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Christoph Bareither

Media of the everyday. The contribution of European ethnology to the field of media and digital anthropology*

Abstract: Digital media have become an integral part of everyday life. Media-related research within European ethnology is characterized by the fact that it penetrates the interconnections of media and everyday life ethnographically. In order to substantiate this competence, the article outlines a series of conceptual approaches that all help to better understand and ethnographically explore the everydayness of media. This includes an eye for media practices and the interwoven, incorporated knowledge; the analysis of the practice potentials and practice restrictions inscribed in media (affordances); access to media infrastructure processes; the interplay of encoding and decoding; and, last but not least, the ethnographic understanding of sensory and emotional processes in relation to media. In summary, these concepts provide a discipline-specific perspective on 'media of the everyday' that allows one to emphasize and make productive the specific contribution of European ethnology to the transdisciplinary field of media and digital anthropology.

Keywords: digital media, everyday life, media practices, affordances, infrastructures, encoding/decoding, emotions

"The media are an integral part of the way the everyday is conducted" (Bausinger 1984: 349).[1] This remark, formulated by Hermann Bausinger as early as the mid-1980s, not only describes a self-evident fact. For European ethnology (and the entire "multi-named discipline"), it articulates the analytic perspective adopted by the discipline in relation to media, including a particular conceptualization of the latter. The discipline does not treat media as artefacts in isolation from their sociocultural environment but as integral components of complex everyday lives. In this sense, media are not simply given objects with static attributes; rather, they constitute themselves as media only in everyday interaction, and it is precisely by way of

this intrinsic integration into everyday life that they contribute to shaping their environments.

Thomas Hengartner, along with Hermann Bausinger, highlighted this aspect within European ethnology by insisting on what he saw to be the intimate links between media, culture and everyday life. To this end, he called for

> engaging in ethnographic analysis and cultural-theoretical interpretation of the mediality of everyday life, namely, investigating the ways in which the media, media content, media ideas, media techniques, etc., have permeated our everyday lives, our work, our relationship management and self-expression within the horizons of knowledge, imagination and thought, our negotiations of importance and meaning, in practices, etc., and the manner in which they impact and shape our lives. (Hengartner 2009: 33)

The present article builds on this critical analysis of the interdependencies between media and everyday life and argues that this fosters a specific analytical sensitivity in European-ethnological research and, furthermore, that this may then be productively introduced into the transdisciplinary field of media and digital anthropology.[2] Moreover, as Bausinger (2001) noted, this implies the strategic question of how media and digitization research in European ethnology can position itself within a scientific sphere wherein numerous disciplines have discovered digital media for themselves as both a productive object of analysis and general perspective of research.

The labels "media anthropology" or "digital anthropology" as well as "media ethnography/ethnology" and "digital ethnography" have appeared with increasing frequency in this context in recent years, and highly heterogeneous introductory volumes and articles have been published under such bywords.[3] Accordingly, precisely what media and digital anthropology is remains an open question. The disciplinary perspectives involved are too diverse, not only with respect to the comparison of the various traditions within ethnology and European ethnology but also due to the fact that these labels are used by such disciplines which do not feature "ethnology" or "anthropology" in their disciplinary names. In such situations, an attempt to restrict the field of research according to a delimiting theoretical, methodological and disciplinary approach would lead inevitably to disputes over scientific prerogatives and competences. Such an approach, above all from the perspective of

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2   Cf. also the dgv-congress publication *Bilder, Bücher, Bytes: Zur Medialität des Alltags* by Simon et al. (2009).

3   Cf. e.g. Askew (2002), Bachmann and Wittel (2011), Bender and Zillinger (2015), Blask, Kallinich, and Schondelmayer (2013), Horst and Miller (2012), Peake (2017), Pink et al. (2016) and Rothenbuhler and Coman (2005). Regarding the specificity of the "anthropology of the medial," especially influenced by the work of Manfred Faßler, cf., in summary, Schwinghammer (2016).

European ethnology, which has developed many of its strengths in dialogue with interdisciplinary perspectives, would be analytically unproductive.

Thus, the present article expressly advocates an inclusive understanding of the field of media and digital anthropology, to which, in addition to ethnologies and anthropologies, disciplines such as media studies, communication studies, (media) sociology, cultural studies, history, linguistics and information sciences contribute. Viewed from this perspective, the question then arises regarding the specific contribution European ethnology makes to this deeply transdisciplinary and international research field.

I propose the formation of the term "media of the everyday" for grouping not all but some of the perspectives and approaches that have proven productive for European ethnology in this context and which, accordingly, co-constitute the discipline's contribution to the field of media and digital anthropology. The term "media of the everyday" designates an analytical formulation referring to the fact that media, while always constituting themselves as part of everyday life, simultaneously penetrate, shape and transform the everyday. In the following, this fundamental assumption is further differentiated by various theoretical-conceptual approaches that provide tools for ethnographic thinking and research focusing on precisely these interdependencies.

Media-related routines/media practices

Directing the perspective to "media of the everyday" implies, first and foremost, understanding media as part of lived processes. This is because everyday life is never static but in a continuous state of flux extending over long intervals in well-established, albeit changeable routines. This interest had already been established in folkloristic studies within the earlier discipline of European ethnology since the 1950s, which had also been devoted to routines and customs of everyday life relating to technology (Beck 1997: 23ff.; Hengartner and Rolshoven 1998). When the concept of social and cultural practice then met with interdisciplinary approval through the influence of Pierre Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau, Anthony Giddens and others (Ortner 1984; Reckwitz 2003), it began to be used increasingly by European ethnology for the analysis of the everyday from the 1990s onwards (Tschofen 2006: 98f.). This facilitated a heightened interest in the theoretical and conceptual aspects of everyday routines. In short, practice theories aided our understanding of 'everyday life' as a processual network of routine activities and, accordingly, enabled us to describe 'everyday life' both as an attribute and mode of such routines. Thinking about everyday life through the lens of practice theory, however, by no means implies reverting to a structuralist perspective, assuming that the everyday is constituted through the recurrence of never-changing processes. Rather, this perspective includes acknowledging the fragility, multidimensionality and vicissitudes

of routines (e.g. Hörning 2004; Noble and Watkins 2003; Reckwitz 2004). The issue of everydayness is then a question of the specificity and regularity as well as the multidimensionality and transformation of sociocultural routines.

This approach can be applied to the analysis of media in everyday life. Gertraud Koch, building on practice theories, proposes a "praxeography" of digital worlds (2015: 186). In terms of the relationship between media and practices, she comments:

> Media are a crucial momentum of social practice. They are adopted and applied in action and interaction. The use of media is both an element and an expression of idiosyncratic social practice, wherein social structures are at once depicted and reproduced, but can also be further developed, transformed and reorganized. (Koch 2015: 187–188)

The present article follows on from these practice-theoretical reflections. In short, the perspective on "media of the everyday" represents primarily an ethnographic sensitivity to the routine, complexity and changeability of media-related activities in everyday life, i.e. for media practices.

Media practices are more than individual acts; they constitute an integral aspect of the sociocultural processes we call everyday life. As such, they have evolved historically, both as an object and engine of social negotiation processes, and they encompass complex arrangements (or networks, assemblages) of interrelating human and nonhuman entities.

It is not even necessary to refer to high-impact publications on the subject to indicate the diversity of potential media practices under consideration; instead, we can take a brief glance at the topics of student theses in European ethnology. Among those media practices most recently investigated by students in the Institute for European Ethnology at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin are "hate speech" on the Internet, the use of hashtags such as #metoo or #ichbinhier, the self-positioning practices of "gamer girls" related to video games, the use of menstrual calendar apps, "self-tracking," the value-creation practices of "influencers" on *YouTube*, digital payment via smartphone apps, and the use of *What's App* for long-distance relationships or political debates on the Internet – whether in the context of *Twitter* campaigns of the "Jeunes avec Macron" or on *Instagram* accounts of right-wing populist movements.

Intensive efforts have been undertaken in recent years both in international media anthropology (Bräuchler and Postill 2010) and media studies (Couldry 2012), especially in the German context (Dangh-Anh et al. 2017), to give sharper definition to the concept of media practice. A European-ethnological perspective on media practices benefits from these works insofar as they assist the understanding of media in their everyday context. However, the discipline can, at the same time, make a contribution to this transdisciplinary field: Initially, methodically by means of dense

ethnographic descriptions of media practices and, secondly, theoretically, by endorsing specific perspectives within this shared interest in media practices.

Incorporated media knowledge

One such specific angle considers, along with Pierre Bourdieu, the "practical sense," which ensures that practices are "*sensible*, that is, informed by a common sense" (Bourdieu 1990: 69, emphasis in the original). It is precisely this "common sense" that also shapes media practices. European ethnology is, therefore, interested in incorporated knowledge, which exercises a constitutive effect on the everyday use of media. Thomas Hengartner has touched on this aspect in his repeated references to the adaptation to and familiarity with technology, as inscribed in the specific ways and means of using technology (2012: 123).[4] Manfred Faßler (2004) sheds light on this inscription process by way of an anthropological macro-perspective, in which he refers to the coevolution of people and media. Even the appropriation of the simplest sign systems by humans, argues Faßler, presupposes the fundamental assumption that "humans engage in the presence of interfaces, of an indirectness, of an 'in-between'" (Faßler 2004: 10). This processual engagement has continued ever since and currently affects the knowledge relating to media and technology as inscribed in the human body.

The practice-theoretical perspective outlined by Stefan Beck in his dissertation *Umgang mit Technik* (1997) is of crucial significance for the following discussion. The latter thesis discusses "the social and cultural formation of comparatively 'soft' cultural orientations, dispositives and habitualizations," "with which the field of socially legitimate modes of using technology are discursively defined" (Beck 1997: 169).

These orientations, dispositives and habitualizations are inscribed in the human body in everyday life; they function "as a sensomotoric memory necessary for action and procedural knowledge when dealing with technical artifacts and, thus, also as an evaluative instance for the adequacy of technical acts" (Beck 1997: 272). The ethnographic perspective, thus, focuses on what I refer to in the following as 'incorporated media knowledge'; a knowledge conveying to us the ways and means of dealing with media which we consider adequate in various situations and which we apply routinely.

One such example of incorporated media knowledge is evident in the media practice of taking selfies.[5] In my current research on media practices at memorial sites in Berlin – including participant on-site observation, ethnographic interviews

4   Here he points rightly to the work of sociologist Karl Heinz Hörning on this question, which is analytically highly valuable for European ethnology, cf. especially Hörning (2001).
5   Cf. Eckel, Ruchartz, and Wirth (2018), Schönberger (2017).

and an analysis of posts on social media platforms (Bareither 2018, 2019a) – the practice of taking selfies plays a significant role, insofar as it serves routinely as a practice of emotionally relating to this place of remembrance. Taking selfies is a striking example of incorporated media knowledge, in so far as it tends to polarize. Particularly (though not exclusively) at sites of "difficult heritage" (Macdonald 2009), and explicitly at the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, many visitors perceive taking selfies as profoundly inappropriate. For others, by contrast, it is a perfectly legitimate way of self-representation in everyday life, especially in the everyday life of tourism. Following Bourdieu, they have developed a practical sense for the everydayness of taking selfies in touristic situations, which facilities an understanding of this media practice as an appropriate, rather than a demeaning way of situating oneself in relation to a commemorative site. This knowledge is 'incorporated' to the extent that it is routinely implemented in these touristic situations by many actors, beyond explicit reflection. Or, as formulated by Thomas Hengartner and Johanna Rolshoven: "The process through which the technical becomes part of everyday life manifests itself in the imperceptibility of practice" (1998: 46).

It is crucial from a practice-theoretical viewpoint that such knowledge is socially constituted, namely, by way of everyday observation, imitation and negotiation. In everyday life, we orient ourselves on other people by implicitly learning from them the 'right' ways of handling situations. The same holds for media practices. However, that this knowledge is inscribed implicitly and beyond explicit reflection in our bodies does not, of course, preclude its explicability: In some cases, public discourses specifically revolve around the question regarding which ways of dealing with digital media are appropriate or inappropriate.[6] The example of taking selfies at the 'Holocaust Memorial' sparked heated debate on social media platforms, most prominently visible in the context of the "Yolocaust" project, for which the artist and comedian Shahak Shapira manipulated selfies such that historical recordings of concentration camps could be seen in the background.[7] Evidently, on-site conversations and interviews about the memorial show how such moral discourses shape incorporated media knowledge and, thus, impact upon media practices on location. Due to these discourses, some actors deliberately opt against taking selfies, or indeed any portraits at all, at the 'Holocaust Memorial.' Others decide to take selfies, but in so doing, they express seriousness or sadness. Incorporated media knowledge

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6   The perspective proposed by Estrid Sørensens (2018) on knowledge negotiations relating to computer games is also helpful in this context. She describes them as matters of concern by using the vocabulary of actor-network theory. The authors of the anthology *Cultures of Computer Game Concerns* (Sørensens 2018) differentiate this perspective in its familial, legal, scientific and economic dimensions.

7   A video of the AJ+ profile documenting the project, available on Facebook, records 79 million hits. Accessed September 13, 2018. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/ajplusenglish/videos/914675568673951/?q=AJ%2B%20yolocaust.

– this much is evident – is multilayered, heterogeneous and the subject of ongoing processes of negotiation.

Media history/persistence and recombination

European ethnology also distinguishes itself in the investigation of such processes by way of its historical perspective. This is significant in that the history of media or, more specifically in this case, the 'everyday' history of media represents a field of research with its own relevance.[8] And yet the historical perspective also possesses an irreplaceable added value for contemporary ethnographic analysis, namely, the extent to which it helps explain the emergence of incorporated media knowledge, which plays such a central role in the constitution of contemporary media practices.

One such example would be the media practice of playful virtual violence in video games: A historical-ethnographic analysis of video game magazines can illustrate the way in which virtual violence has gradually gained acceptance among video gamers since the 1980s (Bareither 2016: 297ff.). The particular incorporated media knowledge that evolved in this process enables today's players to enact positive emotional experiences in dealing with virtual violence through their "feel for the game" (Bourdieu 1990: 66).

An eye for this historical dimension is also linked to the sense of continuity and change in the use of everyday media. Klaus Schönberger proposed that this transformation can be understood as the interplay of "persistence and recombination" (Schönberger 2015). Acknowledging this implies "that despite changed technological conditions, practices continue, develop and flow alongside one another" (Schönberger 2015: 207). In short, the question is "how 'the old' becomes 'new'" (Schönberger 2015: 206).

Schönberger and Christian Ritter give an example of the interplay of persistence and recombination in an ethnographic analysis of the media practice of the "Nossa Nossa" mobile phone video, an intermittently popular practice of imitation, video recording and electronic dissemination of a popular dance, especially among young people (Ritter and Schönberger 2017). They argue that this media practice ties in with the history of self-photography and the youth-practices of video recording reenactments already implemented with analogue cameras. In addition, it also refers to the everyday reception of music videos and dance films since the 1980s. The "Nossa Nossa" mobile phone video adopts these persistent phenomena and recombines them into a new practice that unfolds its own dynamics under the conditions of digital technologies.

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8 A more far-reaching approach reflexively directed at the genesis of digital media and which offers productive intersections with ethnographic research is the "media genealogy" proposed by Clemens Apprich and Götz Bachmann (2016).

As this example shows, to speak of 'media of the everyday' also implies accounting for the historical dimensions of media practices and acknowledges that radically new forms of everyday life do not necessarily emerge even with the introduction of 'new media'. In many cases, persistent routines are recombined into 'new media' practices, and it is this recombination which constitutes sociocultural transformation.

Affordances/media as Tat-Sachen

The historically evolved knowledge inscribed in human bodies, however, represents invariably only one dimension of media practice. Another no less integral dimension of media are its technical functions, which facilitate or restrict specific media practices.

In international media and digital anthropology, this aspect has been increasingly discussed in recent years with recourse to the term 'affordances.'[9] The latter term, originally introduced by evolutionary psychologist James Gibson (1986 [1979]), denotes the practice potentials and practice restrictions inscribed not only in material things or spaces but also in technical devices or media, while, at the same time, avoiding both social-constructivist and technological-deterministic positioning. A chair, for example, does not compel us to sit on it, neither is it a completely arbitrary object; rather, it encourages us to sit in a specific way; it 'affords' a specific way of sitting.

The concept, furthermore, allows us to think about technology and media in a similar way. As Mirca Madianou and Daniel Miller point out, it is important to recognize that digital media become an "environment of affordances" (2012: 170). Digital media are intimately linked to each other and constitute relational networks (or assemblages) of affordances. At the same time, even a single technical device may afford a heterogeneous variety of practices: A smartphone, for example, can afford making telephone calls, writing, taking notes, pictures and videos, calculating, playing – and the list could be continued *ad infinitum*.

Although the application of affordance concepts has become a widespread approach in media and digital anthropological research, one critical point voiced by Stefan Beck as early as 1997 – though meanwhile elsewhere as well (e.g. Costa 2018; Hopkins 2016) – is often neglected. Beck criticized the affordance concept in the aforementioned *Umgang mit Technik* on the grounds that it only accounts for the objectifiable relations between living beings and the environment (1997: 242ff.). For Beck, it is crucial from the perspective of European ethnology that the 'hard' dimension of the technical (here, the specific characteristics and technical potentials of digital media) and the 'soft' sociocultural knowledge (here, incorporated media

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9   Cf. e.g. boyd (2011), Costa (2018), Hopkins (2016), Hutchby (2001), McVeigh-Schultz and Baym (2015) or Zillien (2008).

knowledge) determine one another reciprocally. As Beck remarked in 2000 regarding European-ethnological media research:

> It is only possible to analyze telepresent and technically dispositioned forms of communication and interaction adequately when media, together with their options and limitations for action, are addressed as well as cultural conventions and the symbolic potential of their utilization. (2000: 12f.)

Understood thus, Beck's criticism may not only be directed against the concept of affordance but could also contribute to its productive expansion. Seen from this perspective, the analysis of affordances means, firstly, that they are invariably to be read in relation to the practices through which they are enacted, and secondly, that this entails understanding affordances always in relation to the incorporated media knowledge that constitutes an integral part of these practices. Hence, the affordances of digital media unfold only in their being intertwined with practices and incorporated knowledge. In other words, the affordances of digital media unfold through the everyday.[10]

One example of this are the affordances of the academic Internet platform *Academia.edu* (Bareither 2019b). Here, academics may not only present themselves but also upload text manuscripts, index and make them accessible to others. One of the platform's central affordances arises from the fact that the number of 'views' (received by a profile or text) is always made publicly visible. As a purely technical attribute, this function is initially socioculturally and emotionally neutral. However, it may have considerable implications in the everyday life of scientists. The visualization of quantified attention (through 'views') then affords the practice of competitive comparison (Tauschek 2013) and the attempt to intensify this attention. Here, the platform sets up the request such that the increase of attention is facilitated by regular visits to the portal (which secures higher advertising revenues for the platform operators) and the utilization of specific payment features (which, for example, offer detailed data analyses on the aforementioned 'views').

Accordingly, from a European-ethnological perspective, affordances can only be understood and integrated into ethnographic perspectives when put in relation to practices and/or incorporated knowledge. Hence, from this perspective, a digital medium (or a specific component of a digital medium) does not afford a 'single' practice; rather, its affordances unfold into, at times, very different practices in everyday life. Here, again following Stefan Beck, media make their appearance as *Tat-Sachen*, a German word combination bringing together the terms 'fact', 'action' and 'thing.' This means that they form "utilization complexes with action potentials that need to be

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10 From this perspective, affordance-theoretical approaches also prove adaptable to Manfred Seifert's proposed approach to the analysis of everyday use of technology, which unites both the "actor perspective" and the "perspective of technical constitution" (Seifert 2012: 842ff.).

actualized through concrete use acts" and are, thus, always related to socioculturally evolved, incorporated media knowledge (Beck 1997: 347).

This affordance-theoretical perspective shares several common interests with the approaches of actor-network theory (ANT).[11] The affordance concept is correspondingly suited to those approaches that seek to recognize the 'agency' of digital media and regard the latter as active. It is crucial, above all regarding digital media, that everyday knowledge can be embedded not only in human bodies but also in technology itself, thus, shaping those practices enacted through this very technology. If you will, the algorithms of the *Academia.edu* platform 'know' about specific aspects of scientists' everyday lives and, accordingly, react to specific events in particular ways. In the language of ANT, they, thus, acquire "all the dignity of a mediator, a social actor, an agent, an active being" (Latour 2000: 19).[12] In this way, the "sociality of algorithms" (Amelang 2017: 367) and their "silent politics" (Kunzelmann 2015) can become an integral part of everyday life.

Exemplarily, as a user, I receive the message via e-mail: "The name 'Christoph Bareither' is mentioned in a paper uploaded to Academia by someone Monique Scheer follows." The algorithm, thus, reacts to my previously registered interest in the work of a colleague, from which it then infers that it would be important for me should another person, whom the colleague 'follows,' in turn, refer to my work. This shows how sociocultural knowledge is inscribed in digital media and causes them to engage in specific everyday communication practices.

This example also demonstrates how the boundary between the affordances of a medium and the practices carried out by the medium itself becomes blurred when considering digital media. The practice implemented by the medium (writing to users and pointing to the attention of others) constitutes itself simultaneously, for me, as affordance: I am called upon implicitly to investigate, via the platform, who this mysterious third person giving me attention is (for which, by no coincidence, I am obliged to use paying functions). As such, the relation between affordances and practices is twofold, especially regarding digital media: They are not only mutually conditional but can merge into one another and form complex relational networks.[13]

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11 Exemplarily, Bruno Latour's description of the specificity of nonhuman actors exhibits broad intersections with affordance theories; he also refers explicitly to the usefulness of Gibson's concept of affordance (Latour 2005: 72). For a general introduction to ANT from a social-anthropological perspective, cf. Mathar (2012).

12 Latour demonstrates by using these words to describe the well-known "Berlin Key" (a relatively simple technical artifact) that this possibility is not restricted to electronic or digital media. Due to their dynamics and programmability, however, the latter possess a considerable potential in this respect.

13 In this connection, the interface between affordance and assemblage theories is also interesting. Suggestions for this can be found in Julian Hopkins' article "Assembling Blog Affordances. Theorising Affordances and Agency in New Media" as part of an e-seminar on the Media Anthropology

Media infrastructuring

These relational networks of affordances and practices are invariably based on multilayered material foundations, i.e. on media infrastructures. The "ethnography of infrastructure" developed by Susan Leigh Star and Geoffrey Bowker (Star 1999), among others, focuses on this aspect and has similarly met with strong approval in European ethnology in recent years. This development goes hand in hand with the further establishment of the social and cultural anthropological branch within science and technology studies (STS) (Beck, Niewöhner, and Sørensen 2012). While STS are distinguished by special interests and fields (in addition to technology, particularly knowledge and science research), there are broad overlaps with media and digital anthropology on a theoretical-conceptual level. This includes not only the practice-theoretical perspective and the examination (linked to the development of ANT) of the relations between human and nonhuman actors but also the interest in infrastructures.

As Gertraud Koch has argued, infrastructure analysis complements the analytical perspective on everyday life in that it focuses on the "material basis for everyday action" (2016: 108). Examining infrastructures entails identifying analytically the material and technical structures which, especially in their everydayness, are both frequently invisible and, as putatively self-evident foundations of our lives, all the more effective. Above all, digital media build decisively on such infrastructures that comprise, for example, server parks, fiberoptic cable networks, satellite connections, geo-tracking systems and electricity networks. According to Asta Vonderau,

> An infrastructural ethnographic approach renders visible the multilayered materialities of the World Wide Web that are imagined, implemented and experienced by various actors in different locations of the world and on different levels of political decision-making and economic production. (2015: 160)

In connection with the specifics of social and cultural anthropological and practice-oriented infrastructure research, Jörg Niewöhner advocates focusing ethnographically not only on infrastructures as such but on the processes of 'infrastructuring' in particular, i.e. on the "continuity and complexity of the work that guarantees the functioning of infrastructure" (Niewöhner 2014: 344). In the context of digital media, not only is the infrastructuring of the material foundations – in the sense of physical entities ('hardware') – interesting, but so is the infrastructuring of the digital foundations for everyday practice, namely, the infrastructuring of binary code-based programs ('software').

Network. Accessed November 8, 2018. Available at: http://www.media-anthropology.net/file/hopkins_assembling_affordances(2).pdf; http://www.media-anthropology.net/file/hopkins_eseminar.pdf.

The affordance concept, as discussed earlier, necessitates enquiring into the way in which the affordances of digital media are infrastructured; i.e. how they are designed, developed, maintained and continually adapted. This would involve both the question of technical functions and the way in which sociocultural knowledge (as in the case of the *Academia.edu* platform) is inscribed in digital media by means of infrastructuring algorithms.

Albeit without explicit reference to infrastructure, Götz Bachmann (2018) illustrates the ways in which ethnographic research becomes productive in this context. He outlines in detail how a complex technical project ('Dynamicland' in Silicon Valley) is defined by ideas, processes of appropriation, social negotiations and visions of the future, and the ways in which this complex "work on the medium" inscribes itself in the digital (and material) structures and algorithms of the project.

Another example is provided by Sandra Plontke (2018), who uses STS and ANT approaches to accompany the programming practices of video game developers ethnographically. She not only examines the programming practices as such (by means of concrete examples from the programmed codes) but also traces how ideas introduced by developers, such as player types or preferred gaming experiences, are inscribed in the code.

However, the ethnography of infrastructuring processes may become productive not only regarding expert cultures but also particularly when non-experts alter, adapt and maintain digital infrastructures according to their own purpose. One such example is the infrastructuring of e-mail distribution lists, *Facebook* groups and other Internet communication channels. Marion Näser-Lather illustrates in her ethnographic study of the Italian women's movement "Die reale Begegnung: Kommunikationsmodi und Medieninfrastrukturnutzung in der Frauenbewegung Se Non Ora Quando" (2015) how the adaptation, administration and maintenance of such communication channels are tightly linked to power negotiations and processes of group formation.

Ina Dietzsch and Daniel Kunzelmann (2016) discuss such everyday infrastructuring processes as these pertain to Tel Aviv taxi drivers and the latter's use of the *Waze* navigation software. This software enables actors themselves to reconfigure the information displayed to all users, such as details about current construction sites. With the words "We are the map" (Dietzsch and Kunzelmann 2016: 299), an enthusiastic taxi driver summarizes the possibility of infrastructural appropriation of the software by its users.

Infrastructure processes become visible across a broader spectrum, for example, in connection with a currently popular function of various social media platforms, namely, hashtags. By simply adding the # sign in front of a user-defined term, it is then declared a category within the respective platform, which, with the help of an algorithm, also becomes a hyperlink, namely, a digital reference that leads to

synopses which display all contributions on this topic within the network. These processes of infrastructuring in such well-known cases as the hashtags #metoo or #blacklivesmatter have led to widely acknowledged social discourses.

