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Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

On behalf of the Editorial Board, I am delighted to present this issue of the University of Michigan Undergraduate Journal of Anthropology. The essays in this issue represent the outstanding anthropological research and writing that is currently being accomplished at the undergraduate level. I am also proud that this Journal represents the diversity of theoretical and methodological approaches at use in anthropology today.

This volume is divided into three thematic sections. The two essays in the “Nationalism and Conflict” section explore how visions of the nation are contested and reconfigured in times of crisis. Author Jing Hao Liong gives an anthropological account of anti-corruption protests in Malaysia, while Connor Liskey looks to the aesthetic and spatial aspects of the ongoing Israeli military occupation of Palestine. The section “Medicine and Society” displays the innovative work being done in the field of medical anthropology. Alan Z. Yang provides a theoretical framework for the term “local microbiology,” which pays particular attention to the role of the “local” in producing biological knowledge. Evelyn Shen examines the cultural dimensions of death, using the case of end-of-life (EOL) care for terminally ill cancer patients in Taiwan. Ignacio Fernando Cerdá Blanes and Gonzalo Linares Matás examine the ways in which international responses to, and media coverage of, the spread of contagious diseases are linked with the threat that these diseases pose to so-called “developed countries.” In the “Reflections from Abroad” section, Audrey Schield reflects on her recent experience in India, as she considers what makes her informants happy, and how this has transformed her own conception of happiness.

I would like to thank every member of the Editorial Board for offering their patience, time, and intellect to reading and evaluating these submissions. In addition, this issue would not have been possible without the help of the faculty in the Department of Anthropology.

Sincerely,

Connor Liskey, Editor-in-Chief, University of Michigan Undergraduate Journal of Anthropology

Author Biographies

Ignacio Fernando Cerdá Blanes

Ignacio Fernando Cerdá Blanes is a fourth-year undergraduate student reading Medicine at Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain (UCM). He is interested in microbiology, contagious diseases, and surgery procedures, particularly traumatology. For his clinical training, he's attending Hospital Clínico San Carlos (Madrid). He is the student representative for the module *Surgery Pathology I* at UCM's Surgery Department.

Jing Hao Liong

Jing Hao Liong is currently an M.A. candidate in China Studies at the Yenching Academy of Peking University. His academic interests lie at the intersection of queer theory, postcolonial studies, and East and Southeast Asian studies. During his time at the Yenching Academy, Jing intends to explore gender and sexual politics in urban China and work towards conducting an ethnographic study of queer Chinese lives in contemporary Beijing. Jing recently graduated from Columbia University in May 2016 having majored in Anthropology and Economics-Political Science.

Connor Liskey

Connor Liskey is a recent graduate of the University of Michigan—Ann Arbor, where he studied political science, history, and socio-cultural anthropology. Connor is interested in topics including Islamic intellectual history, social and cultural histories of the Indian Ocean world, and the intersections of historical and anthropological inquiry. In the future, Connor hopes to pursue graduate studies in either history or anthropology.

Gonzalo Linares Matás

Gonzalo Linares Matás is a third-year undergraduate student reading Archaeology & Anthropology at St. Hugh's College, University of Oxford (UK). He is particularly interested in the socio-political contexts of heritage management and ownership, contemporary archaeological theory, and the socio-economic dimensions of early bone technology. He is the Executive Editor of the International Journal of Student Research in Archaeology, and member of the World Archaeological Congress Student Committee. He is currently applying for PhD programs in heritage studies and Palaeolithic archaeology.

Audrey Schield

Audrey is a senior studying Anthropology and Psychology at Washington University in St. Louis. Since the start of her Happiness Project in Southeast Asia and South America, she has used data visualization to bring her research to life. She looks forward to applying her passion in ethnography to design research after graduation.

Evelyn Shen

Evelyn Shen is currently a junior studying Global Health in the Anthropology Department at Washington University in St. Louis. She is interested in the intersection of culture and well-being, and hopes to be able to combine these interests in pursuing an MD/MPH program when she graduates. In her free time, she enjoys visiting farmers' markets, exploring new places, and doing pilates. This paper was inspired by her uncle's lung cancer diagnosis in the beginning of 2015; his laughter and smiles continue to inspire those around him.

Alan Z. Yang

Alan studies Molecular & Cellular Biology and Social Anthropology at Harvard College. His academic interests include the molecular underpinnings of life and the lived experiences of people situated in a particular locality. The specific topics Alan likes to study through these lenses are infectious disease and human aging. He conducts research on antibiotic resistance and pneumococcal epidemiology. He also enjoys playing piano and singing with seniors in Boston nursing homes on the weekends with Harvard-Radcliffe MIHNUET (Music in Hospitals and Nursing Homes Using Entertainment as Therapy).

“Nationalism in Crisis: Analyzing Media Coverage of Corruption and Protests in Malaysia”

Jing Hao Liong, Columbia University

1MDB AND BERSIH 4

Najib Razak & 1MDB - “HEIST OF THE CENTURY”

I spent the month of August in 2015 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia primarily to conduct preliminary fieldwork for an upcoming senior thesis project. While I had initially planned on studying strategies of resistance enacted by minority subjects, my preparations became obsolete as a result of the public unfolding of a corruption case that accused current Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak of pocketing 2.6 billion ringgit through 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), a state owned strategic development company. This and the deplorable state of our economy were the only things anyone wanted to talk about – and with good reason.

In an article entitled “HEIST OF THE CENTURY – How Jho Low Used PetroSaudi As a ‘Front’ to Siphon Billions out of 1MDB!” published on February 28th, 2015, the *Sarawak Report* exposed to the public a series of documents and emails that seemed to link 1MDB, the missing RM2.6 billion, Prime Minister Najib Razak, and Malaysian billionaire Jho Low in a Hollywood-worthy stunt of deceit and greed.¹ On July 2nd, 2015, the Wall Street Journal published a report that traced the flow of cash as ending directly in the pocket of the Prime Minister himself.² This sensational accusation was contemporaneous with a weak economy and a dramatic depreciation

¹ “HEIST OF THE CENTURY – How Jho Low Used PetroSaudi As ‘A Front’ To Siphon Billions Out Of 1MDB!” *Sarawak Report*, February 28, 2015, accessed February 4, 2016, <http://www.sarawakreport.org/2015/02/heist-of-the-century-how-jho-low-used-petrosaudi-as-a-front-to-siphon-billions-out-of-1mdb-world-exclusive/>.

² Tom Wright and Simon Clark, “Investigators Believe Money Flowed to Malaysian Leader Najib’s Accounts Amid 1MDB Probe,” *The Wall Street Journal*, July 2, 2015, accessed April 10, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10130211234592774869404581083700187014570>.

of the ringgit to its lowest level against the US dollar since 1997.³ This problem made blatantly clear the deplorable lack of transparency and accountability in the Malaysian political system, as well as the disproportionate power of the Prime Minister. Malaysia seemed to be in a *state of crisis* with no apparent solution in sight.

Bersih 4: the opposition responds

As more information about 1MDB became available, members of Malaysia's civil society began expressing their dissatisfaction with the government's complacency and the prime minister's consistent denial of the allegations. The problem now began to be articulated as a systemic failure of the Malaysian political system that no longer enjoyed "public confidence." The political system had failed in more than one dimension: ideologically (as a supposed democracy *for the people*), economically (having supposedly brought about the depreciation of the ringgit), and legally (having supposedly failed to uphold the principles of the Constitution).

The various grievances and critiques expressed by both civil society and the people coalesced around the demands put forward by Bersih 2.0, a "coalition of like minded civil society organisations unaffiliated with any political party... [that aims to] effectively monitor both sides of the political divide."⁴ This coalition has historically been and continues to be involved in electoral reform and monitoring to ensure free and fair elections. The concern with transparency and accountability is reflected in the name of the organization, "Bersih," which is the Malay word for "clean."

³ Leslie Shaffer, "Does Malaysia's ringgit face 1997 all over again?" *CNBC*, September 24, 2015, accessed April 10, 2016, <http://www.cnbc.com/2015/09/24/malaysian-ringgit-sell-off-may-worsen-over-economy-1mdb-najib.html>.

⁴ Bersih 2.0, "About," *Bersih 2.0*, accessed December 6, 2015, <https://www.bersih.org/about/background/>.

In response to recent political developments, Bersih 2.0 put forth a list of demands directed towards the Prime Minister and the incumbent government. What deserves particular attention is the *political* nature of these demands and the fact that they concentrate on the particularities of the corruption case itself – the clarification of transaction details, the temporary resignation of the prime minister, and the publicizing of the investigation. Concluding this media statement, Bersih 2.0 announces that the planned rally “will be held on the streets of Kuala Lumpur, Kuching and Kota Kinabalu from August 29th, 2pm to August 30th.”⁵

The proposed date of the rally (August 29th – August 30th) warrants attention as it immediately precedes Independence Day (August 31st), arguably one of the most important holidays of the year. With the 1MDB scandal becoming ever more divisive and controversial right around the time of Independence Day, “the nation” became a powerful ideology to be exploited by both the opposition and the government. Nationalism is deployed to remedy the “political crisis” that many believe Malaysia is experiencing, and it is deployed as a unifying force with the potential to put the country “back on the right track.” How nationalism is conceived and how crisis is solved became the subjects of political contestation that is, in part, performed textually through the publication and circulation of newspapers among the general public.

A brief examination of the Bersih 4 call-to-action has revealed how nationalism as conceived by an oppositional political agenda is tied to the notions of government transparency and accountability, the rule of law, and the self-determination of the people. Some further

⁵ Bersih 2.0, “BERSIH 4: The Time Has Come,” *Bersih 2.0*, July 29, 2015, accessed December 6, 2015, <http://www.bersih.org/bersih-4-the-time-has-come/>.

remarks on what I observed during my participation in the Bersih 4 rally will help elaborate upon some of these themes.

