural trauma more generally. Young's observations make an important contribution to our understanding of how people revisit and potentially transform their current understandings of past traumas.

In my narrative research, I found the concept of allegory useful for describing how personal stories reference, acquire, and develop significance beyond recounting a particular event. Young cites my claim that "allegory in personal narrative is, 'not restricted to or even accountable to the experiences described'" (**p. 12**; Shuman 2005, 71). I want to use this opportunity to clarify that allegories are not necessarily accountable to the truth or verifiability of the events they reference. However, they are accountable to norms, values, ideologies, and what are sometimes described as dominant narratives. When we remember, we draw on conscious as well as unconscious references to the past. When we assign meaning to an event in the past, we draw not only on the denotational references to particular people and events, but also indexical and allegorical references associated with complex cultural categories and ideologies. Stanley Keleman integrates these referential systems when he offers his "speculation" and suggests, "maybe you were afraid of whatever is adult. And told not to be" (**p. 6**). Here, Keleman references other dominant narratives of children, especially girls, being put down in a particular social, cultural, and historical context. With Keleman's help, Deborah fashions an alternative story, a possible counter-memory, that can contradict hegemonic or dominant narratives (Hirsch & Smith 2002, 7; Borland & Shuman 2020).

Young argues that alternative stories are created by what she describes as the "double anchorage in two different times." As Young's account clarifies, narrative memories encompass multiple temporalities and multiple spatialities, including gestural space. The fusion of space and time recalls M. M. Bakhtin's concept of chronotope, the conjunction of temporalities and spatialities, or time-space (1981, 84). Discussions of chronotopes more often focus on heteroglossia or the conjunction of voices (see Blommaert 2015, 113 for a discussion of space and time). Chronotopes are potentially powerful sites; sometimes, as the fork in the road, they define possible alternative

realities. Often, we cannot change the circumstances that constrained our choice of one path or the other in the past, but we can reclaim the allegorical message attached to a chronotope that assigns blame, recognizes heroism, and/or defines us as characters in our own stories.

As part of a therapy session, the gestures Young discusses are initially disconnected or disaggregated from narrative. Deborah, the narrator Young observes, begins with an exercise about scale—making herself bigger and then smaller through gesture. Even disaggregated from the narrative, performing the gesture serves as a reenactment, connecting Deborah to her past. Deborah uses gestural space to inhabit "the virtual space of the storyworld as the character who is herself" (**p. 11**). Intervening in the memory, as Keleman does, opens up the possibility for reconsidering those cultural categories. As Young notes, "this is the pivotal moment in the somatic therapy": the moment when the therapist intervenes in and reconfigures the client's traumatic memory.

Young's model has profound implications for how we understand both individual traumatic memories and collective trauma. If, as Young points out, the point of making body memory conscious memory is "to interfere with it" (**p. 16**), then I would suggest that the same is true for collective trauma—the point is to consciously retell narratives toward the purpose of reconfiguring and reclaiming the narratives. Although scholars from many disciplines have written about cultural traumas, very few have attended to gesture as a form of embodied trauma memory (Chare 2015). Of course, acts of reconfiguration and reclamation are undertaken not only by the person who experienced the trauma but also by witnesses, observers, legal authorities, and scholars (including folklorists). Not all "interfere" in ways that serve the interests of the person who suffered the trauma.

Both narratives and gestures are incursions of the past into the present, producing multiple temporalities and spatialities. The process of tracing the gestures to narratives and reintegrating them creates the possibility for reconfiguring memories in the present.

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Demographic Change: Translating Future Visions in Rural Development Projects in Germany

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Germany

Abstract
Rural regions are problematized as effected by challenges caused by the demographic change in rural development policies, such as the European Union's LEADER program. Residents are called upon as bearers of hope and future shapers who are to be activated to participate in development projects. This paper addresses which role representations of demographic change—understood as policy-induced future objects—have in the activation of residents as future shapers. The analysis is based on qualitative interviews and participant observations collected in three years of ethnographic field research in two LEADER regions in Germany. Building on the Anthropology of Policy, I adopt Michel Callon's concept of translation and argue that visions of the future and actor attributions of policies are displaced in everyday negotiations of residents.

Keywords: Future; demographic change; rural regions; policy; translation

Introduction

> I live in the countryside and experience that it is becoming increasingly difficult: The village butcher has closed down because he can no longer keep up with the dumping prices in the discount stores or cannot find a successor, or both; the bank has closed down; or the way to the next family doctor becomes increasingly far because there are not enough younger doctors who want to settle in the rural areas. [...] But I also experience something else, namely, that community spirit and civic engagement are playing an increasingly important role and upheavals are also understood and used as opportunities. I have experienced representatives from politics, administration, business, science, and associations [...]. People who make a difference on the ground: Mayors, business developers, youth workers – in short, the movers and shakers in rural development. (Klöckner 2020, author's translation)

This excerpt from a speech by the German Federal Minister of Agriculture at the opening of the nationwide "Future Forum Rural Development," represents typical rhetoric about rural areas. It describes challenges facing rural regions, such as declining infrastructures or population. As a solution, the minister highlights the (mostly voluntary) engagement of so-called "movers and shakers" or "active people" who keep rural regions alive or fill them with life.

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This rhetoric that rural regions are addressed as problematic regions affected by future challenges such as demographic change is also prevalent in policy documents on the development of rural regions—such as the European Union (EU) LEADER[1] program. The latter is part of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and explicitly addresses local actors. The *community-led local development approach*, which is the characteristic of the LEADER program, enables local actors to organize themselves in public-private partnerships—so-called *local action groups*—to work out a regional development strategy from the *bottom-up* with citizen participation, and design and implement project ideas (European Structural and Investment Funds 2014). The LEADER program, thus, attests to the regions and their inhabitants a unique, locally specific repertoire of economic, social, cultural, and ecological—so-called *endogenous*—resources that have to be activated for the future development of rural regions (Ray 2000). Residents of rural areas are called upon as important actors in rural development and to initiate LEADER projects (Müller, Sutter & Wohlgemuth 2019, 2020; Cheshire & Higgins 2007, 4; Woods 2011, 143; Ray 2000).

Contrary to the widespread stereotype of a rural idyll anchored in traditions and the past (Ward & Ray 2004, 4), residents are even called upon "to play an active role in shaping their own future" (European Commission 2006, 5), as the LEADER regulation of the European Commission makes clear. This transfer of responsibility—away from state institutions to communities of local actors, often based on voluntary work—makes the LEADER program an example of the new rural paradigm (Høst 2016; OECD 2006; (Kumpulainen & Soini 2019), with its characteristic forms of *governance-beyond-the-state* (Swyngedouw 2005) or *governing through communities* (Rose 1996). In their study on the effects of community development activities on rural places in Finland, Kumpulainen and Soini (2019, 306) attest rural communities even the characteristic of becoming political instruments in rural development.

I discuss in this paper how, in the context of the LEADER program, residents of rural regions are made into these politically intended shapers of the future. The quotation at the beginning of this paper shows that references to demographic change play an essential role in this context. Based on ethnographic material collected during three years of field research in two LEADER regions in Germany within the project "Participatory Development of Rural Regions," funded by the German Research Foundation[2], I ask how do local actors in LEADER projects use projective representations of demographic change to motivate future-oriented practices in rural regions? What visions of the future do these prognoses give rise to, and how do residents position themselves in relation to them?

The present paper is structured as follows: To provide some background information, I will first roll out my methodological approach and present the concrete LEADER project—the "helping network" [pseudonym]—that builds the ethnographic basis for this paper. I illustrate then the thematic topic of the future from a theoretical perspective based on approaches of the *Anthropology of the Future*. Subsequently, against the background of the *Anthropology of Policy*, I elaborate on adaptations of Michel Callon's four moments of translation (1986) in order to show in the following analytical parts that the future visions generated in the LEADER project—with their associated

goals and actor attributions—are displaced in everyday negotiation. To this end, I will first analyze the project's goals and visions of the future as an outline of the *problematization*. Second, I analyze the *interessement* by arguing that the material representations of demographic change function as future objects (Esguerra 2019) that *enroll* the residents as future shapers. Thirdly, I show how the project initiators adopt the topos of "active age" to transform members of the LEADER project into bearers of hope for *mobilizing* new members and to thus realize the future visions. In a fourth step, I focus on the *controversy* between the future visions of the members and the visions of the future conjured up by the future object of demographic change. The paper ends with an outlook on how the visions of the future and role attributions of residents in rural regions can be ethnographically explored in rural development programs.[3]

Methodological Approach and the LEADER Project

This paper is based on a case study about future practices aiming at counteracting the effects of demographic change in the context of the LEADER program. The case study is part of the research project above "Participatory Development of Rural Regions," funded by the German Research Foundation. The overall theoretical framework of the research project is built on the *Anthropology of Policy* (Shore & Wright 2011; Adam & Vonderau 2014), which stresses the dynamics of policies in the process of their translation and implementation into different contexts on various scales. Respectively, the research project employs the concept of *multi-sited ethnography* (Marcus 1995) supplemented by a *studying through* procedure (Wright & Reinhold 2011) that avoids a linear top-down presumption of policy implementation (Lathrop et al. 2005; Müller, Sutter & Wohlgemuth 2019, 2020). According to Susan Wright and Sue Reinhold, 'studying through' follows a discussion or a conflict as it ranges back and forth and back again between protagonists, and up and down and up again between a range of local and national sites" (Wright & Reinhold 2011, 101). This procedure helps to analyze especially "how the meaning [sic!] of keywords are contested and change" (ibid.).

This paper strives to investigate how the meaning of future visions is contested on the different governance levels of a LEADER project. Accordingly, the analysis is based on insights of my ethnographic fieldwork where I followed the EU regional development program LEADER on all its levels of governance—from activities at the European level to training of regional managers at the federal level and program design in state ministries to the implementation of the LEADER program by regional actors from the economic, administrative, and social sectors as well as by village residents.

For this paper, I focus on the local level—i.e., implementation level of the LEADER project "helping network" [pseudonym].[4] Its main aim is to build a platform for intergenerational self-help as they state on the website of the LEADER region. The idea is that people in the region help each other with everyday tasks that cannot be taken over by professional care facilities or other (e.g., manual) services. Such tasks include, for example, changing light bulbs, taking down and hanging curtains, mowing the lawn, or playing games together. The LEADER project was initiated voluntarily in

2014 by the heads of a regional cooperative bank and a care facility in a five-member "competence team," consisting of local politicians, a bookkeeper, and a network coordinator, and started in 2017. The initial phase of the project was still based on the help of seniors, but now it includes all age cohorts, so that, for example, "hired grandma" services or babysitting are also offered.

The LEADER project "helping network" is listed as a "lighthouse project" in the regional development strategy, which is considered a guideline for implementing the LEADER program. Therein, the helping network is part of the field of action "Living space for young and old" whose overriding goal is the "activation of social capital and healthy village structures" (Regional Development Strategy 2015, 52). As for the policy logic, the LEADER project "helping network" represents a measure to counteract the prognosticated effects of demographic change in the present. This is why I chose this LEADER project for ethnographic inquiry about future practices in the context of LEADER. Furthermore, since the funding period of the LEADER project and the fieldwork period both started in 2017, I had the chance to accompany the project from its beginnings of kick-off events, mobilization actions up to the "daily routine" of project implementations.

LEADER funding has been used to create staff positions to coordinate the development of the helping network and act as intermediaries between those seeking help and those giving it. The unique feature of the helping network is that the members are insured during their missions and that they are paid an expense allowance for the voluntary work. In simplified terms, those seeking help pay nine euros for one hour, and the helpers receive six euros (but they can also donate these to the network); three euros remain with the network. By this, no dependence should develop, and people receiving help should also get the possibility of giving something back without providing intangible help on their own like the initiators described their intentions in the interviews.

In total, I ethnographically accompanied the LEADER project "helping network" for almost two years, from spring 2017 until winter 2018. I gained first access to the research field via the regional managers of the LEADER region by explaining my research interest. They brought me in contact with the project initiators whom I introduced myself first via email. I was then invited to join the official kick-off event where I met the two project initiators, the project coordinator, and further employees of the LEADER project as well as inhabitants interested in joining the network for the first time in person. Based on these first contacts and using the multi-sited approach, I followed the LEADER project to various events. I conducted participatory observations at information events in community centers, at consulting meetings in the project's public office, at project presentations at LAG meetings in town halls, and finally became a member of the helping network myself. As a member, I helped elderly people change light bulbs or cooked meals for (permanently) disabled people, and I also received help from other members who gave me rides in remote areas. Next to those ambulant observations (Welz 1998), I also lived for six weeks in the region to get acquainted with the daily routines and challenges in the rural area such as public transport and general public services.

Furthermore, for the LEADER project "helping network," I conducted 18 qualitative interviews with the head of the LAG, the regional managers, the project initiators, and the coordinator, with village representatives and inhabitants who helped and got help via the network. The project coordinator facilitated the interviews with the network members, others were based on previous personal contacts (snowball effect). For this paper, next to media analysis of radio and TV reports, I used ethnographic material collected during five participant observations and seven qualitative guideline-based and narrative interviews.

Even though I mostly met the actors selectively for specific events, I was in continuous contact with the initiators and coordinators whom I met again and again and with whom I spoke on various occasions. Also, with two members I was in constant contact since we met regularly for workshops, helping missions, and information events. Mainly thanks to the interviews with an intense biographical and narrative part next to its guideline-based structure, which implies mutual trust and interpersonal connection (Schmidt-Lauber 2007), the ethnographic work was guided by personal relations on different levels. According to anthropologist Sandra Wallman, the research interest in the future "leads us [...] to try to interpret the way we and others picture the future, and then to understand the effects of our (or their) picturing it as we/they do" (Wallman 1992, 2). Consequently, the ethnography on the topic of the future is itself already to be understood as future practice. The anthropological understanding of the future, and my praxeological understanding, in particular, is the focus of the next part.

Future—A Theoretical Perspective

> One thing is certain: If people have no confidence in the future viability of a region, those who are able to do so will move to the conurbations, where care, education, training and work are guaranteed close to home. We are determined to do everything we can together to ensure that those who want can continue to live in our villages to a high standard of quality – the elderly and the old as well as young families with children. (Regional Development Strategy 2015, author's translation)

This quote from a development strategy of one of the LEADER regions studied clarifies that it is a crucial horizon of action within the LEADER program to imagine and create the future. In the following, I will focus on the term *future* from a theoretical perspective, referring to various interdependent dimensions, such as cultural-anthropological orientations to future, praxeological approaches to future practices, concepts of the future as an open space of possibility, and the concept of agency.