As with the two instances cited above, algorithms often afford non-experts to engage in the infrastructuring of digital media. They allow users to participate in the design of the communication infrastructure within a social media platform by generating points of association and communication spaces. The perspective on 'media of the everyday' accounts for this aspect and queries not only infrastructures as such but also the way in which digital algorithms enable actors to shape the infrastructural foundations of their own everyday routines.

Media content/encoding and decoding

A brief glance at hashtags shows that digital infrastructures frequently constitute the basis for practices whereby 'media content' is circulated. This raises the question of the extent to which a perspective interested in media practices, affordances and infrastructures within European ethnology can be connected to such approaches concerned primarily with media content and its reception.

Early European-ethnological media research also has its roots in narrative research, which "devotes itself to popular story-telling in all its complexity," "whether orally, in writing or via electronic media," whereby it "focuses on aspects of the production, distribution and reception of narratives in addition to the content, material and motifs of narrative communication [...]" (Tomkowiak 2001: 1).

Consequently, it comes as no surprise that early media research in European ethnology focused, first and foremost, on a 'narrative' medium, namely, that of television. Here, too, the question of everyday integration of the medium was pivotal (cf. e.g. Bausinger 1984; Foltin 1999; Lindner 1976). In this case, researchers were not concerned with the reproduction of linear theses of cause and effect but with how television – precisely because it is an integral part of everyday routines – "implicitly transforms everyday life" (Lindner 1976: 11).

Connected with this is the question as to how power is constituted in the interrelations between the everyday and media technologies. In cultural studies terminology, on which film and television research in European ethnology has long since oriented itself (Bechdolf 2007), the issue here concerns how certain media contents are 'encoded' and how they are, in turn, 'decoded' in reception processes (Hall 1973). In what ways, for example, do the producers of a television program inscribe specific meanings and modes of interpretation into the latter? How are audience opinions and worldviews shaped and, thus, social power exercised? Furthermore, which of the varying (partially affirmative, partially resisting) interpretations and ways of appropriation do the viewers – depending on the social group – relate to such media content?

At a superficial glance, the oft-cited and, within cultural studies, oft-criticized encoding-decoding perspective may appear at odds with practice-theoretical perspectives; for it is, initially, focused on media content and media text analysis and, secondly, understands viewers primarily as decoding subjects. Hence, the practice theory-oriented part of media anthropology tends to distance itself from cultural studies approaches. However, the contribution of European ethnology here could consist precisely in not positioning itself on one or the other of the two poles constituting this field of tension but rather in making it productive, by eliminating the supposed contrast between the analysis of contents and their reception, on the one hand, and the theoretical analysis of actual media practices, on the other.

This potential is, though not exclusively, particularly evident regarding digital media. Whereas, by developing the encoding-decoding model, Stuart Hall (1973) – and later David Morley insofar as he adopted it (1992) – still clearly proceeded from mass media content (primarily in television) encoded by professional producers, the situation changed drastically with digital media. This is because their multiple affordances facilitate not only classic forms of reception but also interactive participation and the creation of individual content. Ingrid Tomkowiak (2010), for example, describes how Johnny Depp fans celebrate their star in Internet forums. She shows how the star is not only an anchor point for aesthetic pleasure, but that computer-assisted appropriation can also develop into a seemingly therapeutic process in which questions as to one's own everyday happiness are actively negotiated.

One further example is the resistant and subversive manner in which *Twitter* users deal with Islamophobic media content. Alexandra Schwell (2016) describes in a study of the hashtag #muslimrage how, via social media, Muslims across the world counter racial stereotypes established by mainstream media (in this case, the news magazine *Newsweek*) by means of humorous subversion. Tweets featuring texts such as "You lose your nephew at the airport, but you can't yell his name because it's JIHAD #muslimrage" or "When my falafel comes out completely uncrispy #muslimrage" (Schwell 2016: 265) are "playing with polysemy" (Schwell 2016: 269) by providing alternative readings of the cliché of 'Muslim rage.' By way of these proposed analytical approaches, one may observe how the infrastructure of the hashtag creates a shared communication space affording media practices that disrupt the coding of certain media content and, thereby, question Islamophobic clichés satirically.

Using both examples, the encoding/decoding perspective may be usefully brought together with practice theory to focus on encoding and decoding practices that intertwine with the affordances of digital media. Not only is existing media content used (as in classical television reception), but the actors themselves contribute their own media content (in this case, texts and tweets). This tendency is even more pronounced on image and video platforms, such as *Instagram* or *YouTube*:

Here, actors themselves generate a large part of the media content (mixing it with commercial and professional productions), which is then received and negotiated in a complex entanglement of encoding and decoding practices.[14]

In this context, the conceptual question of media content is also posed anew: Indeed, these are not static 'texts' but integrally interwoven with lived practices. Hence, the proposal of an ethnographic analysis of 'media of the everyday' is also one of a theoretical-conceptual (and hence methodological) integration of two research traditions, which unites content-, text- and reception-analytical procedures with analytical perspectives on practices, affordances and infrastructures.

Experiencing/feeling through media

Both the example of the Johnny Depp fan forums and that of the hashtag #muslimrage point to a further and final dimension: Highly emotional, affective, aesthetic or sensory experiences are frequently enacted through digital media. In recent years, European ethnology has repeatedly pointed out that the analysis of the sensual and emotional dimension of everyday life is indispensable to its ethnographic understanding. The same also holds true for the analytical perspective on 'media of the everyday.'

Regarding processes of sensory perception, Judith Willkomm proposes referring to "mediatized senses" to "denote such human perceptual abilities (seeing, hearing, smelling, feeling, tasting, touching, etc.) as arise in the confrontation with and use of technical media" (Willkomm 2014: 43). Therefore, from a European-ethnological standpoint, she suggests that the question of mediatized sensory experience is less a question of a linear 'expansion' of human senses through media than of complex mutual relations and interconnections.

The works of philosopher of technology, Don Ihde, can provide a theoretical and conceptual basis for this. Ihde describes human perceptual processes as bound to the 'embodiment relations' between human actors and technical artefacts (Ihde 1979: 6ff., 1990: 72ff.).[15] While Ihde is referring to non-digital technologies here, such as glasses or cars, the concept may well be productively applied to digital media.

One example drawn from popular culture are the embodiment relations between video gamers and their avatars, namely, virtual representations of bodies controlled by human actors (Bareither 2016: 109ff.; Koch 2009: 222). How gamers perceive the computer-generated environment and their own sensory presence within it by means of these virtual bodies is constitutive for the gaming process (cf. Bareither 2018: 93ff.). Maximilian Jablonowski (2017) gives another example by way of an

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14   However, as Kaspar Maase points out, the much vaunted "participatory culture" is only partially asserting itself in popular cultural fields on the Internet, and the reception of professional and commercial productions continues to dominate here (Maase 2017).

15   From the perspective of European ethnology, see also Beck (1997: 248ff.).

ethnographic description of the civilian use of drones or, more concretely, the control of drones by means of a transmitted live video image seen from the perspective of the drone. In interviews, users describe "a sensory experience extended far beyond the actual technical sensory data transmitted," allowing the actors to "feel the wind that the drone 'feels' hundreds of meters away" (Jablonowski 2017: 387).

What also becomes evident here is that the sensory interweaving of human bodies and digital technologies is associated with specific emotional and affective processes. From an ethnographic perspective, these may be viewed as "emotional practices" (Scheer 2016), as particular ways of enacting emotional experiences. The media anthropological perspective may, furthermore, reveal the extent to which these processes are conditioned by specific "emotional affordances" (Bareither 2019a), namely, by technical or digital practice potentials and practice restrictions in relation to emotional practices.

As an example, in the context of social media platforms or apps, such as *What's App*, chat practices are now heavily influenced by emojis: Small pictograms used much like text characters (Danesi 2016). *Facebook* claims that over five billion emojis are sent worldwide daily, solely via its *messenger* app.[16] These emojis and their emotional affordances have a tremendous impact on everyday life. Ruth Dorothea Eggel and Barbara Frischling (2018) describe in an ethnographic study on the emoji practices of school students, for example, how the emoji of a glowing heart opens up specific possibilities for initiating intimate relationships which become meaningful in young people's everyday lives. As my current research shows, a similar role is played by the heart emoji in the comments on digital pictures of places of remembrance which are presented on social media platforms. The articulation of intimate emotional experiences, however, may point in two different directions: While the heart emoji can express compliments or affection, it can also articulate sadness and empathy, as witnessed in connection with the 'Holocaust Memorial' in Berlin.

In either of these empirical fields, the potential of emojis to facilitate 'doing emotion' by means of digital media beyond text and language is crucial. From a European-ethnological perspective, the routine handling of emojis may be read as an emotional practice founded on the specific media knowledge of human actors and the specific emotional affordances of digital infrastructures. This does not result in completely novel ways of everyday communication, but the interplay of persistence and recombination – as well as the circulation of encoding and decoding practices – results in changed modes of dealing with emotions in everyday life. Accordingly, this example demonstrates ways in which the perspective of ethnographic emotion research can be productively linked with that of media and digital anthropology to capture everyday emotional practices in relation to digitized communication.

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16 Accessed January 13, 2019. Available at: https://blog.emojipedia.org/5-billion-emojis-sent-daily-on-messenger/.

Conclusion: media of the everyday

The concepts and theoretical approaches outlined in the present article share one thing in common: Each contributes to the perspectivation of media as an integral part of everyday life and, thus, to a greater understanding of the way they impact everyday worlds. Naturally, the list of these approaches is not exhaustive. The present contribution is, therefore, not conceived as a comprehensive overview but as an appeal for discussion. It seeks to stimulate discussion within European ethnology on the kind of contribution the discipline makes to the international and transdisciplinary field of media and digital anthropology. One central aspect of this discussion must be to highlight the transdisciplinary points of reference and intersections. However, it must also include a self-confident emphasis on the potentials of a research tradition with a particular sensitivity for the everyday.

In addition to the necessarily reduced selection of theoretical-conceptual approaches discussed in this article, the second dimension of media and digital anthropology, namely, the methodological one, has been entirely neglected here. All the concepts cited here require a further development of the spectrum of ethnographic methods: Whether it is Internet ethnography, participatory observation between 'online' and 'offline,' affordance, infrastructure or practice-oriented media content analysis; whether relating to questions of ethical implications, the specifics of chat and video interviews or computer-assisted ethnographic data analysis. Regarding methodology, European ethnology also faces the challenge to sustain its sensitivity to questions of the everyday and apply it within a transdisciplinary research landscape.

While a further discussion of the latter dimension would go beyond the scope of the present article, I would like to conclude by again addressing the elephant in the room: What, from the perspective of European ethnology, are 'media'? The answer here is not the oft-cited 'broad media concept' of the discipline, albeit that from the perspective of European ethnology there is much to be said for not restricting the concept of media to technical media, but rather to understand material artefacts and (also human) bodies as potential media as well. By contrast, my answer is conceptual: As with most analytical concepts, the concept of media in European ethnology may well be more than a static categorization of an empirical phenomenon by becoming productive as a tool of thought. From this perspective, 'media' are not clearly categorizable objects; the term denotes rather a specific, analytical approach to the complex relations between people and material, technical or digital entities, through which actors enter into social, cultural, sensory or emotional exchanges with one another (or with themselves). For European ethnology, this also implies understanding these complex relations as an "integral part of the way the everyday is conducted" (Bausinger 1984: 346). The approaches assembled under the overarch-

ing term 'media of the everyday' offer theoretical-conceptual tools to apply precisely this perspective by means of ethnographic research.

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Barbara Sieferle

Participate – experience – understand*

A methodical approach to the corporeality of sociocultural realities

Abstract: The article discusses the methodical approach to the physical dimensions of culture and society. It argues that physical aspects of sociocultural realities, which often cannot be studied by using verbal language, can be made accessible by the method of participant observation. Based on ethnographic field research on the physicality of pilgrimage, it will be shown to what extent the active participation in the practices of the field can provide a methodical access to the physical dimensions, specifically to the physical patterns of action and experience of the field. The process of the European ethnological understanding of the physical dimensions of sociocultural realities by means of participant observation is made transparent and methodologically comprehensible.

Keywords: body, participant observation, method, fieldwork, ethnography, autoethnography, pilgrimage, walking, learning, understanding

The cultural and social sciences have been registering an increasing interest in the physical dimension of sociocultural realities for over 40 years now; this can be attributed to the proclamation of the so-called "body turn" (Gugutzer 2006a) and the identification of the cultural paradigm of "embodiment" (Csordas 1990). In the multi-named discipline of EEthnology/Cultural Anthropology/Empirical Cultural Studies, it was Utz Jeggle who, in the 1980s, drew analytical attention to physicality as a dimension of all human practice (Jeggle 1980: 172) and to the cultural formation of the body (Jeggle 1980: 173). In the course of the cultural anthropological study of the body, classical topics, such as pilgrimage (Sieferle 2017), and new topics, such as Living History (Willner 2017), were examined from a body-theoretical perspective.[1] While the cultural and social sciences initially turned their attention to the body as an object of cultural formation and a symbol of cultural orders, for several years they have been increasingly focusing on it as the basis for the construction of sociocultural reality (Gugutzer 2015; Hirschauer 2008; Schroer 2005). The latter perspective particularly draws analytical attention to the physical constitution of social action and highlights the body as a producer of sociocultural realities. Since social reality,

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1 For an overview, cf. Amelang, Bergmann, and Binder 2016; Linke 2003.

as Gugutzer points out, results from social action and since social action is always physical action, physical actions and the interactions contribute to the constitution of social reality (Gugutzer 2015: 8–9).

Marcel Mauss' body techniques (1975), Pierre Bourdieu's habitus (1987, 2001) and Michael Polanyi's implicit knowledge (1985) are prominent concepts of body research in cultural studies that refer to the physical dimensions of sociocultural actions and the production of sociocultural reality through and with the body (Petersen 2007). They demonstrate that actors usually carry out physical actions so self-evidently that they do not think about them any further. Incorporated and habitualized in the process of socialization, they appear as natural and incorporeal modes of execution. A reflection of their physical constitution would probably even complicate or interfere with these physical competences (Leder 1990: 85). Who, for example, thinks about how exactly they walk in their everyday life? The fact that walking is a central aspect of our everyday life and that different walking styles are always endowed with cultural and social content remains unreflected (Tschofen 2013). Drew Leder (1990), therefore, speaks of the absent body in everyday life, although sociocultural realities and the behavior of actors are fundamentally physically constituted (Crossley 2007).

It is precisely this self-evident nature of physical actions that presents a methodological challenge to cultural anthropologists focusing on the physicality of culture and society. For it is, above all, as Petersen puts it, those routine and unreflected practices which, in view of their self-evident character, are "hard" to put into words by the research subjects (Petersen 2007: 61) and, thus, cannot be made accessible through methods of conversation and interviews (Keller and Meuser 2011: 25). Sociocultural realities must not be reduced to language, as Maurice Bloch (1991) and Stefan Hirschauer (2001) have critically remarked for qualitative social research, which too often relies solely on the collection of oral, linguistic material. The silence of the social (Hirschauer 2001) and the limits of the narratable (Schmidt-Lauber 2005) must be fundamentally considered in the methodological approach to the corporeality of culture and society.

Methodological literature in European Ethnology regularly refers to the importance of fieldwork and particularly to the method of participant observation for empirical access to the physical dimensions of sociocultural realities (Cohn 2014; Mohr and Vetter 2014). It remains unclear, however, how exactly researchers gain such access through participant observation. If one looks at the qualitative method literature on the subject, it is noticeable that participant observation is reflected and thematized far less strongly than qualitative conversation and interviews.[2] As

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2   There are four articles in the volume *Methoden der Kulturanthropologie* ('Methods in Cultural Anthroplogy') (Bischoff, Oehme-Jüngling, and Leimgruber 2014), for example, that highlight the conduct of interviews from different perspectives, while only two articles deal with participant

Katharina Eisch(-Angus) stated in 1999, there is a lack of methodological explanations about the process of participant observation. According to Eisch(-Angus) (1999: 67), European Ethnology urgently needs a reflection on the potentials of participant observation. This demand must still vigorously be made today – 20 years later. I, therefore, see this article as a contribution and further impetus to a methodological debate in which the potentials and, of course, the limits of participant observation will be explored.

The article also contributes to the methodological debate on the exploration of physicality by focusing on the methodological access to the physical dimensions of culture and society. I present specific methodological and analytical steps through which ethnographers can gain access to the physical patterns of action and experience of actors in their fields of research. Participant observation is the linchpin. The aim of the article is to make the process of cultural anthropological understanding of the physical dimensions of sociocultural realities transparent, methodologically sound and, thus, comprehensible, by using participant observation as a method. I plead for strengthening the element of participation in participant observation as a method. I will explain that the physicality of the field of research can often only be made accessible and understood in cultural anthropology through participation in physical practices in the field and through the experiences associated with this. I will refer in the following to my own ethnographic research on the corporeality of pilgrimage to demonstrate this and to argue in a research-oriented way.

The starting point of my research was the observation that research on pilgrimage in European Ethnology regularly referred to the constitution of the sociocultural phenomenon of pilgrimage through the physical performance and physical experiences; however, only as a side note and without body-theoretical references.[3] I wanted to address this research desideratum by conducting ethnographic research on pilgrimage on foot to Mariazell, Austria's most frequently visited place of pilgrimage. My analytical perspective on the physicality of pilgrimage was based on practical theory and oriented at phenomenology. The reference to cultural and social theories of practice made it possible to consider the physical component of social action. For theories of practice focus on the materiality and, thus, also on the physicality of social action. And, in continuation of Marcel Mauss's concept of techniques of the body (Mauss 1975), they also pay attention to the specific physical ways in which everyday cultural actions are carried out. In this way, they also facilitate the analytical perspective on the sense associated with the execution of practices, not as

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observation as a method. In *Methoden der Volkskunde* ('Methods in Folklore Studies') (Göttsch-Elten and Lehmann 2007), one finds three articles on the method of conducting interviews next to one article on participant observation.

3   For an overview on the role of the body in research on pilgrimage in European Ethnology, cf. Sieferle 2017: 23–26.

a sense attributed after the actual execution, but rather as a 'practical sense' inherent in the physical execution.[4] Ascriptions of meaning are grasped in a fundamentally physical way, which also leads to nonverbal linguistic ascriptions of meaning which are present in the execution to be caught in the analytical gaze (Bongaerts 2008; Hillebrandt 2014; Reckwitz 2003; Schäfer 2016). The recourse to phenomenologically and especially body-phenomenologically oriented ethnography, in turn, made it possible to highlight the perceptions and experiences of research actors as fundamentally physical processes (Jackson 1983). The body is conceived as the starting point and subject of the perception and experience of reality.[5] In expanding the perspective from the theory of practice, which focuses on physical movements and activities of research actors, a phenomenologically oriented perspective also considers perceptions and experiences of the world through the body. Drawing on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body (2008), the latter as a point of departure for any experience of the word moves into epistemological interest. What actors actually experience and how they experience it depends on the practices carried out and the practical sense inherent in them. Practices and experiences are fundamentally related (Bruner 1986: 37). Actors who have not learnt specific practices cannot make specific experiences (Asad 1997; Scheer and Eitler 2009).

Through this conceptual perspective, I was confronted at a methodological level with the 'speechlessness of the body.' I wanted to use participant observation as a method to study the physical execution of pilgrimage and the experiences associated with it empirically. Therefore, I accompanied pilgrim groups on their way to Mariazell on foot over two summers. How exactly I arrived at a cultural-anthropological understanding of the physical dimensions of pilgrimage through participation in pilgrim group hikes is what I will outline methodologically in the following.[6]

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4   Approaches from the theory of practice describe this sense of execution in different ways: As implicit knowledge, as practical knowledge, as ability or skill, as capability and know-how, as intuition or a criterion of evaluation for 'doing right.' See Bongaerts 2008: 249; Hörning 2004: 20.

5   I understand perception as a sociocultural process of orientation and the engagement with sociocultural reality. The senses play a fundamental role in this, in that perception encompasses the sociocultural interaction and conditioning of the five external senses, the proprioception and inner intuition and sensitivity (Csordas 2003; Schwibbe 2002: 7). I conceive experience as a turn towards and condensation of experiences that are integrated into a disposition which, in Fuchs's words, equals a "feeling," a felt knowledge and ability (Fuchs 2003: 72). Even if experience is often equated with sensuality (and often also with emotions), experiences go beyond the aspect of sensory perception and emotionality. Actors can also experience sociocultural realities intellectually and, thus, mentally and in a bodiless way, even if these 'mental' experiences are always to be understood as physical experiences from a body-phenomenological perspective (Crossley 2007; Leder 1990).

6   I would like to thank both the editors and anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments.

Corporealities in the field, participation and social proximity

Fieldwork necessitates the physical presence and the involvement of the ethnographer in the research field (Mohr and Vetter 2014; Okely 2007). Gender and Queer Studies in particular point to the subjectivity, positionality and physicality of the researcher in the field (Browne and Nash 2016; Brim and Ghaziani 2016). They make it evident that the body of the researcher serves as a visible identity marker for itself and others and shapes social interactions in the field (Bain and Nash 2006). Sociocultural categories of perception, such as gender, affiliation to a class or a milieu, age and nationality, become effective on the body and influence both access to and social relationships in the field (Okely 2007). They have an influence on the course of the fieldwork and, thus, on the cultural anthropological process of understanding. I do not regard the reactions of the research actors to my physical presence in the field as disruptive factors but rather as moments that promote insight which facilitate statements about the research field and the sociocultural mechanisms at work in it (Sieferle 2017: 45). Older male pilgrims, for example, often protectively cared for me as a younger woman in her early 30s who, from a generational point of view, could have been their daughter. In the field of pilgrimage, I was, thus, able to reveal generational, gender- and class- specific ways of imagining and action. Furthermore, the pilgrims perceived me as a German, in contrast to their self-perception as Austrians, especially when they first encountered me and in our mutual greetings. The significance of national affiliations in the field of pilgrimage (to Mariazell) became empirically tangible for me in this way.

However, what was decisive for my research and the access to the physical patterns of action and experience in the field of pilgrimage were not only the irritations I caused by my presence, particularly at the beginning of the pilgrimages, but by my physical and active participation in the pilgrimage. Therefore, in the summer of 2013, I packed my backpack and set off for Graz to take part in my very first five-day pilgrimage there. I had my hiking sticks which I bought for this very occasion, my dark green raincoat, sun protection, provisions and a large supply of blister plasters in order to be prepared for all eventualities. I did not know what to expect; I had never been on a pilgrimage before. In the course of my fieldwork, I participated in many other pilgrimages. Time and again I was excited and a little nervous when I met my fellow pilgrims at the starting point of the pilgrimage. However, the initial insecurity about the process of the pilgrimage was dispelled – the pilgrimage on foot to Mariazell became familiar to me.

Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber characterizes fieldwork as an immersion and becoming familiar (Schmidt-Lauber 2009: 251) in and with the lifeworlds to be researched. Fieldwork, in her words, is based on participation in the everyday life of the research subjects, with the aim of experiencing and understanding contexts of reality in a meaningful way (Schmidt-Lauber 2007: 219). For Schmidt-Lauber, participant obser-

vation represents the key method of fieldwork because, as she puts it, through the direct participation of the researcher in everyday social life in the respective field of study, through experiencing it together, a meaningful reading and interpretation of social action is to be achieved that is classified in a super-individual cultural context (Schmidt-Lauber 2007: 220–221). In the same way as Schmidt-Lauber, Katharina Eisch(-Angus) refers to the necessity of the concrete, bodily presence of the researcher (2001: 31) and specifies this as an empathic experience of social situations in the field (Eisch 2001: 35). Both scholars address an understanding of fieldwork and participant observation that was central to my research. I immersed myself in the field of pilgrimage to Mariazell and experienced the pilgrimage on foot in an empathic way. For me, this meant doing what my fellow pilgrims did: We walked the pilgrim's path together. We took breaks along the way, cared for each other's wounds and shared overnight accommodation in pilgrims' hostels. We talked and laughed. We also simply remained silent for long stretches of the way. This sounds banal, but this doing together in the field is not necessarily part of ethnographic research.

While a look at the cultural anthropological research landscape reveals prominent examples in which participant observation is used as a key method (Schwanhäußer 2010; Welz 1991), fieldwork is too often reduced – as Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber (2007: 219) and Katharina Eisch(-Angus) (1999: 66) state – to conducting interviews and participant observation to a sporadic presence in the field in the form of afternoon visits to informants (Eisch 1999: 66) and the observation of social situations. It is not enough, the two scholars agree, to be physically present, and this also applies to the field of pilgrimage on foot to Mariazell. Rather, the physical proximity must develop into a social proximity. And this should not only be used as a strategic research tool through which research actors are prepared to participate in research, as Miriam Cohn (2014: 81) states. Instead, as I have found in my research, it is necessary to build social proximity in order to be able to understand the physical practices carried out in the field in a cultural anthropological manner. This had already been implied in the 1980s by Utz Jeggle when he criticized Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl's research approach, which is often regarded as the forerunner of today's research practice in European Ethnology (Greverus 2002: 40; Windmüller 2013: 427), to the effect that Riehl did not stay in one place for longer and had not committed to the field in an ethnographic way (Jeggle 1984: 24).

In my research, a social proximity developed between me and my fellow pilgrims through walking together, overcoming states of exhaustion together, through mutual wound care and the sharing of overnight accommodation in dormitories. I had to be there during the pilgrimage. I had to join in to find a common rhythm of walking with my fellow pilgrims in which the social proximity which developed between us during the pilgrimage and beyond was expressed (Lee and Ingold 2006:

82). This formed the prerequisite and basis of my access to the nonverbal, physical dimensions of pilgrimage.

Processes of incorporation in the field

Building social proximity also means developing familiarity with the field and the research actors involved in it, with the cultural norms and patterns of experience applicable there – and this was only possible through my long-term presence in the research field. Sebastian Mohr and Andrea Vetter also emphasize this when they point out that the perception of the researcher changes through long stays in the field (Mohr and Vetter 2014).

Through the immersion in the lifeworld that is to be explored, to use Mohr and Vetter's description, the ethnographer, after a certain time, is finally in a position to "authentically" relive the emotional and experiential worlds of the actors of the study, the atmosphere of the place, i.e. to think and feel like a person at home in the field (Mohr and Vetter 2014: 109). Mohr and Vetter call this the process of "authentification" (Mohr and Vetter 2014: 109). However, they do not address how exactly this process takes place. They also do not take into account the fact that actors gain experience in their practical doings.[7] It is not enough to focus on what Mohr and Vetter call the emotional and experiential worlds of the actors (Mohr and Vetter 2014: 109) and on the atmospheres in the field. Rather, ethnographers must always take the related practices into consideration and participate in them. For only through active participation in the practices of the research field does the "authentification" of the perceptions and experiences of the researcher in the field take place.