The Ethnographer as Protestor

Because my returning flight from Malaysia back to the United States happened to be on the night of August 29th, I was fortunate enough to attend the first few hours of the Bersih 4 rally. At around 8AM, I caught the KTM, one of the main commuter trains in the city, to make my way from the suburban area of Subang Jaya to Petaling Street in the central part of Kuala Lumpur, one of the designated “meet-up locations” for Bersih 4 participants. Accompanying me were a friend with whom I was staying, her mother, and a group of her mother’s friends. While it was the first time my friend and I had participated in a large-scale rally in Malaysia, we were in good hands as the rest of the group were regular participants in previous demonstrations. I soon learned that this sort of regular involvement was not the norm.

On the KTM was an odd mixture of people – interspersed among the crowd of regular commuters were people attending the Bersih 4 rally wearing conspicuous bright yellow Bersih t-shirts.⁶ Those of us wearing these t-shirts naturally found ourselves clustered together to talk about why we were going to the rally, what we were expecting, and what we thought could be accomplished in the end. Repeatedly, people made reference to the 1MDB scandal, the Prime Minister’s reckless behavior, and the disastrous state of the economy. These were not necessarily surprising given the kinds of discourses that I had been hearing before and the framing of the issues by the Bersih organizers themselves.

⁶ Wearing these yellow t-shirts was banned prior to the rally as a potential national security threat.

What did strike me as unusual and noteworthy was the fact that this was the first time many of the people we spoke to had ever participated in any sort of protest. Many felt compelled to come out and “show some support,” to do *something* to address what was being perceived as a potentially irreversible crisis. A middle-aged Malaysian Chinese woman who I talked to on the KTM explained it to me as such:

“You know, usually I don’t do this sort of thing. Politicians do stupid shit, of course, but this stupid Najib is really something ah! He’s going to ruin the country, you know? This Najib, tak boleh tahan.⁷ So I must come out and show some support before these politicians really screw up our country.”⁸

What is interesting about this comment is that the 1MDB scandal elicited from her a sense of responsibility to the nation that was articulated over and over again by numerous people I met that day. The perception of crisis and the fact that “these politicians [can] really screw up our country” compel actual political action from those who are otherwise indifferent, and its reference and citation can serve as a powerful rhetorical strategy for the preservation of the status quo *or* for the mobilization of dissent. Whether or not the country is *in crisis* according to the evaluations of economists or political scientists is irrelevant; what is important is that the perception of crisis itself can be politicized and contextualized within a discourse that makes use of nationalism as part of its solution. The differential formulations of crisis and its solution must be attended to so that we can understand the different political imaginaries being proposed.

We reached Petaling Street at around 9AM, and by noon a significant crowd had gathered. The mood is simultaneously festive and emotionally charged – people listen to

⁷ *Tak boleh tahan* translates roughly to *intolerable, not being able to tolerate*.

⁸ I reproduce this quote from notes I managed to scribble during our brief conversation. I had made it clear that I was doing research on the 1MDB scandal and the subsequent Bersih 4 protests.

impassioned speeches condemning the government and demanding reforms while munching on a snack or drinking *air mata kucing*, a sweet iced fruit-drink. Small Malaysian flags are being distributed for free, with some dedicated individuals hoisting oversized flags through the crowd, a constant reminder of what is at stake. Witty and snarky signs get the attention of photographers and other participants alike, and confer upon their designers their fifteen minutes of fame.

From the multitude of symbols, images, and slogans that inundated the sea of protestors, an association between nationalism and crisis as articulated through an oppositional politics began to cohere. The rhetoric used by the Bersih organizers in the call-to-action referenced above was echoed in the slogans being chanted, the speeches being delivered, and the signs being carried. The Bersih 4 rally was concerned primarily with the *economic* and *institutional* crisis being catalyzed by bad politics and even worse politicians. It was a rally that gave voice to a collective exasperation with the institutions that undergirded Malaysian politics, and it was a coming together of frustrated Malaysians to “show some support” for a political program that offered reform and change.

Conclusion

I was unfortunately unable to stay for the entirety of the Bersih 4 rally that culminated in Dataran Merdeka (Independence Square) on midnight before Independence Day. I was left to “participate” in the protests virtually through updates online and through communicating with friends who were on the ground.

It was during this time that I began to notice a discrepancy between what I understood to be the politics of the Bersih 4 rally and its portrayal in the newspapers. Critiques of the country's political institutions were recast as anti-Malay sentiments propagated by Chinese protestors, and a demonstration that sought to remedy what it perceived to be a national crisis was translated into an irresponsible outburst that threatened to tear the country apart. Given the very stringent and politically motivated legislation curtailing media freedom in Malaysia, I began to suspect that much more than "differing opinions" or "differing viewpoints" were at play. The particular representation of this rally and the political issues it sought to address is bound up with state power and the political imaginaries that are put forward as possible and, more importantly, desirable.

This project is thus an inquiry into the ways that the state mobilizes and regulates the media in its struggle for political hegemony and control. Rather than attempting to ascertain the legitimacy and accuracy of assigning the term "crisis" to the current political situation in Malaysia, I am concerned with *how* and *why* crisis is recognized and *how* and *why* nationalism is mobilized to address the said crisis. The admittedly ambiguous title of this thesis, *Nationalism in Crisis*, lends itself to two interpretations that speak to my project: *Nationalism in* [a state of] *Crisis* and *Nationalism in* [a time of] *Crisis*. While the former indicates the divergent and contestable interpretations of the nation, the latter indicates the mobilization of nationalism in a specific moment of crisis as a remedial and unifying element. Despite their contradictory directions (divergence vs. unification), these two interpretations are not independent of one another but crucially interrelated. It might be argued that crisis intensifies, if not produces, multiple and incongruous imaginations of the nation (nationalism in a state of crisis), each of

which must then compete for hegemonic control as it attempts to solve the crisis and as it envisions a post-crisis world (nationalism in a time of crisis).

POLITICS AND PUBLICS OF THE ARCHIVE

Generating the Archive

In lieu of returning back to Malaysia and conducting extensive on-the-ground ethnographic fieldwork, I rely on opinion pieces and ‘letters to the editor’ published online in two Malaysian English-language newspapers, *The Star*⁹ and *New Straits Times*.¹⁰ Influenced by Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, I understand the newspaper as an intriguing site of analysis that can potentially tell us something about how the nation is imagined to be re-constituted after crisis, and the political and social imaginaries propagated by the state. All articles collected for this project were published between July and October of 2015.

The Politics of Media in Contemporary Malaysia

The Malaysian public sphere is one severely curtailed by restrictive legislation that directly affect what we might think of as freedom of expression and freedom of information. Those directly affecting the media include the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA), the Official Secrets Act (OSA), the Internal Security Act (ISA), and the Sedition Act.¹¹ Shrouded in the language of maintaining unity and order, these laws make punishable a wide scope of topics, from the

⁹ <http://www.thestar.com.my>.

¹⁰ <http://www.nst.com.my/>.

¹¹ Ross Tapsell, “The Media Freedom Movement in Malaysia and the Electoral Authoritarian Regime,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 43, no. 4 (2013): 615, accessed April 10, 2016, doi: 10.1080/00472336.2013.765138.

seemingly mundane of everyday life (race, religion, ethnicity) to those that take on a more ‘political’ or ‘intellectual’ register (parliamentary democracy, contempt against royalty, indigenous rights).

The mainstream Malaysian media is largely owned, directly or indirectly, by the Malaysian government or government-linked individuals. Surveying the Malaysian media landscape, Yang and Ishak find that through their investment arm, Media Prima, UMNO owns a variety of media outlets including *New Straits Times*, *Business Times*, *Malay Mail*, TV3, NTV7, 8TV, TV9, Fly FM, and Hot FM; similarly, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), a party within the ruling coalition, owns *The Star* and RedFM 104.9 through their official holding company, Huaren Holding Sdn Bhd.¹²

Who is the Public?

It is noteworthy that *New Straits Times* and *The Star*, the two newspaper publications I will be using in this paper, are included in the list of state-owned newspapers enumerated in the above section. Unsurprisingly, they are predominantly pro-government publications that are used to propagate the state’s political and ideological agenda as well as to neutralize the threat of outspoken and powerful dissidents.¹³

Something should be said regarding the particular ‘publics’ conjured and addressed by these publications. Despite the wide circulation of both *New Straits Times* and *The Star*, with

¹² Yang Lai Fong and Md. Sidin Ahmad Ishak, “Gatekeeping in the Coverage of Interethnic Conflicts: An Analysis of Mainstream and Alternative Newspapers in Malaysia,” *SEARCH: The Journal of the South East Asia Research centre for Communications and Humanities* 7, no. 1 (2015): 25, accessed February 25, 2016, doi: 10.7603/s40931-015-0002-2.

¹³ Mustafa K. Anuar, “Politics and the Media in Malaysia,” *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies* 20, no. 1 (2005): 32, accessed April 10, 2016, <http://journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/kasarinlan/article/view/448/413>.

circulation numbers of 55,886 and 272,507 respectively,¹⁴ they do not address the entirety of the Malaysian public. In fact, English-language newspapers are “usually read by the elite and English-educated readers, who live mainly in the urban areas.”¹⁵ The intended public of these two publications then can be imagined to include teachers, businessmen, young professionals, politicians, academics, and the like. We might think of the public being conjured to be what Aihwa Ong has identified to be “a segregated stratosphere – one created by the corporate networks, political parties, professional groupings, clubs, golf courses, think tanks, and universities.”¹⁶ For Ong, this “stratosphere” emerges within a mode of governmentality that confers citizenship privileges based on market productivity and potential.

That this particular public is mainly composed of the elite and urban, English-educated readers is not to be dismissed. In a moment of crisis in which the state’s political legitimacy is undermined by a sensational spectacle of corruption at the highest level of government as well as the disastrous depreciation of the ringgit, the relationship between the elite and the government is destabilized. Loyalty to the state must be instilled, and national subjects re-produced – (new?) national subjects who will participate in the recuperation from crisis and the building towards a better nation. As I will suggest in the sections below, this orientation towards recovery and reunification among racial groups is articulated through the language of nationalism that obscures the presence and power of the state.