The study of the future in the history of the discipline goes back, as Silvy Chakkalakal (2018, 4) points out, to the early cultural anthropology of the 1910s and 1920s around Franz Boas (1887–1948), Ruth Benedict (1887–1948) and Margaret Mead (1904–1975). At those times, anthropologists were mainly involved in generating knowledge about the future in commissioned research for the US government. After a long pause, the future as a field of research (again) played a role in anthropology, especially in the 2000s, as Rebecca Bryant and David Knight note when the "war on terror" and the

global financial crisis and its aftershocks "left many people around the world unable to anticipate the following day" (Bryant & Knight 2019, 9). Now, during a global COVID-19 pandemic[5] and a climate crisis ahead, ethnographic research dealing with the future is more current than ever before in the field of cultural anthropology (Hänel et al. 2021; Sutter et al. 2021; Flor 2020).[6]

Forms of prognostic, creative, and solution-oriented thinking and practices that are negotiated in traditional fields, such as democratization, technological development, migration and mobility, the future of work, sustainability, and the environment, or—as I focus on here—demographic development, are referred to as futurology.[7] What those anthropological approaches to the future have in common is that they think about the future as a means to understand the present rather than starting from the future (Bryant & Knight 2019, 3–12). Bryant and Knight define the characteristics of an *anthropology of the future* which "appears to entail a reorientation of the discipline from being to becoming, from structure to agency, and from social institutions to the hope, planning, practices, and action that project those into the yet-to-come" (ibid., 193). They demand a repositioning of teleology to the center stage of anthropological analysis "to make further sense of the role of the future in orienting quotidian action [...] to disentangle the everyday" (ibid., 201).

The anthropological perspective on the future is, thus, characterized by a praxeological *presentist approach* (Ringel 2018). This approach describes the assumption that actors create the future in the present through concrete practices. Barbara Adam and Chris Groves state that: "A true future orientation [...] is only possible when the future is no longer pre-given as future present but arises from actions in the present" (Adam & Groves 2007, 53). I also refer to these practices as *future practices* regarding Andreas Reckwitz (2016). Jochen Koch and others define future practices as "those forms and patterns with the help of which social actors imagine their future and process ideas about the future in their daily actions" (Koch et al. 2016, 163–164). Such future practices include representational practices—for example, materially generated visions of the future, as seen in urban planning, and nonrepresentational expressions of the future in the present, such as the expression of hopes, expectations, or fears (Ringel 2018, 177–179; Anderson 2010, 783). The future, thus, offers an analytical approach to understanding current negotiation processes from a praxeological perspective.

Since the future nowadays appears as an empty open projection surface that offers orientation, makes planning possible, organizes expectations, gives hope or generates depression and resignation (Bühler & Willer 2016, 9), the future has moved from the domain of fate to a "realm of action potential" (Adam 2010, 365). That is what I am interested in in this paper: how do the actors define their agency, how do they relate to the future that is anticipated by representations of the demographic change, and what actions do they take in regard to the future. The agency of institutions and actors has a unique role to play in this concept of the future (Kleist & Jansen 2016, 381). According to Simone Abram and Gisa Weszkalnys, shaping the future is always an articulation of agency, political interests, and questions of who governs and who is legitimized to do what (Abram & Weszkalnys 2011, 3–4).

Regarding understanding agency, this paper follows the cultural-sociological approach of Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische (1998). Based on the theory of practice of Pierre Bourdieu (1972, 1989), Emirbayer and Mische understand agency as a temporally embedded process of social engagement, i.e., as "informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment)" (Emirbayer & Mische 1998, 963).

Arjun Appadurai's concept of the *capacity to aspire* (2013a, 2013b) can be seen, according to Chakkalakal (2018, 24), as a research attitude to strive for something that is not yet there and to, thus, also combine a formative claim. Appadurai understands the *capacity to aspire* as a culturally shaped ability to express future visions or aspirations. These visions of the future are part of larger ideas that originate from higher cultural norms and are, therefore, not shaped individually but in social interaction (Appadurai 2013a, 187ff.). The *capacity to aspire* is also described as a "navigation capacity." By that, Appadurai refers to the social positioning and associated set of capital that determine how actors will approach the future (ibid., 188). However, he also emphasizes that less privileged actors can actively change the spaces of possibility that prevent them from expressing their own opinions and asserting them in public space (Appadurai 2013b, 289; Borghi 2018, 904; Wohlgemuth 2020).

In order to analyze how, in the context of the LEADER program, inhabitants of rural regions are made into just such future shapers, I apply the theoretical perspective on the future presented here in conjunction with the analytical adaptation of the concept of translation, which I show in the following.

Shaping the Future—A Translation Process

"[P]olicy is a narrative in a continual process of translation and contestation [...]" (Shore and Wright 2011, 14). There is a consensus in the *Anthropology of Policy* that policies in their moments of translation are reinterpreted in a way that may go beyond and deviate from their original political intentions and goals (Clarke et al., 2015; Shore 2010; Müller, Sutter, and Wohlgemuth 2019). I apply Michel Callon's concept of translation (1986) to show in the following parts of the analysis how the visions of the future generated in the LEADER project "helping network," with their goals and role attributions, are displaced in everyday negotiations. Even though Callon developed the concept in the context of actor-network theory using examples from science and technology studies, his reflections on the moments of translation are also fruitful for analyzing the negotiation of policies.

"The notion of translation emphasizes," according to Callon, "the continuity of the displacements and transformations which occur in this story: displacements of goals and interests, and also, displacements of devices, human beings, larvae and inscriptions" (ibid., 18). He distinguishes four translation moments in his sociology of translation: *Problematization, interessement, enrolment,* and *mobilization*. In those four moments, different actors negotiate knowledge and form new socialities. The pivotal

point of the translation process is the *problematization* around which a new network of relations unfolds. *Problematization* describes, according to Callon, "a system of alliances, or associations, between entities, thereby defining the identity and what they 'want'" (ibid., 8).

In the empirical examples of this paper, the problematization is that the initiators of the LEADER project assume that residents are future shapers by participating in the LEADER project. *Interessement* is what Callon calls the actions with which actors impose and stabilize these identities. "To interest other actors is to build devices which can be placed between them and all other entities who want to define their identities otherwise" (ibid.). One such device is the use of representations of demographic change that motivate specific groups of actors—the "active elderly"—to take action. Connected to this is the question of how these roles are defined and attributed—Callon calls this third moment of translation *enrolment:* "Enrolment does not imply, nor does it exclude, pre-established roles. It designates the device by which a set of interrelated roles is defined and attributed to actors who accept them" (ibid., 10). This leads to the fourth moment of translation: The *mobilization of allies*, the definition, and negotiation of representative spokespersons.[8] In *mobilization*, Callon describes processes to ensure that the supposed spokespersons for various relevant collectivities could properly represent those. In this paper, I portray residents who speak on behalf of the LEADER project and contribute to implementing the future vision.

However, these four moments of translation, the consensus, and the alliances it implies are not uncontested. Here again the *Anthropology of Policy* comes into play, assuming that policies are not simply adapted to local contexts but rather reformulated and, thus, brought into being in the moment of implementation (Clarke et al. 2015; McCann & Ward 2012; Shore & Wright 2011). Callon describes this as *controversy*, which refers primarily to "all the manifestations by which the representativity of the spokesman is questioned, discussed, negotiated, rejected, etc." (Callon 1986, 15). This connects to the future concept of an open space of possibility mentioned above, which assumes that actors can influence the future due to their respective agencies. The pivotal point of the translation, the future vision that residents shape the future in the LEADER project, can, thus, be reinterpreted at any time by rejecting the role attributions. What this translation process looks like is the subject of the following analyses.

Problematization—The Future Vision of the LEADER Project

As indicated in the introduction, the LEADER program aims to make the rural region "future-proof" by developing and implementing projects. I understand the concept of LEADER projects as *problematization* which builds the subject of the translation process (Callon 1986). In this section, I will present the LEADER project "helping network," its actors, and intentions to elaborate the vision of the future, the translation of which will be analyzed in the following sections.

One of the project initiators, a member of the board of a regional cooperative bank, a committed man in his 50s, presents the necessity of the LEADER project for the future viability of the region as follows:

> [We live] in a region that is now demographically, yes, has to deal with some demographic issues and especially with the aging of the region and that young people are moving away. And you also need concepts and ideas here on how to ensure that the region remains worth living in. And that is actually one of the ulterior motives of the [helping network], that we try to give old people the opportunity with this project [...] to grow old within their own four walls. (Interview, project initiator I, November 9, 2017,[9] author's translation)

The project initiator in this interview places the LEADER project in direct connection with the demographic change and positions himself with this statement as an idea giver who aligns his acting with the change of life circumstances in the future. This future corresponds to a vision, which is influenced by demographic prognoses.

The interviews call upon the demographic change as further challenges to which the LEADER project reacts. Eventually, the second project initiator, a director of a regional care facility, a man in his 50s, addresses in the interview the narrative of the loss of the infrastructure due to the demographic change:

> It is already so that the children often move away first and also say: "Well, I also want to see something else first apart from this beautiful [region] and want to get out." And this is the generation that has been brought up in this way: "Learn something and do something and go out into the world and create something." And the old people just stay behind. And remain often back within the village area, in contrast to the city, in large houses with still large properties, which was good in earlier years, but now also become somewhat of a burden. We experience that. We have facilities with assisted living here and people from the neighboring villages move there and say: "I will go to the place where there is at least a baker and a butcher or something and I can take care of myself." [...] Well, it's already like that, there are [...] of course there are still good structures, but we have to start now to maintain them. (Interview, project initiator II, August 17, 2017)

Therefore, the LEADER project "helping network" contributes to work against this loss of infrastructure and supply and makes it possible for residents to remain as "independent" as possible at the place where they live. The third project initiator of the network, a local social democrat politician and a senior physician in his early 60s, calls for the villages to be made attractive for all generations as a solution:

> There will be a lot of houses on the market soon and then young people must want to move there. And the old people must be able to stay there until the end. That is what I understand by a living village. So, not just seeking young people. Yes, they belong there, but old people also belong in a good village. And the old people who then say, for example, in the network: "Yes, I can do something, too. Because I can pick up your child from kindergarten. You don't get home until half past five, but I go there every day at four and pick him up and then he can have dinner at my place." That's my idea of it. (Interview, project initiator III, August 7, 2017)

In this interview, the project initiator expresses the vision of the future that within the LEADER project, older residents in the village can remain living there, and the village is to be made so attractive that younger people want to move there. The LEADER project thus creates certain location advantages.

The LEADER project is coordinated by a project coordinator who is in her late 30s. She studied social pedagogy and worked for the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs before moving to the rural region with her young family and building a local voluntary network. She talks in the interview about the practices she used to establish the network and attract new members:

> Well, at the moment, it's all about, yes, it was primarily about creating an image first. That was the first step. And then it was about going public, thinking about where we can reach people. We are still at that point. We also realize that the ways we try out don't work and many others have worked and are continuing to work. [...] But what is very important to me as a next step […] is to bring people into the foreground, to tell stories that are happening now. But also personal skills, like now someone who says: "I have a barrel organ" or "I have expert knowledge about herbs" or "I would like to go on an excursion, I used to run a forwarding agency, I like to drive." So, to get ahead and make very concrete offers in this network. And to see the General Assembly also as a kind of summer party. So, not just this sober construct but to bring more life into it, so that we can exchange ideas, so that we can meet each other. Simply to do something for the community building. (Interview, project coordinator, May 3, 2018)

What is clear from all the interview excerpts is that the project initiators—all of them are leading personalities with long professional experience and a robust social network in the region, including the project coordinator with her experience in networking people – have the necessary *capacity to aspire* (Appadurai 2013a) with their capital set to visualize a possible future and show the necessary courses of action. Similar to the policy rhetoric presented in the introduction, the initiators take up aspects of demographic change, such as the threatened or already perceived loss of local infrastructure, to present a goal or a context to which the efforts of the LEADER project are directed.

To sum up, the project initiators and the coordinator construct a *problematization* (Callon 1986), according to which potential members and their actions in the LEADER project are attributed an agency with which they should shape the future. In concrete terms, the *problematization* is that rural regions are affected by various aspects of demographic change, which local actors can counter with the help of LEADER projects. This creates relationships between global social challenges observed and experienced locally and local actors, who are shaping the future. In order to realize these intentions, a functioning LEADER project requires the membership of other people. How the project initiators gain new members is explained in the following.

Interessement and *Enrolment*—How Statistics on Demographic Change Enroll Future Shapers

The following aims to show the functions of demographic change in the LEADER project. I focus specifically on the project initiators' use of material representations and narratives of demographic change, which I refer to as future objects permeated by policy logic (Esguerra 2019). I show how the initiators of the LEADER project "helping network" use these future objects as a device of *interessement* to win residents to participate in the LEADER project and, eventually, enroll them as future shapers.

Therefore, I use an ethnographic example of a situation in which demographic change was explicitly addressed. This is an ethnographic observation from the kick-off event of the LEADER project "helping network." The kick-off event formed the first physical contact between the project initiators and the residents. It, thus, represents a "moment of friction" (Tsing 2005), in which the policy—in this case, in the form of the LEADER project presented by the project initiators—meets the living environment of the residents and triggers effects (Adam & Vonderau 2014, 19–22). After three years of planning, the implementation of the project began with this kick-off event. The declared aim of the event was to make the inhabitants of the region aware of the project and motivate them to become members of the network.

The kick-off event took place on a summer's day in 2017 in a small town's *Kurhaus* (assembly rooms). The project initiators promoted the invitation to the event in local newspapers. When I arrived, the hall was already well filled. About 160 people, as was later announced in a press release, most of them over 65 years old, sat at long rows of tables. The latter was facing a screen onto which a PowerPoint presentation was projected. Roll-up banners marked the room—they showed a warmly laughing man with a white beard behind him, dynamic-looking senior women of the same age. The five-member competence team described above had gathered in front of the screen. After the first round of introductions, the local politician took the floor as project initiator. With shining eyes, expressively gesticulating, the wiry man in his early 60s in a short-sleeved checkered shirt took the stage.