This engagement with the field and process of "authentification" are to be understood as physical approaches and attunements to the field (Goffman 1997: 263). According to Erving Goffman, the body of the researcher is tuned to the research field (Goffman 1997: 263). This process "implies a degree of solidification of the world incorporated, which will actually make the fieldworker experience a reshaping of the body's actual ability" (Hastrup 1994: 231). By doing what my fellow pilgrims were doing, I became acquainted with the practices of pilgrimage and acquired the patterns of experience of pilgrimage to Mariazell – I incorporated them (Hastrup and Hervik 1994: 7; Leder 1990: 34; Okely 2007: 73). I learned how pilgrims walked to Mariazell, how pilgrims interacted in the group, how they took breaks and how

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7   At least Mohr and Vetter do not explicitly address this issue. It is implicit in their elaborations when they characterize field research as body technique (Mohr and Vetter 2014: 108). The use of the term of body technique and the conceptual proximity to Marcel Mauss' *Techniken des Körpers* ('Body Techniques') (1975) suggests the conceptual step of drawing analytical attention in the field specifically to what actors in the field do (with their bodies) in order to be able to gain perceptions and experiences.

they practiced their arrival in Mariazell. Pilgrimage became increasingly familiar to me and, after a few months and especially in the second summer of my research, I carried out many practices more and more naturally which had seemed strange to me at the beginning of my fieldwork. I would like to illustrate this with an example.

In June 2014, after having taken part in several pilgrimages the previous summer, I was on my way to Mariazell with a group of five pilgrims. The pilgrimage was – from my point of view – characterized by a slow gait which was often interrupted by short breaks. We stopped to enjoy the rush of the stream we were walking along and to admire the flowers and grasses along the path as well as the view from a hill. From my previous pilgrimages, I was used to walking quickly and with perseverance on the path to Mariazell, only taking a break every hour or two and walking long stretches of the way in silence as the effort and walking speed prevented longer conversations. There was often no time to admire woods and meadows, grasses and flowers or the beauty of the landscape.

In the context of this pilgrimage in the summer of 2014, I felt the urge to keep going. I found it difficult to take many breaks and walk at what was a slow pace for me. I found this kind of pilgrimage highly irritating and difficult, particularly on the first day. I had adopted a specific style of walking in the course of my previous participation in pilgrimages that was characterized by fast, goal-oriented, persevering and strenuous walking. I had adopted a manner of perception that did not focus on grasses, flowers, woods and meadows but rather on the path still to be covered. However, I only realized this during the pilgrimage described above because of my irritation at the slow pace. The comparison of this pilgrimage with the previous pilgrimages showed me the practices and manners of experience of pilgrimage I had already incorporated. I had entered the field of pilgrimage and – without noticing it – had incorporated a typical way of walking and pattern of experience of nature and the distance to be covered.

Loïc Wacquant observes regarding the methical approach to boxing that researchers must enter the world of boxing in order to understand boxing. For this did not consist of a finite sum of hidden information, linguistically communicable concepts and normative models that exist independently of their implementation but rather of a diffuse complex of postures and gestures (Wacquant 2003: 62–63). Judith Okely, in her ethnographic study of nature perceptions in Normandy, shows how her viewing habits changed as a result of her long-term presence in the field and how she gradually adopted the ways of seeing that were common there (Okely 2001). Only then did she understand how the research actors perceived nature as a landscape. Consequently, ethnographers must acquire the perspective of the research actors by doing what the research actors do. "[L]earning to sense and make meanings as others do thus involves us not simply observing what they do, but learning how to use all our senses and to participate in their worlds, on the terms

of their embodied understandings" (Pink 2009: 72). Michael Jackson aptly states regarding his own participation in the research field:

> [T]o participate bodily in practical tasks was a creative technique which often helped me grasp a sense of an activity by using my body as others did. This technique also helped me break my habit of seeking truth at the level of disembodied concepts and decontextualized sayings. To recognize embodiedness of our Being-in-the-World is to discover a common ground where self and other are one. For using one's body in the same way as others in the same environment, one finds oneself informed by an understanding which may then be interpreted according to one's own custom or bent, yet which remains grounded in a field of practical activity and thereby remains constant with the experiences of those among whom one has lived. (Jackson 1983: 340–341)

For me, however, carrying out practices together and sharing experiences does not mean, as Jackson states, that one's own experiences and those of others become identical as a result. I approached the physical practices and experiences of the pilgrims through my participation in pilgrimages. However, I never consider the experiences of others and my own as completely identical. They always differ in terms of socialization, biographical backgrounds and the associated different material and physical dispositions (Kesselring 2015: 17). By walking together on the pilgrims' path to Mariazell, I learned to understand pilgrimage and particularly its physicality, because "through shared walking, we can see and feel what is really a learning process of being together, in adjusting one's body and one's speech to the rhythm of others, and of sharing (or at least coming to see) a point of view" (Lee and Ingold 2006: 82–83).

　　Friederike Faust and Stefan Heissenberger (2016) proceed in a similar manner in their empirical research projects. They emphasize their own bodies as a source and means of scientific knowledge and use their bodily experiences and the experiences emanating from their bodies (Faust and Heissenberger 2016: 68) as starting points for the process of cultural anthropological understanding. They refer to processes of habitualization through which the logic of practice inscribed itself into one's own body (Faust and Heissenberger 2016: 73–74). Such an understanding of participant observation – Judith Okely speaks of participant experience (Okely 1992), Katrin Petersen of observing participation (Petersen 2007) and Gerd Spittler of thick participation (Spittler 2001) – is also fundamentally inherent in the understanding of the way in which ethnographic fieldwork is carried out in European Ethnology; even if it is usually thematized in this way on an implicit level and not always practiced in this form. Thus, Rolf Lindner writes in the classic of method literature in European Ethnology "Die Angst des Forschers vor dem Feld" ('The Researcher's Fear of the Field') (Lindner 1981) that it is not only the one on whom research is conducted who may emerge from this process as a changed person but also the researcher

him/herself, as extraordinary as this may sound, who may have gained knowledge (Lindner 1981: 64). Lindner continues to ask why an ethnologist, sociologist and folklorist who identifies with the views and standpoints of the research group must necessarily stop being an ethnologist, sociologist or folklorist. He suggests that if one understood the adoption of views and standpoints not strategically but as the result of a learning process, the view that the researcher who had taken this step would, at the same time, have chosen the simpler role of the participant appears as a narrow-minded expression of an understanding of science that elevates the lack of standpoints to a postulate of scientific complexity (Lindner 1981: 65).

Lindner pursues a different objective with these elaborations than I do in this article. He focuses on the role of the researchers' emotions in the field and criticizes primarily the research ideal of objectivity which prevailed at the time of writing. I read his reference to the "process of learning" that took place in the field and his remark that researchers go through a process of change during fieldwork as an understanding of participant observation which I also represent here. Utz Jeggle (1984: 24) states the necessity of becoming ethnographically involved with the field. However, Jeggle also does not elaborate on what exactly is meant by this. Nevertheless, I read the "becoming ethnographically involved with the field" as an appeal for long-term and active participation. I understand it as an indication of the importance of the appropriation of field-specific physical ways of practice and patterns of experience for the process of cultural anthropological analysis and understanding.

Analytical distancing

I consider the immersion and gaining of familiarity with and the long-term participation in the research field as central components of ethnographic research. At the same time, analytical reflection and distancing oneself from the research field are fundamental components of the methodological approach. This addresses the relationship between proximity and distance which always plays a role in ethnographic research. While this relationship is negotiated between participation as proximity and observation as distance to the field of research in the concept of participant observation, in the following I am concerned with proximity as a process of incorporating field-specific practices, experiences and attributions of meaning and with distance as the analytical reflection of this process.

This also addresses a methodological difficulty: I had incorporated specific ways of carrying out pilgrimages and patterns of experience, and, thus, they had become 'speechless.' Sarah Pink (2009: 72) also points to these difficulties. She writes about the methodical-analytical challenge of how researchers can bring incorporated practices and patterns of experience of the field back to the analytical surface:

> Learning through apprenticeship requires an emplaced engagement with the prac-
> tices and identities that one seeks to understand. This involves a reflexivity and self-
> consciousness about the learning process, establishing connections between sensory
> experience, specific categories and philosophical, moral and other value-laden dis-
> courses (and the power relations and political processes to which they might be
> connected), and creating relationships between these and theoretical scholarship.
> (Pink 2009: 72)

In my opinion, however, her observations are too vague. It remains unclear how the
reflection on incorporated practices and patterns of experience takes place. In the
following, I propose three types of analytical distancing and reflection that I used in
my own research to approach the practices and patterns of experience incorporated
in the field.

Firstly, especially in the first summer of my fieldwork and in my first pilgrim-
ages, I used the strangeness of pilgrim practices as a starting point for analysis. I
paid attention to physical practices of pilgrimage which I was not yet familiar with
at this early stage of research. My irritations about the research field, the actors in it
and the practices of pilgrimage, my discomfort and my own incompetence regarding
some of these practices showed me what was considered normal and right in the field
(Bloch 1991: 194; Okely 2007: 69).[8] At the beginning of my research, for example, I
was highly irritated by the way pilgrims treated the blisters and wounds of their fel-
low pilgrims as a matter of course. Mutual wound care was part of the overall sense of
togetherness within the pilgrim groups; however, I had yet to learn and incorporate
this. Wound care went along with physical contact and physical proximity, which
required great familiarity. While it was difficult for me to allow this to happen at the
beginning of my research, at a later stage, it was natural to me to take the feet of
my fellow pilgrims into my lap, take off their plasters which were soaked from the
blisters, disinfect the wound and put a new plaster on the affected area. A physical
and quite intimate proximity, about which I later no longer thought any more about,
but which was foreign to me at the beginning of my research.

Secondly, I turned my attention to the implementation of practices which had
already been self-evident and commonplace for me before my fieldwork. In accor-
dance with the analytical approach of the "alienation of one's own culture" strongly
emphasized by Klaus Amann and Stefan Hirschauer (1997), I paid attention, for
example, to how we walked in the pilgrim group. I strategically alienated it.[9] Walk-

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8   In the later analysis of my field notes, this entry phase into the field was of central importance in
    order to draw attention to processes of incorporation. In the further course of my research, I no
    longer made a note of many aspects of the field which had seemed strange and unknown to me at
    the beginning; they had now become familiar and self-evident to me. This is also stated by Faust
    and Heissenberger (2016: 72–73).

9   Mohr and Vetter speak of alienation as a research strategy and understand it as the instrumental
    use of individual senses of the body in order to enable a completely different, extraordinary

ing on foot is a sociocultural practice, even if it does not receive any attention in everyday life (Mauss 1975; Tschofen 2013). Here, similarities appear with the ethnomethodological analytical approach by Harold Garfinkel (1967). In order to become aware of the patterns and norms inherent in social action, he deliberately brought about crises in everyday situations, understood as a break with the norms of everyday life, and viewed the reactions of the research actors as strategic-analytical research moments.

I, on the other hand, did not want to irritate the course of the pilgrimage through crises. Rather, in my research, it was what Kesselring calls "moments of dislocation" (2015) that had a similar effect to Garfinkel's crises, but which arose without my deliberate influence as a researcher. Thirdly, I used these to become aware of incorporated practices and experiences. Moments of dislocation were breaks in the execution of the pilgrimage and irritations during the pilgrimage, which occurred both for me and my fellow pilgrims.[10] This was especially the case during the pilgrimage when the execution of pilgrim practices was unsuccessful, which was experienced by both the pilgrims and me as a failure. In such moments, the practices and experiences of pilgrimage which were considered correct were suspended and, thus, brought to light. My irritation, for example, about the slow pace during one pilgrimage I accompanied showed me the pace of pilgrimage I had incorporated, as it was practiced in the pilgrimages I had accompanied so far.

Cultural anthropological understanding and method

Regarding this, I deviate from methodological approaches that emphasize participation in practices but continue to focus on verbal communication about these practices during participation and subsequent analysis. The methods of "Go-Along" by sociologist Margarethe Kusenbach (2008) as well as the *Bewegtes Interview* ('Moving Interview') by empirical cultural scientists Melanie Keding and Carmen Weith (2014) are examples of this. Kusenbach and Keding and Weith point to the physical dimension of culture and society and the difficulty of verbalizing the execution of

experience of the field (Mohr and Vetter 2014: 111). However, I regard alienation as an analytical means to make the seemingly self-evident – and I do not limit this to sensory perceptions – comprehensible through cultural analysis.

10 The research strategy of intervention as, in Mohr and Vetter's words, a disturbance of the course of events in the field which makes visible certain logics prevailing in it (2014: 112) also refers to "errors," "disturbances" and "inaptitudes" of the researcher in the field and uses these as a heuristic means. According to Mohr and Vetter, interventions point to normative structural moments (2014: 112) and boundaries in the field and, thus, to social inequalities, status attributions and power relations. However, interventions, especially when they are examined based on moments of dislocation, also point to processes of incorporation taking place in the field and make it possible to analytically capture practices and experiences already taken for granted.

practices and experiences.[11] Both approaches combine participation in practices with conversations but see the possibility of understanding these practices and experiences only in conversation. Thus, European Ethnologist Katrin Petersen also states that sociocultural practices can only be understood through verbalization (Petersen 2007: 69). In these approaches, cultural anthropological understanding takes place through the analysis of verbal-linguistic statements, while understanding in my research was also a physical process based on the joint execution of pilgrim practices.

Martin Scharfe states, and I agree with him here, that the basis of scientific and, as I would like to add, everyday insight is the human body (Scharfe 2000: 125). Even if Scharfe does not decidedly refer to the methodical approach to the physicality of culture and society, he does point to a process of understanding that goes beyond a purely cognitive one which takes place in the human mind. Robert Gugutzer introduces the term "*leibliches Verstehen*" ('bodily understanding') (Gugutzer 2006b) in this context. For Loïc Wacquant, it was the long-term presence in the field of boxing and the learning and execution of this practice through which he acquired a sense – a physical understanding of boxing – for his research field. In my research, it was the long-term presence in the field and my participation in pilgrimages through which I became familiar with the practices, patterns of experience and practical sense of pilgrimage contained therein, through which I incorporated and understood them on a physical level. I conceive of the process of cultural anthropological understanding of the corporeality of sociocultural realities as the acquisition of practical meaning and know-how during active participation in sociocultural practices (Ridler 1996).

Contrary to Clifford Geertz (1986: 373), who states that foreign experiences cannot be methodically made accessible, I assume that participant observation as a method is the key to accessing and understanding foreign experiences as well as nonverbal, physical dimensions of sociocultural realities – if participant observation is carried out as an active and long-term participation in the lifeworld of the research actors. Researchers can make the nonverbal, physical dimensions of sociocultural realities analytically accessible by drawing on their own experiences in the field.

This does not mean, however, that conversations were completely insignificant for the study of the physicality of pilgrimage. The pilgrims addressed their own physicality, particularly in situations they experienced as a crisis, for example, during leg cramps, injuries or states of exhaustion (Crossley 2007: 82). One can, in turn, draw conclusions about the practices and experiences of pilgrimage from the articulated narratives. Michael Jackson (1996: 39) states that the ways of experiencing sociocultural reality are reflected in narratives. He illustrates this using the example of travel stories:

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11 For the critique of the method of 'Go-Along,' see also Kesselring (2015: 13).

> It is not just that journeys provide the content of the tale; the very structure of the story replicates the structure of the journeying. In a mundane und immediate sense, stories grow out of patterns of our everyday movements in the lifeworld. (…) Narrative, then, is one mode of description or discourse which may satisfy our interests in commenting upon experience without a radical split from it. (Jackson 1996: 39)

The manner of speaking about sociocultural realities, therefore, points to the manner of experiencing these realities. Albrecht Lehman states accordingly that everything we narrate expresses experience and that experiences can only be conveyed in a narrative manner (2007: 9). However, one must not conclude from this that the only way of approaching the experience of pilgrimage methodically is via conversations. As I have already shown, the participation in practices of pilgrimage and the physicality of the researcher can be used as approaches to the experiential dimension of pilgrimage. These, in turn, (and here Lehman comes into play again) I further processed in field notes and evaluation protocols and communicated to the reader through language. It should be borne in mind, however, that the specific implementation and experiences of pilgrimage during the journey differed from those communicated in conversation. The temporal distance and the changed lifeworld context between the practical execution and the narration led to new constructions and, thus, to changes in the perspective on pilgrimage (Schmidt-Lauber 2005: 147). Narrations are reflections on pilgrimage which, although they follow on and emerge from the execution, are always different from it.

I believe that conversations can only be of use for the cultural anthropological understanding of pilgrimage and sociocultural realities in general if they are combined with participation in pilgrimage. It would have been insufficient in my field to draw conclusions about the physical dimensions of pilgrimage simply through conversations. I would never have been aware of the central aspects of pilgrimage. Moments of competitiveness, for instance, which were present in all the pilgrimages I accompanied, were never a topic of conversation. Only my active presence in the field of research drew my attention to this aspect of pilgrimage (Sieferle 2019). The social proximity that had formed during my participation and the experiences I had had through my participation in the pilgrimages were crucial in the conversations I had after the pilgrimages. Only after I was familiar with the field of research and had incorporated field-specific physical methods of execution and experiences was I able to use the conversations productively as a methodical tool.

The same applies to the method of observation. Only after I was familiar with the research field as a researcher was I able to use observations as a methodical tool for gaining insight. While the role of the participant is based on social proximity and active participation in the practices in the field of research, the role of the observer is accompanied by a distanced attitude to the sociocultural practices. Observers position themselves away from the events that they observe from a distance (Förster

2001: 475). They are already preforming the object to which they are directing their attention. Thus, observation, in Förster's words, appears as a conscious turn towards an already chosen object (2001: 475) and forms a perspective that is created by the ethnographer and remains his or her privilege (Förster 2001: 475). Furthermore, observations will only show visible movements of practices. At most, they reveal the external behavior of actors but not the meaning of sociocultural practices (Förster 2001: 471). Clifford Geertz (1983: 11–15) illustrates this in his famous example of winking: I can observe that a person's eyelid twitches, but this does not allow me to grasp whether he or she is winking at his or her counterpart and, thus, sending a secret message or whether the twitch is perhaps more of a parody of the wink. By observation, for example, I was not able to determine whether pilgrims who seemed introverted and kept their eyes closed during breaks were praying, meditating, sleeping or thinking and what kind of experience they were having while doing so. Practices and experiences of pilgrimage always go beyond their visibility (Reckwitz 2003: 290).

There has been a trend towards the autoethnographic method in European Ethnology in recent years. Ethnographers use it to make nonverbal dimensions of sociocultural reality empirically accessible (Ploder and Stadlbauer 2013, 2016). When autoethnography is conceived as a research approach that, speaking with Ellis, seeks to describe and analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno) (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2010: 345), then researchers take their lived experience as a methodological starting point and place it at the center of analytical attention (Ploder and Stadlbauer 2013: 376). Autoethnographic approaches base their methodological approach of introspection on a critique of the methods of qualitative social research. They emphasize that autoethnographic approaches can provide access to research fields which, as Ploder and Stadlbauer explain, are difficult to grasp with the usual methods of folklore studies and cultural anthropology (e.g. interviews, observations, discourse and document analyses) (Ploder and Stadlbauer 2013: 400). Topics that are especially highly emotionally charged, such as grief, joy, love or fear, and body-related research fields, such as sport, sexuality or illness, can be explored with autoethnographic approaches (Ploder and Stadlbauer 2013: 400). I share this criticism of access to themes relating to physicality through distanced observation and conducting interviews (Ellis and Bochner 2000: 433; Ploder and Stadlbauer 2013: 400; Vyran 2006: 405–407). Personally, however, this does not mean that researchers can make the physicality of sociocultural realities accessible to themselves exclusively and best by means of autoethnographic approaches that require full membership in the research field. Surprisingly, the proximity to the method of participant observation is not reflected in autoethnographic studies, as Bönisch-Brednich (2012: 58) also notes. Thus, cultural anthropologists Andrea Ploder and Johanna Stadlbauer, who are currently advo-

cating autoethnographic approaches in European Ethnology (Ploder and Stadlbauer 2013, 2016), neglect a discussion of the relationships between autoethnography and participant observation. I think that understanding the corporeality of sociocultural realities is equally possible via participant observation, especially when it is conducted as a long-term and active participation in the practices of the research field. Researchers can approach the corporeality of sociocultural realities through participant observation by using their experiences in the field to understand experiences that are foreign to them because these experiences approach each other through long-term and active participation. I, therefore, regard participant observation as a central method for understanding foreign lifeworlds. I see 'participant experiences' and the incorporation of field-specific practices by researchers as fundamental to the process of cultural anthropological understanding.

Experience, language and method

Conceiving of and conducting the method of participant observation as an active, intensive and long-term participation in the practices of the research field makes it possible to explore the physical aspects of the field and, thus, to become aware of the physical construction of sociocultural realities in the execution of practices and the accompanying experiences. I plead for intensive and long-term participation in the research field in order to immerse oneself in it and become familiar with it, acquire physical behaviors and use the associated experiences as a starting point for cultural anthropological understanding. This applies particularly to a methodical approach to physical dimensions of sociocultural realities that can often not be expressed in language. However, this applies equally to research that does not explicitly deal with the corporeality of culture and society. I agree with Kirsten Hastrup and Peter Hervik who write:

> There is no way to substitute a phone call for fieldwork; most of the relevant information is non-verbal and cannot be 'called up', but has to be experienced as performed. (...) [L]anguage events, or the eliciting of 'information', are but a fraction of what constitutes the material. That is one reason for emphasizing *experience* rather than *dialogue* as the starting point for the route to anthropological knowledge. (Hastrup and Hervik 1994: 3,6)

Conversations and interviews are often used as central methods of data collection; the field diary and the impressions and experiences gained through participation merely constitute the accompanying text. However, precisely this should be reconsidered. Active participation and the experiences it engenders make it possible to understand the research field in a complex, profound and fundamentally physical way.

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Anna Lipphardt

The invention of the Phantom of Heilbronn*

A cultural anthropological approach to the NSU complex

Abstract: While investigating the murder of the police officer Michèle Kiesewetter, which took place in Heilbronn in the spring of 2007, the police quickly narrowed their search down to an unknown female person whose DNA had been found at the crime scene. It soon became clear that the investigators were on the wrong track; the person who became known in the media as the "Phantom of Heilbronn" had never existed. In fact, the *Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund* (NSU) complex was responsible for the murder of Kiesewetter. Based on a review of the Kiesewetter case files, this paper is a first attempt of a cultural analysis of the NSU complex. It uses current research to explore the sources and reconstruct the events of the case and to highlight the potential of cultural anthropology for researching this highly politicized field and the related ethical challenges. The analysis of existing documents reveals an unfortunate interplay between, for example, the structural prejudice of investigators, DNA-based investigation methods and the media during the construction of the Phantom of Heilbronn. This, in turn, was a hindrance to solving the crime. Many of the people involved in the investigation demonstrated a blind faith in supposedly objective scientific investigation methods, a fact that must be critically scrutinized. At the same time, my questioning and deconstructing of these methods has led to further controversies.

Keywords: NSU Complex, political anthropology, legal anthropology, police, ethics

In the early afternoon of April 25, 2007, a young policewoman was shot in her patrol car in the city of Heilbronn; her colleague was also hit and seriously wounded. The police were initially utterly in the dark about suspects and motives. But on May 31, 2007, several entries were found in the database of the German Federal Criminal Investigation Office that matched the DNA recovered at the crime scene. These matches had been attributed to an "unknown female person" (UFP). Since 1993, this UFP had left DNA traces at crime scenes in Germany, Austria and France, where a wide range of different crimes had been committed, from criminal damage to murder. Because of the unusual mobility of the perpetrator and the high level of criminality, the special commission "SoKo Parking Lot" soon concentrated their investigations on a group of operators who were setting up rides for the annual spring carnival near

the crime scene in Heilbronn, the Theresienwiese fairground. This focus was made public via numerous press releases and interviews in the local and national media where the UFP was soon known as the "Phantom of Heilbronn."

On June 29, 2007, *STERN* magazine published an article with the headline "The hunt for the phantom" stating:

> The hottest trail in Heilbronn currently leads to the Sinti and Roma. No one was willing to officially confirm this, but one investigator stated vaguely and politically incorrectly 'we are also intensely looking into the Gypsy milieu. The woman's sphere of action now extends into France. […] The crime scenes in Freiburg, Heilbronn, and Worms are all near well-known bases of large Sinti and Roma clans. Many of them use a bus company with a regular route from Heilbronn to Romania, sometimes to Austria and France. On the day the police officer was murdered, a bus was said to have left for Romania. Finally, on that fated April 25, several Sinti and Roma families were on the Theresienwiese with their trailers, just 100 meters from the crime scene. Yet, no one admits to having seen anything.[1]

Over the next two years, the SoKo Parking Lot investigated the "vagrants" and "Gypsies," as the police files and occasionally the media called them, sometimes with and sometimes without quotation marks. Tracing the UFP played a pivotal role in the investigations into the murder of Michèle Kiesewetter for two years. The suspects were, thus, almost exclusively reduced to people the police considered to be members of the Sinti and Roma minority. Finally, on March 27, 2009, it was announced that the cotton swabs used by many police stations for gathering evidence in southern Germany and Austria had been contaminated by an employee's DNA during packaging at the manufacturing plant. The UFP, therefore, did not exist and had been, as the police phrased it, a "false trail." Another two and half years later, on November 7, 2011, it was finally discovered that Michèle Kiesewetter had evidently been murdered by terrorists from the NSU, the 'Nationalist Socialist Underground.'

From political to cultural questions

Because this fiasco of an investigation into the murder of a Heilbronn policewoman took place in the state in which I live, the events described here led me to ask several questions both as a citizen of the state and as a cultural anthropologist: To begin with, how was it possible that an investigation could be so extensively guided by antiziganism 70 years after the end of the Nazi persecutions and politics of murder toward the Sinti and Roma and despite the fact that a sophisticated historiographic analysis had been conducted to determine the responsibility the police, the legal system and criminal biology bore for these acts? Secondly, how could it be that the

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1   *STERN*, Die Jagd nach dem Phantom, June 29, 2007. Available at: https://www.stern.de/politik/deutschland/polizistinnen-mord-in-heilbronn-die-jagd-nach-dem-phantom-3264184.html, Accessed December 12, 2019.

search for the Phantom of Heilbronn, which was grounded in racism, was overlooked by the wider public and me for such a long time?

The commission of inquiry, the Munich trial, the investigative research of journalists and prior scientific research on the NSU complex[2] regarded the misguided investigations into the murder of the Heilbronn police officer as an aside, a false trail, that was not relevant for determining what actually happened, i.e. the series of murders and attacks believed to have been carried out by the NSU. By contrast, as a cultural anthropologist, I see the Phantom of Heilbronn as a powerful fiction at the center of epistemological interest which prompted me to ask a series of fundamental questions: How did this fiction come about? What were its sources? What actors and institutions participated in developing it and what kinds of relationships and interactions were there between these parties? What attributions and phantasies about "others" or "foreigners," what media representations and professional knowledge also played a role? What investigative approaches and interpretation methods influenced the hunt for the Phantom of Heilbronn and what effect did they have on those falsely suspected of the crime?