¹⁴ Audit Bureau of Circulations Malaysia, *All Reports*, (Data file), Kuala Lumpur: Audit Bureau of Circulations, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://abcm.org.my/reports/latest-audit-reports/>.

¹⁵ Yang Lai Fong & Md. Sidin Ahmad Ishak, “Framing inter-religious dispute: a comparative analysis of Chinese-, English-, and Malay-language newspapers in Peninsular Malaysia,” *Chinese Journal of Communications* (2015): 9, accessed April 10, 2016, doi: 10.1080/17544750.2015.1096802.

¹⁶ Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 82.

THE BURDEN OF NATIONAL UNITY

Recognizing Crisis

In this discussion, I will focus my attention on how the condition of crisis is identified and diagnosed, and what this might tell us about how the future of the nation is imagined. I am not concerned in this project in assessing the legitimacy or accuracy of assigning the term “crisis” to explain the 1MDB corruption scandal and the subsequent political backlash. Whether or not Malaysia is *actually* in crisis is not the point. Simply assessing the actuality of crisis does not necessarily mean its diagnosis will be readily believed. In order to understand how crisis might compel certain nationalistic political action, *belief* in the certainty of crisis is necessary to inculcate a sense of urgency and anxiety. It is this belief in something having gone wrong that then produces the possibility for imagining multiple futures that propose particular solutions.

In thinking about crisis, I will turn to the discussion of crisis narratives offered by Janet Roitman in *Anti-Crisis*. While Roitman is ultimately concerned with putting forward a critique of crisis as a particular mode of knowledge production with its own conditions and limitations, her discussion of the ways that crisis narratives function in social theory to understand history will be useful.

In tracing the history of “crisis,” Roitman claims that it has transformed from a medical term associated with the Hippocratic school denoting the “condition that *called for* decisive judgment between alternatives” to a “condition, a state of affairs, an experiential category.”¹⁷ Crisis is thus a condition that can be experienced and witnessed, and it is identifiable through the

¹⁷ Janet Roitman, *Anti-Crisis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 16.

recognition of a “state of affairs” – perhaps the state of the economy, or of “democracy” at large. Preserved through the transformation of the term crisis is the assumption of multiple worlds. History is not simply linear and determined *a priori*, but there exist “alternatives” and many states of the world: a state of the world that is *correct*, and its derivations that are *incorrect*. In speaking of crisis, then, it is important that we identify how we come to know what is *correct* and *incorrect*, and that there is always the possibility for otherwise:

*“Ultimately the question of **blame**, be that in the form of moral or technical **failure**, provides closure and hence the possibility for **rectification**, **emancipation**, **redemption**.”*¹⁸

If inherent in crisis is an element of “failure” and thus the possibility for “rectification,” then crisis narratives are powerful tools for politics as a means of indexing the wrongdoings of one’s political rivals. For our purposes, analyzing crisis narratives allows us to identify how blame is differentially assigned, how knowledge of failure is differentially constructed, and how the programs for change are differentially prescribed. But crisis *as failure* must first be observed and ascertained for it to be substantiated as an “experiential category.”

The experience of living through crisis can be discerned through an analysis of opinion pieces and letters-to-the-editor in *The Star* and *New Straits Times* in the articulation of fear, anger, and outrage at the present condition of the nation. A general picture emerges that depicts Malaysia as passing through a particularly unsettling period of its history, what June H.L. Wong, an Opinion columnist at *The Star*, describes as “Living in toxic times” – the title of her column on October 7th, 2015. In her article, Wong suggests a deterioration in what she perceives to be the

¹⁸ Roitman, *Anti-Crisis*, 43, emphasis mine.

health of the nation: “It’s October now and I must say I feel worse than I did in March. Like all the right-thinking citizens, I had hoped for some sort of accountability over 1MDB.”¹⁹

Wong’s feeling of frustration turns quickly into one of despair: “I feel utterly helpless as a citizen... there is nothing I can do about the haze, about the failing ringgit, about China’s economy, about 1MDB.”²⁰ What Wong expresses here is that her sense of helplessness is brought about predominantly by political and economic problems (the haze notwithstanding, although that could also arguably be a geopolitical issue) that lie outside of her control. She feels helpless *as a citizen*, suggesting that the state has failed to perform its duties towards those it supposedly represents and on whose behalf it exists. In this moment of crisis measured by a failing economy and political turmoil, the state disappears as the site in which citizens can make their demands and can expect their grievances to be addressed. Indeed, Wong ends on a pessimistic note as she laments that “the best bet for all good citizens is to pray for an economic recovery, ignore foul politicians... and stay indoors.”²¹ In this statement is both a refusal of politics as that which is capable of solving problems and a *turn away* from the realm of the public to the “indoors,” into the realm of the private and the personal.

Indeed, this sense of crisis is echoed by Jema Khan, whose article “Let’s all come together as Malaysians” in *The Star* serves as a rallying call to combat what he understands to be a nation coming undone. Near the beginning of his article, Khan declares that “[t]o stay silent

¹⁹ June H.L. Wong, “Living in toxic times,” *The Star*, October 7, 2015, accessed February 2, 2016, <http://www.thestar.com.my/opinion/columnists/so-aunty-so-what/2015/10/07/living-in-toxic-time/>.

²⁰ Wong, “Living in toxic times.”

²¹ Wong, “Living in toxic times.”

when the heart of your country is being ripped apart is impossible.”²² Like Wong, Khan expresses a sense of dismay at the condition of the country; he feels an obligation to speak out and “do his part.” However, for Khan, the recognition of crisis is not indexed merely by *collapse* as it did for Wong (the collapse of the ringgit, of the economy, and of political credibility in the 1MDB case), but rather there is a sense of *rupture* in the very fabric of the country: “the heart of your country is being ripped apart.” The country as a totality is being fragmented, and it is in this fragmentation that “failure” is identified. And once again, we see the refusal of politics and the turning away from the state: “let’s all come together as Malaysians. Party politics be damned. Let’s just do it right.”²³

In both cases presented here, and in many others in my archive, there is a recognition of crisis as something lived and as that which compels action towards a rectification of some kind. The indications of crisis (of collapse and rupture) tell us something about the imagined state of normality – that of a healthy and growing economy and that of national unity. While it is quite apparent that blame is assigned to the state and to politics (“Party politics be damned”), the hope for rectification and redemption is turned inwards towards the self, or more specifically, towards the Malaysian people in their individual capacity. Unlike the demands made by Bersih 2.0 which held the state accountable for its failures, the sentiments expressed in the elite discourse circulating through the newspapers asks for a rejection of politics (“ignore foul politicians”) and, implicitly, a forgetting of the state’s wrongdoings. Perhaps such a move is borne out of a sense of exasperation with party politics, or it may be an attempt to “empower the people” (although I

²² Jema Khan, “Let’s all come together as Malaysians,” *The Star*, October 2, 2015, accessed February 2, 2016, <http://www.thestar.com.my/opinion/letters/2015/10/02/lets-all-come-together-as-malaysians/>.

²³ Khan, “Let’s all come together as Malaysians.”

would argue that marching in Bersih 4 is also quite an empowering act of defiance). But the suggestion that we turn away from the state transfers the burden of responsibility for failure *from* the state *to* the people; the state thus recedes into the background while the people, the Malaysian citizen, is called upon to save the nation.

National (dis)Unity

The problem of national (dis)unity emerges as a particularly salient issue across the articles I reviewed for this project. In particular, there is a persistent characterization of national (dis)unity as a specifically racial/ethnic problem – one that threatens to tear apart the cherished multicultural fabric of Malaysia. Given Malaysia’s long and complicated history of colonialism, immigration, and pervasive ethnic-based preferential policies,²⁴ the issue of racial justice and equality is a politically legitimate one that warrants attention and serious consideration. However, I want to suggest that the racialization of the Bersih 4 rally and its subsequent invocation as a symptom of national dis-unification serves to displace the institutional critiques put forward by the opposition, allowing the state to recede behind a nationalistic discourse that places the burden of national reconciliation on individual efforts to overcome racism.

In trying to unpack contemporary Malaysian political discourse, a brief detour through Malaysia’s history will be useful. Located in a geopolitically strategic area in terms of trade and commerce, Malaysia has a long history of ethnic and religious diversity as a result of its economic ties with China, India, and the Middle East.

²⁴ See Aihwa Ong’s *Neoliberalism as Exception* for a more detailed discussion on the concept of “graduated citizenship” and its application to Malaysia’s ethnic-based political system.

Beginning in 1511, four different major powers would colonize Malaysia until independence on August 31st, 1957: the Portuguese (1511-1641), the Dutch (1641-1795), the British (1795-1942, 1945-1957), and the Japanese (1942-1945). British colonial rule has affected most significantly contemporary understandings of race and politics in Malaysia. As a supplier of important natural resources for the British Empire, British Malaya was administered through a racialized system of control that minimized the possibilities of collective organization and resistance. To that end, the British administration encouraged the importation of large numbers of Chinese and Indian laborers who would fulfill different roles in a racially stratified socio-economic structure.²⁵

The colonial experience would profoundly impact the postcolonial experience of nation building and the formation of a national identity. There existed at the time of independence a racially stratified socio-economic structure. In general, “the Malay elite controlled the government and administration, the Malay nonelite worked the land, Chinese dominated business and the economy, and Indians worked in the civil service and as agricultural laborers.”²⁶ Class and race were intricately intertwined, fostering racial tensions undergirded by an unequal distribution of socio-economic opportunities.