"Demography: What is that?"—"A description of how a population is composed," he answered his rhetorical question. "And that has changed – and that is why we need this [the helping network]. It all goes back 50 years ago that something in the population composition changed," he said, showing a slide with a population statistic, which was a graph of the age structure of the population in Germany. "That's when the contraceptive pill was developed," he said, pointing to a bend in the statistical curve for today's 55-year-olds. "The big bulge before that was the baby boomers born after the war. But even HERE the pill arrived"; the audience in the hall laughed. Then he showed statistics again. "In the past, it looked like a pyramid (many young people, few old people)," he explained, "Today it is a mushroom." That would mean that in 2030 we would have many more 70-year-olds. "But that is no reason to panic. Because the 70-year-olds in 2030 will be much healthier and more active – and that is what we hope for. Many people say: 'Oh, it's not so bad here. I don't want to scare you either. A proverb says: "It comes how it comes" [he speaks in local dialect].' But this attitude

is not good!" he proclaims. "The population is decreasing, especially in the southern districts," he continues. In the local community, there would even be a population decline of 20 percent. For all communities, he said, there will be more older people over 65. "This is no reason to panic," he repeated, "because these are people who help each other. And they have to! – So, I think you all now have to sign a contribution form!" With these words, he walked off the stage, the audience in the hall clapped. The lecture had the character of a TED talk—and it did not fail to achieve the desired effect because more questionnaires were indeed asked for afterward, as I experienced standing at the table with the forms (author's observation protocol, May 29, 2017).

This situation is an excellent example of how LEADER enrolls and calls upon residents to participate in projects as future shapers. The project initiator creates a vision that there will be more older people in 2030 and that the accustomed social composition will change, which the present audience has to manage. As this situation shows, the *enrolment* works first via community-building mechanisms. In this example, the project initiator refers to an imagined community by using local proverbs in dialect, making self-ironic jokes about a "backwoods" mentality, and naming concrete village names where the audience lives, – an approach that is well known from nation-building processes (Anderson 1983). This is typical for the new rural paradigm of self-responsible citizens empowered by a constructed sense of community to feel responsible for shaping their future (Husu & Kumpulainen 2019; Markantoni et al. 2018; Paula 2019).

Second, the residents are enrolled as future shapers with the help of representations of statistical data on the demographic change, materialized in the form of the statistical graph, projected onto the screen as a PowerPoint presentation. I understand the graph on demographic change as a *future object*. Alejandro Esguerra defines future objects as "an array of socio-material entities that underpin future practices" (Esguerra 2019, 964). As "socio-material entities of anticipation," they emphasize, according to Esguerra, what could become a problem. They form the infrastructures with which people imagine the future.

Esguerra highlights further that future objects are not neutral but rather perform political work since they co-construct the future (ibid.). He assigns knowledge-generated objects, such as surveys, databases, or statistics, to the future object type one. Their function is to generate a vision of the future as something that can be determined and known and promote corresponding practices, such as decision-making, in the present. For the future objects to have an effect, knowledge must be made evident—arenas for this purpose are, for example, conferences, events, or press reports (ibid., 964–966). Practices such as performing, calculating, and imagining give, according to Ben Anderson, content to specific futures. "It is through these acts that futures are made present in affects, epistemic objects and materialities," he continues (Anderson 2010, 778–779).

The project initiator uses the references to demographic change to present the future as a threat in this empirical example, the handling of which requires action in the present. In concrete terms, the image emerges that existing and familiar social relations, such as neighborhood help or family support, will no longer exist as usual

in the future due to the declining population. With the help of the graphic, the project initiator, thus, creates an urgency to act now in the present. The future is transported into the present. In this process, the statistics represent a future that can be planned and anticipated, where the exact content is not relevant.

The generalizing use of statistics on demographic change for political purposes can be also described as 'demographization' (German "*Demographisierung*"). According to Stephan Beetz, the term goes beyond the use of entrenched stereotypes to mean that social, economic, and cultural factors are subsumed under demographic statements or suppressed by them (Beetz 2007, 238). Social, cultural, and economic changes are blurred under the term demographic change; they are "demographized" (ibid., 221). Eva Barlösius points out that statistics and discourses on demographic change constitute representations that are oriented towards a normative conception of population development. The statistical representations show that a stable population structure favors a stable society (Barlösius 2007, 19–20). Demographization offers patterns of order that, according to Beetz (2007, 242), in recourse to Beck, are intended to provide security for political action. Barlösius (2007, 20) points out, however, that this suggested security hinders the view of options for shaping the future and the openness to the future.

The empirical example shows the effectiveness of the LEADER policy with its future objects on the imagination, action, and design options of local actors. With knowledge about demographic change, the policy and, thus, state knowledge becomes present in the field. Cris Shore and Susan Wright define policies as instruments with which actors (e.g., governments, companies, NGOs)

> "classify and regulate the spaces and subjects they seek to govern. Policy is a fundamental 'organising principle' of society which, like 'family', 'nation', 'class' or 'citizenship', provides a way of conceptualising and symbolising social relations, and around which people live their lives and structure their realities." (Shore & Wright 2011, 2)

Since policies organize people's thinking and actions, they are powerful vehicles for social change (ibid., 3) and, eventually, also function as future objects. According to Vonderau and Adam, policies have the characteristics of supporting specific modes of action and preventing others (such as assistance in addition to neighborhood and family support), establishing new institutional structures (such as the helping network), generating public discourse, and establishing their key concepts (such as demographic change or bottom-up citizen participation). Furthermore, they privilege particular visions of the future or visions of the 'good life' (Adam & Vonderau 2014, 19). In this example, the project initiator uses his agency, i.e., his ability to speak and be well networked in the region, to use statistics as future objects with the help of which residents are activated. The project initiator understands the membership in the network thereby as a means to work against the prognosticated future.

This part has shown a "moment of friction" in which local actors have applied action-motivating future objects, permeated by policy logics, such as the use of statistics on demographic change in their contact with residents. Visions of the future of

new social helping structures were created with the help of the future object. Through this practice of using the future object, an *enrolment*, according to Callon, becomes apparent. In this case, the project initiators take on the role of brokers (Müller, Sutter & Wohlgemuth 2020), who mediate between the policy logic and the everyday life of the people. They act as visionaries of the future, which, according to Callon's understanding of *interessement*, use specific future objects to privilege a vision of the future within the framework of which residents are intended to take action. At the kick-off event, the project initiators address the audience as potential members and, thus, enroll them as future shapers.

Mobilization—The "Active Old People" as Bearers of Hope

By using the future object of statistics, the project initiators use the future practice of stirring hope as an alternative response to the threats posed by demographic change. In doing so, they mobilize members to take on the role of representatives or spokespersons in the further course of the project. In the example above, the project initiator addresses the target group of older people as bearers of hope for shaping the future by saying: "But that is no reason to panic. Because the 70-year-olds in 2030 will be much healthier and more active—and that is what we hope for" (author's observation protocol, May 29, 2017). The hope in this LEADER project lies in older people's health condition and their engagement to participate in the LEADER project.

One of the functions of the future practice of stirring hope is to motivate people to act, as Bryant and Knight say: "Hope [...] is a form of futural momentum, a way of passing into the future that attempts to pull certain potentialities into actuality" (Bryant & Knight 2019, 134). The presence of the not yet realized potential, i.e., a supposedly dark present, becomes a resource for hope (ibid., 136). As Berlant's concept of "cruel optimism" (Berlant 2011) also suggests, hope makes the present more bearable and helps to get over crises. Bryant and Knight state: "[I]n a Time of Crisis, hope stabilizes and familiarizes the present, but it does this through collective mobilization, a momentum that focuses on specific targets, from which generalized hopefulness springs" (Bryant & Knight 2019, 153). In this phase of the LEADER project, these targets, on which hopes are pinned, are the fit and active older people who are to become members of the "helping network."

These "wishful images" (ibid., 135) are created and conveyed in narratives or media-effective representations of the LEADER project—materialized in roll-up banners or other print media. In an interview, the project coordinator explains the role of conveying experiences and stories to create a community:

> So you have to be in the public eye permanently to get it into people's heads again and again. You actually have to be present everywhere in all places. [...] And, at the same time, it is my heart's desire to get this community going, as a community. And that's where I now try to bring stories to the fore every time we get into the press (laughs). (Interview, project coordinator, May 3, 2018, author's translation)

Therefore, the project coordinators entered into media partnerships for which they asked members to talk about their helping missions in radio, or television reports, newspaper articles or social media. In order to acquire new members, for example, a story from the network was broadcasted weekly on the radio at specific intervals over one month.

The following radio report is from a series in which ten such contributions were broadcasted. They are all between three and a half and four and a half minutes long and follow the same pattern: Firstly, a moderator introduces the network, then it follows a description of a helping person and a person helped and, finally, the report explains how the listeners can become members. The following is an excerpt of a radio report that exemplifies well the members' narratives, which helps to understand their role in the LEADER project better:

> Moderator: "So, there are services provided for which there is often no market in the countryside. Everyday things that used to be the responsibility of the family community, which is no longer the case everywhere. A good thing for [Harald Schulz][10]. And that's why he does everything he can to ensure that [the helping network] continues to grow quickly."
>
> Helper [Schulz]: "It is important for me that as many as possible get in touch with us in the sparsely populated [region], because the neighborliness among people is good, but more and more, I see this in our village, we have 54 houses, […], and so you notice that the young people are moving away, the old people stay behind or have to go to old people's homes, because they can no longer manage the domestic environment in the same way.
>
> Moderator: "[Marie-Luise Kramer] has also received everyday help from [the helping network]: She is particularly pleased about the interpersonal and practical aspects that are part of the [helping network].
>
> Person helped [Kramer]: "That was, for example, repairing a raised bed, and what I like about it: If I am interested in how it is done, with what it is done, then I get the corresponding information from the person. And that's what also interests me. Or working with fretsaws; I once called on somebody's help to show it to me. And then I was shown it by a nice young man.
>
> (Radio report, July 17, 2018)

The medial mediation helps create the image of the fit and active older people who are presented as future shapers at the kick-off event. With their engagement, they embody the wishful thinking of older people as to what they should be like in the future through the network. The personalized stories of the members function thereby as a means to let the visions of the future, intended by the LEADER project, become real in the present. The members portrayed, thus, stand as representatives and spokespersons (Callon 1986) of the future narrative.

These representations of the members—as involved older people onto whom hopes are projected, who are committed to the future, and who help each other in everyday life—are part of the topos of *active old age*. According to Matthias Ruoss, this image of *active old age* is commonly understood as a call for productive occupation, for

greater participation in social life, and for an independent way of living, which is why it is particularly prevalent in the context of demographic change (Ruoss 2015, 160). The topos of *active old age* is to be located not only in the context of the cuts in the aid systems of the welfare state and the increasing underfunding of public administration and infrastructure but also in the (re)discovery of civil society. The latter is characterized by a partial transition from state provision to self-care and from public to private responsibility for help for those who need it (van Dyk et al. 2016, 38).

Silke van Dyk also summarizes this development of the topos of *active old age* under the activity thesis. She assumes that older people—apart from (minor) health restrictions—have the same psychological and social needs as in middle age (van Dyk 2007, 97). The theme of the activity approach is, therefore, the coping with everyday problems caused by a perceived lack of social function (ibid.). The re-regulation of old age is, thus, associated with the neoliberal restructuring of society. However, according to van Dyk, this does not occur as a top-down process of engaging older people but rather a shift of regulation into the subjects themselves, through self-accentuation, and guidance for self-management (van Dyk 2007, 106).

When subjecting the radio reports to quick content analysis, it becomes clear that the members take up narratives of the demographic change—such as the omission of family structures or youth migration—and formulate them as their own desires (i.e., helper Kramer). Both members also adopt the role attribution as future shapers or bearers of hope by ending their comments with positive outlooks—the helper presents the network as an option to replace neighborly help, and those helped emphasize the gain of new knowledge. The rhetorical image is similar to what the project initiators want to convey; however, their speaker's positions as inhabitants or peers fulfill another function in the radio report. Eventually, the future affected by demographic change appears to the listeners as something jointly experienced in the present, which can be mastered by the membership together. A community of future-oriented actors develops among the residents.

I, therefore, understand the radio reports as means of *mobilization* described by Callon (1986). The members portrayed in these radio reports act as representatives and, literally, as spokespersons for the network to spread their visions of the future and, thus, mobilize other residents to become members. The subject of the next section is how the members negotiate this role in everyday life and what effects this has on future orientations in everyday life.

Controversy—Future vs. Present and the Effects on Everyday Life

The project initiators set their sights on the kick-off event on the future in the year 2030—a time horizon that, in some cases, lies further into the future than the expected lifespan of the audience. What relevance does this future have in the present for the target group of the lecture—older people aged 60 to 90 years? The question of this section is how the members position themselves and their agency in relation to the visions of the future conjured up by the future object of demographic change. I argue that this reveals a *controversy* (Callon 1986) in which members reject their assigned role or negotiate it differently than intended in the *problematization*.

Felix Ringel and Roxana Moroşanu established the term *time-tricking* to point out the agency of actors in shaping the future: "Time-tricking refers to the many different ways in which people individually and collectively attempt to modify, manage, bend, distort, speed up, slow down or structure the times they are living in" (Moroşanu & Ringel 2016, 17). Statistics and their underlying vision of the future, for example, would also help to realign individual life courses accordingly (Ringel 2018, 25). Once again, I will focus on the members who spoke in the radio report to better understand the residents' agency.

The helper portrayed is about 70 years old, a trained carpenter who later worked in public service. He has lived with his family in the same village all his life. I first met the helper in the network's office when we both signed our membership cards. In the following three months, I saw him again on each of my field research missions to the network: At an information event in a village pub, where he, as an already active member, had been there "out of curiosity" (author's observation protocol, July 17, 2017), at a training course for helpers and as my first helper when I requested help myself through the network. All in all, I perceived him as a "man of the first hour," concerned with the development of the network.