After the NSU trial in Munich ended in the summer of 2018, many details about the direct connections between the crimes remained unclear and extensive questions regarding the social and institutional contexts that supported the NSU and the long-term consequences of their crimes were left unanswered. This article describes how the hypothesis of a perpetrator who was a "highly criminal, highly mobile Gypsy" was constructed and established as the main version and how it became efficacious. It is, thus, also an empirical contribution to an investigation of institutional discrimination at the interplay between the police, the legal system and the media that is otherwise seldom visible "as it usually takes place in the gray areas of organizational behavior" (Gomolla 2017: 131). To this effect, a method was chosen that, according to Mechthild Gomolla and Franz-Olaf Radke, examines the interplay of "legal and political conditions, organizational structures, programs, norms, rules, and routines as well as collective knowledge repertoires that are available for justifying decisions" (Gomolla 2017: 131).

Since my research is still being carried out, I cannot present conclusive findings or full-fledged theories. However, this paper draws from analytical methods used in the field of cultural anthropology to reveal relevant connections and contexts which have been largely disregarded during the investigation of the Heilbronn murder. This

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2   The term NSU complex comprises three interrelated dimensions: 1. the NSU's crimes, carried out by the three main perpetrators with broad and active support from the German neo-Nazi scene; 2. the entanglement of the secret services, particularly police informers in the perpetrators' social environment and the extent to which security services obstructed the solving of the crimes; and 3. the degree to which the police investigations were affected by prejudice, leading to the victims and their families being unjustly suspected for years of having contacts with the criminal sphere (Karakayalı et al. 2017a: 9).

article should be understood as a reconstruction of events from the perspective of cultural anthropology and a review of the sources – and, thus, as a contribution to the documentation and analysis of the NSU complex. Secondly, it should be read as a report on a work in progress that presents various approaches for researching the NSU complex from the perspective of cultural anthropology. Using selected aspects, the paper illustrates possible research approaches common in cultural anthropology that may be applied to this largely inaccessible and highly political field. Thirdly, it addresses methodological and ethical challenges that arise as the project moves increasingly into the area of public anthropology.

Researching the NSU complex

Scientific research on the NSU complex is currently in its initial stages and must be rated as deficient, even in disciplines such as law and political sciences (cf. the detailed research overview by Karakayalı 2017b; Schmincke and Siri 2013). The only existing publications on the NSU in cultural anthropology literature are by Lee Hielscher (Güleç and Hielscher 2015; Hielscher 2016a, 2016b) and Manuela Bojadžijev (2013), which deal with migrant knowledge and the culture of remembrance regarding the NSU as well as racially based reporting in the media. This literature concentrates on examining the racist structures and interpretation patterns that influenced the investigation and media reports on the so-called "doner murders" of nine men with Turkish or Greek immigrant backgrounds, thus, shifting the focus away from the actual perpetrators, the NSU and its supporters.[3] The attack on Michèle Kiesewetter and her colleague plays a special role in legal and political analyses and scientific research, because it was aimed at two civil servants and members of the German majority and, therefore, stood in stark contrast to the established pattern of NSU victims and attacks. Until the "cotton swab affair" was uncovered, the Heilbronn investigation was based on "prejudicial routines in police work," a fact that has, in principle, been acknowledged by the NSU commission of inquiry in Germany's national parliament.[4] Yet, the NSU commission of the Baden-Württemberg state parliament was unable to detect "any structural racism in the investigative process."[5]

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3   For more detailed information on this systemic false perception, see, for example, Aust and Labs (2014); Förster (2014); Virchow, Thomas, and Grittmann (2015).

4   Deutscher Bundestag, Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des 2. Untersuchungsausschusses nach Artikel 44 des Grundgesetzes ['German Bundestag. Proposed resolution and report by the 2nd commission of inquiry pursuant to article 44 of the Basic Law'], printed paper 17/14600, 17. Wahlperiode, August 22, 2013, p. 880. Accessed November 22, 2018. Available at: http://dipbt. bundestag.de/doc/btd/17/146/1714600.pdf. Accessed 11/22/2018.

5   Landtag von Baden-Württemberg, Bericht und Beschlussempfehlung des Untersuchungsausschusses "Die Aufarbeitung der Kontakte und Aktivitäten des Nationalsozialistischen Untergrunds (NSU) in Baden-Württemberg und die Umstände der Ermordung der Polizeibeamtin M.K." ['State

What specific research methods does cultural anthropology have to offer that could be productively applied in an analysis of the NSU complex generally and the Heilbronn case specifically? The most important of these methods systematically incorporate or intentionally confront divergent research perspectives, combine an empirical analysis of the present with historical perspectives, or focus on specific contexts and processes. All of them are well-established methods in the field. The conceptual framework of this paper is based on Beate Binder's (2018) demand for a closer collaboration between legal and political anthropology. Until now, law has been defined "as a relatively static formation" that "primarily takes place outside of political processes and political struggles." However, Binder suggests that "the dynamics of law should be considered as part of political processes, in particular the productivity of law and the constitutive role of legal normativity in political fields or processes." Law should, thus, be understood as "an extremely contradictory forma-tion that is processual and constantly contested" and which can "only be realized by social practice" (Binder 2018: 54). In order to better understand the production of knowledge by the police and their investigations particularly in the case of the Phantom of Heilbronn and minorities generally, we can find inspiration from one researcher who has explored anarchism, subordinate politics, and nongovernmental societies in South-East Asia – the American anthropologist James C. Scott. He noted in his book *Seeing like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed,* which has since become a classic:

> Officials of the modern state are, of necessity, at least one step – and often several steps – removed from the society they are charged with governing. They assess the life of their society by a series of typifications that are always some distance from the full reality these abstractions are meant to capture. [...] The functionary of any large organization ´sees´ the human activity that is of interest to him largely through the simplified approximations of documents and statistics. (Scott 1998: 76)

This field of conflict between state abstraction and social complexity has motivated research in three fields that examine the police both as an institution and in their everyday work: 1) In historical anthropology, which is used in administrative and court documents to, among other things, gain access to the legal culture and dis-ciplinary experiences of past eras (Kienitz 2012); 2) in the still relatively new and, thus, small field of 'anthropology of policing'[6]; and 3) in criminal sociology and

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Parliament of Baden Württemberg, Report and proposed resolution by the commission of inquiry "Analysis of contacts and activities of the Nationalist Socialist Underground (NSU) in Baden-Württemberg and the circumstances surrounding the murder of the police officer M.K."], printed paper 15/8000, April 28, 2016; see section on evaluation 4.14. Kein struktureller Rassismus in der Ermittlungsarbeit ['No structural racism in the investigative work'], p. 899.

6   Important forums include the blog ANTHROPOLITEIA. Critical Perspectives on Police, Security, Crime, Law and Punishment around the World at https://anthropoliteia.net and the journal Politi-

criminology, whose researchers, including those in Germany, are increasingly relying on qualitative research methods (Behr 2000, 2002; Hunold 2015, 2017; Reichertz and Schröer 1996).

Ethnographic field research in the form of participant observation of the police would certainly provide promising findings on the logic and practice of investigations, which would afford an understanding of the rise and fall of the Phantom of Heilbronn. However, it is generally difficult to gain direct access to the police for ethnographic research, especially when a capital offense is involved, as was the case regarding the Heilbronn murder. Similar to other ethnographers of police work whose access to the field is limited, I, therefore, began my research with an alternative method: by examining the files.

Gaining access to and reading the files

Police files and witness statements (both in the Munich trial and the commissions of inquiry) are essential points of reference for a criminal, political and journalistic analysis. In order to understand a case, experts read 'through' these documents or use them as sources of information or facts, which serve as the basis for reconstructing how a crime took place. By contrast, the anthropologists Laura Lowenkron and Leticia Ferreira suggest examining police files as "producers of knowledge, relations, effects and affective responses" (Lowenkron and Ferreira 2014: 79)

Firstly, it was necessary to gain access to the relevant files. The Heilbronn Prosecutor's Office and the Public Prosecutor General at the Federal Court of Justice denied me access to files on the (misguided) investigation of the UFP, which was terminated in 2009, citing the ongoing trial in Munich as grounds. However, I have two investigative journalists to thank for giving me access to a large number of documents summarizing the Heilbronn investigations for the Public Prosecutor General at the Federal Court of Justice following the discovery of the NSU in 2012.[7]

cal and Legal Anthropology Review (PoLAR); an extensive introduction to the field of research can also be found in Garriot (2013), Karpiak and Garriot (2016) and Mutsaers (2016).

7   The volume of files I was able to view covered the period from April 30, 2007 to November 4, 2011. The files on the murder of a Heilbronn police officer were registered by the SoKo Parking Lot between 2007–2009 under the file number 110096/07 and from 2009–2011 by the Baden-Württemberg State Office of Criminal Investigation under the file number 430B-5/09; the Heilbronn Prosecutor's Office registered the files for the preliminary judicial investigation under the file number 16 UJs 1068/07, cf. LKA Baden-Württemberg, Ermittlungsbericht im Ermittlungsverfahren wegen Mordes z.N. Michele KIESEWETTER und versuchten Mordes z.N. Martin [A.] am 25.04.2007, um 14.00 Uhr, in Heilbronn, Theresienwiese, Stuttgart 08.12.2012, p. 12, 25 (Folder 1; from hereon, quotes referring to the files from this volume will be listed with the file number from the State of Office of Criminal Investigation – Az.: 430B-5/09 – and the corresponding folder). The two journalists justified the decision to grant me access to the files with their wish to see as much information about the NSU revealed as possible and their belief that scientific research could make an important contribution. For several years, a blog run by an NSU sympathizer published

What can be concluded from the Heilbronn police files that I have been able to access? Before answering this question, it is important to first understand the abstract language used in the police files to record and describe capital offenses and to translate them into police routines. Murder investigations often put a great deal of pressure on the police officers involved, both in terms of media attention and the expectations of the public and regarding the ethical responsibility to the victim's family. However, emotional aspects and their effects on the members and internal dynamics of a special commission are intentionally omitted from police files or rationalized by following established documentation guidelines and using technical phrases. The distanced *ductus* of the Heilbronn records, for example, reveals very little of the emotional distress the murder caused the colleagues of the two victims – both in their closer professional environment and among the members of the special commission. Police officers appear in the files solely in their roles as officials, in contrast to, for example, informal talks or participant observations.

Secondly, the Heilbronn files give the impression that police investigations are a very differentiated process. They imply that investigations are based on a division of labor that is rooted in established routines and that they require a constantly high level of communication. Not only does this include communications within the special commission but also with other police institutions and the Prosecutor's Office involved in the investigation. The operative case analysis (in the following: OCA) carried out by the State Office of Criminal Investigation in Stuttgart played an important role in the Heilbronn investigations. One month after the murder, the OCA submitted a preliminary assessment of the motives behind the crime:

> The original motive […] may well be found in the perpetrators' need to realize their own sense of superiority or to compensate for inferiority experienced in the presence of the police […]. The demonstration of one's own power is closely connected with this motive. […] The […] case history very likely involves a previous police operation that took place […] recently at a nearby location […] The perpetrators, therefore, probably belong to the local criminal scene, have had experiences of this kind with police operations and see themselves as victims of police 'attacks.' [Emphasis AL][8]

Just ten days later, on May 31, 2007, this theory was dismissed entirely due to two pieces of evidence that were discovered independently of one another. The first was the DNA mentioned earlier that was found at the crime scene. This DNA was com-

extensive volumes of police files which contained highly sensitive details about witnesses and falsely accused persons and evidently contained false information. I, therefore, strongly advise against using this source for scientific research. For more information, see Behrens and Schwarz (2016).

8   Vorläufige Rekonstruktion des Tathergangs durch die OFA des LKA Stuttgart ['Preliminary reconstruction of the events leading up to the crime carried out by the OCA of the Stuttgart State Office of Criminal Investigation'], May 21, 2007, p. 18f. (Az.: 430B-5/09, Folder 13). Quote translated by Jessica Wallace and Julia Heinecke.

pared with the central DNA database of the German Federal Criminal Investigation Office and yielded numerous matches to crime scenes in Germany and Austria that had been attributed to a UFP who was considered to be highly mobile and highly criminal. In light of this DNA, some other information suddenly appeared relevant that had been assessed as irrelevant in the preliminary crime scene reconstruction carried out by the OCA: At the time of the crime, over 100 carnival operators were at the crime scene, the Theresienwiese fairgrounds, setting up the spring carnival. In addition, members of a traveling Roma family had parked their caravans on the grounds. Like everyone else who had been near the crime scene, these people had also been questioned as witnesses in the days following the murder. However, they were the only ones who, according to the filing plan, had been given their own group-based category for the investigation.

Even though group-based investigations, registrations and classifications are officially forbidden today, and the police are no longer permitted to use the term "vagrant," the files show that the police, at least in Heilbronn, did precisely that. These terms were not only used uncritically as a category for the filing plan shown above, they were also frequently used in the files – without any explanations or specifications and without any indication of whether their use was discussed internally. Again, this reflects the long tradition of racially based special registration and persecution by the police of "Gypsies," "people who traveled in a manner similar to Gypsies" or "vagrants" (Lucassen 1996; Tatarinov 2015), which included the Yenish people, the Sinti and Roma (often regardless of whether these people actually were itinerant or sedentary) and members of mobile professions, such as carnival operators and circus members.

According to Markus End, German "police and investigative authorities have established, adapted, and further developed the concept of 'Gypsies' as a guiding method of investigation for police work […] over the past 300 years" (End 2017: 5). This practice continued into the post-war era and, to some extent, into the present, even though the principle of equal treatment, as laid out in the Basic Law, Article 3, officially forbids investigations that focus on minorities and the use of harmless sounding terms like "MEMs" for "mobile ethnic minorities" or "traveling groups" in police work, which, according to End, have the same stigmatizing functions (End 2017: 5; see also Baumann et al. 2011). In the region of what is now Baden-Württemberg, the "Bureaus for Gypsy Affairs" in Karlsruhe and Stuttgart, which were part of the Gestapo and the Nazi Criminal Investigation Department, were directly involved in the Nazi policy of registering and murdering minorities. The special registration, surveillance and repressive measures carried out by the criminal investigation agency continued in Baden-Württemberg for several decades after 1945 (Feuerhelm 1987; Strauß 1998). The "Police Department for Vagrants" in Karlsruhe was responsible for these measures until the mid-1980s. Their files

have not yet been systematically disclosed.[9] An extensive, historical analysis of this issue, from the end of the Nazi era to the present, has yet to be carried out in Baden-Württemberg.

If we take a closer look at the Heilbronn files, a wide range of alternative terms can be found in the interrogation and observation records, written correspondence between participating police departments and the Prosecutor's Office, and the operative case analyses, from the now officially banned term "Gypsy" to terms with negative connotations, such as "clan" and "extended family," to the proper names "Sinti" and "Roma" or "Travelers." Some of these terms were used in order to distinguish them from others (e.g. in the table of contents of the investigation report dated February 8, 2012, in which a clear differentiation was made between "carnival operators" and "members of traveling families"), but the terms were used more frequently as synonyms.

The diversity of the terms in the files emphasizes four aspects: Firstly, it is apparent that the police are still very unclear and uncertain in their use of terms to refer to traveling people (Baumann et al. 2011; Lucassen 1996). Secondly, this range of categories reveals an evident disparity in the standards individuals learned during their training – depending on when and where they were trained. Thirdly, in all likelihood, they also reflect the different individual ethical stances and levels of sensitivity of the investigators, prosecutors and examining magistrates involved in the case. Fourthly, it is important to note that the Phantom of Heilbronn was created at the interplay between the local, national and international production of knowledge by the police.

From DNA matches and profiling to biological cross-referencing

The second, equally strong piece of evidence on which the Phantom of Heilbronn was based was the DNA found at the crime scene. This DNA was compared with the DNA database of the German Federal Criminal Investigation Office and attributed to the UFP. The SoKo Parking Lot was soon in close touch with investigative teams from across Germany and Austria where the DNA had been found at earlier crime scenes. The Freiburg Criminal Investigation Department particularly, more specifically the special commission "SoKo St. Georgen," which had been following the UFP's trail since the murder of a senior citizen in Freiburg in 2001, advised their Heilbronn colleagues. This special commission had already been working under the assumption that the perpetrator was highly mobile and highly criminal and explored four central hypotheses regarding the group this person might belong to: 1) a group of magazine

9 Landesarchiv Karlsruhe, Findbuch 527 Access 2001–38: Landespolizeidirektion Karlsruhe: Generalia: Landfahrer, 1847–1985: Accessed July 26, 2019, available at: http://www.landesarchiv-bw.de/plink/?f=4-270542.

sellers, 2) the drug scene, 3) the homeless, or 4) "the traveling people" as Freiburg investigators referred to them in communications with the press.[10] Over 3,000 women who were considered to be members of one of these groups and had been near crime scenes were forced to provide saliva samples for a mass DNA screening.[11]

The Heilbronn colleagues also based their central investigative approach on these theories. They were supported particularly by the OCA of the Stuttgart State Office of Criminal Investigation, who had already supplied them with the offender profile mentioned above of an unknown female source of an (alleged) female DNA trace including all known crimes on May 7, 2007. After receiving this profile, the theory of two perpetrators operating "recently at a nearby location" was dismissed in favor of the theory of a highly criminal and highly mobile female perpetrator.[12]

The Heilbronn SoKo, however, went a step further than their Freiburg colleagues. The authorities in Austria, where the DNA of the UFP had been found at several burglaries, requested an analysis of the "biogeographical origin"[13] of the alleged perpetrator as legal assistance. This request was granted because the perpetrator was accused of a capital crime in Germany. On July 12, 2007, the district court of Wels, Upper Austria ordered the forensic investigator Walter Parson from the University of Innsbruck to "analyze the DNA trace for mitochondrial DNA in order to determine 'the genetic origin' of the sample and to analyze the X-chromosomes of the DNA in order to confirm the gender of the suspect's DNA" [Emphasis AL].[14] Parson's report arrived just a week later, on July 17, 2007.[15] The details of its contents are still unknown – it was part of the files mentioned above to which I have not been granted access. However, it was possible to reconstruct the essential points from media reports. An article was published, for example, by the *Heilbronner Stimme* on August 28, 2008 under the headline "Skin and eye color of the phantom remain a mystery" and the sub-headline: "The DNA in the murder of a police officer that stated: 'The Austrians are permitted by law to do more than we are in Germany.'"

10 *DIE ZEIT*, Die Unsichtbare, April 24, 2008; *BERLINER ZEITUNG*, Seit 15 Jahren suchen Berliner Polizisten nach einer Frau, April 25, 2008; *FUDDER*, Die Spur der Spurlosen, June 2, 2008.

11 *STERN*, Die Jagd nach dem Phantom, June 29, 2007. Available at: https://www.stern.de/politik/ deutschland/polizistinnen-mord-in-heilbronn-die-jagd-nach-dem-phantom-3264184.html, Accessed December 12, 2019.

12 Az.: 430B-05/09, Folder 13.

13 For more information on the bio-scientific foundations of this concept, see V. Lipphardt 2017.

14 Court order for the DNA analysis, dated July 12, 2007, LG Wels/Ö, 7 Ur 29/07 (Az.: 430B-05/09; folder 18).

15 Letter from police officer Fink, SoKo Parking Lot, to Prof. Dr. Walther Parson, Forensic Medicine Innsbruck, Subject: Preliminary investigation by the Police Headquarters I Criminal Investigation Department Heilbronn – special commission Parking Lot into the murder and attempted murder of a police officer in Heilbronn and burglaries in Austria, here: Antrag auf Durchführung einer mitochondrialen DNA-Analyse an einem Spurenhaar ['Request to conduct a mitochondrial DNA analysis on a hair sample'] (Az.: 4308–05/09, folder 23).

The article explains: "The Institute of Legal Medicine in Innsbruck took a closer look at the genetic code of the Phantom wanted by police. [...] The findings claim that the DNA 'occurs more frequently in Eastern Europe and the region bordering on the Russian Federation.'" However, the head of the Institute of Legal Medicine in Innsbruck, Professor Richard Scheithauer, noted in the same article that this was only a "geographic, not an ethnic allocation."[16]

But the investigators involved in the Heilbronn case treated these results precisely as if they were indeed an ethnic allocation. The Stuttgart OCA, consequently, made conclusions about the appearance of the UFP, assuming she belonged to a "south-eastern European or eastern European phenotype" [sic!].[17] "South-eastern European" is frequently used in internal police communications and media reports to describe the Roma people.[18]

Several years earlier, the Freiburg investigation had focused on four groups – magazine sellers, homeless people, drug addicts and women "from traveling families" (although it is very likely that many sedentary Sinti, Roma and Yenish women were also included in this category). In Heilbronn, however, all the information I had access to pointed to the focus being narrowed down to the last group. This view was also supported by the revised offender profile established by the Stuttgart OCA, which came to the following conclusions on October 30, 2007 regarding the alleged perpetrator:

> *Regionality.* [...] In this case, frequently changing crime locations over a larger geographic area [...] support the conclusion that the suspect travels frequently, essentially leading a vagrant lifestyle.[19] [...] *Living situation.* [...] It is very probable [...] that the suspect subsists in marginal living conditions that serve as the basis for venturing into sedentary society for raids and nomadic forays. [...] The suspect

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16 Carsten Friese, Haut- und Haarfarbe des Phantoms bleiben ein Geheimnis, *Heilbronner Stimme*, August 28, 2008. Accessed November 22, 2018. Available at: http://www.stimme.de/heilbronn/polizisten-mord/archiv/Haut-und-Augenfarbe-des-Phantoms-bleiben-ein-Geheimnis;art133317,1334161; see also Michael Stang and Michael Lange, Ermittlungen im Erbgut. Was biologische Spuren über Täter, Opfer und den Tathergang verraten, January 14, 2009, *SWR2 Wissen*, program manuscript, accessed November 15, 2017. Available at: https://www.swr.de/-/id=4266846/property=download/nid=660374/1rq4zfz/swr2-wissen-20090114.pdf, p. 8f.

17 SoKo Parkplatz, 1. Zwischenbericht im Ermittlungsverfahren wegen Mordes und versuchten Mordes z.N. Michele KIESEWETTER und Martin [A.] ['Interim report on the investigation of the murder and attempted murder of Michele KIESEWETTER and Martin [A.]'], December 22, 2008, p. 126 (Az.: 430B-05/09, folder 2).

18 Cf. End (2017: 11, 21–24, 38); End (2014: Ch. 2.2). Pressemitteilungen der Polizei und die anschließende Berichterstattung, p. 236–274.

19 LKA Baden-Württemberg/OFA, Täterprofil der unbekannten Verursacherin einer (vermutlich) weiblichen DNA-Spur unter Berücksichtigung aller bekannt gewordenen Straftaten ['Offender profile for an unknown source of an (alleged) female DNA trace including all known offenses'], October 30, 17, p. 7 (Az.: 4308–05/09, folder 13).

shows a preference for living on the margins of society, independent of social obliga-
tions. In line with a vagrant lifestyle, income is achieved by committing crimes. [...]
Mobility. [...] Likely does not properly belong to a fixed group of "traveling people"
(vagrants, Sinti/Roma, carnival operators, circus members, etc.) but likely grew up
in such a group.[20]

The chart included in the offender profile[21] illustrates which group became the focus
of the investigation, even if the reference to "Gypsies" was not explicit: Despite
the fact that the OCA specifically added that this "offender profile is 'not' suitable
for direct search measures or a public search" (emphasis in the original text)[22], the
proactive media communications of the SoKo Parking Lot focused entirely on this
interpretation. The Phantom of Heilbronn was thus invented at the interplay of
investigators (supported by the Prosecutor's Office and the Heilbronn District Court)
and journalists. "That was one hell of a case, none of us wanted to miss out," one
of the journalists who had conducted extensive research on the case and had had
exclusive contact to the SoKo Parking Lot told me. All the journalists I spoke to now
regret not having been more critical at the time. Only one of them expressed self-
criticism unprompted, saying he – like most of his colleagues – had unquestioningly
adopted the discriminating vocabulary and expressions used by the investigative
team, some of which were racially based, to refer to the Sinti and Roma people.

The context of knowledge production by the police and the exertion of power at
the intersection between an assumed objective and precise science and sociocultural
interpretation should be further examined. No criminological explanation could be
found for the increasingly wide range of the modus operandi and the diversity of
crimes – from breaking into a garden house to murder and robbery. Yet, it was
assumed that this was the consequence of the high adaptivity of the UFP to the
corresponding group of perpetrators which she had joined,[23] on the one hand, and
her socialization in a highly criminal and antisocial context in which laws and social
norms did not play a role, on the other.[24] The offenses attributed to the UFP were not
deemed "typically female" and neither witnesses nor any of the alleged accomplices

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20 Ibid., p. 15.
21 Until now, I have not been able to find the publication that originally contained the chart. It can
    be assumed that it was from a police training material. The use of the sociological concepts of
    "lifestyle" and "way of living" indicates that the publication was more recent, i.e. written after
    1990.
22 Ibid., p. 19.
23 Baden-Württemberg State Office of Criminal Investigations/OCA, offender profile October 30,
    2007, p. 17f. (Az.: 4308–05/09, folder 13); ibid, Fallanalytische Neubewertung und zweite Überar-
    beitung des Täterprofils der unbekannten Verursacherin einer weiblichen DNA-Spur unter Berück-
    sichtigung aller bekannt gewordenen Straftaten ['Re-evaluation of the case analysis and second
    revision of the offender profile for an unknown source of a female DNA trace including all known
    offenses'] (dated 7/24/2008). 7/30/2008, p. 8f. (ibid).
24 Offender profile, 10/30/2007, p. 13.

who had been arrested had ever claimed to see a woman at the crime scene, yet the Heilbronn investigators initially claimed this was due to the witnesses' fear of the UFP: "Whoever saw her must be denying it. Presumably out of fear."[25] Later, it was even assumed that the perpetrator did not look like a woman but instead had the appearance of a man and may well have been transsexual.[26]

The creation of the Phantom of Heilbronn at the interplay between the prejudice structures of the investigators toward DNA-based investigative methods, profiling by the OCA, media communications and, finally, genuinely esoteric or parapsychological methods,[27] gives rise to numerous additional questions. However, it would be necessary to gain comprehensive access to the files in order to answer these questions. A close reading of the Heilbronn files, as described here, makes it clear that an approach that focuses on the work carried out by the special commission – as was the case in the commissions of inquiry and the media reports on the NSU complex – falls short. The SoKo Parking Lot received important information from forensics, the operative case analysis of the State Office of Criminal Investigation and foreign investigative agencies that – because they were backed by scientific methods – were particularly plausible. Even though the Prosecutor's Office and the examining magistrates did not, as far as I was able to ascertain, themselves develop any suspicions about the UFP, they did contribute to solidifying this fiction – by not questioning the hypothesis of the "highly mobile and highly criminal Gypsy," failing to provide counter arguments or alternative versions, approving the prejudicial media communications of the SoKo Parking Lot, and by issuing the court orders that led to extensive investigations and general suspicions regarding the Sinti and Roma people.