These class and racial tensions exploded on May 13, 1969 with the killing of hundreds of ethnic Chinese in the capital city of Kuala Lumpur by Malays threatened by their economic power and rising political influence. In response, the government implemented the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1970 in part to de-link racial identity from economic function. The NEP

²⁵ Timothy P. Daniels, *Building Cultural Nationalism in Malaysia: Identity, Representation, and Citizenship* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 29.

²⁶ Jean DeBernardi, *Rite of Belonging: Memory, Modernity, and Identity in a Malaysian Chinese Community* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 112.

established race-based affirmative action policies that sought to systematically incorporate Malays (or *bumiputera*²⁷) into all sectors of the economy, thereby hoping to achieve a degree of ethnic redistribution and economic justice in the name of development and modernization.²⁸

A dichotomous schematic is thus inscribed into the popular political imaginary that aligns the UMNO-dominated government with the interests of the Malays, and the various political parties that constitute the opposition with the interests of minority groups (namely the Chinese and the Indians). To smooth over this divisive and politically contentious schism, the government has proposed its own “solutions” to construct what Anderson would identify as an “imagined political community.”²⁹ Perhaps the most interesting solutions proposed by the government come from former Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad’s *Wawasan 2020* (Vision 2020) and the idea of *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian “race”) – the former a program to achieve advanced industrialized status by the year 2020 and the latter the creation of a united Malaysian nation through the racialization of nationality that would override already existing racial distinctions. Even the “1M” in 1MDB (1Malaysia Development Berhad) is a nod towards the construction of a cohesive united nation.

We thus see the erasure in dominant institutional discourse of a political imaginary binarized along racial lines in favour of a “deep, horizontal comradeship”³⁰ based on a notion of

²⁷ *Bumiputera* translates literally to “natives of the soil,” and this term is used in the Federal Constitution to refer to both Malays and indigenous peoples.

²⁸ Donald M. Nonini, “*Getting By*”: *Class and State Formation among Chinese in Malaysia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 51-52.

²⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 6.

³⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

modernity and an abstract Malaysian-ness (*Bangsa Malaysia*) that elides historically produced struggles and conflicts. The concept of “unity” thus becomes important as an indicator of progress from the racially stratified socio-economic structure put in place by colonial occupation; it signifies, perhaps erroneously, the equalization of status among the different ethnic groups. However, the concept of “unity” is also important for the state as a means of justifying, and perhaps rendering invisible, its own race-based affirmative action policies that systematically confers preferential privileges to *bumiputeras* in the realm of education, finance, and media, among other things. Disunity is dangerous not only because it threatens the government’s (and by extension, the state’s) legitimacy as the representative of *all* Malaysians, but also because it throws into the foreground the deep systemic inequalities that continue to stratify Malaysians according to racial categories.

Reading Race into Bersih 4

The fear of a united Malaysia under threat was already made clear above (“the heart of your country is being ripped apart”), but I now want to turn to the ways that racial tension figures as a symptom in this very rupture. On the extreme end, we see the blatant and unapologetic accusation of Chinese guilt as expressed by Tunku Abdul Aziz in his opinion piece for the *New Straits Times* on August 31st, 2015. He asserts that the “undeniably Chinese funded and organised demonstration” is a “diabolical endeavour” that is bent on “bringing down the Najib administration by resorting to illegal means in the name of democratic rights.”³¹ While this is certainly not representative of the overall tone, it does point to some of the main themes that run

³¹ Tunku Abdul Aziz, “At what cost the greater good?” *New Straits Times*, 31 Aug, 2015, accessed January 25, 2016. <http://www.nst.com.my/news/2015/09/what-cost-greater-good>.

throughout: the race issue, the legitimacy of Bersih 4, and the notion of democracy and thus “the people.”

For the majority of the articles I looked at, race factors in as that which becomes significant *as a result* of Bersih 4: the rally is portrayed as creating the condition of possibility for racism and racial tension. Thus what the rally “really” achieves is not a successful critique of the political system, but instead it serves to tear apart a supposedly harmonious Malaysian society. In an article entitled “Unity in diversity is key to our very survival,” published in the *New Straits Times* on September 27th, 2015, Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye begins by stating:

*“Malaysians concerned cannot ignore the recent series of unpleasant developments, particularly in our nation’s capital, as well as the street rally where participants hurled racial abuses at another ethnic group... Malaysians should reject such polarisation for the sake of racial and religious harmony, as well as unity.”*³²

The street rally loses its significance as an organized effort to enact and pressure for political reform, and is instead reduced to merely a site “where participants hurled racial abuses at another ethnic group.” “Blame” is thus attributed to the organizers of Bersih 4 (and implicitly its participants) as it established the conditions through which racism and racial tension could manifest itself, thereby producing the “polarisation” of Malaysian society (the “failure” of national unity). The portrayed effects of Bersih 4 overshadows completely the potency of its political critique, as well as the “polarisation” it sought to highlight – the polarization between the people and the state.

³² Lam Thye Lee, “Unity in diversity is key to our very survival,” *New Straits Times*, 27 Sep, 2015, accessed January 25, 2016, <http://www.nst.com.my/news/2015/09/unity-diversity-key-our-very-survival>.

And again, the “polarisation” of Malaysian society can be rectified through the efforts of individual citizens and the actions they choose to take. The author declares that the problem of racism (“polarisation”) can be amended by the citizen’s choice to “reject” it, that the solution of “racial and religious harmony, as well as unity,” can be obtained through personal individualized effort, rendering invisible the history of colonialism, race-based affirmative actions policies, and the constitutional classifications of citizens into *bumiputera* and *non-bumiputera* that both symbolically and materially confer rights and privileges disproportionately. Both history and the state disappear in this appeal to a sense of national responsibility that mandates “the people to break any racial divide that exists and go beyond politics to *strive towards* unity in diversity.”³³ The task is clear: address the currently existing racial divide so that we can establish unity *in the future*. In the privileging of futurity, the past is portrayed as that which can incite racial divide if seriously scrutinized; the content and form of what is potentially controversial loses its clarity and becomes a *mirage*.

I think the term *mirage* is a particularly fitting one that I take from Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner’s article “Sex in Public” in which they analyze the cover of a 1993 *Time* magazine special issue on immigration. Berlant and Warner suggest that the cover image, a digitally-created mix-raced girl representative of America’s future citizen, is a “*racial mirage* generated by a white-dominated society, supplying a specific phobia to organize its public so that a more substantial discussion of exploitation in the United States can be avoided.”³⁴ The fear of “the immigrant” who will alter genetically the average US citizen serves to render obsolete the

³³ Lee, “Unity in diversity,” emphasis mine.

³⁴ Lauren Berlant & Michael Warner, “Sex in Public,” *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (1998): 549, accessed March 1, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1344178?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

existing structure of white supremacy and domination; it is a *mirage* insofar as an imagined future that is frightening works to obscure what exists today. The *mirage* we find in the Malaysian newspaper produces the same result, but through an inversion of the imagined future posited in the *Time* magazine cover. The phobia is not of racial homogeneity and the convergence of racial distinction but its very converse, that of racial disunity. The fear of the nation “rupturing” along racial lines organizes this particular public in such a way that a substantial discussion of structural inequalities and corruption in Malaysia is avoided.

This is evidenced by the way that the Bersih 4 rally is re-presented as *the problem to be addressed* as opposed to it *addressing* the issues of corruption, government accountability and legitimacy, and the flawed political system. Bersih 4 becomes the “real threat” that the nation faces as a symptom of escalating racial tensions and thus the potential catalyst for the disintegration of the unitary Malaysian “imagined political community” that the state is invested in constructing through projects such as *Wawasan 2020* (Vision 2020) and through concepts such as *Bangsa Malaysia*. As demonstrated earlier, crisis as an experiential category compels people to act in ways they would not otherwise. On the one hand, the scandal that Najib has created compelled the woman on the train with whom I talked to participate in a street protest for the first time. On the other hand, the state is attempting to compel a different sort of action through the discourse propagated through state-controlled media: prioritize first and foremost the unity of the nation (measured by a lack of racial differentiation) by internalizing and individualizing the work of “rejecting racism,” and turn away from scrutinizing the institutional and political structures that have exist in Malaysia today.

Nations-of-intent

Throughout this section, I have outlined how the state manages to re-present the Bersih 4 rally as that which *incites* racism and national disunity, conferring “blame” onto the Bersih 4 organizers and participants and thus identifying the potential for “rectification” or “redemption” in the *people themselves*. This is in stark contrast to the discourse put forward by Bersih 4 that attributes “blame” to Najib and the *political structure*, thus identifying “rectification” in institutional and structural reform. In this final section, I want to examine the consequences of these competing political imaginaries, which I understand as competing “nations-of-intent” (to borrow Malaysian anthropologist A.B. Shamsul’s phrase), both in terms of how Malaysian politics is to be conducted and of the relationship between the state, the nation, and the people.

A.B. Shamsul employs his concept of “nations-of-intent” to think through the complex and nuanced identitarian politics existing in Malaysia concerning the question of national identity. The nation-of-intent is not unlike Anderson’s notion of an “imagined political community” in that there is an *imaginative* quality involved, but it is predicated upon a future-oriented temporality: “[it] depicts an idea of a nation that *still needs to be constructed or reconstructed*.”³⁵ It is a “positive, proactive and forward looking” project that “has a programmatic plan of action articulated in *realpolitik*.”³⁶ The nation-as-intent thus allows us to think about how an imagined future might inform actual political decisions and agendas.

I think the concept of “nation-as-intent” is particularly useful in the context of “crisis,” a state of uncertainty that provides the condition for the emergence, or the increased salience of,

³⁵ AB Shamsul, “Nations-of-intent in Malaysia,” *Asian Forms of the Nation*, eds. Stein Tønnesson and Hans Antlöv (Richmond: Curzon, 1996), 328, emphasis mine.