In an interview that I later conducted with him, he justified his commitment with the words: "We have to get the car running," which is why he also participates in the media reports, among other things. As he says in the following interview excerpt, his motivation to get involved with the network comes from a "sense of honor" that he feels on a human level towards the network:

> But as I have already said, the [project coordinator] is a passionate supporter [...], because she has a certain sense of honor. And she wants to get the thing through and that's why the basic idea [of the helping network], as I just said, is a laudable one, a good one, with a corresponding background, which will be needed more in the future than it is now. […]. Or I would commit myself even more, because, as I just said and formulated, the basic idea is good and when a person, as she does, goes through with it, it is like founding a company. […]. In a company, she would be the boss, she coordinates, she needs her supporters. It needs, as they say here in [the network], its caretakers. And the more positive things come along, the easier it is for her and the easier it is for her to pursue the matter. If there are a lot of people who help her and continue to do so, I think that in ten years' time, the matter will be more important than it is today. (Interview, helper, July 18, 2018, author's translation)

The helper describes himself as a "caretaker" and places his actions in the context of entrepreneurial action (Bröckling 2016; Husu & Kumpulainen 2019). The primary motivation for his commitment comes from interpersonal relationships and a habitually based sense of duty.

The second member portrayed in the radio report is a woman in her early 60s. She lives alone in a house with a large garden and sheep, which she bought ten years ago with her husband, who has since passed away. Before that, they lived 40 km away. She has no family in the region. In the interview, she talks about an arranged television shoot, where she was filmed in her garden during a helping mission.

> So I thought: "Gee, that [the fence repair] would be something for the TV show." Then we can at least show what we can do, what we do, in a practical way. [...] The editor did it very humorously. It was really great, wonderful. You could also show what the network is doing. That was the point of the thing, that they concreted the supports for the fence with quick cement. I could have done it myself, but ok, we just took it for the report. It was also quite good, was nice. (Interview, person helped, November 14, 2018, author's translation)

The person helped positions herself both in the interview and the radio report as "active" who has something to present and convey. She enriches her own life through the network by learning new skills and meeting other people, as she emphasized elsewhere in the interview when she reported on a mission in her garden:

> And then he [the helper] came. He brought another neighbor with him and said, "I have to see what to do here first. I have to bring the tools and stuff like that." "Yes, gladly." Drank coffee, told, showed. And then we built the raised bed together. I mean, he built it and I was the sidekick, so to speak. And that I also enjoyed. And then I went to him with a piece of wood because he said: "I don't have the drills with me now. Why don't you just come over." And then he showed me his workshop. Oh, that made me jealous. He has things, tools, wonderful, really great. […]. And then he showed me how to drill the log. […]. I admired that and so on, I am such a hidden craftsman. And ... yes, then we had a cup of coffee afterwards – his wife came downstairs and introduced herself. And that was a good wavelength with the wife, also with the garden and greenhouse and, oh, such a direct exchange. "If you get that from me, I'll get that from you," like that. Great. And that was also when they were shooting here, she came with him. (ibid.)

This interview excerpt clarifies what the implementation of the LEADER project is about. It is about accomplishing daily aid, the enrichment of everyday life and community. This is also made clear by the following excerpt with an over 90-year-old woman who received help via the network:

> I wanted to have someone to play games with me. That way you get more entertainment. And then I had help in the garden. And if something gets broken, for example, hanging a light bulb. They offer all that. [...] Now I have the Bible TV; I can't get it on the TV alone now, so I get help again. (Interview, person helped II, October 13, 2018, author's translation)

These notions of new forms of social interaction that the members highlight in the interview reveal different temporal horizons and logics on the different levels of the LEADER project. To illustrate that, there are, on the one hand, the members who highlight first and foremost the benefits of the LEADER project for their own lives in the present. On the other hand, the project initiators, who follow more the policy logic, envision what the LEADER project could achieve in the future. I understand this dissidence regarding the mediated visions of the future as the *controversy* in the trans-

lation process. Callon describes the controversy as "all the manifestations by which the representativity of the spokesman is questioned, discussed, negotiated, rejected, etc." (Callon 1986, 15). He asks what happens if the actors do not fulfill their expected roles and act in a very different or opposite way (ibid., 16). I do not want to say that the members actively reject their roles, nor could (and would) I detect any dissidence towards the project. On the contrary, I could see goodwill towards the engagement of the project initiators and the idea. However, I would like to point out a *controversy* between the intended future orientations on the LEADER project level and the individual future orientations in everyday life.

If the project initiators portray the residents as bearers of hope and future shapers, a look at the residents shows that they act as spokespersons due to their agency. However, their motivation to participate, is individual and follows their own goals. Therefore, the shaping of the future plays more of a role on the level of the brokers and/or those who create and implement the LEADER project. Participation in the LEADER project for the current members, however, fulfills above all the purpose of mastering everyday life in the here and now and improving the life situation for the individual. The future plays a role only on the level of the policy and its materializations, such as the future objects and their medial mediation.

Conclusion

This paper shows that policy-induced visions of the future and role attributions are displaced and renegotiated in the process of their translation. The adaptation of Michel Callon's four moments of translation for the analysis of the negotiation process served to focus on the agency of local actors in shaping the future.

With their social and cultural capital, project coordinators act as brokers at the interface between LEADER experts and residents. They have the capacity to aspire to use policy-induced future objects, such as representations of demographic change, to convey a vision of the future and enroll residents as future shapers. Representations of demographic change serve the project initiators as future objects to anticipate their vision of the future in the present and, thus, create urgency among residents to act in the present. As this paper has shown, one future practice effected by that is the practice of mobilizing new members for the LEADER project by addressing the topos of "active old age." To this end, members act as spokespersons who, by telling personal stories from the network, embody the intended future vision of the "active age."

Therefore, the analysis showed that the future—in this case, related to the handling of the demographic change—plays a role primarily in the context of the LEADER policy as a strategic means to motivate residents to act. However, these policy-induced future practices have no significant influence on the everyday life of residents. It is more a matter of coping with the here-and-now challenges. In the LEADER project, residents are, thus, representatives of activated bodies intended to symbolize the future in an ideal way. Regarding the controversy about the policy-induced vision of the future, their agency comes into play when shaping a future characterized by a reinterpretation of the visions of the future conveyed and filled with individual life.

As Chakkalakal notes, making and knowing the future always has a political dimension of belonging and participation. The future is linked to power and inequality relations, making a perspective on *race*, *ethnicity*, *class*, *age*, *dis/ability*, etc., indispensable (Chakkalakal 2018, 9). My fieldwork that was focused mainly on official events, where the LEADER policy was visible, gave insights into who can formulate and assert a particular future vision. Further ethnographic research focusing more on the informal parts of LEADER projects, for example, strictly on the implementation phase when no "official" LEADER experts are present, could follow up on the inequality relations that exist when dealing with the future. That way, it could be determined even more who the declared "future shapers" are and how they position themselves to global social transformations such as the demographic change.

Notes

1 LEADER is the abbreviation for the French name *Liaison entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale* (Link between actions for the development of the rural economy) (see https://www.netzwerk-laendlicher-raum.de/regionen/leader/. Accessed November 20, 2020.

2 The DFG funded research project "Participatory Development of Rural Regions. Everyday Cultural Negotiations of the EU LEADER Program" of the Department of Cultural Anthropology at the University of Bonn is investigating the questions 1) of how inhabitants of rural regions participate in the local implementation of politico-economic development measures, 2) how they translate the measures into their everyday life, and 3) what effects these translations have on perceptions and interpretations, as well as on cultural objectification. (https://www.kulturanthropologie.uni-bonn.de/en/dep/en/research/projects/dfg-projekt-partizipative-entwicklung-laendlicher-regionen-participative-development-of-rural-regions?set_language=en).

3 I thank the two anonymous reviewers for their careful reading of my manuscript and the insightful comments and suggestions.

4 In general, for my case study about future practices, I accompanied two LEADER projects in two neighboring LEADER regions in Germany in depths and three other projects occasionally in three LEADER regions. For this paper, I focus on just one LEADER project, even though my analysis is influenced by my insights on the other projects as well.

5 In regard to current anthropological studies about the coronavirus pandemic, the research project "Bonndemic. Urban cultures during and after the Pandemic" investigates based on participant observation, qualitative interviews, and online ethnographies at the example of the German city Bonn, how urban spaces of a neighborhood, nightlife, and protest are transformed in the wake of the pandemic and which practices become part of everyday urban culture after the crisis (see https://www.kulturanthropologie.uni-bonn.de/bonndemic/about).

6 That dealing with the future becomes more and more relevant for the study of everyday life is also shown in the increasing number of research projects and conferences on the topic of the future, such as the DFG funded project "Living or Surviving the Future? Future Laboratories as Spaces of Possibility for a Good Life Beyond Contemporary Society" of the department of cultural anthropology at University of Freiburg or the university conference of the German Folklore Society (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Volkskunde) "Planning. Hop-

ing. Fearing. On the Presence of the Future in Everyday Life" of the department of Cultural Anthropology at the University of Bonn in 2018.

7 The future, for example, became a topic in the field of anthropological research of macroeconomics and finance (Guyer 2007), in processes of modernity and globalization (Appadurai 2013), in urban and state planning (Abram 2014, 2017), or in theories of temporal succession and duration (Moroşanu & Ringel 2016; Nielsen 2011)—to name just a few.

8 Callon uses the term "spokesman/spokesmen"—for gender neutrality, I use the term "spokesperson."

9 Due to the anonymization in the project, the author does not provide the names of the interviewees and the places where the interviews took place. Instead, only their functions in the LEADER project are named.

10 The following names in square brackets are pseudonyms.

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Responses

Grounding Future Visions: A Response to Wohlgemuth

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Sina Wohlgemuth details a useful methodological tool kit for ethnographic study, at a regional scale, of State-sponsored efforts to ameliorate rural demographic crises. Such crises are trending globally. Since the advent of industrial capitalism, rural areas have struggled to hold onto their young, and in recent decades, declining national birth rates have supercharged demographic strains on rural communities. These trends, which are both macrostructural and international, are ripe for interdisciplinary scholarly research that integrates critical cultural analysis.

What are the implications for aging rural communities facing declining government capacity and growing care needs? Jumping into the breach, the European Union's LEADER program models the provision of care for the old and young by integrating government services with family and neighborly caregivers. Focusing on the roll out of this effort in two regions of Germany, Sina Wohlgemuth has assembled data through interviews and participant observations of cross-sectoral[1] public forums (and their accompanying documents) for stakeholders from local communities.

We find Wohlgemuth's careful attention to the emergent, fragile spaces where translational moments incubate networked matrices for collaborative governance especially compelling. These matrices, structured as communicative events, generate the new identities and temporalities needed for envisioning alternative futures. Wohlgemuth's methods are particularly effective in creating: a) an actor-centered view of bureaucracies; b) a linear, action-centered view of bureaucratic processes from top-down governmental vision to the uptake (or rejection or reconfiguration) of those processes by local actors; and c) a view of public deliberation and culture as a series of discrete social dramas, framed as events that produce definable discursive "objects."

At the points where the stalactites of government meet the stalagmites of bottom-up regionalization, we encounter contestation, struggle, and visions of contending futures. In 2019 our organization, the Livelihoods Knowledge Exchange Network (LiKEN), undertook a collaborative research project with a regional arts organization, Mid-Atlantic Arts (Hufford and Taylor 2020a, 2020b). With funding from a private foundation, LiKEN coordinated a field team to assess the need for folk and traditional arts programs in the region and identify resources and venues. Focusing on aesthetic practices that express and renew a sense of collective being helped structure our listening across 112 counties in Appalachia—a region comprising fertile territory for LEADER-like work. A focus on the arts allowed us to engage in appreciative inquiry into community assets and visions for alterna-

tive futures in a region coming to terms with post-industrial economics following well over a century of industrially driven, mono-economic forms of development.

This regional survey identified emergent spaces and networks where local energies could be matched with the regional distribution of resources through a program such as LEADER. We found that these networked spaces are unevenly, but quite organically, emerging through locally-driven efforts to access and weave together many kinds of resources toward creating alternative futures. We feel a vital role for ethnographic research into how such efforts are incubating networked governance. We wonder how this terrain in the U.S. compares with that in Germany and how the research subtending the LEADER program was designed to discover and engage existing efforts to reflect on and reshape models for the future.

Like the rural parts of Germany described in Wohlgemuth's essay, rural parts of the Appalachian region face youth attrition and an aging population. Yet we found, in every county, community-based efforts to stem the tide of outmigration through economic development that integrated artistic and ecological assets. The leadership was often affiliated with regionally networked auspices such as Convention and Visitors Bureaus and local seats of governance, and regionalizing from below through meso-level alliances, cooperatives, and markets which were also connected through what we have come to call ecologies of care. Listening to this leadership formed the basis for our report and recommendations.

Having spent three decades in the Appalachian region of the U.S. following interactions among government agencies, cultural /societal /economic macrostructures, and bottom-up collective (and individual) subjectivities and processes (from organized social /political movements to community life to national cultural metanarratives), we are struck by the multidimensional interactions of forces. We recognize that cultural analysis is fundamental to an often-contentious process before policymaking and implementation. Because our work focuses on identifying policy needs at the grassroots in a region with a historically distinctive relationship to the State, we find ourselves wishing for more context that would situate the LEADER program in the play of local, regional, and national history and politics. Such a context could illuminate: 1) what is distinctive about national and regional political cultures and 2) a dynamic view of the State itself as a site of contestation.

1) Contextualizing within regional and national political cultures: We find that Government programs are never simply top-down but arise from distinctive kinds of historical relationships between the State and other sectors (e.g., organized civil society, corporate power, experts, media, etc.) (Rothschild and Stephenson 2009). A program like LEADER might play out differently in countries with relatively high levels of trust in government (like Germany) from countries where "bottom-up" civic voluntarism is traditionally trusted more than governmental action (like the U.S.) (OECD 2022). Unique political-cultural terrains are laid down by national and regional histories and contestations that provide the background of possibilities within which government policies operate across regional civic ecologies (Taylor 2009). The LEAD-

ER program is a many-layered design, with EU inspiration and origins, but national and subnational implementation. It is traversing heterogenous political terrains with diverse cultural narratives to frame how civil society, customary communities, and the State should interdigitate. The LEADER model sounds curiously "American" with its valorization of voluntaristic and household-based care. However, it is being implemented in German regions with a long tradition of public care systems based in a strong social democratic State. Attention to background political cultures could encourage comparative studies of diverse national and regional contexts that would increase the depth and accuracy of cultural analysis.