25 *STERN*, Die Jagd nach dem Phantom, June 29, 2007. Available at: https://www.stern.de/politik/deutschland/polizistinnen-mord-in-heilbronn-die-jagd-nach-dem-phantom-3264184.html, Accessed December 12, 2019.

26 Bernd Dörries, Die große Unbekannte, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, May 17, 2008, accessed November 22, 2018, available at: http://www.sueddeutsche.de/panorama/dns-fahndung-die-grosse-unbekannte-1.291983; Rüdiger Soldt, Eine Frau mit Vergangenheit, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, February 12, 2009, accessed November 22, 2018, available at: http://www.faz.net/aktuell/gesellschaft/kriminalitaet/polizistenmord-eine-frau-mit-vergangenheit-1773551.html; cf. also the offender profile October 30, 2007, p. 5.

27 Several media reports mentioned card readers, psychics and necromancers who had been assigned to the case, see, for example, Jan-Eric Lindner, Die falsche DNA-Spur – das Erbe des Phantoms, *Hamburger Abendblatt*, March 27, 2009, accessed November 22, 2018, available at: https://www.abendblatt.de/politik/deutschland/article106785667/Die-falsche-DNA-Spur-das-Erbe-des-Phantoms.html; Freia Peters et al., Der Wattestäbchen-Skandal, *Berliner Morgenpost*, March 27, 2009, accessed November 22, 2018, available at: https://www.morgenpost.de/printarchiv/seite3/article103997233/Der-Wattestaebchen-Skandal.html. The use of esoteric methods in criminal investigations was apparently not restricted to the Heilbronn case; see Dobranic 2007; Sanders 2012; Schetsche and Schellinger 2007.

From an examination of the files to public anthropology: The Phantom of Heilbronn and the "Freiburger Herbst" ('Freiburg Autumn') 2016.

Two sexual murders were committed in the city of Freiburg and nearby Endingen in the autumn of 2016. These cases greatly unsettled the people of the region for numerous weeks and dominated both media reports and private conversations. A short time after the first crime, whose victim was a medical student at our university, a flyer appeared in Freiburg published by a right-wing extremist political sect called "Bund gegen Anpassung" ('Alliance against Conformity'), which bore the title "Is the justice system covering for the Dreisam murderer because of his race?" The flyer claims:

> A lot speaks for the murderer being a pseudo-refugee. […] It's very easy to determine a person's race based on their DNA. […] It would be the easiest thing in the world in this case and innocent people would not need to be bothered if the race of the murderer were determined.

In the following weeks, demands for legal permission to carry out extended DNA analyses were made increasingly in the media within the context of the two murder cases. These reports referred repeatedly to corresponding demands made by representatives of the police, especially from Freiburg and Baden-Württemberg.[28] After the Freiburg police had arrested a suspect for one of the murders in early December 2016 – a refugee from Afghanistan – Baden-Württemberg's Minister of Justice Guido Wolf (CDU) made the introduction of extended DNA analyses a top priority and announced he would start working on the corresponding legislative initiative immediately.[29] At the time, I was in the middle of my research on the Phantom of Heilbronn and this announcement caught my attention. The investigation into the Phantom of Heilbronn had, after all, been the only officially known case in Germany where an extended DNA analysis had been carried out in a search for a suspect. My findings also indicated several similarities and connections between the two investigations in Heilbronn and Freiburg and the ensuing public debates. In particular, the close cooperation between the Freiburg and Heilbronn special commissions on the investigation of the UFP and the corresponding DNA computer searches described above were striking, as well as the fact that the introduction of extended DNA analyses had also been demanded in connection with the Heilbronn investigations between 2007

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28 A documentation of the media debate is available at: https://stsfreiburg.wordpress.com/hinter grund/mediale-entwicklung. Accessed November 22, 2018.

29 For more on the development of the legislative initiative from December 2016 until the federal elections in 2017, accessed November 22, 2018, available at:https://stsfreiburg.wordpress.com/ hintergrund/gesetzesentwurf.

and 2009[30] – in part by the same protagonists and using the same arguments and wording that was very similar to that used in the current debate.

During these weeks, my sister Veronika Lipphardt – who teaches here at the university in Freiburg and is conducting research on the construction of genetic diversity – and her work group heavily debated submitting a public statement outlining the many unanswered questions regarding the scientific basis of these technologies and the enormous risks and challenges that would arise if they were to overhastily become regular practice in police investigations. I also participated in this internal discussion but hesitated to take a public position in the planned interdisciplinary science initiative for numerous reasons: 1) Because of the heated mood; 2) because, at the time, I was in the middle of collecting data and was still far from any conclusive research findings; 3) because I feared this could stand in the way of being able to carry out more field work with the police and the justice system; and 4) because I was currently in the final phase of my tenure process. My involvement in our initiative and the increasingly populist undertones of the public debate finally moved me to sign my first open letter in December 2016 and, thus, to participate publicly (after my tenure process had been successfully concluded) in our initiative's press communications and educational campaign. Since then, this has included expert and background discussions with representatives from the police and the justice system, political decision-makers, civil society initiatives and representatives of victim support groups, such as the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma or the Amadeu Antonio Foundation.[31]

This also significantly changed the basis of my research project on the Phantom of Heilbronn regarding the basic conditions and the expansion of the thematic focus, my analytical perspectives and the (re-)positioning of my research within the tradition of public anthropology. In doing so, I lost important interview partners from the police and the justice system, who found fault with my approach to the topic and believed my positioning in the public debate on expanded DNA testing was "steeped in ideology," "anti-scientific and anti-progressive," or even that it "protected offenders." At the same time, however, I discovered many more new contacts in the field. Discussions with activists, representatives of support groups, critical lawyers and journalists provided me with information, for example, on relevant source material and contacts, as well as giving me deeper insights into political and institutional processes. Lectures, expert groups and background discussions that

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30 Friese, Haut- und Haarfarbe des Phantoms bleiben ein Geheimnis, *Heilbronner Stimme*, August 28, 2008; Stang and Lange, Ermittlungen im Erbgut, *SWR2 WISSEN*, January 14, 2009; dpa, Experte fordert erweiterte DNA-Analyse des Phantoms, *Heilbronner Stimme*, January 28, 09; Dirk Asendorpf, Steckbrief aus dem Erbgut, *DIE ZEIT*, March 5, 2009.

31 You can find more information on the main research aims, publications, and outreach activities of our initiative available at: https://stsfreiburg.wordpress.com. Accessed November 22, 2018.

take place among the members of our initiative have since become important meth-odological resources, which have enabled me to gain insight into experience and practical knowledge, the routines of criminal prosecution, and important aspects of police work and safety policies from, for example, investigators, prosecutors or criminal defense lawyers.

The direct encounters with police officers and prosecutors over the past year have also increased my awareness of different cultures and modes of communication and the related phenomenon of talking past one another. The dictate for scientific transparency stands in opposition to confidentiality requirements in preliminary investigations and the official secrecy regarding processes within the police department and the Prosecutor's Office. And while, as a scientist, I am literally paid to pub-licize my very own scientific positions,[32] police officers and prosecutors are bound by strict hierarchies in official communications to the public and are only permitted to express the official positions of their department, and not, however, their personal opinions and assessments if they are permitted to speak publicly at all.

In addition, the frequently very controversial discussions with investigators forced me repeatedly to critically review my interpretations and assessments, further develop them, or defend them – with even clearer arguments – as well as to ques-tion my own positionality. Beate Binder has warned scholars involved in cultural anthropology research projects on law and politics to be cautious of "remaining in one's own comfort zone or adhering to apparently convenient opinions, for example when following explanations and interpretations of people whose goals and values one thinks are agreeable" (Binder 2018: 60). The criticism of power structures 'is' my comfort zone – due to my scientific socialization in a discipline which is dedicated particularly to researching social relationships from the perspective of the disad-vantaged as well as through my political socialization in the alternative, left-wing milieu. This twofold critical position (which is fairly common in our field) can also lead to the "othering" of the state apparatus and the police, in particular – some-thing I catch myself doing from time to time. It is, thus, that much more important to search continuously for ways out of this comfort zone. Mutsaers, Simpson, and Karpiak argue that this one-sided focus of attention and criticism can be found in the majority of cultural anthropology research on police work:

> Anthropologists have documented the profound effects of policing on minority com-munities as well as the profound creative resistance of marginalized individuals and communities in the face of such. However […], such writing generally occurs against the police, not with or for them. (Mutsaers, Simpson, and Karpiak 2015: 786)

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32 For more information on the legal conditions of the right to freedom in research and education guaranteed by the German Basic Law in conjunction with the official requirements connected with the requirement of moderation for government public servants, see the current expert's report by Klaus Gärditz (2018) in *Forschung & Lehre*.

They advocate instead for a larger "epistemic solidarity" that should include "collaboration with police, despite its many challenges and dangers" (Mutsaers, Simpson, and Karpiak 2015: 786). As helpful and important as this suggestion is, it does not go far enough for an anthropology of 'policing' that does not only see 'the police as an institution but rather views police work within the context of complex social interactions': Firstly, multiple 'epistemic solidarities' are required to do justice to the different actors that come together in this context. Secondly, the more tense the interactional relationships under research are, the more difficult the collaboration will be. A collaboration with investigative authorities – in the sense of a binding, long-term cooperation on equal terms and with a joint goal – is viewed by the other actors involved in the situation as partisanship. The more conflicted the interactive relationships with the police and the justice system are and the more distrust researchers have toward these authorities, the more difficult or even impossible contact to the rest of the field will be. By contrast, I understand the expert discussions and training sessions described above, in which I am an active participant, as an exchange of information within a cooperative relationship. They are based on mutual respect and interest but do not have a joint goal and are only somewhat binding and of short duration; they, thus, pose a lesser danger of monopolization and offer a wider range of points of contact within the field.

Conclusion

The summation of the representatives of the co-plaintiff in the Munich NSU trial, which was submitted during the revision of this article, once again clearly demonstrated to the public the extent to which the prejudice-based assumptions and practices of the investigative authorities drove them to suspect members of a minority, while also blinding them for possible or actual right-wing extremist perpetrators (Behrens 2018).

My analysis of the investigations surrounding the Phantom of Heilbronn in this paper demonstrates the diversity and the complex relationships of the institutional mechanisms that led to these events. As Mechthild Gomolla ascertained, it is not necessarily "required that participants have prejudices or discriminatory intentions" for institutional discrimination to develop. In addition, institutional discrimination cannot be "explained, not even primarily, as the sum of discriminatory attitudes and actions of prejudiced individuals" (Gomolla 2017: 131). After assessing the sources available to me, two aspects of the Heilbronn investigations were particularly striking: The fact that evidently neither the SoKo Parking Lot nor the Heilbronn Prosecutor's Office, which was the point of convergence of the investigations, developed mechanisms to compensate for a 'confirmation bias', i.e. the tendency to select and interpret information so that it confirms one's own expectations. In addition,

the forensic DNA analysis carried out by the investigators was seen as the ultimate authority.

Many of the investigators and representatives of the justice system with whom I spoke during the last year did not acknowledge any relevant biases or structural discriminatory effects in the Heilbronn case – or in the current legislative initiative to permit expanded DNA analyses, which does not have any precautionary measures in place to mitigate the inherent potential for discrimination. The people I spoke with saw the arguments I have presented in this article as unjustified general condemnation of the police and the justice system and as criticism of their understanding of their official functions and themselves as individuals. In the future, these cognitive, communicative and affective fault lines must be further explored from more than just a scientific perspective.

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Harm-Peer Zimmermann

Meeting an old friend again*

Prudence as a *punctum* of dissidence in the study of age

memoria amici, Theo Waßner (1930–2018)

Abstract: The article is used to open up an alternative view of age and, thus, the possibility of speaking about it in other ways. The argumentation is based mainly on Roland Barthes and links his theses with forerunning epistemologies of gaze and stereotypical speech. On the one hand, this is done with the existentialist criticism of common ways of viewing age and speaking about it (Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Jean Améry) and, on the other hand, with an older cultural-anthropological starting point for counter-narratives: Prudence (Johann Gottfried Herder). The train of thought finally leads to the conclusion that the category of age must be held in suspension and that a *punctum* of dissidence needs to be introduced into the study of age.

Keywords: age, study of age, othering, alterity, dissidence, counter-narrative

Whilst searching for different ways of talking about age in a different way, I came across Roland Barthes's fragment of a language of age which struck me, at first, as a hackneyed manner of speech. The entry for March 19, 1979, in his *Chronik* ([1979] 2003: 60) reads:

> Met an old friend again:
> You don't grow any older.
> Nor do you.

Is Barthes merely repeating a polite but clichéd phrase, such as we use to downplay age? Whereby, we know that it is only a pretense and a cliché and, accordingly, politely or ironically play along? But then it strikes one that Barthes is varying, both in form and content, one of Brecht's best-known Keuner stories:

> A man who hadn't seen Herr K. for a long time greeted him with the words:
> "You haven't changed a bit."
> "Oh!" said Herr K. and turned pale.

We are caught up in Brecht's alienation effect. Words of welcome are subverted; their ostensible meaning is betrayed. Not to change – that would be terrible. Brecht gives

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* German version in *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 2019, 115 (1): 71–82. Translated by George Low.

us a lesson in dialectical concision and triggers a paradigm change. At a stroke, he changes the perspective and things appear in a different light. The same situation (a greeting), the same compliment and a comparable effect appears in Barthes.[1] Only Barthes joins together again what Brecht breaks. Barthes has a synthesis follow Brecht's antithesis, a synthesis that returns to the polite phrase, rehabilitates, upgrades and releases it in the name of friendship and in the face of old age. It is important, particularly in old age, to keep up a certain formality and that includes retracting the astonishing moment of Brecht's concision in favor of friendly formality and subtle subversion. This is reminiscent of another Brechtian legacy, namely, that man should help man, charitably and politely (*An die Nachgeborenen*, 1939). Barthes's Keuner story reads fully as follows:

> Met an old friend again.
> – You don't grow any older.
> – Nor do you.
> – Because we still have the same gaze.
> A gaze does not grow older. People who grow older do so because they do not have a gaze or do not have a gaze anymore. (Barthes 2003: 60)

This means there are two forms of gaze: One which uses and confirms the conventional language of age but which is, for this precise reason, not a gaze at all; and a different gaze, which frustrates and undermines the language of age and which, for this precise reason, sees something and opens one's eyes. The one gaze is, according to Barthes (in his lecture *Das Neutrum*, [1977/78] 2015: 75) "surrounded by a slew of conformist habits: what one has to do"; the other one is a gaze that impresses both those involved and onlookers by being different and suspending meaning. It contradicts age and makes it possible to read even cheap polite phrases about age in a different, non-stereotypical way.

Barthes, like Brecht, breaks traditional sign systems and code – in this case, those of old age – with the might of suddenly compelling evidence. Even old age appears at a stroke to be redundant, even nonexistent, and the gerontological view appears, at a stroke, not to have a protagonist. Can it be that precisely those who are academically focused on old age have "no gaze"? Do they only ever see the same thing, namely, nothing? This is not just a *deformation professionnelle,* but, according to Barthes, gerontology is provoked to a paradoxical form of self-transcendence, to overcoming what is its central idea – old age.

The aim of this essay is to create an alternative view of age and, with it, the possibility of talking differently about age. I see this alternative way of seeing and speaking about age as a genuinely cultural and scientific contribution to gerontol-

1   Barthes had already varied Brecht's alienation effect in the *Mythen des Alltags* (Barthes [1957] 2010a), but then reflected on them particularly in his collected *Writings about the Theater* (Barthes 2001).

ogy. I would like to elucidate it culturally, scientifically and epistemologically by relating Barthes's fragment to an earlier existentialist discourse (Sartre, de Beauvoir, Améry) and then link it to an older theory of perception and epistemology from the beginnings of modern cultural anthropology and linguistic philosophy: That of Johann Gottfried Herder. He described calmness, "prudence," in his *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache* (Herder [1772] 1985) as a basic human condition and explained it as the starting point for human perception and thinking, speaking and acting in its alterity. What he meant, however, is a different calmness than the so to speak reflective, conciliatory, harmonizing one; rather, it means a pugnacious calmness, which results in an alternative gaze and way of speaking.[2]

The first section (1) deals with Sartre, de Beauvoir, Améry and the existentialist critique of conventional ways of seeing and speaking about age. Barthes and Herder are then introduced, showing the possibility of an alternative gaze which, on the one hand, (2) as a *'punctum,'* on the other hand, as 'prudence,' marks the starting point of 'counter-narratives.' These considerations, finally, (3) let the category *old age* hang in suspension, i.e. interrupt common speech patterns and ways of speaking and give the *studium* of old age a *punctum* of dissidence. To express it in Barthes's terms: It is a question firstly of the gaze that is not one; secondly, of the gaze that does not grow older, *punctum*; thirdly, of the gaze that remains the same: Prudence. To conclude with, (4) I would like to propose that we meet an old friend again – a friend of Herr Keuner's.

1.   The gaze that is no gaze at all

By choosing the term "gaze," Barthes immediately indicates that he is commenting on a discourse that was initiated by Sartre and applied to old age by Simone de Beauvoir and Jean Améry.[3] According to Sartre (*Das Sein und das Nichts*, [1943] 2014; *Überlegungen zur Judenfrage*, [1944] 2010) it is not the biological or physical that imposes on us a "totality of barriers and constraints" that we call old age but the "gaze" (Sartre 2010: 39, 2014: 474). Simone de Beauvoir (*Das Alter*, [1970] 1972) speaks of the "eyes of society," which make a human being an old person or even make them age in the first place (de Beauvoir 1972: 9, 247). It is the "gaze of the others" that imposes a set of behavioral patterns and feelings on a human being which exhaust their possibilities: "The aged person feels old because of the other

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2   Zurich aging studies aim in this direction with, for example, the essays of Grebe (2015) and Grebe et al. (2012). Compare also the earlier works by Biggs (2011), Haller (2007), Rozanova (2010) and Rudman (2015).

3   Cf. Sartre (2014), particularly the chapter "The Look" (457–632). For relevance to gerontology, cf. also Zimmermann (2016, 2017).

people" (de Beauvoir 1972: 247). This form of alienation is called othering in current cultural anthropology.[4]

It is not, however, a question of mere stereotypes of old age but of a fundamental problem that Simone de Beauvoir analyses in accordance with the model of her gender theory (*Das andere Geschlecht*, [1949] 1951). According to this, the gaze that makes people old is based on a guiding difference that "divides humanity into two categories of individuals" (de Beauvoir 1951: 550 and 9), one side of which is marked as the "positive pole" and the other side as the "negative pole". The "eyes of society" aim to "depict an old person as someone *different*" (de Beauvoir 1951: 7 and 550), "as a [negative] deviation from the norm" (de Beauvoir 1951: 10). The norm, however, is youth, life with all its strength and productivity: "The hierarchy of the age groups is determined in the enterprise of life" (de Beauvoir1951: 13). In this way, age becomes the "alternative" to life; it "appears, even more than death, as the opposite of life" (de Beauvoir 1951: 463). Old age, particularly, is regarded only as "waste," as "walking corpses" (de Beauvoir 1972: 9). From this point of view, aging persons are no longer anything and anybody and they no longer change – they are old and they remain old. "Oh! said Herr K. and turned pale."

Jean Améry assessed the situation of old age in society even more radically (*Über das Altern*, [1968] 2005): The negation is so advanced that ageing people are no longer considered of worth or worthy of a single glance. The "glance of other people" passes through them as if "through a transparent material." Aging people are "destroyed by the empty glances" (Améry 2005: 100). Sociologically this means desocialization, loss of their role, "social dying" (Améry 2005: 145). Semiotically it means that all discourse about age that takes place "is characterized by nothing" (Améry 2005: 99). Existentially, however, the negation of age means that it is denied the opportunity to "redesign itself with other possibilities" (Sartre 2014: 488), that it is forbidden to "again and again pass on to what is possible" (Améry 2005: 88). Whereas it is said of young people that "the world is 'their oyster'" (Améry 2005: 35), for old people, there remains nothing but "a social vacuum," a "barren region of life" (Améry 2005: 91).

And science helps to make it barren, says Améry. Old people do "what they are ordered to do by advertisements, posters, popular newspaper articles, and even serious sociological investigations, which are of course produced in the service of the social apparatus and published for its benefit" (Améry 2005: 108). Améry even criticizes modern-day gerontology, which is positive, optimistic and cheerful and does not focus on losses and deficits but on the resources and potentials of age. Even when it talks of aging people's opportunities, potentials and tasks, this takes place in a context where they are regarded *a priori* as "creatures without potentiality"

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4   For a detailed discussion relating to the question of age, cf. Zimmermann (2012, 2016).

(Améry 2005: 84). Why else would it be necessary to particularly stress their potentials? The focus is on how active, productive and successful old people are – are still; they are assessed "automatically according to the inventory amount" (Améry 2005: 86). The crucial point is the 'still,' because it presupposes that they will soon no longer be so. Even the 'best agers' have the word 'worst' written on their foreheads. They already bear "the mark of nothingness in their faces" (Améry 2005: 99).[5]

According to Améry, even the many colorful guides for the elderly, indeed the entire anti- and pro-aging industry, at best, offer the elderly "shelter in the madhouse" of a consumer world – be it in special stores for orthopedic fashion or in the "mendacious idyll of old age" (Améry 2005: 110) that is currently being marketed very lucratively particularly by the esoteric and tourism sectors. These offers are dishonest in part, because they are accompanied by strict social and health policies. When it comes to the crunch, i.e. when it is a question of money, then extremely negative images of old age continue to dominate the discourse. Then catchwords like "overaging" and "senescence," "the burden of old age" and "mountain of pensioners" are used unscrupulously.[6] Paling, Améry sums it all up: "We must not deceive ourselves," the "nihilation and the annihilation of aging people" is "total" (Améry 2005: 99). Old people are – as society dictates – what they are, nothing" (Améry 2005: 110).

Roland Barthes got to the semiotic heart of this important existentialist criticism of popular ways of seeing and speaking about age: No gaze. This means that this gaze is encoded in a way that it cannot see anything – anything apart from what the dominant semiotic systems of old age permit. This gaze exhausts itself in reflexes; it does not understand anything, rather it reiterates again and again, as it were, automatically, the same speech patterns and ways of speaking, albeit in colorful variations or under promotionally effective new names. However cheerful the brave new world of age may appear – its gaze is barred, locked up in the constant return of the same thing: No gaze (Barthes 1972: 49).

2.   The gaze that does not grow older. *Punctum*

Barthes's contributions to the discourse about age are to be found scattered over numerous publications. But even though they only occur sporadically, they are strong and marked. "Of all the signs of the idiocy of the age, one of the most irritating seems to me to be the way it talks about age" (Barthes 2015: 249). Barthes shows two ways of interrupting this "usual bla bla" (Barthes 1980: 65). The one approach concurs with Michel Foucault, when Barthes asks: "Who is in control of the discourse about age? Which forces create and use the term 'age'?" (Barthes [1974–1976] 2007:

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5   Cf. in more detail Zimmermann (2017).
6   For these and other "metaphors of aging", cf. Grebe et al. (2012).

434). He, thus, demands an analysis of the discourse about age and a critique of conventional representations of age.[7] The other direction, which is to be examined here, demands a Keuner gaze that disrupts, thwarts and subverts the sign systems of age. This also requires a form of scientific observation, which Barthes traces back to the Ancient Greek root word: Disengage, dissolve, separate (Barthes 2015: 78). But how does that work? The two friends show this in their dialog by indicating two further possibilities.

One possibility is the following: The two friends recognize, through the masks of age, those features of the other that have not grown old. This suggests a gaze that sees, first of all, the familiar: The smile, for example, that remains beautiful, the eyes that still sparkle, the unchanged voice. We are talking here about a language of friendship behind which the language of age is of less importance. In this sense, Foucault and others have talked of countering the "monotonous dominion" of the great discourses with the pluralization of language games and the reproduction of the discursive types (Barthes 2015: 461; Lyotard [1979] 1999: 67, 84; Rorty [1989] 1997: 29, 36f., 77). The change of codes guarantees other possibilities of speaking and, therefore, of seeing. Which code could be more receptive to age than that of friendship?

The second possibility, however, would be a gaze that would not sidestep the discourses' powerful circling but would disrupt it. It would be a gaze that does not exhaust itself in changing linguistic codes, but one in which – as Brecht achieves with dialectic concision – an "absolute peephole to conformity" (Barthes 2015: 78) suddenly appears. It would be a gaze that would not age, in either a transitive or an intransitive sense: Transitively, one that would not make the other person appear old; intransitively, one that would not grow older itself. It would be a gaze that would dissect or/and take apart the signs and codes of age, such as "sting," a "cut" or a "flash" (Barthes [1980] 2010b: 33ff.). Barthes talks of the neutralizing *punctum*, of the neuter, that "overrides/invalidates the paradigm," that renders the "implacable binarism" (Barthes 2015: 94) ineffective: Young or old, "yes/no (+/-)" (Barthes 2015: 32).

This gaze, which would lead to the collapse of the order of things, would also instantaneously reset our gerontological systems to zero. Barthes speaks of the "point zero" (2015: 32f.), of the neutralizing effect ("neuter"). But what would the result be? Agreeing with Emmanuel Lévinas, Barthes says: "Consideration for alterity," "thinking of the other person" (2015: 75).[8] The gaze that does not grow older makes it possible to discover "a region, a horizon, a direction" of the other person

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7 This critique today stands at the center of critical gerontology. Cf. Grebe et al. (2012) and Van Dyk and Lessenich (2009).

8 For the phenomenology and ethics of alterity cf. Lévinas (1983, 1991). Regarding age, cf. Zimmermann (2016).

(Barthes 2015: 93). In this way, it is the agent of the break with stereotypical ways of seeing things, and it is, at the same time, the agent of the "counter-narrative per se" (Barthes 1972: 61).

3.   The gaze that remains the same: Prudence

This gaze does not grow older "always remains the same," as long as it repeatedly goes through forms of belief and thought – like a timeless, placeless and baseless "leap into the unknown" (Barthes 2015: 288). Like Edmund Husserl, Barthes speaks of *epoché*. In Barthes, that is the moment when the clockwork of the fossilized paradigms, linguistic codes and ways of speaking stops and a "peephole" in the closed horizon of the sign systems appears (Barthes 2015: 329f.). Barthes recapitulates this possibility from ancient skepticism to far eastern Taoism: *Wu wei*, non-action, let go (Barthes 2015: 289ff.). *You understand that hardness must lose the day*.