³⁶ Shamsul, “Nations-of-intent in Malaysia,” 328-329.

multiple and competing political imaginaries as solutions for a “post-crisis” world. I mean by “post-crisis” the imagined world achieved after a “resolution” of crisis either by returning to the status quo based on the past or by propelling the nation into a new direction that envisions a brighter future. The post-crisis world is the object of political contestation; it is the world that the people long for as that which promises an end to their sense of urgency and anxiety and that the state longs for as that which (re)legitimizes their power.

Where “failure” has been identified, either in the Malaysian political system (in the case of Bersih 4) or in racial disunity (as in the case of state discourse), a “reconstruction” is understood as a political program that will lead to a *better* nation. The programs might be divergent in their methodology, but they converge in their shared commitment to the nation. Recall the two interpretations that the title of this thesis allows: *Nationalism in* [a state of] *Crisis* and *Nationalism in* [a time of] *Crisis*. The two nations-of-intent put forward by Bersih 4 and the state propose different ideas of the nation (nationalism in a state of crisis) accompanied by different political programs that will lead the nation out of crisis into a post-crisis world (nationalism in a time of crisis).

But what are the *consequences* of these competing nations-of-intent, and why should we care? What is at stake in picking a side, if we do decide to pick a side? To begin with, the burden of responsibility falls on diametrically opposite shoulders. Bersih 4 calls upon the people to demand for political reforms at an institutional and structural level, demanding action from politicians who are supposed to represent the people’s interest after having been elected into office. The nation-of-intent cohering around the articles I analyzed sought instead to deflect attention away from the state, identifying “failure” in the racial tensions supposedly produced as

a result of protests and complaints. As such, national reconciliation is dependent upon the people's willingness to turn inwards and reevaluate their own values and judgments of others, to cultivate within themselves the spirit of Malaysian-ness that can be found already within each citizen. In this way, the state denies both the responsibility of "failure" and the responsibility of "rectification" – the citizen bears the burden of both.

A brief examination of a column written by prominent Malaysian human rights activist Marina Mahathir will demonstrate what the enactment of the state's nation-of-intent might look like. In her article "A week that saw many old taboos broken" for *The Star* on September 24th, 2015, Mahathir writes about how many delicate and sensitive taboos have been transgressed recently in both the political and social world, indicating progress in the country's shift away from conservative values. However, she ends by describing a scene that can only be described as the state's utopian fantasyland of balloons, sunny weather, and an obnoxiously generous side of patriotism:

*"Some of us had a picnic in KLCC park complete with balloons and cake for Malaysia's 52nd birthday. Total strangers dropped by and sat under the trees, made friends with one another and chatted about anything and everything under the sun. It was clear we all had no problems with one another despite differences in background and that we all truly loved our country. We ended our picnic by singing the national anthem."*³⁷

This utopian (or dystopian) scene is precisely what the state is attempting to produce as that which we should aspire to: cute picnics in the park, idyllic interactions between and across difference, and an enthusiastic performance of the national anthem that borders on the absurd when one considers how religious and cult-like this all seems. The national anthem provides a

³⁷ Marina Mahathir, "A week that saw many old taboos broken," *The Star*, Star Media Group Berhad, 24 Sep, 2015, emphasis mine, accessed January 26, 2016, <http://www.thestar.com.my/opinion/columnists/musings/2015/09/24/a-week-that-saw-many-old-taboos-broken-last-week-was-pretty-groundbreaking-when-it-came-to-getting-r/>.

sort of closure and finality to a day well spent, a day of unbounded love for one another and unbounded love for the nation; we turn inwards towards ourselves to build bridges across obvious differences produced by structural inequalities in order to sacrifice all of it to the nation. And in the process, the state disappears, free to plunder and exploit the labour of the people while they are busy reconciling amongst themselves in the name of Malaysia. Such is the power of this vision that at the end of the day, Marina Mahathir can write, “We went home feeling good about ourselves.” The citizen is pacified despite nothing having been fixed. The “post-crisis” world is merely the status quo, a permanent condition of *racial mirage* in which the individual must continually work to become the model multicultural Malaysian citizen in fear of national disunity.

Conclusion

In the alternatives presented here, the nation-of-intent figures as the central concept animating politics. For Bersih 2.0, institutional reforms are demanded on behalf of “the people” imagined as undifferentiated citizens in a liberal democratic state. The state thus becomes the site through which the nation is to be constructed as a multicultural plurality of ethnicities and races that all deserve equal treatment under the rule of law by virtue of being Malaysian citizens. Its nationalism is inflected by a notion of modernity that is modeled along the lines of Western liberal democratic principles; it is nationalistic because it strives for these principles on behalf of the Malaysian nation and its citizens as post-colonial subjects who are able to, and indeed deserve, “modernity.”

For the state, the nation figures as that which must be continually unified through a process of self-monitoring and self-cultivation of love and compassion for fellow Malaysians regardless of race or structural inequality. It turns attention away from the state as a site of complaint and prescribes the good citizen's project to be a personal one of love and compassion for one another and the pacification of political inclinations in service to the nation. If we consider the particular public that the state addresses in the mainstream English-language newspapers I analyzed, this personalization of politics is important as a strategy of subduing the elite who possess the material and political power to threaten the hegemony of the state by refusing to play their role as high-skilled market actors when the state can no longer maintain the political structure that confers upon them privileged citizenship.

The elite can choose to emigrate and reduce the availability of high-skilled labour for further economic development, a phenomenon that is known as "brain drain" when emigration levels become so severe that they can undermine the health of the national economy. Indeed the problem of brain drain has been applied to Malaysia because it is experiencing a higher rate of emigration than other countries, particularly among high-skilled workers across all sectors of the economy.³⁸ By projecting a nation-of-intent that imagines the nation as constructed and maintained by its citizens' obligatory love and compassion for one another, we can understate the state to be reinvesting the elite with a sense of duty towards the nation, and thus to continue to provide the state with skilled labour to realise its own projects of modernization such as

Wawasan 2020.

³⁸ Junaimah Jauhar & Yusliza Mohd Yusoff, "Brain Drain: Propensity to Leave by Malaysian Professionals," *International Journal of Innovation, Management and Technology* 2.2 (2011): 119-120, accessed April 10, 2016, <http://ijimt.org/papers/116-M491.pdf>.

EPILOGUE: BEYOND THE NATION?

While this thesis has been focused on re-imagining the nation in a time of crisis, I want to conclude by reflecting upon on what might seem to be a counterintuitive line of thought - the end of the nation and nationalism. We must reconsider seriously the nation itself as the privileged site in which we invest our hopes and yearning for belonging. I am compelled to do so because of what my friend's mother told me one day as we were having breakfast at a local hawker center and talking about our experiences living abroad for significant amounts of time: "We hate our government and we hate our politics, but at the end of the day we still really love being able to live here."

Her remarks revealed to me so much about an alternative mode of the political that rests upon a different affective register and configuration of belonging that is not predicated upon the nation. I find this comment remarkably profound for its ardent refusal of the contemporary condition of politics, for its refusal to *feel good about ourselves* in a moment of severe political and economic turmoil. Her anger and frustration resist pacification by nationalistic sentiments, and her hatred of the state resists conformism and naïve obedience to a vision of the future as a fantastic multicultural utopia.

More significantly, her claim that "we still really love being able to *live here*" offers a different mapping of desire and belonging that does not conform to the concept of the nation. *Here* is not the nation that binds people together through some shared notion of identity or future. *Here* refers to the specific sites, people, and memories that constitute her community and life-

world: the hawker center, the food at the hawker center, neighbors and friends, family, the local market, the warm climate, speaking different languages, playing football at the park. These are things that make one feel equally “at home” and as if one belongs, and they do not necessarily attach themselves to the idea of the nation.

While the questioning of the nation and nationalism is not new, much of the literature in what is known as postnationalism seems to collide with, or at least runs parallel to, the discourse on globalization and the increasing ease of mobility across and beyond national borders.³⁹ This, however, is not what I have in mind when I suggest that we pay particular attention to the specificity of the *here*. It does not attend to the forms of collectivities and notions of belonging created across vast distances through new media,⁴⁰ technology, and neoliberal capital. Rather, it would attempt to identify the particularities of home – what sorts of historical and material conditions allow for the socio-spatial organization of a specific location, and how does this produce a particular affective and political attachment to a place? Such a framework would avoid the attempt to locate a specific place within a larger, macro-level logic of power (whether that be capital, empire, North-South relations, etc.) that risks overlooking specificities for the sake of a conveniently neat overarching narrative.

In a time when “transnational” is a common adjective found across scholarly literature of various disciplines and in common parlance regarding politics and the economy, is the nation as bounded and unitary an outdated idea? We might consider thinking about belonging by

³⁹ See, for example, Jürgen Habermas’ book *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays* and Ruud Koopmans & Paul Statham’s discussion of postnationalist thought in their essay “Challenging the Liberal Nation-State? Postnationalism, Multiculturalism, and the Collective Claims Making of Migrants and Ethnic Minorities in Britain and Germany.”

⁴⁰ By new media I refer to digital modes of communication such as Twitter, Facebook, and even Instagram that allow for the instantaneous exchange of information.

paradoxically being informed by particularities of the places one has inhabited and by constant motion and movement. In an age of neoliberal governance, the circulation and flows of both capital and people possess the potential to undermine the nation-state as that which determines belonging in both the legal and affective sense. Perhaps the nation itself will soon be in crisis.

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“Inhabiting Violence: Occupation, Architecture, and the Politics of Visibility in Palestine”

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Following the Six-Day War of 1967, in which Israel defeated the combined armies of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, the embattled Jewish state found itself tasked with administering newly-acquired Palestinian territories—from the West Bank and the Golan Heights to its east, to the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip to its west. According to Neve Gordon, the aftermath of the conflict presented Israel with a problem of enormous magnitude: namely, how to preserve the benefits—both tactical and religious-ideological—of the territorial acquisitions while preventing the dilution of Israel’s “Jewish character” through the extension of citizenship to Palestinians.¹ Almost fifty years after the war’s end, it looks as though Israel has chosen indefinite military occupation as its favored solution to the “logistical” dilemma posed by its own expansion. Palestinians remain a population without a nation-state of their own, living daily under the repressive apparatus of the Israeli state—subject to the violence of the military, the police, and even civilian groups. As military bases and settler outposts have proliferated where, according to international consensus, a Palestinian state should be found, the possibility of a “two-state solution”—long touted as the only viable resolution to the conflict—has begun to seem all but impossible.