2) The need for a dynamic understanding of the State: The content of the policy and the structures of agencies and programs arise in a messy back-and-forth, dialogue, and contestation among communities, civil society, government (at diverse and often antagonistic scales), and other players (Stivers 2009). How might the moments of contention to which Wohlgemuth alludes exemplify such a dynamism? Wohlgemuth alludes to the possibility that a program like LEADER could fit a neoliberal pattern of valorizing voluntary care work while decreasing government services and public revenues. How do participants within the communities recognize and address that possibility? We know these patterns from our work in a part of the U.S. that is a 'sacrifice zone' for extractive industries (Reid & Taylor 2010). For over a century, the coal and timber of Central Appalachia produced vast wealth for absentee corporate owners while locking local communities into a path of development on the peripheries of the world system, with severely under-funded government services and little room for maneuver (in a Gramscian sense).

Boom and bust, extractive economies generate deep local inequalities and a 'local State' dominated by local elites tied to extraction (Billings & Blee 2000). This is a kind of corporate State power structure in which, paradoxically, anti-government narratives can thrive. This kind of anti-government rhetoric has been key to the neoliberal dismantling of government services and agencies in recent years. Examining these cultural and political formations, "in the round," from multiple perspectives is essential. In the Appalachian context, the very dysfunctions of government in this "sacrifice zone" have also opened up alternative, civic spaces for social movements for a "just transition" from extractive industry—enabled by the distinctive, regional history of bottom-up justice movements (Tarus et al. 2017; Taylor et al. 2017)

"Edgework": 'research objects' that are 'boundary objects': To achieve the above goals, we think the primary need is to find methods that allow one to focus on objects of cross-sectoral care and stewardship that can become 'boundary objects' for collaborative research (see, for example, Bendix et al., 2017). We call this a form of "edgework" that brings multiple perspectives into dialogue to situate the object of research and action at a public nexus of interdisciplinary and multisectoral perspectives to break down silos between spheres, sectors, and scales (Hufford & Taylor, 2013). The key to this is understanding public life as arising from particular historical and cultural contexts

and paths of development. We need to contextualize them in the political terrain within which they must operate—defined as the background conditions of the political arena in which civil society navigates and "the prevailing atmosphere [that] determines boundaries and a language of possibility" (Perusek 2006, 86). This specificity matters, because cultural analysis of community rhetorics that mobilize collective hope are important to understanding the building of public trust and participation. Folklore's historical association with top-down regionalizing projects of the State has been reflexively redeployed in recent decades in the work of bottom-up regionalization (Taylor, 2001). Public folklore can play a vital role in fostering shared inquiry around named cultural expressions of collective being (festivals, foodways, land practices, musical and oral traditions, etc). Moreover, these forms of cultural production can form a productive boundary object for multisectoral (and cross-disciplinary) knowledge sharing—around which everyone assembles as subjects. Out of the shared inquiry into the boundary object comes the raw material (recordings, transcriptions) on which to reflect together in the process of collaborative modeling.

Wohlgemuth's essay foregrounds both the kinds of discursive boundary objects we have in mind and their functions. How might local discursive objects be at risk of cannibalization by the State's discursive objects? Attention to the interactions of official and vernacular forms of knowledge exchange engages vernacular epistemologies. Generating forms of time that depend on demographic stability, vernacular epistemologies could be more central to the process but would require ethnographic attention throughout the design and implementation of programs such as LEADER. In the case at hand, the most prominent objects are those originating with the State, termed "future objects." Like Dickens' ghost of Christmas future, graphic models of projected demographics offer scenarios around which alternative futures and alternative future shapers materialize. The essay mentions, almost in passing, the kinds of boundary objects to which public folklore might be most keenly attentive: proverbs, stories, herbal knowledge, gardens. As collective structures that secrete vernacular temporalities, bundling together past, present, and future, and as material practices that actively shape the future out of the present, this kind of knowledge could be used not only to model potential consequences of demographic change but to audit equity in planning and evaluation. Here, we believe that ethnographically grounded public folklore can play an essential role in the unfolding processes of knowledge exchange vital to the success of programs like LEADER.

Notes

1 We use "cross-sectoral" to refer to work and communication between the sectors of government, civil society, experts, and other key types of players relevant in particular settings (such as corporations, philanthropy, etc.)

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Becoming an "Ex-Con": When Ritual Fails and Liminality Endures

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Abstract
People that are released from prison find themselves in a state of liminality: no longer part of the prison, not yet part of the "world outside." As there is no official ritual for release, men create rituals for themselves to escape the state of liminality. However, release rituals often fail, and liminality becomes a permanent state. This article argues that the broader social context is responsible for the failure of ritual and the endurance of liminality by labeling of formerly incarcerated men as "ex-convicts." This argumentation is based on ethnographic research of post-prison life, centering around an adult male prison in Germany.

Keywords: post-prison life; ritual; ritual failure; stigma; labeling; liminality

Introduction

Michael spent five years behind bars in a German federal prison. On the day of his release, a social worker picked him up and accompanied him to the local halfway house, where he would spend the next couple of months. Having unloaded his luggage, Michael went for a walk. His brown leather shoes – the ones he had been wearing when he was arrested—felt strangely hard on the soles of his feet. In prison, he had only been allowed to wear sneakers and slippers. It felt weird to leave the halfway house whenever he wanted, no longer being locked up in a cell. Michael enjoyed the sun of this late October day when he walked around the lake in the municipal park. For the last five years, he had only been in contact with wind and weather in the prison courtyard, surrounded by grey walls with crumbling plaster and barbed wire fencing on top. He made a long visit to the supermarket, strolling through the aisles, looking at the colorful packaging, picking up some products. In prison, doing grocery shopping had meant ticking boxes on the prison shopping list and waiting several days for the goods to arrive. On the evening of his first day "outside," he enjoyed the smell of his freshly washed laundry. It stood in sharp contrast to the neutral smell of the prison washing soap.

A couple of days later, when Michael talked to me about his release, he still was full of joy and relief. At the same time, he felt out of place, insecure, frightened, and alone. Would he find an apartment? Would he find employment? Before his incarceration, he had worked as a sales assistant in a big department store. How would future employers and people, in general, react when he told them about his past? Would he

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find friends and a partner? Would he be able to cope with the "world outside?" For Michael and formerly incarcerated men in general, release from prison is as much a time of insecurity and instability as it is a time of elation and excitement. The men are no longer in prison, but they do not yet belong to the outside world. They are "betwixt and between" (Turner 1967, 93), in a state of liminality. Referring to cultural anthropologist Victor Turner, I understand release from prison to be an "in-between" stage. Release from prison is a liminal threshold, within which formerly incarcerated men stand between old cultural orders (prison) and new ones (life after prison), within which old social roles (as inmates) are no longer valid, and new ones (as fathers, workers, tenants, partners) are still to be found.

In this article, I conceptualize release from prison as a state of liminality. I direct analytical attention to release rituals, which I conceive as symbolic and expressive actions (cf. Krieger and Belliger 2013, 7–8) that men create and perform to get past this liminal state of release. During ethnographic research in the field of post-prison life, I encountered men who performed such rituals but who were nonetheless unable to leave liminality behind. I will argue that liminality becomes a permanent state if rituals of release go wrong – and they do so very often. I will show that the "failure" of release rituals is based on society's refusal to allow formerly incarcerated men to cross the liminal threshold of release by stigmatizing them as "ex-convicts."[1]

Michael is one of the twenty-five persons I met during my ethnographic field research on post-prison life. I spent one-and-a-half years working in this field. My research started at a German prison for adult men serving long-term sentences; that meant serving at least two years behind bars in the German context. I spent five months in prison as an ethnographer. I got to know the daily prison routines and their atmosphere.

Moreover, I met with incarcerated but soon-to-be-released men (ten in total) in the prison visiting area for interviews (which took the form of informal talks). My encounters with imprisoned men allowed me to gain many valuable insights into prison life and allowed me to take part in their release process. I met with them in the months, weeks, and days before their release, and I met with them several times after their release and witnessed their struggles in establishing life after prison, their performance of release rituals, and their pain when other people saw them as "ex-convicts" and nothing more.

Like Michael, many of these men had lost all their social ties during their time in prison. They started their new lives at the city's halfway house like Michael. Besides the prison itself, this halfway house was the second starting point for my research. All in all, I spent one-and-a-half years at the halfway house where I met men who had been released for only a couple of days. Furthermore, I met men whose last stay in prison was more than fifteen years ago and who considered the halfway house their "home away from home."[2]

Some of the men I met during my research had been convicted for drug-related crimes; some of them had served their sentences on charges of fraud, burglary, or robbery, while some had been charged with violent crimes, murder, rape, or child abuse. Some had spent two or three years behind bars, others more than a decade. I met men

in their early twenties and men in their sixties from many nationalities. The men all had in common that they had to establish new everyday lives after being released from prison.

I met these men as persons who had committed criminal actions, but I did not reduce them to their crimes—or instead, I tried not to. Sometimes, my prejudices and moral orientations made this difficult (cf. Jewkes 2011; Liebling 2014). Thus, I refer to the people I met during my research as "men" rather than as "ex-prisoners," "ex-inmates," or "ex-convicts." In describing them as "men" and using pseudonyms, I seek to "restore to [them] a kind of dignity of which prison, the courts, and the police [after their release: society] tend to deprive them" (Fassin 2017, xix).[3]

Conceptualizing prison release as a state of liminality is just one way of analytically approaching life after prison, but it is nonetheless a very fruitful one. It unfolds from my overarching research project, in which I explore post-prison life ethnographically. I am interested in the effects of prison sentences on the lives of formerly incarcerated men weeks, months, and years after release. I ask how actors establish everyday life after their release from prison how they experience post-prison life. I look at the marginal social position men often occupy after release and the cultural meaning they attribute to their life situations. I analyze the social forces they encounter due to their prison terms, such as alienation from the outside world, stigmatization, and poverty. Moreover, I identify cultural techniques that men employ to navigate in and around insecure social circumstances (cf. Sieferle 2020a; Sieferle forthcoming).

Although there is a range of prison studies that give ethnographic insights into the lifeworlds of incarcerated men and that point to incarcerated persons' alienation from the world outside (cf. Clemmer 1940; Crewe 2009; Fassin 2017; Le Caisne 2009; Rhodes 2004; Sykes 1958; Ugelvik 2014), post-prison life as experienced by formerly incarcerated men is rarely addressed.[4] Prison studies usually end with a short outlook on the processes of release, but they fail to recognize the struggles and insecurities that come with release and the lasting effect of prison sentences on formerly incarcerated men.

Post-prison life is almost exclusively addressed from a criminological or social science perspective. These (primarily quantitative) studies point to important aspects of release and life after prison: They focus on the challenges newly released men face, especially on the structural barriers to finding employment and housing, on the risks of homelessness, social isolation, and recidivism (cf. LeBel 2012; Moore et al. 2013; Munn & Bruckert 2013; Pager 2003; Petersilia 2003; Visher et al. 2011; Winnick & Bodkin 2008; Johns 2018).

However, these studies do not consider formerly incarcerated men's actions and experiences of post-prison life. They do not approach life after prison ethnographically and often overlook the importance of release rituals for newly released men. An ethnographic approach and a cultural anthropological analysis of post-prison life—as I take and conduct my research—enable me to reveal the sociocultural processes and meanings that underly released men's actions and their experiences of post-prison life. It allows conceptualizing post-prison life as an enduring state of liminality.

To do so, I will focus on the liminal experiences of formerly incarcerated men and identify central aspects that make up post-prison liminality. I will describe the release

rituals that formerly incarcerated men perform to leave liminality behind. Focusing on the failure of these rituals, I will then address why release rituals so often go wrong. I will show in ethnographic detail that social labeling as "ex-convicts" prevents the men from leaving liminality behind, making liminality a permanent state.

In-Between: Prison Release as Liminality

Michael felt relieved and excited after his release. At the same time, he felt frightened and insecure. This mixture of elation and fear is typical of release. It starts weeks, sometimes even months, before the upcoming event. (Formerly) incarcerated men call this state of mind "gate fever." It combines both a deep longing for release and a high level of insecurity regarding it: "The traditional way for treating fevers is to eat less, as in the old saying, 'Starve a fever, feed a cold.' But if you've got Gate Fever, you've got to think beyond what's on your dinner plate. You may be worried about what lies in store, wondering if you will cope, and feel restless and even fearful. At the same time you might have grand plans for the future, and be tremendously excited. All these feelings are often mixed up together, and it can really do your nut" (Prison Phoenix Trust 2014, 1; cf. also Campbell 1986, 171-176; Champion 2005, 110).

Gate fever gripped the men, especially those serving their first prison sentence. However, even Silvio, who had been in prison two times before and served a three-year sentence, suffered from gate fever. He was unable to get any sleep in the days before his release. Days felt like weeks, hours like days. Although they had a distant relationship, Silvio's thoughts revolved around his return to his parents, who had agreed to take him in. He constantly thought about where to find employment and what his friends might think about his return—not one of them had visited him in prison, and Silvio did not even know if they still lived in town.

Gate fever illustrates the ambiguous state men find themselves in upon their release. On the one hand, they are no longer confined behind bars. On the other hand, they do not feel like they belong to the "world outside." They are between prison and the "world outside" in a state of liminality: "betwixt and between" (Turner 1967, 93). As Victor Turner points out, actors who find themselves on such a liminal threshold are no longer the person they were before, not yet the person they will become after having left this in-between stage behind. They are in an ambiguous "no longer, not yet status" (Förster 2003, 704), "in a limbo that [is] not any place they were before and not yet any place they would be in" (Turner 1988, 25). They are "transitional being[s], liminal personae" (Turner 1967, 95), "no longer classified and not yet classified. Their condition is one of ambiguity and paradox, a confusion of all customary categories (…). Transitional beings (…) are neither one thing nor another (…) neither here nor there" (Turner 1967, 96-97). They are "out of time" (Turner 1982, 24). Liminality is "fruitful darkness" (Turner 1967, 110), "a fructile chaos, a storehouse of possibilities" (Turner 1986, 42). Liminality holds danger and is profoundly unsettling and painful. At the same time, liminality contains the potential for creativity and development. All this holds for men being released from prison. Their liminal status manifests itself on spatial, temporal, social, and emotional levels.