At the outset of modern cultural anthropology and linguistic philosophy, however, it was Johann Gottfried Herder who explained the situation of letting go, the peephole, the "gap" to the center of the *conditio humana* and to the basic epistemic disposition of human beings. Following the model of antique skepticism, he called it "calmness" (*sophrosyne* – prudence) (Herder 1985: 719–722); and it appears as a "peephole," i.e. as the central deficiency in a system of multiple deficiencies. For while elsewhere in nature, instincts, hard reflexes and acute senses explain behavior, human instincts and senses are weak and dull; in addition, they weaken and neutralize each other by their variety and contradictoriness:

> Naked and bare, weak and wretched, shy and defenseless: and what constitutes the sum of his misery, bereft of all guides for life. – Born with such a diverse and weakened sensuality, with such indefinite, slumbering abilities, with such divided and exhausted urges, evidently reliant on a thousand needs, (Herder 1985: 715)

that is the strange nature of the human race.

Behavioral disorder, dullness and passivity (not functionality, acuteness and activity) are at the start of human action. Barthes, on his tour through the possibilities for an alternative gaze, did not, it is true, mention this basic cultural anthropological and linguistic philosophical thought of Herder's, but one of Barthes's central terms clearly derives from Herder. It is the term "dull sense" for a form of perception that is not hard and acute, not functional and not goal-oriented but is open to alterity and disposed to an alternative gaze (Barthes 1990).

Herder says: "His [mankind's] senses are not focused on one thing; he has senses for everything and therefore naturally weaker and duller senses for each individual thing – His strength of mind is scattered all over the world; his imagination is not focused on one thing" (Herder 1985: 713). Having dull senses means having "senses for everything." Arnold Gehlen called this disposition "open-mindedness"; and it is this that permits the "inexhaustibility of views of things" (Gehlen 1956:

23). This alternative role of mankind in the world is called "eccentric positional-ity" in Helmuth Plessner's work ([1928] 1975: 309f., 325). For Roland Barthes, this becomes the idea that it may be possible to transcend one's own (cultural and scientific) linguistic codes and ways of speaking: "Apparently the dull sense goes beyond culture, knowledge and information." It "brings about, so it seems to me, a total, in other words endless opening-up of the playground of the senses" (Barthes 1990: 50).

According to Herder, "gaps and deficiencies form the character of the human species"; "in the center of the deficiencies," however, a different gaze is formed (Herder 1985:722f.), because humankind here is uncoupled from reflexive seeing (and reacting) and has to rely on reflection. Herder calls this center, this eye of human possibilities, "prudence." "This creature is the human being and we propose calling this entire disposition of his nature [...] '*prudence*'." (Herder 1985: 719). "Humankind is placed in a condition of prudence that is inherent in him, and this prudence (reflection) working freely for the first time created language" (Herder 1985: 722). In the center, at the eye of the storm of nature, a space opens up for different ways of seeing and, thus, for language, communication, and processes of negotiation and understanding. The neutral point in the center forms the "necessary genetic basis for the creation of a language" (Herder 1985: 716f.).

In this way, language is created as the "counter-narrative per se" (Barthes 1990: 61), as the medium and game of reflection, which frees itself, dissociates itself from all reflexes.[9] The problem here, according to Barthes, is that linguistic games and discourse are subject to a "paradox": They become independent and firm in a way that is hardly less than the original compulsive character of the nature of reflex (Barthes 2015: 67, 93). Barthes had spoken of "naturalization" early on (1957: 279). Prevalent linguistic patterns and ways of speaking are reproduced reflexively. Holding a discourse no longer means "communicating," negotiating, reaching agreement, rather "it means dominating" (Barthes 1980: 19). This applies particularly to the category 'old' Reflexively, it acts arrogantly and imposes "from outside a way of being" on aging people (Barthes 2015: 87). In this, it legitimizes itself with the acute gaze of nature: Of course, we all grow older; so do you, my old friend, we can see that.

However, to say of someone that they are old, locks them into their old age. The gap is closed again: There is no gaze anywhere. But Barthes advises us, "Let us not be premature!" (2015: 115)[10] ; for, at the same time, we "still have the same gaze," this other one, the "dull" one, which appears like a *punctum*, causing a sudden and brief interruption of the coded view, an "endless opening-up of the playground of the senses" (Barthes 1990: 50). And maybe it is not a coincidence that Barthes

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9　In this context, cf. also Schopenhauer ([1844] 1968: 492f.).

10　"A friend says to me: 'Saying of someone that they are beautiful locks them into their beauty.' I say: Yes, that's right, but nevertheless: not so fast! Let us not be premature!"

speaks of two "old" friends who practice this gaze. Does this gaze involve a special liaison with age, particularly with old age?

The Dresden philosopher, ethicist and gerontologist Thomas Rentsch argued along the same lines. In old age the "basic human situation" comes to the fore in a radical way: The "deficient being" that is dependent on relationships, attention and solidarity (Rentsch 1992: 297, 303). Like Herder, Rentsch says that out of the center of the deficiencies grows an "opportunity for prudence," combined with "practical insights that are more difficult to acquire when one is younger" (Rentsch 1992: 302f.). Similarly, the Heidelberg gerontologist Andreas Kruse spoke of a special "openness" in old age: "in the sense that people are receptive to new impressions, experiences and realizations which grow from the gaze upon oneself as well as from the gaze upon the social and spatial world around one" (Kruse 2017: 65). Consequently, we can regard prudence as a basic human disposition characterized as calmness, receptivity, openness, especially in (old) age – not in the sense of accepting, adjusting to the deficient *per se*, but in the sense of a gaze that is "still the same," focused on "a region, a horizon, a direction" of the Other. Would that be an advantage of age?

4.   Meeting an old friend again

"Met an old friend again." Barthes uses the category "old," but he lets it hang in a suspension of friendship. In this way, he simultaneously demonstrates how that paradigm of age that operates with "intimidations, submission, domination" could be undermined (Barthes 2015: 253). Because the *punctum* would only be effective in places, the dull sense would remain a blunt instrument if it were not secured epistemologically and linguistically. According to Barthes, the possibility of such a continuation consists, on the one hand, in "letting every category hang in suspension," i.e. making use of it, and simultaneously letting it appear dubious and undecided: "The linguistic problem would consist in letting every category hang in suspension […] or, to be more precise, in indicating implicitly while speaking that every paradigm is badly constructed" (Barthes 2015: 94). On the other hand, the problem would consist of beginning a "counter-narrative" out of this suspension, on the brink, and that means opening a "discourse of the maybe" (Barthes 2015: 93).[11] Maybe it is possible to "overrule, to suspend, to avoid the paradigm, its pretensions" (Barthes 2015: 33). Maybe.

The gaze that does not grow older plays with the category "age" and refers to other possibilities. They are presented here in the guise of friendship: Faced with the friend, the "statutory pretension of the language of discourse" (Barthes 2015: 93) is unmasked as an empty gaze: Obsolete, an imposition. However, there appears

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11   In this context, "Thinking of the *maybe*" (Derrida [1994] 2011: 103).

a different seeing in the "wrinkle" (Barthes 2015: 61) of a simple polite phrase that shows "consideration for alterity" (Barthes 2015: 75). This "thinking of the Other" (Barthes 2015: 75) can be found not least in the form of the polite address: The old friends use the polite form "Sie" in the original, keeping their personality in the third person plural. Perhaps one could say that this gaze itself appears like an old friend, a friend of Herr Keuner's, which can be encountered throughout all the "power that lies in language" (Barthes 2015: 88), all the orders of age: "rare, fragile, brief maybe" (Barthes 2015: 81) but all the more piercing and lasting: *And thy gentle beams descend/Kindly where I go,/Like the mild eye of a friend/On my joy and woe.*

It is easy, says Barthes, for the trained academic gaze to include this other gaze in "the family of puns, of farces, of useless exertions" (Barthes 1990: 50): This may be good enough for poetry or for personal encounters, but not for science. Especially as the other gaze cannot be operationalized, cannot be subjected to any method of assessment or classification, does not lend itself to hard data and measurable significances. However, the misery of the scientific gaze, its "training" (Barthes 2010b: 35), can be seen precisely in such "threatening demands 'to make a choice'," as Barthes puts it: "measurable, hard, resilient – or not", "yes/no (+/-)" (Barthes 2015: 32f.). Would it not be advisable, instead of such decisionism, to do both: To make use of the paradigm and to subvert it, in other words, to give the *studium* a *punctum* of dissidence? Because "in the end *studium* is always coded; the *punctum* is not" (Barthes 2010b: 60).

In order to "take on responsibility for our *imago* as regards the Other," Barthes proposes stirring up the discourse (about age) in such a way "that it remains open for negation, doubt, questions, restraint" (Barthes 2015: 90). To repeatedly cast doubts on one's own guiding difference (old/not old), the categories, methods and ways of speaking in gerontology and to leave them hanging in suspension – either by alienation effects or by dissident or sensitive ways of seeing and speaking: might it be possible in this way, to open up new, cultural and scientific approaches to gerontology? This would mean, for example, paling in the face of the both popular and profitable discourse of active, productive and successful aging and, instead, bringing up the possibility of passivity, letting go and allowing oneself to be grasped. This might conceivably even mean "being silent" (Barthes 2015: 62–65) when only the same things could be said again and again, because "sensitivity perceives every unnecessary repetition as frightening, insulting" (Bathes 2015: 73f.). It might perhaps even mean occasionally freeing oneself from recording, measuring, classifying – in favor of a Keuner gaze which "subverts the expected" (Barthes 2015: 68), in favor of an "opening up of the playground of the senses" (Barthes 1972: 50). Would this be a possible way of practicing prudence in a cultural and scientific, even in a gerontological way – with the gaze of a friend who does not grow older? Perhaps.

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Hannah Kanz

When sleep deprivation means success. Interpretative frames and discursive practices of a breastfeeding support group*

Abstract: Parenting culture is increasingly permeated by diverting and competitive moral interpretations and imperatives. Seemingly marginal decisions for or against parenting methods have become questions of identity. Based on ethnographic research, this paper analyzes a breastfeeding support group as part of the breastfeeding advocacy dispositif and, thus, a place where the attachment parenting discourse is actualized. Singular everyday experiences are classified into discourse-specific interpretative frames within the group discussions. I argued that participating mothers, thereby, practice the handling of criticism and adopt discourse-typical positioning and identity offerings.

Keywords: parenting culture, ideologies of motherhood, attachment parenting, breastfeeding advocacy discourse, discourse actualization, identity work

Introduction[1]

Because we have lost the naturalness in our interaction with small children, a new guidebook comes onto the market every few years that fuels the debate about the best educational model with a new contrary opinion – this is how Wenke Husmann describes the positionings that are demanded of parents in a 2017 newspaper article titled *Die Jammermamas* (The Whining Mommies) (Husmann 2017). There are regular contributions on the topic of parenthood in the media, be it a discussion about controversial guidebooks, such as *Jedes Kind kann schlafen lernen* (Every Child Can Learn to Sleep)[2] (Kotte 2018), polarizing films, such as the documentary *Elternschule* (Parent School) (Adenberger 2018; Dietz 2018), or reports on parenthood ideals in general. Parenthood is a persistent hot topic in the media which is used not only

2 The guidebook advocates infant sleep training called Ferber method or Ferberization based on Ferber (1986).

to negotiate ideals of good motherhood, fatherhood and parenting but also, in a broader sense, to negotiate ideas about the functioning of society.

The focus of the discussion is mostly on young mothers,[3] who are supposed to put these ideals into practice and receive instructions from a wide range of angles. Sociologist Sharon Hays describes contemporary parenthood as *intensive parenting* (Hays 1996). Accordingly, the last few decades have been characterized by a professionalization of parenthood which presupposes that parents acquire comprehensive specialist knowledge on child development (Heimerdinger 2011: 205–206). By choosing an expert, parents already communicate a willingness to adopt a parenting style and its norms. One possible advisory setting is the breastfeeding advice offered by the La Leche League (LLL).[4] The LLL is a self-help organization founded in the United States of America in 1956 that operates worldwide. Its aim is to support mothers with practical information on breastfeeding and, thus, to promote breastfeeding.

This contribution is based on research I conducted in an Austrian breastfeeding support group with links to the LLL and the International Board of Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLC)[5] as an exemplary site for a discourse actualization of the attachment parenting discourse. In the following, I analyze how everyday experiences are reinterpreted through discursive speech acts and are integrated into the attachment parenting discourse.[6] I argue that on the one hand the handling of criticism and on the other hand discourse-typical positionings and identity offerings are conveyed and practiced.

The analysis is based on participant observation in a breastfeeding support group from June to December 2017 and ten interviews with participants of this group. The term participant observation, in the sense of perception under conditions of co-presence (Breidenstein et al. 2013: 71), already includes the conceptual contradiction of proximity and distance which is fundamental to this method.[7] Proximity in this case consisted of my co-present participation in the group meetings and the discussion unfolding there. At the same time, my distance was recognizable

3   Fathers are not excluded from this discussion; however, this article focuses on mothers, since, in the discourse examined here, they are primarily responsible for childcare in the first years of life.
4   For a critical discussion, see Bobel (2001). Similar advisory settings have also been studied by Charlotte Faircloth (2013) and Rose and Steinbeck (2015).
5   The group examined here is a lactation advisory group that is anchored in an Austrian consultancy institution. Through its leaders, the group has connections to both the LLL and the IBCLC training program and, thus, to the European Lactation Consultancy Alliance (ELACTA). In a similar manner to the LLL, ELACTA, as the umbrella organization of the IBCLC associations, is concerned with all aspects of the promotion, protection and support of breastfeeding and trains IBCLC consultants as professional authorities in the field of lactation and breastfeeding (ELACTA n.d.).
6   The discourse analysis employed here is based on Keller (2011a).
7   The specifics of this method cannot be discussed in more detail at this point. For an in-depth reflection of this topic, see Lindner (1981).

for me and all participants since I was present with a female body but without a child. As a non-mother and non-breastfeeding counselor, I usually took the position of an eager-to-learn intern.[8] Distance restricts access to certain everyday experiences such as the physicality of breastfeeding. However, it is precisely this distance, which enables the researcher to analyze connections that the actors are sometimes hardly aware of. Participant observation, therefore, allows insights into processes of interaction and, thus, makes it possible to capture the contexts of meaning, performed practices and non-verbalized, implicit knowledge (Beck 2012: 228). Since this article focuses on the discursive practices, the ethnographic field notes from the breastfeeding support group serve as the primary source corpus, while the interviews were used to contextualize what was observed.

The essay is divided into two parts. In the first part, I approach the topic through a historical positioning of the attachment parenting discourse and give an overview of the current parenting culture. The second part of this contribution begins with an introduction to the breastfeeding support group as a research field and as a place of discourse actualization, followed by an analysis of discursive events around experiences of inadequacy regarding infant nutrition and sleep. I then analyze the discursive boundaries and perception of the breastfeeding support group by the participants against the backdrop of the resulting ambivalence and identity work.[9]

Attachment parenting and the La Leche League

There are several specialized discourses on parenthood currently that differ regarding their implicit ideas of humankind (Anthropologeme) (Bilstein 2008: 51) and the methods of parenting and care derived from them. In terms of a scale, this results in a spectrum between authoritarian, structured approaches and participative and predominantly unstructured parenting styles (Faircloth 2013: 20–21). While the former date back to the 19th century, the latter have been increasingly advocated over the last 60 years.

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8   I introduced myself and my research project in every session. However, the way I was equipped – with notepad and pen but without a child – mirrored the appearance of the interns who occasionally visited the group. In addition, my gender was actualized repeatedly by the breastfeeding counselors who pointed out that by participating, I could prepare myself for my supposed later motherhood.

9   Charlotte Faircloth uses the term *identity work* with reference to Erwin Goffman in her analysis of LLL breastfeeding groups in London and Paris. The conceptual linking of identity and work reveals the ongoing processes of the production, negotiation and (situational) presentation of constructions of identity. Identities are constantly actualized and, therefore, subject to ongoing work. Aspects of this production and updating process are examined below. On mothering as identity work, see Faircloth (2013).

In the 1960s, processes of demedicalization set in which questioned the previously unchallenged medical authority (Heimerdinger 2011: 204). This led to a differentiation of expertise. Young parents were increasingly encouraged to acquire specialist knowledge on child development. Consequently, the range of courses for parents was expanded and the literary genre of parenting guidebooks developed into a mass phenomenon (Höffer-Mehlmer 2007: 78).

With their theory of attachment inspired by biological behavioral research, British pediatrician and psychoanalyst John Bowlby and US American-Canadian developmental psychologist Mary Ainsworth laid the foundation for a new image of infancy and a parenting style that was based on competence theory and participation (Lee 2014: 60). Infants were no longer understood as tyrannical bundles of impulses; rather, their social and interactive competences took on greater prominence (Gebhardt 2004: 264–266).

Building on Ainsworth and Bowlby's attachment theory, US pediatrician William Sears and his wife Martha coined the term *attachment parenting* in the 1980s, which emphasized the needs of the child and the mother-child relationship (Faircloth 2014b: 152).[10] Sears and Sears defined the secure bond between mother and infant as an important fundamental condition for the healthy development of the child. The continuous work of the mother on a secure attachment should, thus, enable the child to thrive. Sears and Sears recommended certain methods to strengthen attachment, such as breastfeeding on demand or bed-sharing, i.e. having the whole family sleep in the same bed (Faircloth 2014b: 152–153). The healthy development of the child is, thus, linked strongly to the female body. According to this approach, the mother's actions should be oriented entirely towards the child's natural needs.

Attachment parenting considers itself as a traditional and, at the same time, natural style of parenting. Attachment parenting can, thus, be associated with a naturalization process that began as early as the late 19th century and was driven by medicine and philosophy (Gracia and Dietzsch 2018: 105). On the one hand, naturalization in the context of parenthood includes interpretative frames with reference to an assumed natural order and the biologization of culture. On the other hand, it includes the consideration of the role of the mother and the mother-child relationship in a manner detached from the historical context (Gracia and Dietzsch 2018: 101).

Therefore mothers are to learn to trust their instincts and to (re)discover the connection to their human nature which had been repressed by the developments of civilization. The argumentation is largely based on biological explanations and comparisons of evolutionary biology. Stone Age humans and archaic tribal societies serve as "site[s] for playing out fantasies of the natural" (Faircloth 2013: 129) far from the

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10 The guidebook by Dr. Spock (1946), which sold millions of copies, had already gone in a similar direction to Sears and Sears. See Gebhardt (2007: 94).

harmful interference of civilization. Thus, the unstructured methods recommended in attachment parenting are presented as natural and instinctive, while medicalized, structured methods are associated with social constraints.

The child-centered approach of attachment parenting, which is based on a cognitive, competent infant in need of affection, thus, represented a clear rejection of previous authoritarian educational approaches. Despite the criticism of the scientific studies used by Sears and Sears, the religiously influenced, conservative family image that is conveyed in their guidebook and the associated retraditionalization, the attachment parenting approach continues to enjoy growing popularity to this day.[11]

Among others, it is disseminated by the LLL (Faircloth 2013: 63), which has been operating in Austria since the 1970s. Today, the organization is a leader in breastfeeding counselling and is represented in over 80 countries with its publications, telephone counselling and self-help groups (La Leche Liga 2019). The LLL has always positioned itself as a feminist countermovement to conventional, historically male-dominated medicine and has declared breastfeeding to be part of female self-determination. At the same time, it emphasizes the natural aptitude of women to be mothers. This results in a paradox of feminist self-determination and simultaneous re-traditionalization anchored in biological determinism (Bobel 2001: 135).

The LLL promotes breast milk as *the* best food source for infants and breastfeeding as one of the main factors leading to a secure attachment and, thus, a thriving child. In contrast to the WHO recommendation, which points to the advantages of breast milk regardless of the feeding method (Ott and Seehaus 2010: 258), the LLL advocates an intensive breastfeeding relationship. It recommends breastfeeding until the children have outgrown the breastfeeding relationship.[12] The mother-child bonding, thus, programmatically takes the place of child-rearing. In this, the LLL advocates an anti-medicalization but pro-science approach by favoring methods that are declared natural but whose promise of success is based on scientific findings (Faircloth 2013: 87–94).

The rapid spread of the LLL is partly explained by the differentiation of expertise in the second half of the 20th century. It enabled not only medical and educational professionals to act as advisors but also the mothers themselves. Today, expert knowledge is no longer based exclusively on (scientific) specialized knowledge about child development but also on one's own experiences (Lee 2014: 63–65).

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11 The critical debate on Sears and Sears conducted both in the public and academic sphere cannot be discussed here in more detail. See, for example: Faircloth (2014b); Kanis et al. (2016); Pickert (2012).
12 The breastfeeding relationship propagated by the LLL often continues beyond the six-month breastfeeding period recommended by the medical profession into the toddler or preschool years.

Parenting culture today

US American sociologist Sharon Hays has coined the term *intensive parenting* for the dominant parenting culture of the 21st century. According to her, contemporary parenting is "child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor intensive, and financially expensive" (Hays 1996: 69). Therefore, mothers and fathers must be prepared to invest time and financial resources and acquire specialist knowledge in order not just *to be* parents but to *fulfil* this role well in a moral sense, and optimally in terms of a comparison of performance. In terms of mothers, intensive mothering constitutes a paradigmatic notion of ideal motherhood that serves as an interpretative pattern and frame of reference for the evaluation of parental practices of the middle class. In this context, Charlotte Faircloth (2013: 25–26) argues for understanding intensive motherhood not as a hegemonic idea but as an "emergent ideology" of good motherhood. Accordingly, the concept is conceived as a system of meaning that can be interpreted as the view of a particular social group and, thus, criticized and challenged.

Early childhood experiences have been given great developmental significance ever since Sigmund Freud. The child's psyche is understood as fundamentally innocent but impressionable and, thus, exposed to a variety of risks[13] (Faircloth 2014a: 42). In this context, Frank Furedi introduces the term *parental determinism*, according to which parental influence is given great credit for the development of the child (Furedi 2002: 65). This assumption of the fundamental malleability of the children turns into an obligation for the parents (Seehaus 2014: 35). The child's development becomes a product of parental work, devotion and affection, and the child's body becomes the yardstick of successful parenting (Faircloth 2009: 15–17; Seehaus 2014: 24–25). In addition, a neoliberal idea of performance comes into effect, according to which the parents are not only tasked with limiting risks but also with affording optimal support to the child (Heimerdinger 2011: 206).

This power of forming the child, however, also includes the possibility of failure, with grave consequences for the offspring. The danger of a potential parental insufficiency is shown in the shift in focus in parenting advice literature, which initially focused on the behavior of the children and now increasingly turns to that of the parents (Seehaus 2014: 24). In parallel to the children's need to be parented, the parents are constituted as being in need of advice and, thus, equally pedagogized (Höffer-Mehlmer 2008: 138). The advice of the experts no longer only claims to be beneficial to the child's development but also to have a therapeutic value for the parents. Parenting is framed as a difficult and potentially burdensome phase during which the parents need professional support both for the promotion of the optimal

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13 Thus, for instance, the *Nationale Stillkommission* (National Breastfeeding Commission) in Germany is associated with the *Bundesinstitut für Risikobewertung* (National Institute for Risk Assessment). See Bundesinstitut für Risikobewertung (2019).

development of their child and for their own well-being. Through this kind of advice, a need for counselling is created at the same time (Lee 2014: 70).

The demand for expert-driven parenting, however, is not easy to fulfil. The 21st century is characterized by the plurality of the counselling landscape and its contradictory, divergent instructions for action. In contrast to the previous tendencies of medicalization and demedicalization, this development can be described as reflexive medicalization (Knecht and Hess 2008: 172). A wide variety of specialist, expert and everyday knowledge is available and accessible, but it is up to the parents to make an informed decision in the interest of their child's welfare – which can lead to uncertainty. In keeping with the demands of neoliberalism, parents act as reflected and informed actors and consumers and are responsible for their decisions. By choosing certain methods and experts, they associate with certain parenting styles and, thus, commit themselves to the logic and ideals of parenthood prevailing in the respective discourse. The attachment parenting approach represents one possible set of norms along which parents orient their parenting and identity work.

The breastfeeding support group as a component of the breastfeeding advocacy dispositif

The breastfeeding support group that I studied is a counselling program offered every two weeks. It shows tendencies of a self-help group, as it provides a framework within which mothers with similar problems and concerns can exchange information. The breastfeeding support group is part of a course program of an Austrian support and counselling institution for parents. The offers of the breastfeeding support group are primarily directed at mothers with children up to two years of age. The course description in the brochure of the institution invokes a somewhat broader audience by inviting not only mothers with babies and pregnant women but also fathers and all those interested in breastfeeding. Despite the openness towards various forms of family and life plans propagated in the brochure, the conversations in the breastfeeding support group showed a heteronormative orientation during the fieldwork period.

Each meeting of the group has a thematic focus, such as introducing solid foods, sleeping, breastfeeding or partnership. According to the support organization's brochure, the aim of the counselling service is to strengthen women in their competence as mothers. In the group, mothers are to find counselling, support and an exchange of experiences. Participants do not have to register in advance; each unit can be attended independently of the others. A visit lasts two hours and is subject to a fee.[14] During the research period, the group usually consisted of two

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14   At the time of research, the participation fee was 12 and 8 Euros, respectively, for members of the
     association of the support institution (as of 2018).

breastfeeding counselors who led the group, the participating women with their babies and occasionally also interns.

Different counselling institutions do not only represent different approaches in terms of parenting and, thus, different discourses, they also exhibit differences specific to the milieu.[15] The clientele of the support institution was described to me by their director as "elite mothers". This means women between their late twenties and early forties from the educated middle class. Most of the participants I met in the breastfeeding support group had one child for whom they were the primary carer in the first year.

For the analysis in the following, the breastfeeding support group is understood as the site in which the specialized discourse of the attachment parenting manifests and unfolds its potency. It is, therefore, part of the breastfeeding advocacy dispositif, i.e. part of "infrastructures emerging out of a discourse [...] in order to deal with the real world phenomena addressed by the discourse in question" (Keller 2011a: 56).

In the discourse analysis based on the sociology of knowledge, Keller differentiates between arenas of systematic discourse production and the actualization of discourse (Keller 2011b: 143–144). In the former, the discourse is systematically developed, for example, in scientific research, at conferences of the LLL or in advisory literature. In the latter, the actual discourse production only receives a little influence, but it still contributes to the communication of the discourse. The breastfeeding support group is part of the second arena, because the discourse is actualized through the communicative acts and transmitted to the mothers who come to seek advice. Therefore the discursive practices taking place there are analyzed as fragments of discourse. In other words, what is at the center of my interest are statement events in which the attachment parenting discourse is, to use Keller's terms, actualized more or less comprehensively (Keller 2008: 234).