This paper investigates the Arab-Israeli conflict through an analysis of the material infrastructure—including “civilian” settlements, “floating” checkpoints, and underground tunnels—that taken together, constitute an important site of contestation between Palestinians and Israelis, occupied and occupier. I will focus my attention on the interaction between the built

¹ N. Gordon, *Israel’s Occupation*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008, pg. 6.

environments of the conflict and the affective and political landscapes that sustain it—asking not only how the visible is invested with “political immediacy,”² but also how particular infrastructural configurations generate immaterial products—whether affective investments or political subjectivities. In tracing the relationship between the manipulation of space and its political contestation, I treat conflicts over the use of the landscape as the basis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict more generally. Following Eyal Weizman,³ I locate the unfolding of the political in the organization of space itself. I argue that the landscape is not merely the background against which military occupation unfolds. Instead, it constitutes the privileged medium through which state violence is enacted.

Employing Ranciere’s conception of aesthetics as “the system of *a priori* forms determining what presents itself to sense experience,”⁴ I will also examine the stakes of the occupation’s manipulation of architecture and urban planning. These disciplines not only serve to regulate the circulation of bodies through space and time, they also, owing to their status as “artistic practices...maintain relationships to modes of being and forms of visibility.”⁵ In other words, architecture and urban planning are implicated not only in determining where one can or cannot go, but also in influencing how one understands their relationship to the contested landscape they inhabit—whether as open-air prison or Promised Land. An Israeli freeway overpass, for instance, that allows settlers to travel from their homes—which lie beyond Israel’s internationally-recognized borders—and on towards Tel Aviv without ever seeing Palestinian

² D. Monk, *An Aesthetic Occupation: The Immediacy of Architecture and the Palestine Conflict*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

³ E. Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel’s Architecture of Occupation*, London: Verso Books, 2007, pg. 7.

⁴ J. Ranciere, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2005, pg. 8.

⁵ Ibid.

villages, does much more than merely ensure the unobstructed circulation of Israelis (although this is an important function). This hypothetical highway performs the parallel function of disallowing forms of solidarity between Israelis and Palestinians, as the violence of military occupation passes by unbeknownst to motorists. I discuss this effect, whereby the occupation attempts to render itself “invisible,”⁶ more below.

According to Israeli architect Eyal Weizman, the built environment of the Occupied Territories (OT) constitutes a “battleground...where simple elements like trees, cladding, terraces, and walls [function as] weapons of war, whose role in the system of occupation can be decoded with the right analytical tools.”⁷ In this paper, I aim to make a similar claim, looking to the mundane infrastructures of occupation to attempt to understand what, exactly, gives this conflict its curious staying power. By emphasizing the material, as well as immaterial, effects of architecture and urban planning in the OT, we can begin to understand the basis upon which claims to the landscape are formulated, enacted, and contested. I consider the ways in which the conflict over the uses and representations of space is, in fact, rooted in the conflict over the “distribution of the sensible”, understood here as the delimitation of “what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak.”⁸ In other words, an analysis of the manipulation of space—by both Palestinians and Israelis—illuminates the conditions of possibility that enable the conflict to perpetuate itself over time. By identifying the underlying “sense” that the conflict makes of itself, we can shift our attention to the unfolding of politics according to the logic of a particular regime of “sensitivity.”

⁶ Gordon, *Israel's Occupation*, pg. 20.

⁷ E. Weizman, “Rebel Architecture: The Architecture of Violence,” *Al Jazeera English*, 2014.

⁸ Ranciere, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, pg. 8.

Soldiers, Architects, and Engineering the Sensible

Israeli architects, urban planners, and military officers have directed their efforts toward a common purpose since the capture of the West Bank and Gaza Strip following the Six-Day War—namely, how best to maintain control over occupied populations while, simultaneously, making Israelis feel “comfortable” living beyond the internationally-recognized borders of their country. The organization of space in the OT was to proceed according to military and strategic imperatives, but also according to the affective-ideological needs of apprehensive Israeli settlers, who needed to cultivate attachments to lands that were populated by hostile Palestinians.⁹ Given that these lands also had religious significance for Israeli Jews, the need to manufacture a sense of “being at home” was especially pressing for those tasked with organizing this landscape. The challenge was how, exactly, to reconcile the two modes of governance employed by the occupation: the development of suburbanized “settlements” for middle-class Israelis, alongside harsh repression of Palestinian activities—political and otherwise.¹⁰ The production of subjectivities—whether “docile” Palestinians or Israelis with affective attachments to the occupied landscape—was just as important as regulating the circulation of bodies through space and time, however. The enormity of this task, coupled with the institutional synthesis of architecture and state power afforded Israeli planners a unique luxury—a *tabula rasa* of sorts, in

⁹ Weizman, *Hollow Land*, pg. 26.

¹⁰ Gordon, *Israel's Occupation*.

which the “high modernist”¹¹ plans of architects could be implemented without regard for the occupied populations forced to inhabit them.

For Neve Gordon, the first decades of Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (roughly 1967-1993) can be characterized, primarily, by the occupation’s adoption of a biopolitical regime of power that sought to control Palestinian resistance by taking interest in the well-being of the population.¹² During the initial decades of occupation, the Israeli state introduced improvements in health care, agricultural production, and education that, taken together, improved the economic situation of most Palestinians—at least for a time.¹³ The Israeli welfare state’s involvement in the lives of Palestinians during this period was paralleled by its involvement in the lives of its own citizens—from subsidizing the creation of new suburbs in the OT to intervening heavily in the domestic economy. In many ways, the actions of the Israeli state during this period were consistent with the “Keynesian consensus” that predominated throughout Europe and North America, in which the role of state-planning was emphasized to a greater or lesser degree.

Accompanying this emphasis on the economic development of the Occupied Territories, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) pursued techniques of governance that sought to make the Palestinian population “visible”¹⁴ and hence, governable. Paralleling what James Scott refers to as the “Haussmannization of Paris”, in which the city was re-designed to accommodate the

¹¹ J. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

¹² Gordon, *Israel’s Occupation*.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

ability of the military to penetrate rebellious, working-class districts,¹⁵ the Israeli military sought to project its gaze into the dense, built fabric of Palestinian cities to quell unrest. In fact, Ariel Sharon cited Hausmann's re-structuring of Paris as an influence during his infamous raids on Gazan refugee camps in July 1971, during which wide roads were carved out of the "chaotic agglomeration of structures" that had enveloped the grid-system installed by the UN in 1948.¹⁶ Learning from the experience of the Paris Commune, the Israeli military was eager to avoid a similar situation in Gaza. In some cases, the Israeli occupation even adopted structures of "making legible" via surveillance that had been left in place by previous administrations—whether Jordanian, as in the West Bank, or Egyptian, as in the Gaza Strip.¹⁷

In both cases, however, the complex asymmetry of particular architectural forms came to be understood as an impediment to the extension of state authority, which, according to James Scott, relies on the metaphors of unobstructed visibility and simplification in order to govern effectively.¹⁸ Underlying both examples, however, is the presence of a highly-centralized state that assumes the responsibility of governing unilaterally. After all, the concept of sovereignty requires that the state, and no one else, formulate the plan according to which life will unfold under its rule. As I argue below, in the years following the First Intifada, this ceased to be the case, as the Occupied Territories were transformed into a frontier of sorts, in which the role of the state was supplemented by that of non-state, or even counter-state actors—from real estate speculators and private corporations to anti-Zionist Haredi Jews and the infamous Hilltop Youth.

¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 59-63.

¹⁶ Weizman, *Hollow Land*, pg. 70.

¹⁷ I. Feldman, *Police Encounters: Security and Surveillance in Gaza under Egyptian Rule*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2015.

¹⁸ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

According to Eyal Weizman, the post-1987 transformation of the Occupied Territories into a frontier space characterized by “structured chaos in which the...selective absence of government intervention promotes an unregulated process of violent dispossession” cannot be understood without examining the “redistribution of the sensible” that this development entailed.¹⁹ The figure of the courageous Israeli frontiersman, embodied *par excellence* by Ariel Sharon, emerged during this period, infusing Israeli politics with a newfound awareness of the impermanence of Israel’s borders, and reimagining its territoriality as an “incomplete project.”²⁰

Not only did the archetypal frontiersman harbor aspirations for the achievement of a Greater Israel, however, he also espoused a new aesthetics of national defense. These “new Jews” located the source of Israel’s vitality on its frontiers, advocating for the establishment of settlements on Palestinian territory for reasons of national security. They posited the networked, defense-in-depth model of fortified settlements against the linear, bureaucratic Bar Lev Line, the notoriously dysfunctional fortification associated with the Labor Party.²¹ Whereas, in previous decades, the center-Left had favored state-planning and the security of fixed borders, the ethos of the frontiersman took hold in Israel, pushing Likud into power and re-casting the importance of the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip to Israel’s continued existence. Thus, the idea of the “living wall,”²² in which settlements occupied by private individuals become central nodes in Israel’s networks of national defense—effectively blurring the distinction between public and private action, as well as re-imagining the stakes of military occupation itself.

¹⁹ Weizman, *Hollow Land*, pg. 5.

²⁰ Ibid, pg. 64.

²¹ Ibid, pg. 66.

²² Weizman, *Rebel Architecture*.