In the field of post-prison life, spatial liminality is to be taken literally: the men

leave prison through its main gate. They are no longer incarcerated behind bars. From then on, they are on the other side of the prison walls but have not yet fully arrived there. Many of them do not know where to go after their release. Some of them stay with family members for a short time, some get a bed in the city's homeless shelter, others move into the local halfway house, which offers rooms for temporary living. As the term "halfway house" indicates, the men find themselves in a space "halfway between inside prison and in society. (…) [T]hey had finished their prison terms but remained in a carceral setting" (Michael 2020, 18; cf. also Becci 2011; Ortiz 2005). The halfway house feels quite similar to a prison, surrounded by other formerly incarcerated men, supervised by social workers and probation officers. It is a liminal space whose inhabitants belong "neither here nor there" (Turner 1967, 97). They are no longer in prison, not yet completely free.

This "in-between state" manifests itself in physical space and temporal levels. The men have done their time behind bars, but many are still connected to prison through their probation periods. The men have to observe all conditions imposed, such as psychotherapy, social counseling, and drug testing. Their legal status as "citizens on probation" places them in a temporal liminality (Michael 2020, 18). Germany's probation time is limited, ranging primarily from one to five years.

Nevertheless, one to five years for men released from prison seems incredibly long. Their thoughts, dreams, hopes, and plans for the future are overshadowed by probation time. Where will I live—and will the potential landlord ask for a certificate of conduct? Will I find work—and what if I have to show my clearance certificate? How will people react to my criminal record? Will I ever be able to find friends and a romantic relationship?

These questions point to the social dimension of liminality. Men released from prison are "no longer classified and not yet classified" (Turner 1967, 96). They find themselves between fixed positions. In prison, their social role was clearly defined: they were inmates. With the release, this role dissolves, and the men no longer know what roles to take up. "Behind bars, I knew what I was: an inmate. But who am I now?" Michael asked. He problematized his missing social roles (worker, employee, tenant, friend, husband, partner, father) and undefined social status after his release (Will people accept me? Will they see me as a "criminal" and an "ex-convict?"). Upon release, even men who return to their families have to get used to their social roles as sons, fathers, and partners, as they were alienated from these roles during their prison terms.

Next to alienation, insecurity is a familiar feeling during release. Together with elation, relief, and joy, these feelings constitute the ambiguous emotional dimension of liminality. The fruitfulness and positive potential that Victor Turner attributes to liminality show itself in the men's deep longing for release, in their hopes, dreams, and plans for their lives after prison. Once released, feelings of joy, excitement, and relief are slowly but steadily replaced by estrangement and insecurity due to the social, temporal, and spatial limbo the men find themselves in.

Furthermore, the men are no longer familiar with the habits, rules, and daily routines of the "world outside." They had lost touch with the sociocultural order outside.

Mundane situations and interactions, which people without prison experience take for granted, are highly problematic for released men (Sieferle 2020a). They evoke insecurity, confusion, and stress (cf. Johns 2018, 157; Munn & Bruckert 2013, 71). What do cars look like nowadays? How should I dress? How do I use a computer? Which buttons do I have to press at the ticket machine? Will I be able to go to the bakery and order bread rolls? How do I get a prescription at the doctor? What do supermarkets look like nowadays? Will people notice that I was in prison? The men constantly reflect on their social actions, appearance, and the impression they might leave. Social interaction is a source of stress. It requires the men to speak to non-correctional personnel, to "everyday people," which they might not have done for several years.

Everyday life as familiar ordinariness (cf. Schütz & Luckmann 1989, 1973) does not exist for men released from prison. It does not form the silent background of their lives but instead comes to the forefront of their awareness. The men are accustomed to the spatially and socially confined prison world with its daily routines and rules. They have learned how to act and survive in prison (cf. Fassin 2017; Sykes 1958) while unlearning how to act and survive outside. They have, to put it in the words of the sociologist Erving Goffman (1961, 73), "disculturated" from the habits and rules of the "world outside." Upon their release, they are confronted with a world they are no longer familiar with. Release disrupted their sociocultural order.[5]

Liminality is fundamentally oriented towards an end. It envisions a step into a new sociocultural order with fixed spatial, temporal, and social positions that reduce liminal feelings of insecurity and estrangement. How do formerly incarcerated men take this step? How do they (try to) leave liminality behind?

Rituals of Release

Sascha and I got to know each other in prison during his third and longest prison sentence (three-and-a-half years). He was 30 years old and had spent most of his twenties in prison. We met in the visiting area of the prison regularly. He told me a lot about his experiences behind bars, and his hopes and insecurities concerning life after prison. A couple of days before his release, his girlfriend invited me to Sascha's release party, which I happily accepted. On the day of his release, his girlfriend, together with their 3-year-old son, two good friends, and I had been waiting for over two hours when Sascha finally stepped through the prison's main gate. We toasted Sascha's release with beer. His eyes were full of tears when he held his son in his arms. He was born shortly after Sascha's incarceration. Up to now, they had only met under the gaze of officers in the visiting area. Our little group went to a nearby park. Sascha and his friends refreshed their friendship by sharing memories about their past. The couple sat closely embraced, their son romping around. They enjoyed being together again. We toasted many times more.

A couple of weeks later, Sascha started a job at a local industrial company. Before his incarceration, he had kept himself over the waters with occasional work. His uncle, who worked for the same company, got him the job. Another couple of weeks later, Sascha moved into a new apartment with his girlfriend and son – until then, he lived

with his parents. His friends had helped him find the apartment, and his parents had provided a rental guarantee. Shortly after, I was invited to a housewarming party. We again celebrated Sascha's new life.

Passage rituals—and I consider Sascha's release and housewarming party to be one such ritual—are (most often, though not always) socially formalized actions performed during critical biographical transitions. They bring changes in social status, social role ascriptions, and social relations. They mark, facilitate, sometimes even enable the transition from one sociocultural order to another. Therefore, they are often understood as ceremonies of social transformation.

Whereas the anthropologist and folklorist Arnold van Gennep (1960 [1908]) recognized the threefold pattern of passage rituals (separation – liminality – reintegration), it was Victor Turner (1967, 1977) who (more than fifty years later) took up van Gennep's conceptualization, focusing on the middle stage of passage rituals, liminality, and its transformative powers. Both scientists point to the importance of rituals to master critical life changes and to convey life stages and important milestones.

Release from prison certainly is such a milestone. In the case of Sascha, we performed his transition from prison into his new life ritually: we celebrated his release toasting with beer, and we celebrated his new job and his new apartment with a housewarming party. These were all essential ceremonies to cross the liminal threshold of release. Insecurities concerning work, housing, and returning to his family vanished rapidly due to the support of his family and friends. Marked with rituals, Sascha left his social role as prisoner behind and stepped into his new roles as father, partner, friend, son, tenant, and employee.

For the majority of formerly incarcerated men, release turns out differently. Aged 51, Michael had lost touch with his family and friends during his five-year prison sentence. Far from a ritual of release, he was picked up by a social worker who drove him to the local halfway house – a liminal space that would be his home for the next few months. Unlike Sascha, Michael did not have relatives or friends with whom to perform and mark his release ritually, to attribute to him with new social roles and thus help him reduce the liminal insecurities of release.

Therefore, Michael created a ritual for himself. After a couple of days in the halfway house, as he told me, he looked through his belongings and collected all the things that he associated with prison in a large pile in his room. There were a lot of clothes, some books, his toiletry equipment, a laundry bag, a stereo system, tablecloths and much more. He kept the pile in his room until waste collection day. As soon as he heard the garbage collection trucks, he took all his "prison stuff" (which he had packed into three large waste bags), went out into the street, and convinced the garbage collectors to allow him to throw his bags into the truck by himself. Afterward, he told me with a bright smile on his face, he "felt relieved, twenty kilos lighter and further away from [his] time in prison."

Mario, another man I met in prison and accompanied ethnographically in his post-prison life, did a seven-day pilgrimage tour on foot to a local Catholic shrine right after his release. Mario had served a ten-year prison sentence and was entirely on his own in establishing life after prison. Before his incarceration, he had worked as a chef.

He doubted whether he would find a job with 54 and a criminal record. While still in prison, he had arranged to make his confessions to the local priest. He brought a candle to the pilgrimage church, got it blessed by the priest, and left it at the pilgrimage shrine. Mario considered this a way of repentance, of ending his old prison life and starting a new one.

Farin, aged 38 and having spent six years behind bars, performed his release ritual many months after he had left prison for good. After his release, he slept on couches belonging to acquaintances for five months. He did not have a permanent place to stay nor any prospects of a job. Before his time in prison, he had worked as a warehouse employee. Since his release, all his attempts to find a job have been unsuccessful. One afternoon, I got a phone call from Farin. I had to keep the phone away from my ear to prevent my eardrum from hurting. Farin screamed excitedly: "I got an apartment. My own apartment. I made it. No more prison feelings! Finally! New life – here I am!" He described in detail the signing of the lease agreement, how his hand had trembled when holding the pen, how powerful and magical it had felt when he put his signature on the document. Intoxicated with joy, he even thought about framing his lease agreement and hanging it on the wall of his soon-to-be new apartment.

Dave, in turn, performed his first day at work ritually. Like Farin, he told me in detail about the start of his first day: how he had proudly put on his suit, prepared his lunch box and a huge flask of coffee, how he stepped through the gate of the company premises and clocked in. Holding his chip card to the attendance recorder had made him feel part of the company. Like Farin, who "made it" when he signed his lease agreement, Dave felt that he "made it" by starting work.

I consider the men's actions to be rituals, which they performed to leave their liminal state of release behind. Mario resorted to an established religious transformation ritual: pilgrimage (cf. Frey 1998).[6] Mario built on popular discourses of pilgrimage and its transformative powers. More than once, he had told me about movies, documentaries, and reports on pilgrimage tours he had seen on TV in his prison cell. He also drew on Christian Catholic religious conceptions of pilgrimage as a form of penance and purification. He intended to purify himself of the criminal offense he had committed and his time in prison. Mario performed his pilgrimage to take off the role of "inmate" and to embrace his (still to be found) new social roles.

Michael's purification ritual looked different. He formed a large pile of prison objects in his room and got rid of them shortly after. Unlike Mario, he did not rely on culturally pre-formed and socially accepted (religious) rituals but instead created a ritual for himself. However, its intention was the same. Michael rid himself of prison and his role as an inmate by throwing away his materialized prison memories. Contrary to material culture studies, which often focus on the use of objects in memorialization (e.g., Braun, Dieterich & Treiber 2015; Kwint, Breward & Aynaley 1999), Michael used the technique of "ridding" (Gregson 2007) himself to "de-memorize" his current life, to transition into a new life.

Michael charged the ordinary, everyday throwing away of trash with cultural meaning. For him, it symbolized the end of liminality and the transition into a new sociocultural order. He ritualized the quotidian act. Cultural anthropologist and ritual

expert Catherine Bell describes “ritualization” as a “strategic way of acting” (Bell 2009 [1992], 7). Ritualization, Bell writes, is “a way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian, activities. As such, ritualization is a matter of various culturally specific strategies for setting some activities off from others, for creating and privileging a qualitative distinction” (Ibid., 74).

Farin and Dave did the same. Farin ritualized signing a lease agreement; Dave ritualized the act of going to work and clocking in. They thereby produced “differentiation and established a privileged contrast” (Ibid, 90), which made their actions more critical (in comparison to their quotidian execution). The actions became “symbolically dominant to [their] conventional counterparts” (Ibid., 90).

In these rituals of release, the men wanted to leave their state of liminality and the insecurities they faced after release behind. The ritualization of going to work and clocking in symbolized the end of Dave’s unemployment and financial insecurities. The act of signing a lease symbolized the end of Farin’s housing insecurities. These actions marked a move towards “normal life biographies” (Bereswill 2016), as well as the end of their social status as “(ex-)convict,” “(ex-)inmate” and “criminal,” and the beginning of the adoption of new social roles, such as tenants and employees. The same goes for Michael: in ridding himself of material prison memories, he symbolically rid himself of his status as “(ex-)convict.” Mario did so by going on pilgrimage.

The men prepared themselves for new social roles and a new cultural order in the world outside of prison. They turned to ritual actions as a practical way of dealing with their liminal life circumstances (Bell 2009 [1992], 92), as a strategic way of dealing with insecure social circumstances (Ibid, 100). They used rituals to help them cross the liminal state of release and experience “normal life” (Ibid, 104) – at least they hoped so. I will show in the following that the men’s rituals failed. They could not leave liminality behind despite their successful performance of release rituals.

Rituals without Passage

Cultural anthropology and ritual studies rarely address the issue of ritual failure (Schieffelin 2007, 1). Ritual theory and empirical studies instead focus on the transformative power of ritual and successful transition into new sociocultural orders (for a comprehensive overview, see Bell 1997; Belliger & Krieger 2013). However, the few studies that address ritual failure (cf. Geertz 1957; Grimes 1990; Hüsken 2007) give different explanations of why rituals may go wrong. Just as I do in this article, these studies base their analysis on empirical, context-sensitive findings. Nonetheless, two main lines of reasoning can be identified.

For some scholars, the cause of ritual failure can be found in the execution of the rituals (cf. Grimes 1990). From this first point of view, failure results from incorrect ritual performance and thus missing (but intended) ritual emotions. For other scholars, however, ritual failure has to be understood from the perspective of the intended ritual outcome (cf. Geertz 1957; Grimes 1990). Following this second line of argumentation, the failure to produce ritually expected outcomes does not necessarily correlate

with failed performances or missing sentiments but rather depends on the ritual's social context (cf. Schieffelin 1996). The latter perspective is of utmost importance for the field of post-prison studies.

All the men performed the rituals they created to pass their liminal state of release successfully. They described their ritual activities in detail when they told me about their ritual actions. All emphasized the performative aspect of the respective ritual and its successful completion, be it arrival at the pilgrimage shrine, the complete removal of prison objects, the signing of a lease, or the first day at work.