Communication in the breastfeeding support group was oriented at the participants' questions and needs and was guided by the breastfeeding counselors. In this setting, the group leaders took speaker positions which "depict positions of legitimate speech acts within discourses which can be taken on and interpreted by social actors under specific conditions (for instance, after the acquisition of specific qualifications) as role players" (Keller 2011a: 55). Their training by the LLL or through IBCLC exams, therefore, institutionally stabilizes the role they took on

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15 Bobel (2001: 146–147) points out that "race and class dimensions" are inherent to the LLL ideology. Accordingly, the US American LLL members are almost exclusively from the white middle class and are married. The LLL philosophy primarily addresses women who have already decided to breastfeed their child. However, this decision is not purely ideological but also tied to the level of education, access to resources and particularly the economic capital of the family, as the breastfeeding on demand that is propagated by the LLL is difficult to combine with work life.

within the group and enables the breastfeeding counselors to perform legitimate speech acts in this context.

The breastfeeding counselors' statements and practices, therefore, have an inherent interpretative power, and they take on an expert status within the breastfeeding support group. This positioning began with the course announcement in the counselling institution's brochure and was called on during the introductory round at the start of each meeting. Aside from their LLL training, they legitimized their expert status by introducing themselves as mothers. The breastfeeding counselors, thus, support their expert knowledge both through their experiential knowledge and qualifications.

The women participating were usually addressed as *Mamis* (mommies) in the breastfeeding support group. As social actors, they had subject positionings[16] at their disposal. Exemplarily, they could take on the role of the advice seeker and simultaneously the role of the experts of their everyday practice, as long as these corresponded to the ideal of the attachment parenting approach. Furthermore, a specific interpretative frame of motherhood as an identity offering was negotiated in the breastfeeding support group, as will be demonstrated in the following.

By choosing this counselling offer, the mothers have already signaled in advance a commitment to breastfeeding and at least an affinity to an attachment parenting approach. The entire design of the room was aimed at making breastfeeding easier for the mothers. During group meetings, they sat on mattresses on the floor, were surrounded by numerous breastfeeding pillows and breastfed on demand. If the mothers did not use breastfeeding as a means for calming their children, this was noticed by the breastfeeding counselors: In a conversation after the course, one of the consultants told me that a mother whose child was restless and crying had not breastfed the child. The breastfeeding counselor would have liked to have spoken to the mother about it but as she had left early, there had not been an opportunity to do so. Therefore, the breastfeeding support group is not only a space that facilitates breastfeeding, but it is also a space into which breastfeeding is normatively inscribed. Deviating behavior attracted attention and was remarked on.

Adaptation and reinterpretation of experiences of inadequacy

Child development and, thus, maternal action are generally closely observed. Medical staff collects growth, motor skills and weight gain in preventive checkups (Ott and Seehaus 2010) and records this biometrical data in the "*Eltern-Kind-Pass*" (parent-child passport).[17] In addition, mothers need to explain and, at times, justify

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16 Subject positionings here means "positioning processes and 'patterns of subjectivation' which are generated in discourses and which refer to (fields of) addressees" (Keller 2011a: 55).

17 On the competitive tendencies that develop as a result of the classification into a corridor of norms see Heimerdinger (2013).

the methods they have chosen and their skills to their own family, friends and acquaintances. In the following, the handling of such experiences in the breastfeeding support group will be highlighted based on three examples.

Firstly, encounters with doctors, midwives or osteopaths were repeatedly brought up for discussion in the breastfeeding support group. The mothers were usually irritated when the recommendations by these experts deviated from the ideals negotiated in the breastfeeding support group. One participant told the group that a young doctor had advised her to stop breastfeeding while treating her mastitis. However, she said that she had decided to continue breastfeeding because she thought it was important. The breastfeeding counselor explained that doctors often lacked understanding of breastfeeding because it was not part of their training. Breastfeeding often demanded a lot from the mothers, the breastfeeding counselor continued, but it was the right way, even if it often seemed to go against societal conventions, because it was oriented at the child's needs.

Through his recommendation, the doctor had questioned the mother's decision to breastfeed for longer than six months and in spite of health issues. Since breast milk is considered to be the best food and breastfeeding the most natural method, there was consensus in the group that the mother should breastfeed to the best of her abilities. The doctor, on the other hand, had rejected the mother's positioning with his advice that aimed at the mother's health. This irritation was smoothed out by the breastfeeding consultant's reference to the lack of medical training on the topic of breastfeeding.[18]

As demonstrated in this example, the negotiations of practical problems taking place in the group are linked to interpretative frames of morally correct action. In their role as speakers who, thus, act as representatives of the discourse, the breastfeeding counselors served as a corrective. The consultation with them made it easier for the irritated mothers to classify new knowledge as legitimate or illegitimate[19] according to the discourse. These speaking acts, thus, have a structuring effect on everyday knowledge relationships and create orders. The general agreement within the group also strengthened the positioning and practice of the mothers.

Secondly, breastfeeding was often discussed in connection with sacrifice and deprivation. As Marion Müller and Nicole Zillien (2016: 423–424) point out, being able to cope with pain is part of the interpretative frames of pregnancy and birth which is already practiced in antenatal classes. It becomes evident here that this narrative of perseverance is upheld beyond birth. In the breastfeeding support group, one mother told how she had never thought that she would still be breastfeeding

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18 This finding is consistent with Faircloth's (2013: 155) research in LLL groups in Great Britain.

19 Categories such as *truth* and *knowledge* are conceived here as discursive constructions. Truth is, thus, analyzed as, in Keller's words, a historically contingent result of knowledge politics (Keller 2008: 139).

now, especially since she initially had had problems, perhaps like many others as well. But despite the pain, problems and the advice from her social environment to just stop breastfeeding, she had not given up and was now breastfeeding on one side. One of the breastfeeding counselors told her that she should be proud to have fought so hard, because many other mothers would give up because of trivial things. Many could not imagine breastfeeding for a longer period during pregnancy, but once the child was there, they would like to breastfeed for longer after all.

In this example, it is the use of words such as *fought* and *give up* which point to the competitive character of contemporary parenthood (Knaak 2005; Heimerdinger 2013) that immediately stands out. Even though breastfeeding is often negotiated as a natural act that is inscribed into the female body in discourse, it was here thematized as a technique that had to be practiced by the mother through hard work. Her perseverance and her willingness to endure pain in order to give her child the best possible start in life enabled her to position herself as a good mother.

Thirdly, the participants in the breastfeeding support group repeatedly reported the great burden that sleep deprivation presented for them. One mother told the group that, at the moment, her daughter demanded to be fed every hour at night. The sleep deprivation that resulted from this was putting such a strain on her that she could no longer think of words while speaking and have a normal conversation. Other mothers followed with similar stories. The breastfeeding counselors then explained that frequent waking was completely normal for infants and that it was rather the social concept of an infant who sleeps through the night that should be revised. Even if it meant a great effort now, this phase was very important, because through the physical presence of the mothers, a sense of security would be established in the children which would accompany them positively throughout life. The breastfeeding counselors went on to say that studies had shown by now that well attached children woke more frequently at night.

Attachment oriented mothers find themselves in a difficult situation regarding the topic of child sleep, because idealistic and practical problems arise here. The societal ideal of an infant who sleeps through the night, which they sometimes also encounter from other mothers with whom they are friends who have decided to opt for bottle feeding, seems unattainable to them. The path they have chosen not only diverges from a widespread ideal but also turns out to be physically stressful. The breastfeeding counselors, on the other hand, reject the ideal of the child who sleeps through the night because it was not in the best interest of the child. Instead, they provided mothers with an interpretative frame in which the waking of the children becomes proof of secure attachment, and sleep deprivation, thus, becomes proof of the success of the approach.

Making the discourse visible: Discursive limits of the breastfeeding support group

As has already been shown based on the example of the story about the doctor, the set of rules inherent to the discourse determines which legitimate statements can be made at a certain time, in a certain context. Accordingly, discourses contain structures of interpretation and practice that construct reality and, thus, exclude certain content as illegitimate. These discourse limits in the breastfeeding support group become especially tangible in the topics of weaning and pacifiers. When mothers of children younger than one year of age[20] raised the topic of weaning in the breastfeeding support group, the breastfeeding counselors usually inquired about the reasons for this wish. After a few questions, the pressure from the social environment of the respective participant was often identified as the trigger for this question. Weaning was, thus, not interpreted as the mother's wish but rather as that of her partner or their relatives. She was then advised by the breastfeeding counselors to trust her feelings, ignore criticism and continue breastfeeding.

The questions of one mother who complained about waking up to eight times a night to breastfeed and was, therefore, looking for an alternative also remained largely unanswered. In the discursive logic, which ranks the needs of the child first and frames the satisfaction of the child's needs as the most important task of a good mother, the desire to wean appears selfish. A mother who no longer wants to breastfeed, thus, appears to be more concerned with her own well-being than with that of the child.

In addition to weaning, the use of pacifiers was also one of the topics that was met with rejection in the breastfeeding support group. This became evident in the manner in which pacifiers were discussed as soon as the mothers brought them up.[21] One mother, for example, recounted that she found it a relief when her boyfriend was able to take over the care for their child in the evening because they used a pacifier and she could, thus, get a rest. Such narratives were usually introduced by phrases such as "One shouldn't use a pacifier, but …" or mitigated by relativizations in which it was emphasized that it was rarely used.

The need to argue in this manner arises from the fact that it is assumed in the attachment parenting approach that the use of pacifiers or bottles alters the baby's sucking reflex and is, therefore, detrimental to breastfeeding. This alteration is referred to as *sucking confusion*; in addition to being an obstacle for the infant to learn

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20 From the age of approximately 18 months to two years, weaning is discussed as a legitimate option. Exceptions are also made in the case of serious medical issues and if the mother is unable to continue breastfeeding due to illness.

21 The use of pacifiers was brought up only rarely by the mothers, but if the topic did come up, it was usually raised by mothers who attended the breastfeeding support group for the first time or had only joined recently.

to breastfeed, anatomical and logopedic concerns are also mentioned in the debate surrounding pacifiers. Heimerdinger (2010: 14–15) points out that arguments of this kind on the harmful effect of pacifiers can be understood as medicalizing reflexes. However, breastfeeding is understood not only as the intake of food but also as the transmission of positive affective feelings, i.e. love and affection. The child's need to suck, therefore, simultaneously, represents a demand for closeness that should be satisfied by the female breast.

From the participants' point of view: Reception and identity work

The mothers often came to the breastfeeding support group with specific sets of problems and hoped for specific recommendations for action to solve them. The participants tried to offer help to each other by telling about their own every-day experience. Apart from the breastfeeding practices that were demonstrated, the breastfeeding counselors often gave unspecific advice and rather essentially encouraged the mothers in their practice. Their advice on how to improve the situation usually took its starting point in the attitude and mindset of the mother. Thus, for example, the breastfeeding counselors recommended that the mother who complained about the burden of sleep deprivation should accept the situation, as it was easier to bear that way and to look for short breaks in her everyday life wherever possible in order to recharge. But after the encouraging experience in the breastfeeding support group, the mothers often faced the same unsolved problem at home, as Marina told in her interview[22]:

> *Marina [with an eight-month-old daughter]:* I always think it's funny, you go home and think it's all good [laughing] or I'm doing everything right anyway, because they [the breastfeeding counselors, HK] just simply, like, say it *works* when you always breastfeed them and it works if they lie on the breast for a long time and all. Um, but *sometimes* when I lie in bed again and can't get away from her, then I think to myself, yes [laughing] but actually it also doesn't work. But it's certainly – I sometimes go to the maternity and infant welfare service as well and she says, "Yes, by now she [the daughter, HK] should slowly be sleeping in her own bed and you should get her used to that and one hour of midday sleep," and I should see to it that I always put her down at the same time. And then I think [exhales noisily] that is *so not* my thing. And then I think that the breastfeeding support group is more on my level. I think that's the way it is for mommies, that everyone goes and gets [amused] what they want to hear.

Marina here points out the ambivalences of the breastfeeding support group. As the interview shows, she was encouraged in her actions, but she also would have liked

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22   The names of the interview partners have been replaced by pseudonyms. Direct quotations from interviews have been translated from German for better comprehension. Emphasis in the interviews was indicated in the transcription by the use of italics.

to have received specific solutions for her problems. By contrast, Marina had also experienced a different counselling institution. This other consultant gave her very specific instructions, which she, in turn, rejected for idealistic reasons. In the end, Marina opted for the breastfeeding support group despite the partly unsatisfactory situation because it was more in line with her idea of parenting.

The breastfeeding counselors follow the discourse-typical logic of the LLL in their counselling practice, whose declared aim is not to give strict advice but to provide mothers and parents with information as a basis for decisions (La Leche Liga 2018). It is a kind of nondirective, dialogical consultation which seems to abstain from any sort of judgement and instruction.

The mothers are addressed as self-responsible, advised selves who are not only entrusted with their own formation and optimization (Bröckling 2002: 177; Wandhoff 2016: 257) but also with that of their children. Therefore the advice is not intended to result in a change in the child's behavior but starts with the behavior and attitude of the mothers. This focus on parental behavior is also evident in contemporary guidebooks, where the shift from normative-directive to nondirective counselling took place at the end of the 20th century (Wandhoff 2016: 273).

However, the specific counselling practice also showed that in addition to information on coping with everyday life, interpretative frames and morally charged classifications were provided and practiced. There was a noticeable discrepancy for the mothers, at times, between the counselling situation and their everyday experience. In addition to the unspecific counselling, the mothers critically reflected on the discursive-normative limits of the breastfeeding support group:

> *Emma [with a 13-month-old daughter]:* So there is *a lot* of *confirmation* of what in-laws, parents say. [amused] It *feels really good* that you're understood there [in the breastfeeding support group, HK] and that they tell you that that's *rubbish*[23] and blah blah blah and, but there is *not much space* for when a mother wants to *detach, I think*. So [...] I think they [the breastfeeding counselors, HK] are *great* and I *enjoy* it every time I'm there because they, they always give me, I just feel really good afterwards, right? So like they say, uh, they *praise* you and they also say you're doing *great* and it is *worth* hanging in there and so on, but sometimes there is just little space if you just want to, I think, want to say now I *want* to, I don't know, go somewhere or, you know?

As Emma explains, she found a lot of praise and recognition in the group. At the same time, she points out in the last sentence that she is aware of the normative rules of the breastfeeding support group and, therefore, does not introduce certain topics into the discussion. Her desire to go out in the evening or make plans with friends meant that she entrusted her husband with the care of their child. Conse-

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23 The interview partner here refers to well-meaning advice that she receives from her parents or parents-in-law.

quently, she pumped milk which her husband later fed their child with the help of a bottle before putting her (the child) to bed. In the interview, she called this practice *detaching* the mother from her child. Emma, therefore, did not address this topic in the breastfeeding support group, even though it was important for her in her everyday life.

As was already noticeable with Marina, Emma also used the meetings specifically to gain support for her parenting method and confirm her identity work. In the breastfeeding support group, the attachment parenting discourse and its actors were experienced in a manner that enabled the mothers to see themselves as part of a group with the same values, place their actions in a larger context and, thus, interpret them within the discursive interpretative frames. The mothers, often exhausted, enjoyed getting in touch with like-minded people and drew new strength for coping with their everyday lives from the breastfeeding support group. Through the communitization, a sense of not being alone with these problems arose. The breastfeeding support group, thus, had a stabilizing effect on the participants.

Conclusion

For this contribution, the breastfeeding support group was regarded as part of the breastfeeding advocacy dispositif, and the statements that were made as fragments of the discourse of the attachment parenting discourse. The statements that were analyzed show how the discourse was actualized and communicated to the participants. Based on the participants' narratives, classifications of the discourse are evoked and the discourse is, thus, actualized and continued. Singular everyday experiences are classified in the breastfeeding support group by different narratives into the interpretative frame of secure attachment and, thus, into a discourse-specific order of knowledge.

The interpretative frame of secure attachment consists of several elements of interpretation and is closely related to the interpretative frame of motherhood that is negotiated in the discourse. Attachment refers to a relationship between the social positions of mother and child that is primarily argued in terms of biology. These two actors are, thus, in an asymmetrical generational context, with the mother being entrusted with the child's welfare. Attachment is both the prerequisite and a means to enable the child to thrive. This results in the moral imperative of the interpretative frame of motherhood to ensure the development of the child by establishing a secure bond.

The analysis shows that this discursively conveyed goal – a securely attached child – which is difficult to grasp in everyday life, can be experienced by the mothers in the breastfeeding support group. Sleep deprivation and, thus, the dark rings around the eyes of the mothers, therefore, serve as proof of success. The mothers' suffering and sacrifice are here formed into discourse-typical narratives and, thus,

charged with meaning. The actualization of the discursive order provides frames of interpretation of their everyday practice for the participants and narratives for engaging with their critics.

As was demonstrated, contemporary parenthood has a latently competitive character and is often marked by speaking of success. Because of the parental determinism, every alleged wrong decision by the mothers is attested negative consequences for the development of the child. From this obligation to design, the fear of failure is derived as soon as everyday practices do not run smoothly or ideals cannot be implemented. Experiences of inadequacy, on the one hand, not being able to breastfeed and, on the other hand, not being able to get the child to sleep, are reinterpreted into stories of success in the breastfeeding support group by reference to attachment.

This creates spaces for identity work. The participants actualize and constitute their positionings as mothers by resorting to narratives and in reference to identity offers available in the discourse. The emphasis of the natural suitability of women as mothers and the assumed malleability of the children generate the need for a continuous reassurance to have made the right decisions for the welfare of the child. The mothers in the group experience confirmation that all the work and deprivation is not in vain but for the good of their child and that they have committed themselves to the ideals of attachment parenting for good reasons. The breastfeeding support group provides this kind of confirmation in response to parental determinism, which is why mothers use it for their identity work:

> *Emma*: Right and then you leave [the breastfeeding support group, HK] and feel *really great* because you're doing everything *right*, yes? Only then you are at home and then you deal with *exactly* the same thing again as before. Only that you feel good for a few days because you know that you are doing everything right. *Only* someone who doesn't *see* it this way and has like other *values* and things from their social surroundings just can't understand what it is that you always *discuss* in groups like that.

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Cécile Yoko Egli

When a village plans its town: A study of Spreitenbach*

Abstract: The Aargau municipality of Spreitenbach is known today for its high-rise buildings, shopping centers and a high proportion of foreign residents. Shaped by a construction boom that now dates back some fifty years, Spreitenbach is currently looking towards a new future. This article shows the thought patterns, values and routines of two actors within the framework of current planning. The discrepancy between the two actors becomes apparent in the interaction between the planning processes and the specific local factors. The lack of consensus on their ideas and expectations leads to a shift in the space in which participation is negotiated.

Keywords: planning culture, planning, participation, municipal meeting, village, high-rise building

Spreitenbach – a municipality in the Limmat Valley

The Aargau municipality of Spreitenbach lies directly on the border to the neighboring Canton of Zurich, on the plain between the Heitersberg and the Limmat River. Its present appearance is the result of an eventful past, marked by repeated clashes between politics, a vision and the local mentality.[1] Hardly any other community in Switzerland is as well-known as this one for its spatial development. Convinced by the ideas of a young urban planner, the community approved the construction of several high-rise buildings and a shopping center in the 1960s to mid-1970s – true to the US model (Steigmeier 2000: 279f., 298f.). During this time, Spreitenbach grew from a farming village of 1,230 inhabitants to a municipality with a population of more than 7,000.[2] However, when growth and planning got out of hand and the social structure changed due to the influx of numerous guest workers, the construction boom came to an abrupt end (Steigmeier 2000: 306–311; Suter, Balmer, Gasser et al. 1995: 22). From the point of view of many residents and outsiders, what

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1   The book *Spreitenbach* (Brüschweiler, Kottmann, and Steigmeier 2000) gives a detailed and in-depth account of the history of Spreitenbach up to the year 2000, based on community records, newspaper reports and other sources, and literature.

2   Cf. Spreitenbach online. Accessed January 4, 2019. Available at: www.spreitenbach.ch/filead min/00_website/resources/Statistik_1921-2000.pdf.

remains of this heyday is a negative image. To this day, the high-rise buildings, shopping centers and multicultural composition of the population are a constant reminder of failed planning.

Roughly fifty years have passed since the construction boom, and the community is now facing another major change. At the end of 2017, Spreitenbach had a population of 11,796 with a share of foreign residents of 50.3 %.[3] By 2030, the population of the entire Limmat Valley is expected to increase by 22 % compared to the 2015 figures. The number of people employed is also expected to increase by a further 15 % (Amt für Verkehr 2016: 134). Spreitenbach envisages possible growth for this period up to a population of 15,000.[4] The planned Limmat Valley railway between Killwangen-Spreitenbach railway station and Zurich Altstetten was intended to relieve traffic congestion, but instead, it itself became a catalyst (Gemeindepräsident 2017: 12). The attractiveness along the future route as a residential and business location is increasing, and several construction projects in Spreitenbach are already in progress or in planning: A multiplex cinema with apartments, a hotel, a hardware store, further high-rise buildings and a city park. The dimension is like a déjà vu.

Five years ago, in search of an apartment somewhere between Baden and Zurich, I moved to Spreitenbach. I was persuaded by the good traffic connections, the nearby shopping options, the view from the apartment in the high-rise building and, above all, the low rent. Although I led an anonymous life here and did not participate in community life, I was aware of the developments which had been initiated in the last few years. On the contrary, my interest was awakened, and two years ago, Spreitenbach became the research field for my master thesis in Popular Cultures at the University of Zurich. My focus was on the cultural scientific analysis of planning practices and the study of planning culture in Spreitenbach. After a brief description of the theoretical concepts and my methodological approach, I would like to show which values, thought patterns, ideas, traditions and other aspects of culture have a significant influence on the planning practice in Spreitenbach based on two actors. Finally, I would like to illustrate the extent to which this influence can reach by means of the participation which is brought to different levels in Spreitenbach in the course of the planning process.

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3   Cf. Spreitenbach online. Accessed January 4, 2019. Available at: www.spreitenbach.ch/portrait/
    zahlen-und-fakten/alles-auf-einen-blick.
4   The growth was originally forecast to be 18,000 inhabitants. However, this figure has since been
    corrected to 15,000 (Protokoll Einwohnergemeindeversammlung 19.06.2018: 13).

Theoretical approaches in planning culture and more

The gaze in cultural anthropological urban research likes to wander to the inhabitants of a city, to those who, as Andrej Holm[5] and Henrik Lebuhn[6] (2014: 76) have put it, keep producing and reproducing the city with their everyday actions. In recent years, however, the interdisciplinary topic of planning has been gaining momentum in cultural studies. The concept of planning culture is intended to focus on aspects that have so far received too little attention in planning practice (Levin-Keitel and Othengrafen 2017: 76). The concept of planning culture can be described as the missing determinant between planning science and planning practice, because it encompasses the aspects that underlie local or regional planning processes and simultaneously influences them. These include thought patterns, values, routines, traditions and norms – both at the individual and the institutional level (Levin-Keitel and Othengrafen 2017: 76f.).

Due to the complex and dynamic nature of a planning culture and the direct link to a planning process, there is not only one planning culture (Othengrafen 2012: 54; Wolff 2016: 59f.). In a planning culture, as Almut Wolff[7] has pointed out, it is, above all, the ideas of social and spatial design aims, the design of planning processes, adequate drafting processes, the forms of decision-making and communication styles that establish themselves (Wolff 2016: 60). Some actors will already know these values from their professional contexts, for example, urban planning, architecture and public administration, others will only acquire them during the planning process. It is, therefore, very different who gives how much input into a planning process. At the same time, this is decisive for the respective project-specific planning culture (Wolff 2016: 60, 63).

Matthias Loepfe[8] and Angelus Eisinger[9] used semi-structured expert interviews to study the test planning of a site design in terms of its planning practice and planning culture and found a strong orientation at consensus, which, in their view, was problematic in two respects. On the one hand, contradictions and potential conflicts were omitted from the planning process unless immediate solutions were in sight; instead, a harmonious outcome was sought. Thus, the unresolved conflicts were only swept under the carpet; they represented a potential difficulty that could reappear to an even greater extent in the later course of the process. On the other hand, the

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5　Andrej Holm is a social scientist and works as a research associate at the Humboldt University in Berlin.

6　Henrik Lebuhn is a political scientist and research associate at the Humboldt University in Berlin.

7　Almut Wolff is an architect and research associate at Jade University of Applied Sciences.

8　Matthias Loepfe is a social geographer and planning theorist and project manager at the Regional Planning Zurich and Surroundings (RZU).

9　Angelus Eisinger is an urban development and planning historian and Director of Regional Planning Zurich and Surroundings (RZU).

actors had, thus, missed the creative potential that such a dissonance usually makes possible (Loepfe and Eisinger 2017: 51–53).

This tendency can also be observed in politics. Andrej Holm and Henrik Lebuhn describe it as part of post-politics, in which, they write, the creation of a consensus replaces the conduct of dissent and conflict and a technocratic management takes the place of democratic procedures and a depoliticized urban populism prevents the public debate on questions of power and structural contradictions in the cities (Holm and Lebuhn 2014: 87). There is no longer any dispute; rather, the decisions are legitimized by expert opinions (Holm and Lebuhn 2014: 87). Tanja Klöti[10] writes that consensus is always based on negotiation, i.e. it also excludes things and cannot, under conditions of social inequality, be regarded as more democratic than, for example, the results produced by technocratic planning (Klöti 2016: 90). Thus, I ask: Is consensus still a sign of democracy at all or is it a means of oppression and levelling?

This orientation at consensus is supported in planning practice by the trend towards participation. According to Klöti, there is no specific trigger for the rise of participation. Rather, it was the result or the consequence of social changes over the last fifty years. Whether it was the civil rights movement from the 1970s onwards, the weakening of the state tax authority from the 1980s onwards or the progressing globalization, participation was ultimately about control and decision-making (Klöti 2016: 83f.). Regarding spatial planning practice, I am, therefore, confronted with the two questions: who receives control and decision-making power in participation, and what the goal of the initiated negotiation of consensus is.

Answering these questions would reveal the relationship between the actors within a planning culture and reveal part of their thought patterns and values. With the participation of many actors, the routines of action, traditions, norms, thought patterns and values multiply, which determine planning culture significantly. Planning is an application-oriented discipline and is not based on a clearly definable theory but arises, as Frank Othengrafen has pointed out, in interaction with practice and, thus, also with laypersons (Othengrafen 2016: 46). In Spreitenbach, the same actors enter into different planning processes, while the unique past of the municipality not only forms the starting point but has also fundamentally shaped the local actors.

Methodological approach

When I received the invitation to the residents' municipal meeting in the summer of 2017, I took this opportunity to gain a first impression of the municipal admin-

10 Tanja Klöti is a research assistant at the Institute for Social Planning and Urban Development at the University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland Social Work University.

istration, the voters, and the topics and procedures. A completely new picture of Spreitenbach revealed itself to me which had nothing to do with anonymous city life – which I had been pursuing here so far – but reminded me more of my home village where everybody knew everybody.