In this section I have attempted to construct a genealogy of Israel's attempts to "engineer the sensible" in the Occupied Territories through the manipulation of space and according to the imperatives of governance, counter-insurgency operations, and even the need to generate particular affective relationships between Israelis and the landscapes of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. No less central to this endeavor, however, was the attempt to engender particular types of Palestinian subjects, something I will explore further below. Applying Ranciere's conception of the "distribution of the sensible", I have tried to illuminate the stakes of architecture and urban planning in the OT, showing how, exactly, the terms of the conflict are reproduced and embodied materially. The "sensible" can always re-distributed, however, as the emergent conception of the OT as a "frontier" demonstrates clearly. In the next section, I shift my focus toward the "nitty-gritty"—exploring the practices and ideologies through which Israel produces a military occupation that is both "visible" and "invisible", depending on the political imperatives of the moment.

The Invisible Occupation

During a lecture delivered on June 10, 2006 at Tel-Aviv University, former IDF officer Shlomo Gazit reflected on the strategy adopted by the Israeli military following the acquisition of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967. According to Gazit, "[our goal was to] allow the population of the areas to carry on their life and activities just as they had been used to until the 5th of June 1967, or as [Defense Minister Moshe] Dayan once put it, the goal was to make the occupation invisible."²³ As Neve Gordon demonstrates, the IDF attempted to accomplish this task by

²³ S. Gazit, Lecture, 2006.

establishing “governorships”, in which local Palestinian elders would be empowered to represent the occupied population—effectively acting as mediators between the Israeli state and the Palestinians.²⁴ Smadar Lavie encountered a similar model of governance during her fieldwork in the Sinai Peninsula, where Bedouin tribes were headed by “sheikhs” whose appointments were only recognized by the Israeli military.²⁵ The logic of this practice was simple: if Palestinians felt that their local leaders still maintained autonomy, the violence of military occupation would fade into normalcy, and their subordination would be rendered “sensible”.

In many ways, the logic of “invisible occupation” continues to this day—albeit in an altered form, given the establishment of the semi-autonomous Palestinian Authority (PA) following the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. While, as per the Accords, the Palestinian Authority is responsible for policing its cities, providing for its population, and—in theory at least—managing its borders, the day-to-day operation of the PA is dictated by the imperatives of Israel’s “security needs.”²⁶ Given this situation, the Israeli military must enable the performance of sovereignty by the PA, allowing, for instance, the display of Palestinian national symbols in checkpoints—despite the fact that Israeli police officers monitor the entire facility from behind one-way mirrors and hidden cameras.²⁷ This compromised “pseudo-sovereignty” is, as Palestinians themselves realize, part and parcel of an attempt to further normalize Israel’s internationally condemned presence in the West Bank and, until 2005, the Gaza Strip.

²⁴ Gordon, *Israel's Occupation*, pg. 49.

²⁵ S. Lavie, *The Poetics of Military Occupation*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, pp. 60-1.

²⁶ Gordon, *Israel's Occupation*, pg. 190.

²⁷ Weizman, *Hollow Land*, pg. 139.

When it comes to the manipulation of space in the OT, the attempt to construct an “invisible occupation” produces particularly deleterious effects for Palestinian resistance. The construction of the “separation barrier” throughout the West Bank following the violence of the Second Intifada in 2002 represents the uniquely destructive results of the occupation’s manipulation of visibility vis-à-vis the representation of Palestinian sovereignty. Like the architecture of checkpoints, whose appearance is meant to obscure the ever-present gaze of the IDF, the opaque, concrete structure of the separation border is deployed as a signifier of sovereignty—the “wall” is designed to mimic an international border between two, equally legitimate nation-states. Unfortunately for the Palestinian cause, however, this circuitous barrier snakes throughout the entire West Bank, extending far beyond Israel’s internationally-recognized borders and deep into Palestinian territory. As Wendy Brown notes, this seemingly legitimate “border” performs affective-ideological functions for Israelis suffering from anxieties about everything from the coherence of their own national identity, to the violence that state violence has visited upon their Palestinian neighbors²⁸. The separation barrier operates not only to obscure the reality of Israel’s “land grabs” through the strategic deployment of signifiers of sovereignty, it also shields Israelis from the discomfort of witnessing military occupation. In this way, the separation wall performs as much affective-ideological work as it does military-tactical. The wall not only provides Israelis with security, then, it also “engineers a sensible” through its very materiality that, paradoxically, renders its violence almost invisible.

Perhaps most importantly, the rapid, unceasing construction of Israeli settlements throughout the West Bank performs a function similar to that of the separation barrier—namely,

²⁸ W. Brown, *Wall States, Waning Sovereignties*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2010.

to render the military occupation itself “invisible”, to both the international community, the rest of Israeli society, and even to Palestinians. Given the suburban aesthetic of most Israeli settlements, replete with playgrounds, swimming pools, and identical houses, their parallel function, as fortifications in the “living wall” of Israel’s system of national defense might not be immediately apparent.²⁹ However, their placement on hilltops (something explored further below) makes them extremely important for the operations of the IDF, who often use them as “stepping stones” during incursions into Palestinian cities.³⁰ Even more crucially, perhaps, to their role in the construction of an “invisible occupation” is the fact that, despite their tactical utility, civilians—mainly middle-class Israeli families—populate them. While the location of settlements is considered, almost unanimously, to be in violation of international law, their function as middle-class enclaves akin to the gated communities of the United States, South Africa, or Brazil makes them appear somehow harmless and without military function. In this instance, the Israeli state navigates “the distribution of the sensible” constituted by the discourse of international humanitarianism, justifying its settlement-building based on their “civilian” character. After all, how can civilians enact a military occupation?

Not only is the position of settlements in Israeli society rendered through political discourse, however. Instead, small architectural cues are deployed to signify, mainly to their occupants and other Israelis, that the settlements are perfectly legitimate places to call “home”. Again, the mundane infrastructure of military occupation can be shown to perform military-tactical, as well as affective-ideological functions. In this case, according to Eyal Weizman, the

²⁹ Weizman, *Hollow Land*, pg. 50.

³⁰ Weizman, *Rebel Architecture*.

facades of buildings in the outer suburbs of Jerusalem—previously mentioned as parts of the “living wall” of Israel’s system of national defense—are covered with a thin veneer of limestone, the distinctive building material that is associated with the heart of Jerusalem itself.³¹ This seemingly insignificant architectural detail forces a fundamental misrecognition on the viewer. Instead of realizing that, in fact, these suburbanized settlements are located in the middle of what, according to international consensus, should be a sovereign Palestinian state, the viewer is “tricked” into feeling “at home” in this landscape, as if it were the middle of Jerusalem. In this instance, the reality of military occupation disappears, as the facades of the building generate affects of “being at home”, resulting in the occlusion of any critique of the Israeli state’s settlement-building activity. This small detail that is most likely registered by its viewers only unconsciously, demonstrates the emphasis placed by the occupation on the generation of particular types of Israeli subjects, who feel “at home” beyond the Green Line. Through the manipulation of space and the relationship between people and the landscape, the occupation produces a “distribution of the sensible” that both escapes conscious articulation, as well as lays the groundwork for the unfolding of politics—as both discourse and action.

The Visible Occupation

While the architectural and political technologies discussed above concern themselves primarily with rendering military occupation “invisible”, I will now focus my attention on a particular instance in which the IDF finds it advantageous to emphasize the materiality and visibility of the occupation. To illustrate the political implications of what I refer to as an aesthetics of

³¹ Weizman, *Hollow Land*, pp. 28-30.

occupation, I turn once again to Israel's multitude of settlements in the West Bank—structures whose architectural design make them far more than bedroom communities of Jerusalem. Instead, settlements function as fortifications whose layouts allow them to dominate the surrounding landscape through a unique configuration of Bentham's Panopticon and the "exhibitionary complex" described by Tony Bennett.³² By pointing to the ways in which settlements project the power-laden gaze of the Israeli state into the urban fabric of Palestinian villages and cities, I hope to illustrate something about how architecture constructs the "sensible"—simultaneously determining the stakes and avenues of political contestation.

Israeli settlements are imposing structures. Almost always built on hilltops, these self-contained communities resemble fortifications in almost every way—from the uniformity of their buildings to the uninterrupted lines of sight that allow anyone inside the settlement to effortlessly survey the landscape beneath them. The structural similarity between settlements and military bases was intentional. In fact, according to *Haartez*, Ariel Sharon, a central figure in the establishment of the structures, claimed that all of them are placed in accordance with tactical-military imperatives. The military, however, is not the only actor tasked with surveying the West Bank from above—instead, civilian residents are forced, by the logic of the architecture, to adopt the subject position of citizen-watchman. For Eyal Weizman, "[the military occupation enlisted, through its use of architecture] the civilian population to act as its agents alongside the agencies of state power...the task of civilian settlers...is to investigate and report Palestinian movements in the West Bank."³³ From the placement of windows in bedrooms to the angle of main roads, the

³² T. Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex," in *Culture, Power, History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*, eds. Dirks, Eley, Ortner, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.

³³ Weizman, *Hollow Land*, pg. 132.

surveillance apparatus of the Israeli state instrumentalizes the eyes of settlers through its design of settlements. There is, in effect, nowhere to look but down—toward the ever-present menace of Palestinian cities.

The disciplinary power of Israeli settlements on individual Palestinians is rooted in the unidentifiable gaze emanating from the hilltop. With the homes of settlers arranged in overlapping concentric circles along the edges of the hill, a Palestinian can never be sure whether she is, or is not, being watched. According to Bennett's reading of Foucault, the effect of this unverifiable gaze is internalized and embodied by the prisoner [or in this case Palestinian], causing him to alter his behavior in fear that, at any moment, someone might be watching him.³⁴ The effect of altering one's behavior in relation to power's gaze offers a powerful example of the ways in which the manipulation of space via architecture and urban planning is implicated in the production of particular subjects—in this case, "docile" Palestinians. However, while the role of disciplinary power is certainly important to the "distribution of the sensible" in the OT, I draw on Tony Bennett's discussion of the "exhibitionary complex" to offer a more nuanced account of the role of the Israeli settler in transmitting power's gaze. Just as, according to Bennet, the birth of the modern museum is entangled with the "democratization" of power's omniscient, ordering gaze,³⁵ the architecture of Israeli settlements invites residents to partake in "seeing like a state."³⁶ Not only does this moment of "democratization" illuminate the power of the Israeli state vis-à-vis its ordering of the landscape, it also enables the god-like, visual domination of the landscape

³⁴ Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex," pg. 126.