Furthermore, all the men mentioned the deep emotional state they had been in during their release rituals. They described these feelings as "intense excitement," "awakeness," "emotional turmoil," "restlessness," being charged with "positive energy," "happiness," leading to "ease," "calm," and "good feelings." These are all common emotions that ritual studies use and emphasize when describing the liminal stage of rituals and ritual transformation processes. The ritualization of everyday activities allowed the men to process the "emotional turmoil" of release, to acknowledge its insecurities emotionally, and envision life afterward. For the men, the ritual was successful in terms of its sentiments and its performance.

However, "successful" ritual sentiments and performances did not achieve the intended, desired, and envisioned end of liminality. For the men, the rituals failed because their intended outcome was never realized: the transition into "normal life," closely connected to the discordance of their role as "ex-convict" and "criminal." Formerly incarcerated men remained "ex-convicts," as society ascribed this stigma to them.

The Stigma of Being an "Ex-Convict"

Dave had started to work and had symbolically highlighted his first day at work. He had successfully ended the liminal insecurities concerning his financial situation. He had become an "employee" now, a "worker," which made him very proud. However, he still had a feeling of not belonging to the "world outside." When he had applied for the job, he had omitted his prison term. Since then, he had needed to hide his past at work. He found this exhausting, as he constantly had to think about what to reveal about himself and what to conceal. Nonetheless, he considered it the right move. He was convinced that he would never have gotten a job otherwise.

Dave's situation points to what formerly incarcerated men experience in daily life: problems finding a job due to their prison sentence. Many men told me about the "vicious circle" regarding their efforts to find employment. Marcel, who had been released eight years previously and had been unemployed ever since, described this vicious circle as follows: "When you don't admit that you've been to jail, and your boss finds out, he accuses you of being dishonest and you are fired. When you apply and tell them right away, you don't have any chance at all of finding a job. No matter what you do, you are always the one to blame."

Similar to Marcel, Farin spoke about the hardships of finding a partner. "There's no good time to tell a woman about my time in prison. When I don't tell her on the

first date, I am said to be a liar. When I tell her, I am said to be a criminal." Although he had successfully moved into an apartment of his own and ritualized the signing of his lease to indicate his move into "normality," the more months passed, the more frustrated he became. Every woman he had dated was either unwilling to meet with him at all (due to his prison term) or left during the date once she found out about his past. He did not even get to tell them why he had served a prison sentence. Mentioning prison alone was enough. The calm and positive state he had been in after signing his lease had vanished long ago. He felt more and more insecure when meeting other people. He constantly feared being reduced to his time in prison.

Many men experienced the fear of being labeled as "different" and "abnormal" after their release (cf. Harding 2003; Keene, Smoyer & Blankenship 2018; LeBel 2012). Potential landlords, employers, friends, and partners labeled formerly incarcerated men as "dangerous" and "suspicious criminals" and expressed that they could not trust them enough to let them an apartment, give them a job, or have social relations with them.

Michael, who had ritually ridden himself of his prison memories, still lived in the halfway house. Almost two years had passed since he moved there. His attempts to find an apartment, a job, and develop a social life, which would have provided him with a sense of independence and self-confidence, have been unsuccessful. "Who would let me an apartment? I am unemployed. Who would hire me—an ex-con?" With the "mark of a criminal record" (Pager 2003), he has found it next to impossible to gain a lease, get employment, or establish social ties. Two years after leaving prison through its main gates, he still feels out of place and like he does not fully belong to the "world outside."

Mario, who went on a pilgrimage to purify himself of his past, has stopped looking for a job altogether. Like Michael, he had been released two years previously. He has experienced too many frustrating rejections when looking for a job. "We don't hire criminals." He has heard this sentence too often. He has lost hope of finding employment. Mario lives in a social housing apartment and spends most of his days in the common area of the halfway house. He considers the halfway house his "home away from home" and especially likes it for its open atmosphere. As he once told me, he does not have to be afraid of "wicked looks and unfair treatment at the halfway house. Everybody has his history and that's okay. Nobody judges you here for what you've done, where you've been." Mario avoids potentially stigmatizing situations by restricting his social contacts to other formerly incarcerated men. The halfway house serves him as a stigma-free space where he feels safe.[7]

Erving Goffman defines stigma as "an attribute that is deeply discrediting," that reduces the stigmatized person "from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one" (Goffman 1963, 3). Stigmas are closely connected to negative stereotypes and prejudices (Ibid, 4), which the men experience firsthand in everyday life. "Ex-cons" are considered unreliable tenants, lazy employees, and untrustworthy friends and partners. These labeling processes have discriminatory consequences for the men. Their chances of finding permanent housing, a job, and establishing long-term friendships and partnerships are significantly reduced (Sieferle 2020a)—even years, some-

times decades, after their release.

Though the men performed the rituals "successfully" and had the "right" ritual sentiments, they could not achieve the intended outcome of leaving liminality through the transformation of their social status and ascriptions of new social roles. Through processes of social labeling as "ex-convicts," the men remained—for most of society—"criminals," "offenders," "(ex-)convicts." Although Dave is an "employee" now and Farin a "tenant," the label "ex-convict" holds a "master status," that "overrides other attributes in reactions to the individual such that others view the person only in terms of the stigmatized label" (Lucas & Phelan 2012, 318).

Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner both point to the significance of social integration for the success of ritual passages. In the post-prison research field, Sascha pointed to the importance of the support of a social group for release rituals to be successful in terms of their intended outcome. Sascha's family and friends did not reduce him to his role and status as an "ex-convict," they enabled him to transition into new social roles as a father, friend, partner, employee, and tenant.

Post-Prison Life as Permanent Liminality

However, most of the persons formerly incarcerated men interacted with remained "ex-convicts" and nothing more. Months, often even years, after their release, the men are still faced with insecurities concerning housing, employment, and social relations due to stigmatizing processes. For formerly incarcerated men, the liminality of release is not a transitional stage into "normal life," it is their primary mode of existence (Sieferle 2020b). Liminality becomes a permanent state.

As ritual studies rarely focus on the failure of rituals, they seldomly think of liminality as a permanent state and a primary mode of experience. However, Arnold van Gennep points—even if only briefly—to the possibility of liminality becoming a permanent state (van Gennep 1960 [1908], 11). Victor Turner developed this thought further by speaking of the "institutionalization of liminality" (Turner 1977, 107).[8] By using monastic orders as his only example of the institutionalization of liminality, Turner solely emphasized spatial and social seclusion from society. Nevertheless post-prison life is not an institutionalized form of liminality. Its permanent liminality is characterized somewhat differently. The continuously felt insecurity, social marginalization (not only spatial and social seclusion), and constant stigmatization make up its essence.

Criminologists Diane Johns (2018) and Eileen Baldry (2010) both point to the enduring marginal, liminal position that formerly incarcerated men hold in society. They both emphasize society's role in preventing formerly incarcerated actors from leaving their liminal release state behind. Baldry (Ibid, 261) writes: "Rather than a threshold into a new space it continues as an ambiguous space. It is marginal in that it is right on the edge of mainstream community and society's consciousness and barely worthy of attention, with the exception of forays to deal with delinquency and offending." She stresses what Didier Fassin (2017, 58) states for prison, but which also holds for post-prison life: it is a "well-kept public secret." I understand the term "secret" as a refer-

ence to society's non-thematization of the lifeworlds of (formerly) incarcerated actors, to the marginal space these actors occupy within society, and to the lack of socially accepted release rituals.

Prison Release as Ritual Gap

The folklorist Christina Burckhardt-Seebass (1990, 144) refers to the lack of socially provided rituals as "ritual gaps." Such gaps force actors to undergo transitions privately, secretly, and without cultural framing, "though, there is no doubt that such transitions are highly significant for society" (Ibid.). Whereas Burckhardt-Seebass assumes that transitions are successful despite ritual gaps, post-prison life shows otherwise. There are no institutionalized rituals of release for people being released from prison. Therefore, formerly incarcerated men create rituals for themselves. But the lack of social support causes them to fail. However, I agree with Burckhardt-Seebass that the ritual gap in prison release is "highly significant for society" (Ibid.).

I consider the absence of a socioculturally accepted and institutionalized release ritual indicating society's disapproval of formerly incarcerated men. Social actors position formerly incarcerated men in a marginal social place by reducing them to "ex-convict" during social interactions. Correspondingly, social actors and the state indicate their refusal to integrate formerly incarcerated men into society by failing to provide formalized and accepted prison release rituals.

The criminal justice system performs powerful, institutionalized rituals of incarceration. Court trials can be interpreted as state-sanctioned "degradation ceremonies" which "ritually destruct" previous social status and role ascriptions, as the sociologist Harold Garfinkel (1956) points out. With the court's judicial sentencing, actors are marked as and reduced to "criminals" and "convicts." Accordingly, Erving Goffman (1961, 14) describes incarceration rituals (e.g., change of clothing, body searches, cell allocation) as "mortification processes," as "a series of abasements, degradations, humiliations, and profanations of self" (Ibid., 14), which mark actors as "inmates."

Powerful, institutionalized, state-sanctioned rituals which may undo role ascriptions as "criminals" and "convicts" do not exist for prison release. The criminologist Shadd Maruna problematizes (2011a) this: "As a society, we make an impressive ritual of punishment – from the drama of the courtroom to the elaborate de-individuation processes involved in institutionalization. Yet, when it comes to reintegration – turning prisoners back into citizens – we typically forgo all such ritual and try to make the process as stealthy and private as possible, if we make any effort at all. This contradiction may account for why the imprisonment of human beings is taken for granted as 'normal' or even 'natural,' and yet the return of the same human beings to communities is the cause of often inordinate concern."

Maruna argues that degradation rituals of court hearings and incarceration classify sentenced men and women as "dangerous" and "abnormal." Due to the lack of release rituals, society perceives formerly incarcerated men and women as a threat to the social order. Such perceived danger manifested itself during my research on media coverage ("Offender released after ten-year sentence. Will he move back to his

hometown?”), in citizen protests against the establishment of halfway houses in their neighborhoods, and in reactions to my research topic (“Isn’t it dangerous what you do?” “Take care when meeting with ‘these people.’” “Aren’t you afraid?”).

Maruna argues that society and the state need to create official prison release rituals to address these public fears which would allow formerly incarcerated men to transition from their liminal role as “ex-convict” into full members of society. Maruna explains that these rituals prevent society from reducing formerly incarcerated men to their prison sentences. Indeed, a few countries have already created such institutionalized release rituals, such as Japan or New Zealand (Braithwaite & Mugford 1994), as well as France (cf. Herzog-Evans 2011; Maruna 2011b).

In France, this ritual process is called “Judicial Rehabilitation” (Herzog-Evans 2011). It consists of a court hearing following the convicted person’s release. In this hearing, for which formerly incarcerated persons must apply, they testify that they have paid all the damages to their victim(s), that they take full responsibility for their past criminal actions, and show, convincingly, that they have not pursued any criminal actions upon their release. If they do so successfully, all criminal record files are deleted – no matter which criminal action they had committed (except for sexual offenses). This hearing serves as an acknowledgement for the formerly incarcerated person, but also for his/her relatives, friends, neighbors, and broader society, that he/she has left prison (and his/her criminal actions) behind (cf. Herzog-Evans 2011).

Criminological studies on these rituals in France, New Zealand, and Japan point to the reduced social stigmatization of formerly incarcerated actors. With state-sanctioned release rituals, prison no longer holds a master status. Furthermore, the studies point to the famous phrase from the cultural anthropologist Mary Douglas (1966, 65; cf. Maruna 2011a): “There are some things we cannot experience without ritual.”

Prison release might be such a thing. It needs the ritual support of a broader social group to enable formerly incarcerated men to become full members of society and to take on “normal” social roles such as trustworthy and reliable partners, friends, tenants, workers, neighbors, etc.

> A man who has spent any time ‘inside’ is put permanently ‘outside’ the ordinary social system. With no rite of aggregation which can definitely assign him to a new social position he remains in the margins, with other people who are similarly credited with unreliability, unteachability, and all the wrong social attitudes. (Douglas 1966, 121)

The rituals of court sentencing and incarceration symbolize “moral exile” (Johns 2018, 86). “Without rites to renew social status, ex-prisoners remain forever ‘in the margins’ – perpetual outsiders, socially excluded,” concludes the criminologist Diane Johns (2018, 87). I want to add: The absence of release rituals extends moral exile into a permanent state of liminality.

Becoming an “Ex-Con.” Toward a Conclusion

The notion of “becoming” is inherent in liminality (Johns 2018, 91; cf. also Biehl and Locke 2017). The “no longer, not yet status” is fundamentally oriented towards an

end. In the field of post-prison life, this notion manifests itself in the rituals formerly incarcerated men perform to leave this insecure liminal state behind. It shows itself in their hopes of becoming "normal" citizens, taking on social roles as tenants, employees, partners, and friends. However, this is rarely realized. "Who am I?" Michael asked himself in the time following his release. Many men ask themselves this very question years, sometimes even decades later. They do not identify with the label "ex-con" that society forces upon them. At the same time, their attempts to leave the stigma of being an "ex-con" behind consistently fail. For formerly incarcerated men, "becoming" never ends. It becomes a permanent state.

This article has used ritual and liminality as analytical lenses to understand post-prison life. I have argued that formerly incarcerated men experience prison release as a state of liminality that comprises four dimensions (spatial, temporal, social, emotional). As I have shown, prison release liminality is characterized by insecurity regarding everyday life outside of prison and essential life areas (housing, work, social relations). Men create and perform rituals to leave this insecure state of liminality behind. As institutionalized rituals of prison release do not exist, the men do so by ritualizing everyday actions to mark the passage from liminality to "normal life." As I have shown empirically, these rituals often fail.

However, the failure of rituals does not rest on a lack of the "right" ritual emotions or the "right" ritual performance, but rather on society's refusal to allow formerly incarcerated men the intended ritual outcome: integration into society. The "failure" of ritual highlights its normative dimension: the men are shown the moral incompatibility and otherness that society ascribes to them. In realizing that their rituals have failed, they feel that their efforts to "become" someone (apart from an "ex-con") have failed. Through labeling and stigmatization, society places formerly incarcerated men at the margins of society—in a permanent state of liminality.

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Notes

1 I use the term "failure" and its opposite "success" as field evaluations of ritual processes. Formerly incarcerated men did not use the term "ritual." It is an analytical concept I use to approach and understand life after prison.