My curiosity had been aroused and the same evening, I came across the association Pro Spreitenbach, which meets once a month in a restaurant in the center of the village. The association describes itself on its website as the mouthpiece of the silent majority of Spreitenbach.[11] Because of this clear statement, I attended a meeting for the first time in September 2017. The people who gathered that evening at the restaurant were as diverse as the topics that were discussed. Among the fifteen or so present were former members of the municipal council, employees of the municipal administration, members of commissions, new residents and many others. It became clear to me that the Pro Spreitenbach association is an important actor in the community, and, thus, I joined the association without further ado in order to be able to be present as a participant observer until the end of my research. At the subsequent meetings, the question of whether my quiet presence and observation influenced the discussions kept coming into my mind. For this reason, I visited the club meetings a few times after finishing my master thesis and was glad that I could not notice any difference.

Due to the complexity of the topic of planning culture and the given framework of my master thesis, I decided to limit my study to two actors who could be described as representatives of the population: The community, represented by the *Gemeindepräsident* (Mayor), and the Pro Spreitenbach association. Other important and interesting actors in the current development are not only the specialists, such as building owners, building administrators or members of committees, but also the local parties.

I conducted a total of three qualitative interviews. Firstly, with the current *Gemeindepräsident* who had been in office since February 2012 and living in Spreitenbach since the age of two. Afterwards, I conducted an interview with a former *Gemeindeammann*[12] of Spreitenbach through whom I gained historical insight into the processes and developments of the last thirty years thanks to his 21 years on the municipal council. Finally, I conducted a group interview with four members of the Pro Spreitenbach association, three of whom had grown up in the community. Some

11 Pro Spreitenbach. Accessed March 13, 2018. Available at: www.prospreitenbach.ch/index.php/ueber-uns.

12 *Gemeindeammann* is the former term for the *Gemeindepräsident*. The term was changed in Spreitenbach in 2014 due to misunderstandings, in particular with the neighboring communities in the Canton of Zurich, where the *Gemeindeammann* is the debt collection officer (cf. Protokoll Einwohnergemeindeversammlung 24.06.2014: 290).

central questions were the same in all three interviews, while I formulated others based on statements and findings from the interviews I had already conducted.[13]

These three interviews, together with the records from my participant observation, formed the main source of my research. In addition, I used specialist literature on theoretical approaches as well as numerous project records and documentations about Spreitenbach's past.

How planning processes are influenced

Since the current *Gemeindepräsident* took office seven years ago, a strong process orientation has been evident in the planning practice of the municipality. According to him, this is a deliberate course of action which he has pursued together with the building official (Gemeindepräsident 2017: 45f.). Based on the forecast growth, the local residents meeting approved the loan application for a master plan in November 2012. Four years later, it was adopted under the name *Räumliche Entwicklungsstrategie 2030* (Spatial Development Strategy 2030; henceforth RES 2030), which now represents the binding central theme in Spreitenbach and outlines the future development of the municipality up to the year 2030. It provides orientation and states that it aims to serve authorities in the future as a framework for the assessment of spatially relevant decisions (Planpartner AG 2016: 7) by defining priorities and providing instructions for specific projects.

In developing this strategy, the municipality used the instrument of competing ideas which it had experienced only a few months earlier within the framework of the ETH Zurich research project "*Zukunft Raumentwicklung Limmattal*" (Future Spatial Development Limmat Valley). Inspired and convinced by this method, the community commissioned three planning offices to develop ideas based on Spreitenbach's "image of the future" with short-, medium- and long-term development priorities defined by the local council (Planpartner AG 2016: 6, 8). This process was supervised and evaluated by an advisory committee. The three drafts resulted in a synthesis plan which was adopted in a participatory process and then finalized as the master plan and declared binding for the authorities. In this way, it will remain in place even in the event of future changes in the local council, and the building

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13 I guided the conversation with the *Gemeindepräsident* and the Pro Spreitenbach along the lines of the following questions: "In your opinion, how is a town planned?", "How should a town be planned?", "What does your own role in the planning process look like?" and "What do you think of the current construction projects?" I mainly let my interviewees tell me what they thought and, thus, did not have to ask the questions mentioned here explicitly. In the interview with the former *Gemeindeammann*, the focus was more on the past, so the questions were answered somewhat more indirectly. The interviews were conducted in German; for better readability, direct quotations from them have been translated into English.

owners maintain planning security (Planwerkstadt AG 2016: 5; Gemeindepräsident 2017: 40–42).

In this process-oriented approach, the main concerns for the *Gemeindepräsident* are transparency, participation and effectiveness. Shortly after he took office in February 2012, the owners of one of the shopping centers came forward to report on the progress of their construction plans. Since he did not know what these plans were, he was genuinely shocked when he was presented with the interim status that contained two planned high-rise buildings. Against the background of the RES 2030, which was coming up at the time, the owners were then urged by the local council to develop a holistic concept in which the adjoining public space was also considered (Gemeindepräsident 2017: 41f.). The development plan for the *Zentrumsentwicklung Neumatt* (Neumatt Center Development), of which quite a few members of the population remain critical to this day, arose from this brief – but I will go into this in more detail later. The planning process was analogous to that of RES 2030, and the resulting development plan represents a preliminary stage of the overall design plan (Gemeindepräsident 2017: 40f.).

These two planning examples show how decisive the composition of the municipal leadership is in the development of Spreitenbach. The current *Gemeindepräsident*, with his attitude and ideas, not only influences how but also what is planned. In contrast to the critical voices in the population, he is convinced of the development of the center: "Well, […] I think this is a very good project, right? Of course, the opposite could have happened if someone had been elected to office who said: 'No, that's out of the question, even more houses,' or: 'Well, I am actually more on the investor's side and I say: that's right for me'" (Gemeindepräsident 2017: 45).

With him, there is a person in office who not only wants to further develop and expand Spreitenbach, but who is also committed to continuity and reliability. However, in the course of the interview, his personal relationship to the municipality also surfaced time and again. When he told me about the federal program "*Projets urbains*,"[14] in which Spreitenbach had participated with the Langäcker quarter from 2008 to 2015, he began to indulge in childhood memories. The Langäcker quarter is the one where almost all the high-rise buildings of the 1960s and 1970s are located and where the *Gemeindepräsident* grew up. The quarter is not only distinguished by its high-rise buildings but also by its generous green spaces. He remembers that he used to play "Räuber und Poli"[15] with about sixty children between the high-rise

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14 The Bundesamt für Raumentwicklung (Federal Office for Spatial Development) states that the program "*Projets urbains*" was adopted by the Federal Council in 2007 as an integration measure and created positive momentum in the neighborhood. The declared aim of the district developments was to sustainably improve the quality of life of the residents through an interdisciplinary and participatory approach (Bundesamt für Raumentwicklung 2017).

15 Cops and robbers.

buildings during the holidays (Gemeindepräsident 2017: 27). Today, the appearance of the district is characterized by numerous fences which divide the once enormous green space into many small ones (Gemeinde Spreitenbach 2018: 29). Although the "*Projets urbains*" project tried to reopen the spaces, this did not happen because of the complex internal structures of ownership (Gemeindepräsident 2017: 5f.).

It is not only the Langäcker quarter that has unique characteristics. Each quarter in Spreitenbach tells a piece of history and, at the same time, reflects the changes in architectural and spatial planning philosophy, as each was built in a modern and contemporary manner in its time (Gemeindepräsident 2017: 2f.). This peculiarity did also not go unnoticed by the planning offices of the RES 2030 competition of ideas and the expression "*Stadt der Quartiere*" (City of Quarters) was used (Gemeindepräsident 2017: 24f.). While the highlighting and accentuation of the identities and qualities of the individual neighborhoods is now one of the strategic instructions, the question arose for me as to which characteristics define the respective neighborhood identity and quality. In our interview, the *Gemeindepräsident* named the large houses and large open spaces as the identity of the Langäcker quarter (Gemeindepräsident 2017: 2f.). However, this image is much closer to his childhood memory than to the present state. The "emphasis" and "accentuation," therefore, seemed to me to be the wrong expression. Rather, the former identity of the quarter became the new model here.

The arguments presented in this chapter have shown that the *Gemeindepräsident*, respectively, the municipality, have had a decisive influence on the direction of the planning processes. In this process, the past has a conscious or unconscious influence. However, as already indicated, the municipality is not only meeting with approval for its ideas. Many members of the Pro Spreitenbach association are among those people who are critical of the current development based on previous (personal) experiences.

How experiences determine local factors

The average tax force per capita in Spreitenbach in 2017 was around CHF 1,600 (Galbiati 2017). The need for "higher income earners" is clear in order to avoid further tax increases and to be able to realize the planned investments in infrastructure, because the forecast growth up to a population of 15,000 requires more school space and a larger town hall (Gemeindepräsident 2017: 51).

While the municipality expects the influx of "good taxpayers" through projects such as the *Zentrumsentwicklung Neumatt* (Neumatt Center Development), most of Pro Spreitenbach do not believe in this. They have been disappointed too often in the past by similar prospects, and the municipality is aware of this fact. When not much residential space was built in Spreitenbach from the mid-1990s onwards, many people from the middle and upper income brackets moved away because they

could not fulfil their dream of a new apartment or a new house here. There was a lot of catching up to do. It was, therefore, no surprise that the apartments of a new development project were almost exclusively occupied by people from Spreitenbach (Gemeindepräsident 2017: 11f., 28f.). The former *Gemeindeammann* described this phenomenon as the "internal shift" (Ehemaliger Gemeindeammann 2017: 17) and was able to show me in our interview that this process has an almost traditional character in Spreitenbach:

> Then came the call: "Yes, but we sit too tightly together, next to each other and on top of each other. We want something else." One of the next steps was the Schleipfe quarter here [...]. Then a part of the population, I will call them the higher or the better ones, moved up here [into the Schleipfe, C.Y.E.] after the Langäcker. [...] Then came the call "One should convert into property." [...] So the village developed out towards there, and those who were a little better off in the Schleipfe moved again. So, it remained a dream that the best and the best tax payers come to these new areas. This development seems to continue to this day. (Ehemaliger Gemeindeammann 2017: 5)

This "internal shift" seemed to me like climbing a kind of prosperity ladder. Each quarter is a reflection of the prosperity of its inhabitants and, simultaneously, represents a certain rung on the ladder. Thus, contrary to the ambition of luring "good tax payers" to Spreitenbach with the new quarters and apartments, it was mainly people with lower incomes who moved into the vacant, low-cost apartments. The tax structure, therefore, did not improve but rather deteriorated even further and continued to put pressure on the municipality (Gemeindepräsident 2017: 30). Since this development is an open secret, doubts and uncertainties are growing in some parts of the population, especially at Pro Spreitenbach, as to whether this course can be steered into a more positive direction. According to the *Gemeindepräsident*, this phenomenon is slowly coming to an end and in the latest quarter, Kreuzäcker, it had been found that the ratio between the internal shift and external influx was roughly the same (Gemeindepräsident 2017: 29).

Of the many construction projects that I listed at the beginning of this article, the Zentrumsentwicklung Neumatt polarizes like no other. It exposes the values, ideas and thought patterns of the members of the association which are deeply rooted and reach far into Spreitenbach's past. The topic of "internal shift" only played a minor role in their case. It is the planned high-rise buildings which attract attention.

Nowadays, high-rise buildings are no longer a rarity and represent urbanity and densified urban development, attributes which were already regarded as desirable and modern by the urban planners of the last construction boom (Steigmeier 2000: 276). However, the rather small apartments soon no longer corresponded to the average housing demand, and the well-earning couples who had moved to Spreitenbach

due to the ban on cohabitation in the Canton of Zurich gradually left the municipality after the ban was lifted in 1972 (Steigmeier 2000: 310f.; Suter, Balmer, Gasser et al. 1995: 22). The low rent on these apartments then attracted many people from the lower income bracket, who also found employment in the retail trade or industry in Spreitenbach (Steigmeier 2000: 311). In the course of my research, it became clear that this social structural change in the high-rise buildings was accompanied by social challenges which had entrenched themselves in the object "high-rise building." For many people in Spreitenbach, the high-rise building became a symbol of problems of integration, welfare cases and low-income residents. In our group interview, a member of Pro Spreitenbach said that the high-rise buildings used to have a "wow factor" but were now frowned upon (Pro Spreitenbach 2018: 1). Interestingly, this statement came from a member of the association who, like the *Gemeindepräsident*, grew up in one of the high-rise buildings in the Langäcker quarter. During the interview, he also spoke fondly about his childhood and life in the neighborhood but, unlike the *Gemeindepräsident*, his aversion outweighs his beautiful memories. However, there are also more pragmatic reasons behind his reluctance which have to do with the impact on the infrastructure.

As has already been mentioned, the growth requires additional school space and a larger town hall. But since the population of Spreitenbach had experienced only a few years ago that new schools particularly could escalate into extremely high expenses, the four members of Pro Spreitenbach suspected that many in the community were now sensitized to question the development even more (Pro Spreitenbach 2018: 79f.). They also felt completely perplexed that the next school building was already being planned: "And one is hardly finished, and it takes four months and I hear, for the first time, that we are to have a school building again and I think this can't be happening. We just spent 28 million and now they are back at it again" (Pro Spreitenbach 2018: 59).

According to the population increase forecasted, Spreitenbach will need eighteen additional classrooms by the 2024/25 school year (Protokoll Einwohnergemeindeversammlung 28.11.2017: 606). Due to this tight schedule, the municipality drew up a proposal for the construction of a new town hall to convert the old one into a school building. When the project loan was put to the vote in the fall of 2017, the resistance at the municipal meeting was clearly noticeable and the voters rejected the construction. Looking back, the *Gemeindepräsident* spoke in our interview about an unholy alliance of opponents to the introduction of a waste regulation[16] and the town hall and a negative mood at the meeting. When it came to the agenda item of a provisional bus stop for the new Kreuzäcker quarter, the tone remained negative. In response, the former *Gemeindeammann*, who had not wanted to take an active part

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16   Spreitenbach was one of the last municipalities in Switzerland not to charge any waste fees.

since resigning from office, spoke up and denounced the negative mood; he pointed out that the people who now lived in the area were also a part of Spreitenbach and appealed that they should be made to feel welcome (Ehemaliger Gemeindeammann 2017: 11–13). This statement was a surprise also to the *Gemeindepräsident* as, according to him, it was something of a code of honor not to continue to be involved in politics after one's term of office had ended (Gemeindepräsident 2017: 62). The application for the bus stop was accepted by a narrow margin of 100 to 91 votes.

Both the infrastructure and the high-rise building are themes which are charged with experiences in Spreitenbach. From my point of view, they are among the specific local factors, because, on the one hand, they are physically present on site, on the other hand, they trigger reactions from the actors – especially on the part of the population – in the form of perceptions, thought patterns and values which influence planning fundamentally. This was also evident in the tense mood at the municipal meeting in the fall of 2017. In the course of my research, I repeatedly noticed that a certain critical and, at the same time, strong-willed attitude is anchored among the residents in Spreitenbach from which collectives had quickly formed in the past, and that this is still the case today.

The mentalities in Spreitenbach

The Pro Spreitenbach association is such a collective and consists of people whose common interest is the future of Spreitenbach. In contrast to the local parties, the association does not pursue a specific program and is, therefore, described by some as intangible or even unpredictable (Gemeindepräsident 2017: 55; Pro Spreitenbach 2018: 64). However, it is precisely this freedom that allows its members to be interested in all kinds of matters and to have an open ear – which, at times, is a reason for the steady increase in members.[17] As a member, one also does not have any duties and does not have to participate in the meetings; nevertheless, one can find out what was discussed at the previous meeting via the monthly newsletters to which the minutes of the meeting are attached. Regarding current developments in spatial planning, the association's focus is particularly on the revision of the Bau- und Nutzungsordnung (building code; hereafter BNO)[18] since, as the association sees it, "this paper decides what Spreitenbach will look like today, in ten years and in fifty years" (Pro Spreitenbach 2018: 52). This is because, based on the current version of the BNO, the planned high-rise buildings of the Zentrumsentwicklung Neumatt have a utilization rate that is too high – which means that they are too high with their planned 95 and 98 meters.[19] For this reason, among others, this point has to

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17 Today, the association has about 80 members.
18 As the building code states, it covers municipal spatial planning, environmental and building law and applies to the entire municipal territory (Einwohnergemeinde Spreitenbach 2012: 4).
19 Roughly 25 % higher than the current high-rise buildings.

be considered in the revision and changed accordingly (Planwerkstadt AG 2016: 28). The members of Pro Spreitenbach are anything but enthusiastic about the fact that the construction project is not oriented to the laws but that the law is to be adapted to the construction project (Pro Spreitenbach 2018: 19f.). The height of the buildings is especially met with resistance, and they are convinced that many of the population are not even aware of how high the new buildings will be. According to them, the complexity of the BNO also contributes to this ignorance:

> Those who have never built or bought, have never read the BNO. They don't even know what BNO means. – Those who have built before, or who, like us now, have been a little involved with it, there are a few who have read it. Of these few who have read it, a few should still be able to understand it [speaks slowly and clearly]. (Pro Spreitenbach 2018: 51)

The last building boom showed the consequences that a lack of awareness and understanding can have. It struck me both in the group interview and at the meetings of the association that there was always talk of powerlessness. It was said that one had been overrun by growth (Pro Spreitenbach 2018: 7). However, the former *Gemeindeammann* sees Spreitenbach in a not quite so innocent light. At the time, one had believed in the future, and when the proposals were presented to the population and the municipality, they had been convinced by them, so that they had also approved all the steps at the municipal meetings. Therefore, the question arises as to what extent they were aware of the whole thing and able to grasp the matter at all (Ehemaliger Gemeindeammann 2017: 2f.).

For Pro Spreitenbach, the BNO is a decisive instrument for shaping the future of the municipality. Above all, it is seen as the only way to apply the brakes a little in the current developments. This was necessary during this building boom as Spreitenbach to them was actually a village (Pro Spreitenbach 2018: 37f.). I heard the term "village" and also the sentence "We are a village" from many here in Spreitenbach, particularly at the association Pro Spreitenbach, even though, based on the population, the municipality has not been a village for a long time. However, the term was not only used to describe the village-like character of life in the municipality, the village was also defined in the municipality. "Everything that is west of the Bahnhofstrasse is the village" (Pro Spreitenbach 2018: 38), meaning not only the original village center but also the surrounding neighborhoods in which there are as few high-rise buildings as possible. This word seemed to me to be a means of segregation, voluntarily and consciously undertaken by the "villagers" to separate themselves from the quarters with the high-rise buildings. The origin of this separation reaches far back into the past:

> You just have to keep in mind that we actually had a well-functioning farming village here. And we suddenly had some kind of satellite town that has grown together with it over time. And, in my eyes, this has resulted in two different residential

populations: the working class and the natives, practically all of whom still came from the farming industry. (Pro Spreitenbach 2018: 6)

This clash of two worlds seems insurmountable to this day. It had been wishful thinking from the start that this would become a community (Pro Spreitenbach 2018: 97). "There's no such thing as living together after all. Those [in the high-rise buildings, C.Y.E.] have a completely different attitude than the ones up here [in the village, C.Y.E.]" (Pro Spreitenbach 2018: 97f.). What exactly was meant by these attitudes was not explicitly stated in the interview. The two terms "village" and "high-rise building" were repeatedly juxtaposed like two poles. This clear positioning, therefore, makes it possible to conclude what the "village" does not stand for: Integration problems, welfare cases and low-income residents. My conclusion was also confirmed by the fact that only two out of four people who took part in my group interview once lived in these quarters, from which they now distinguish themselves by the term "village".

The *Gemeindepräsident* had also noticed this tendency at the municipal meeting in November 2017 when the provisional bus stop was put to the vote: "They say they are Pro Spreitenbach, but, for example, they were against a bus stop in Raiacker anyway. So, [he laughs] they are actually Pro Village, but they still aren't. It is still difficult to figure out the whole thing" (Gemeindepräsident 2017: 55).

This attitude may stem from the fact that the entire board of the association lives in the "village," and I can understand that they view things from a personal perspective first. Regarding the provisional bus stop, Pro Spreitenbach's opinion was that the distance to an existing bus stop would not have been unreasonable for the residents of the new quarter as some of the "villagers" would have to walk much further.

However, as has already been mentioned, Pro Spreitenbach's goal is to raise the population's awareness and make them understand how important the BNO is for the future and what it means (Pro Spreitenbach 2018: 53). In their quest to act for the community, however, the members feel left alone and are a little annoyed by the fact that the local parties are hardly involved:

Do you hear the FDP anywhere? Or do you hear the SP say that they had discussed something? Maybe their consultations are secret, which is actually of no use – we speak for the village and not about the village. So, without being arrogant, who is still talking about Spreitenbach except Pro Spreitenbach? (Pro Spreitenbach 2018: 64)

The history of Spreitenbach shows that such initiatives from the population – such as by Pro Spreitenbach – have made a difference. Thus, about 170 years ago, the Spreitenbach farmers used their hay forks to drive out the surveyors of the Spanisch-

brötlibahn[20] and, thus, prevented a railway station from being built near the village (Kulturkommission Spreitenbach 1973: 54). In 1986, the electorate rejected the construction of the industrial road which had been favored above all by the shopping centers and industry and had also been approved by the municipal council (Ehemaliger Gemeindeammann 2017: 16; Steigmeier 2000: 328). The population at that time was of the same opinion as Pro Spreitenbach today: Too much is being built. As a result, the *Industrieverein* (industrial association) built the road at its own expense in 1996 (Ehemaliger Gemeindeammann 2017: 16; Steigmeier 2000: 328).

This prevention of undesirable developments does not seem to be a novelty in Spreitenbach. Whether it be against the Spanischbrötlibahn, the industrial road or the high-rise buildings – the motives for collective action always lie in the rejection of growth. Most members of the Pro Spreitenbach association see themselves as part of the "village" and act from this perspective. In the current development, Pro Spreitenbach wants to shake up the population and make them aware of the importance of the BNO. They want participation and a say in Spreitenbach's future.

The shift in participation

Both the Räumliche Entwicklungsstrategie 2030 (Spatial Development Strategy) and the Zentrumsentwicklung Neumatt (Neumatt Center Development) were the subject of a process of participation. Interested parties were invited to come forward to comment on the draft plan, which represented a synthesis of the competing ideas. From the point of view of the municipality, the participation process offers the opportunity to involve the population earlier and to be able to respond to their fears and needs. Furthermore, it permitted them to react at a relatively early stage of the project and incorporate suggestions, because, from a financial point of view, it would be a great pity if millions were invested in projects which, at the end, resulted in a "no" in a municipal meeting without knowing why (Gemeindepräsident 2017: 45f.). Tanja Klöti also writes that participation is mainly facilitated by the actors from the administration and planning departments to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning process (Klöti 2016: 87). It is not *per se* a question of jointly shaping and deciding but merely of eliminating reservations.

An exhibition took place in the shopping center for several weeks regarding the participation in the Zentrumsentwicklung Neumatt, at which, the *Gemeindepräsident* was present on two Saturdays to provide information (Gemeinde Spreitenbach 2016: 3; Gemeindepräsident 2017: 31f.). A total of 56 submissions were made. Given the population of almost 12,000 and the possibility for non-voters to participate, the figure did not seem very high to me at first. The *Gemeindepräsident* shared this

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20   Literally the Spanish roll (a puff pastry specialty) railway, a colloquial term for the Swiss northern railway. It was the first railway in Switzerland and opened the Zurich-Baden line in 1847.

opinion and also confessed that there was not a single positive feedback among the submissions. This presented the municipality with a difficult situation, because it was unclear to them how they should deal with this and whether their work was predominantly met with approval or not (Gemeindepräsident 2017: 31f.). However, the disappointment was not only on the part of the municipality but also on the part of Pro Spreitenbach. At one of the meetings, the members of the association told me a little angrily that, on the one hand, the procedure had been very cumbersome and, on the other hand, that the resulting report was sobering. In order to be able to participate, they first had to search for the form on the convoluted municipal website, download it, print it, fill it in by hand and then send it back to the municipality either as a scan via e-mail or by post. They found it unacceptable that a document available online could not be completed online. In the face of this, they had asked themselves if the municipality even wanted people to join in at all or whether this was only a tedious duty.

A participation process gains its justification from the fact that it is assumed that the population wants to actively participate. According to urban ethnologist Barbara Lang, the initiator of a participation process assumes a population which corresponds to an ideal image and, thus, provides an exact reflection of the population's opinion (Lang 2000: 65). In her words, the urban dweller is interested, committed, politically involved and highly motivated to help shape their living environment (Lang 2000: 65). However, the response to the participatory procedure has shown that the participants also expect a certain performance on the part of the initiator, which not only has an influence on the number of submissions but also on the willingness to participate in future events again.

The control and decision-making power in the participation remained in the hands of the municipality and the building owners, and the aim of the negotiation of consensus was to eliminate concerns on the part of the population. The fact that the population was not involved at the beginning of the planning process but only after a draft had already been drawn up had already excluded other options. In the light of Pro Spreitenbach's great interest in the revision of the building code and the general rejection of the municipal building at the municipal meeting, the desire for participation is clearly evident. From Pro Spreitenbach's point of view, one could only have a say in minor matters. As far as they were concerned, an investor comes in, buys land, applies for a building permit for the construction project, and then everything was assessed. Only once the building phases were published or the building profile was set up would one learn about it. No one asked whether they agreed with it (Pro Spreitenbach 2018: 49f.).

Pro Spreitenbach sees the possibility of finally having a say in the revision of the building code, at least as far as the height of the planned high-rise buildings

is concerned (Pro Spreitenbach 2018: 49f.). However, just as with the participation process, the average participation at the municipal meeting is low:

> And then, out of 12,000 inhabitants, we have 4,500 voters. If it goes badly, 80 people come to the municipal meeting in a gym, or 120 to 130 if it goes mega crazy well. And 130 people vote on what 15,000 inhabitants that we will eventually have will have to live with at the end of the day. Then I don't understand why people don't go to municipal meetings or at least vote. (Pro Spreitenbach 2018: 53f.).

Pro Spreitenbach has set up a working group to explain the importance of this building code to as many people as possible and to motivate them to participate in the meeting. It is intended to discuss the exact content of the new BNO draft and show what the revised legal texts and calculation tables mean in concrete terms, so that amendments can be proposed at the vote if necessary (Pro Spreitenbach 2018: 53).

The two actors studied here had different ideas about what participation in a planning process should mean, and the failed implementation of the participation process further exacerbated this discrepancy. Although the process provided a platform for negotiation, no consensus was reached because of the different expectations. Pro Spreitenbach would like the opportunity to have a say in something that will be a significant influence on the future and is now discussing the participation in the municipal meeting. A decision will probably be made there this year (2019) as to whether or not a consensus can still be found. If not, then dissonance, according to Loepfe und Eisinger, at least enables creative potential, which might not be such a bad way of finding a new way to consensus. From my point of view, a look at the remaining 99 % of the population of Spreitenbach who do not participate in municipal meetings or participation processes would still be interesting. The question arises if it is justified to derive a consensus of the entire population of Spreitenbach from the actively expressed opinions, votes and submissions in the participation process.

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