2 To protect my research partners, I have not only anonymized their names, but also withheld information about their criminal actions, life stories and the social and spatial contexts of my research.

3 However, I do not agree with cultural anthropologist Didier Fassin (2017, xix), who states that the use of invented names gives ethnographic stories an anecdotal turn. My use of

pseudonyms as first names rather indicates a research relationship based on trust and empathy (cf. Sieferle 2021).

4 For a comprehensive overview of the anthropology of (post-)prison see Cunha 2014; Rhodes 2001; and Wacquant 2002. For post-prison studies, that address life after prison in an ethnographic manner see Becci 2001, Johns 2018, Munn & Bruckert 2013.

5 Many of the men adapted to life outside after a while, but their sense of alienation has never vanished completely. Many feel different from the rest of society even years and sometimes decades after their release.

6 It is not surprising that it was Victor Turner (Turner and Turner 2011 [1978]) who introduced the idea of pilgrimage as liminal transformation into the scientific discourse.

7 On an analytical level, the halfway house was not a hierarchy-free space. Instead, it was structured according to prison hierarchies, depending heavily on the hierarchization of offense types. Men who had served a prison sentence for acts of violence and sexual offenses against women and children were at the bottom of the hierarchy. They were tolerated among the group of formerly incarcerated men, but they were not accepted. Furthermore, there were sharp categorical distinctions between voluntary workers, social workers, and "ex-cons," in which institutionalized hierarchies were manifested, placing formerly incarcerated men at the lower end.

8 Sociologist Arpad Szakolczai (2000, 215–227), in turn, conceptualizes modernity as a permanent state of liminality (cf. Thomasson 2009). Cultural anthropologist Sarah Nimführ (2016) describes migrant experiences in Malta as a permanently lived legal liminality.

9 Due to reasonable research pragmatic factors, especially in the landscape of German prisons and the access to them, Barbara Sierferle´s—and most other studies—focus on *men* released prison. It is also important to note that 94 percent of prisoners in Germany are male (e.g. Kinzig 2021). For further research in this field, it would be a relevant question how the liminal state after prison may be influenced by gender aspects.

10 Despite intersections, there is obviously an important difference between the "carceral experience" during lockdown and the "carceral reality" (Tschanz/Hernandez 2021, 143). Furthermore, it should be noted that the described experience might be very different for people who were imprisoned for a longer period and who often lose their social contacts during this time.

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Responses

Social Inequalities After Prison Release: The Aspiration of Future within Permanent Liminality

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In his introduction to "Prison Worlds," the cultural anthropologist and sociologist Didier Fassin states: "the whole of society […] decides who should go to prison, and why" (Fassin 2017, 26). Barbara Sieferle's study in the field of post-prison life illustrates that society also decides who sustains the status of 'ex-convict.' Drawing from intensive fieldwork and rich ethnographic data, Sieferle demonstrates vividly how the social context makes it impossible for men[9] released from prison to also release themselves from the insecure state of liminality.

By re-introducing Arnold van Gennep's concept of passage rituals and Victor Turner's frameworks of liminality, Sieferle convincingly argues that formerly incarcerated men live in a permanent state of liminality. The article shows in-depth how the "liminal status manifests itself on spatial, temporal, social and emotional levels" (Sieferle 2022, **p. 56**). One of the most striking findings is that the reason for such liminality is not due to a lack of engaging in passage rituals in the liminal phase after the prison release. In contrast to trial, detention, and incarceration, there are no commonly known or institutionalized passage rituals for release. Those released develop and perform individual rituals, such as release and housewarming parties, throwing away all things associated with prison, a pilgrim tour, or rituals around meaningful events like getting their own apartment or their first day at a new job.

Nevertheless, these rituals fail to set up a new social role, so the state of liminality continues. Sieferle's article makes an important point: the ongoing state of liminality is not based on a "wrong" ritual performance or emotional setting, "but rather on society's refusal to allow formerly incarcerated men the intended ritual outcome: integration into society" (ibid, **p. 67**). The main reason for this "moral exile" (Ibid, **p. 66**) lies in the ongoing stigmatizing of these men and the marginalizing label of 'ex-convicts' they are given, all of which overshadows any other possible social roles.

Sieferle's article makes a significant contribution to the study of permanent and involuntary forms of liminality that come without institutionalized rituals. This way, we do not only learn about the everyday life and struggle of men released from prison but also obtain further inspiration about possible ways to adopt and discuss Victor Turner's concept in the context of specific contemporary fields and related practices. In taking up theories in a fruitful way and reading them through empiric material, researchers do not have to adhere to them in every aspect but rather can discuss them. One aspect that caught my eye, was that according to Turner, persons in states of liminality are "no longer classified and not yet classified" (Turner 1967, 96) and Sieferle confirms this for men released from prison (cf. Sieferle 2022, **p. 57**). The question then is; whether one might argue that the label "ex-con" is already a lasting classification, even though it is not one they choose on their own.

Furthermore, the opening quotation of Fassin illustrates that social inequalities affect them much earlier before the prison release. Sieferle addresses her research partners as "men" and not as "ex-convicts" or similar. This reflexive use of attributions reminds us to think about ways of writing that do not reproduce stigmatizing labels.

Despite the specific stigma that people experience after prison, it seems noteworthy that permanent liminality could be described as a universal phenomenon. While one might extend the observation of permanent liminality to other fields and social groups, especially marginalized and vulnerable groups, some have argued that modernization processes led to a normalization or permanentization of liminality, often connected to "crises" (Thomassen 2009, 22 f.). The COVID-19 pandemic might be another example of widespread liminality during a continuing crisis.

Although my research does not focus primarily on *post*-prison life, a conversation with one of my research partners during my fieldwork occurred to me. When I first talked to him, a few months after he was released from prison, I asked him how it felt that he left prison during an immense change in everyday life due to the pandemic. His answer surprised me; despite all the obvious negative aspects of the pandemic in and outside of prison, he felt a strong relief that he could return slowly into life after prison. He met his friends and family one after another, and everyone was empathetic that he was not ready for crowded events.

The common experience of such liminality led to a sense of community in his case. He also assumed that, although the lockdown at home was not like prison life, people might used it to gain a better idea of his carceral experience.[10] It would be interesting to find out if the research partners at the halfway house, where Sieferle did most of her fieldwork, also felt some sense of community throughout their common liminal experience.

In the introduction of her article, Sieferle states: "Conceptualizing prison release as a state of liminality is just one way of analytically approaching life after prison, but it is nonetheless a very fruitful one" (Sieferle 2022, 3). I agree and would like to add; from my research perspective on negotiations of digitalization scenarios in German prisons, the current concepts linked to future may also prove fruitful in these conversations. Of course, future orientation is already an essential part of processual passage rituals, especially in situations of liminality, with its striven transformation between statuses and imagined futures.

As Sieferle has shown in her previous research work, specific ways of dealing with the future arise in the liminal times after prison, particularly the use of hope as an active form of designing the future (c.f. Sieferle 2021). Reading Sieferle's latest article not only reminded me of the importance of studying social inequalities from an anthropological, actor-centred perspective, but also represented potential courses of study on unequal futures.

While understanding "future as a cultural fact" (Appadurai 2013) was not always a central tenet of cultural anthropology, anthropological engagement with future has grown exponentially with different global crises since the 2000s (Bryant & Knight 2019, 9). It is worth mentioning that we should not only analyze the temporal elements of the social but also social elements of time: according to Appadurai

"'the capacity to aspire' is unequally distributed" (Appadurai 2013, 289). Consequently, not only the realisation of future plans but even the imagination and aspiration of a different future depends on your social status.

Considering current practices of future-making, the sociologist Andreas Reckwitz recognizes a "room of uncertainties" in which open positive scenarios are no longer considered, but rather the avoidance of negative conditions are central (Reckwitz 2016, 130). While the future of formerly incarcerated people is deeply affected by their past, it is no coincidence that their hopes concentrate on 'modest' goals in the near future, like finding a job, an apartment, or a partnership. As European ethnologist Stefan Wellgraf has shown in his example of German secondary schools, people who experience economic and social insecurity aspire to these small goals of a 'normal biography', in contrast to bourgeois aspirations of a 'unique lifestyle' which devalues the former (Wellgraf 2019).

Men released from prison experience daily barriers and constant liminality, yet their ongoing hopes can be connected to what the cultural theorist Lauren Berlant calls "cruel optimism" (Berlant 2011). Cruel optimism takes place among precarious work and life conditions. Berlant asks, "why do people stay attached to conventional good-life fantasies – say, of enduring reciprocity in couples, families, political systems, institutions, markets, and at work – when the evidence of their instability, fragility, and dear cost abounds?" (Berlant 2011, 2). Cultural anthropologists have much to offer in the study the possibilities and obstacles to aspiring futures in the field of post-prison life. Such study might ask questions like; how may we interpret hopes and optimisms during permanent liminality and crisis? Are these hopes and optimisms "cruel," or are they essential resources for socially excluded actors to use in shaping their futures and initiating transformation?

Barbara Sieferle´s article gives us rare insights into the lived experiences and practices of men released from prison, and provides an analysis, more generally, of the social context linked to these observations. Her research contributes to the use of liminality theory in the field of post-prison ethnography. Furthermore, it shifts the focus of ritual theory from only "successful" rituals to the consequences of rituals "failing." Ultimately, her work makes us aware of the marginalization of people released from prison. Her article raises important questions for the reader on how the whole of society could possibly act in a more inclusive and less stigmatizing way—and to aspire different futures.

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Reviews

Sunny Days: The Children's Television Revolution That Changed America.
By David Kamp. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2020. Pp. ix + 326, foreword, introduction, notes, bibliography, index.

David Kamp's *Sunny Days: The Children's Television Revolution That Changed America* examines the moments in television history that elevated children's programming from the vapid *Howdy Doody* to the research-informed *Sesame Street*, *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*, and *The Electric Company*. This golden age of children's television brings into focus other social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, such as racial equality, gender parity, and the shifting American family, which makes this text an excellent choice for courses on media, the American child, or modern American culture.

Musician and cultural commentator Questlove provides a forward for *Sunny Days*; he is a skilled student of popular culture and an excellent touchstone for younger students. *Sunny Days* is an excellent example of how popular culture writing can be simultaneously rigorous and engaging. The early chapters of *Sunny Days* illustrate the environment that inspired the likes of Fred Rogers, Joan Ganz Cooney, Lloyd Morrisett, and Jim Henson to improve children's television. This section examines the television landscape for children in the 1950s and 1960s, which had limited impact in the long term. Most shows were light on educational content and existed for pure entertainment or commercial value. At the same time, pre-school education was still not widely appreciated, especially in urban centers where it could cause financial hardship to many families. These two conditions provided the ideal gap for public television to fill, especially *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* and *Sesame Street*. This chapter is essential for contemporary readers and those who study children's television because of *Sesame Street* and *Mr. Rogers'* longevity in American culture. It is easy to forget that over 50 years ago, programs of this high caliber did not exist, and the television programming aimed at children was unquestionably the foundation of Newton Minow's "vast wasteland" (Minow, "Television and the Public Interest," 1961). Kamp takes time here to clearly illustrate the rapid rise of television in the post-World War II years, as well as the medium's influence on all aspects of American life.

Kamp also introduces Jim Henson and other members of the Muppet creative team and shows how Henson developed his own career in television, which was not focused on children's entertainment. Through these television projects, Henson meets Frank Oz, Jon Stone, Jerry Nelson, and Joe Raposo, with whom he will develop many of his future projects, including *Sesame Street*. *Captain Kangaroo*, often overlooked, also factors into the journey of *Sesame Street* in two ways. First, this show was a departure from most early American children's television, but it also served as a training ground for the creative teams that worked on *Sesame Street* and *Mr. Rogers'*. Kamp quotes director Jon Stone in saying that Captain Kangaroo "[addressed] the child at home like a thinking, reasoning person" (Kamp

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2020, 35). This observation illustrates the intellectual bridge between early children's television and these later pivotal programs. The early chapters of *Sunny Days* also outline the unique conditions that existed in the political realm to allow for the funding and overall support of American public television.

Chapters five through twelve of *Sunny Days* focus heavily on the progress and introduction of *Sesame Street* to the masses, as it was the program most responsible for the major shift in children's educational television. The rise of public broadcasting, and with it the development of *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*, is concurrent with this time, bringing all the threads of the first part of the book together to illustrate the level of change happening on television. This section emphasizes how unique these shows were to the American television landscape. In showing the programs' success, Kamp notes, "Rogers, this world's creator, would prove irresistible to parodists as his popularity grew. In a loud, fast, cynical time, he was dulcet, unhurried, and beatifically calm: through an adult lens, a total weirdo" (Kamp 2020, 71). Despite the shows' obvious benefits to children, American culture at large would come to see *Mr. Rogers'* and *Sesame Street* as pivotal programs through nostalgia as much as improved reading scores.

The final section of the book looks more at the immediate results of the programming pioneered in the 1960s. As the success of *Sesame Street* continued throughout the 1970s, other programs both at PBS and beyond took note of what worked for children's programming. *The Electric Company* was created as a sister show to *Sesame Street* for school-age kids, focusing on more advanced reading skills. While the show only ran for a few seasons, partly because the actors almost universally went on to star-studded careers, its effectiveness was similar to *Sesame Street*. *Zoom* was another public television program that looked at the social-emotional and creative needs of school-aged kids. Another focus of this last third of *Sunny Days* is the Marlo Thomas special *Free to Be...You and Me*, which examined the changing idea of childhood and family life in the United States. Thomas recruited numerous actors, singers, and authors to her cause, and the style of the show was very similar to *Sesame Street*'s short segments and catchy song formula.

David Kamp's *Sunny Days* is a strong example of primary source scholarship, relying almost completely on direct interviews or archival material. While *Sesame Street* has long been part of the discussion of children's television, it was not seen as worthy of academic study as a larger cultural text until the early 2000s. Kamp opens the book with an engaging narrative introduction, but he sets the personal aside throughout the rest of the book, illustrating a strong use of storytelling throughout. This text would be a welcome addition to any television studies course, as it thoroughly covers the first thirty years of children's television history, but it would also find a home in an American studies or cultural history classroom, both accessible for undergraduates and detailed enough for graduate students.

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