³⁵ Ibid, pg. 130.

³⁶ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

by Israeli subjects to seem natural. In other words, the extension of surveillance to Israeli settlers reifies the stratified, violent landscape that they overlook.

Insurgent (In)Visibility

While the above analysis confined itself to examining the spatial practices through which the Israeli occupation has attempted to order the landscape according to both affective-ideological and military-tactical criteria, I will now shift my focus toward the ways in which Palestinians manipulate space for their own purposes. For Palestinians, however, this is an uphill battle, given not only their military inferiority, but also their general lack of control over the mundane infrastructure that, I argue, enables the system of military occupation to function in the first place. As a result of this situation, Palestinian militants are forced to conduct struggle *around* the infrastructure of occupation—either by constructing alternative pathways and tunnels (as is common in Gaza), or by attaching new meanings to the spaces of everyday life. In a sense, the task of the insurgent is to attempt to “re-distribute the sensible...by [shifting the locus of contestation] and breaking the frame of perception, and causing a sensorial rupture.”³⁷ By moving the practice of insurgency below ground and into tunnels, for instance, Palestinian militants reject the Israeli attempt to colonize the landscape, and continue their struggle on new terrain—both ideological and spatial. Similarly, in attaching new meanings to the mundane spaces of their cities, Palestinians point toward the construction of alternative discourses, ideologies, and affective investments that, when taken together, advance a claim to the landscape that challenges the hegemonic narrative proffered by the Israeli occupation. However, as my

³⁷ D. Boyer, and A. Yurchak. “American Stioh: Or What Late-Socialist Aesthetics of Parody Can Reveal about Contemporary Political Culture in the West,” *Cultural Anthropology* 25.2(2010).

analysis will show, the “re-distribution of the sensible” is not solely attainable by insurgents. In fact, the forces of occupation have been just as successful in their attempt to re-structure the conditions in which this conflict plays out.

According to Neve Gordon, during the decades between the initial acquisition of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, until the signing of the Oslo Accords and the formation of the Palestinian Authority in 1993, the display of nationalist symbols—including flags, *keffiyeh* scarves, and political posters—was enough to warrant an arrest by the IDF.³⁸ It turns out that, along with governing the OT through an emphasis on bio-power, the Israeli occupation had an interest in discouraging political activity on the part of Palestinians. With the introduction of the Palestinian Authority, however, the situation changed markedly. Whereas, before the Oslo Accords, the Israeli state took it upon itself to manage every aspect of life in the OT in order to prevent rebellion, the responsibility of policing Palestinian cities now fell to the Israeli-equipped Palestinian Authority.³⁹ One result of this development has been what I refer to as the “symbolic reclamation” of Palestinian cities, whereby streets, squares, and markets have been re-named after “martyrs” killed by the Israeli military, and walls have been plastered with posters commemorating these same “heroes.”⁴⁰ As Lori Allen demonstrates, the commemoration of “martyrs” on both posters and street signs, constituted a process through which, in resignifying the spaces of everyday life, Palestinians demonstrated their ability to “get used to” and hence, resist Israeli violence.⁴¹ By re-naming spaces after victims of the occupation, Palestinians made

³⁸ Gordon, *Israel's Occupation*, pp. 40-2.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ L. Allen. “Getting By the Occupation: How Violence Became Normal During the Second Palestinian Intifada,” *Cultural Anthropology* 23.3(2008):462.

⁴¹ Ibi, pg. 276.

not only their suffering, but also the violence that engendered it, a site around which the nation itself, understood by Ernest Renan “as a great solidarity constituted by the feeling of sacrifices made and those that one is still disposed to make,” could consolidate. In the context of military occupation, then, Palestinians re-configured their relationship to space, transforming it into an affective-ideological resource in their struggle for national liberation.

Given the emphasis placed on keeping Palestinians “visible” by the Israeli occupation, it hardly seems surprising that poorly-equipped insurgents “re-distribute the sensible” of the conflict by harnessing the power of “invisibility” in their pursuit of armed struggle. Palestinian villages often use city-wide “blackouts” to disorient Israeli soldiers during their nocturnal incursions into the towns and refugee camps of the West Bank⁴² (Weizman 2007, 133). Perhaps most fascinating, however, is the military success that insurgents have achieved through the employment of underground tunnels, which enable weapons, supplies, and even militants to circulate freely *beneath* the contested landscape—effectively thwarting the air superiority that Israel insisted upon during the Oslo negotiations.⁴³ By reshaping the space of the West Bank and Gaza Strip according to their tactical needs, Palestinian militants enact an embodied claim to the landscape and their place within it. In manipulating the spatial environment and creating alternative avenues of circulation, insurgents make war on the very structure of military occupation itself—formulating an alternative approach to urban planning that yields both tactical advantages, as well as forms of solidarity. While the Israeli military maintains control over the roads of the West Bank, often installing checkpoints and mandating “lockdowns” that confine

⁴² Weizman, *Hollow Lands*, pg. 133.

⁴³ *Ibid*, pg. 253.

Palestinians to their towns and villages,⁴⁴ the construction of subterranean tunnels allows Palestinians to remain connected—both materially, ideologically, and affectively. In effect, the tunnels serve as infrastructure for nationalist consciousness and solidarity, alongside their more obvious, military functions.

While the resignifications of space and the construction of alternative infrastructures employed by Palestinians are, without a doubt, central to the unfolding of military occupation, their effectiveness should not be overstated. The IDF regularly discovers and destroys tunnels constructed by Palestinian militants and smugglers.⁴⁵ In fact, it was Israel's air superiority and technological prowess that forced the Palestinian struggle below ground in the first place. Following Lila Abu-Lughod's caution against compromising one's analysis by falling prey to the "romance of resistance," I want to emphasize the ways in which the tactics of the military occupation—along with those of Palestinian militants—are, in effect, mutually constitutive⁴⁶. In short, I argue that the spatial practices of the military occupation lay the groundwork for Palestinian alternatives—operating as influences, rather than as determinants, of the tactics adopted by insurgents. Just as a particular regime of the "sensible" must achieve hegemony before it can attract resistance, it also prearranges the system of oppositions within which it is contested. This process is described well by Daniel Monk, who notes the unquestioned assumption—that the political inheres, unmediated, in the form of the built environment—that

⁴⁴ Gordon, *Israel's Occupation*.

⁴⁵ Weizman, *Hollow Lands*, pp. 253-5.

⁴⁶ L. Abu-Lughod. "The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power Through Bedouin Women," *American Ethnologist* 17.1(1990).

underlies the formulation of political claims to space by both Israelis and Palestinians.⁴⁷ It seems to me that, in Palestine, the “sensible” itself is not easily overturned.

While Palestinian insurgents have “re-distributed the sensible” and resisted the spatial practices of the occupation with varying degrees of success, the IDF, too, has benefitted from reimagining the aesthetics of counter-insurgency. For instance, according to Eyal Weizman, during the early 2000s, the Israeli military began employing the metaphors of poststructuralist theory, attempting to “turn inside-out” the practice of urban warfare, conceiving of the city itself as a weapon of war, whose matter is “flexible, liquid, contingent, and forever in flux.”⁴⁸ Through the tactic of “walking through walls,”⁴⁹ the IDF blurred the distinction between public space/private space, blowing holes through the dense urban fabric of Palestinian refugee camps, forcing insurgents out of the “invisibility” of the private sphere and into the streets. By invading the space of civilians (i.e. homes), the IDF re-cast both the arena, as well as the actors, involved in the spatial practice of counter-insurgency—effectively, disrupting “the properties of spaces and possibilities of time” that, taken together, constituted the “sensible” of military occupation.⁵⁰ As the conflict unfolds over time, the forces of military occupation adapt their tactics in response to the insurgency they are tasked with combating, making and re-making the spatial environment according to tactical necessity. Crucially, Palestinian militants contribute to this dialectical process as well—constituting the anarchic, “anti-plan” according to which the IDF, along with its

⁴⁷ Monk, *An Aesthetic Occupation*, pg. 2.

⁴⁸ Weizman, *Hollow Lands*, pg. 168.

⁴⁹ Ibid, pg. 189.

⁵⁰ Ranciere, *Politics of Aesthetics*, pg. 8.

legions of planners and architects, must attempt to regain control through the re-ordering of the landscape.

The Haunted Landscape

The manipulation of visibility by both Palestinians and Israelis constitutes a fundamental axis along which the violence of military occupation plays out—imbuing the landscape itself with the violence of both public and private, state and insurgent, actors. The concept of (in)visibility fails, however, to offer a convincing framework for exploring more complicated notions of “presence” that manifest themselves throughout the militarized landscape of the Occupied Territories.

Following Yael Navaro-Yashin, I turn to “the phantomic”, understood here as the material manifestation of spectral (i.e. invisible) presence, to account for the meanings people attach to the spatial environment of the OT.⁵¹ In a place like the Occupied Territories, where claims to the landscape are often formulated according to the idea that the legacy of one’s ancestors—whether national-religious or purely biological—inheres in a particular place long after their departure, “the phantomic” can be used to describe the relationship between people and their material surroundings. While, according to Navaro-Yashin, a sense of “the phantomic” leads Turkish-Cypriots to express unease about the legacy of violence visited upon their Greek-Cypriot neighbors,⁵² the same cannot be said of the OT. In the latter case, according to Eyal Weizman, Israelis imbue the landscape with rich signification that connects the present moment with the

⁵¹ Y. Navaro-Yashin, *The Make-Believe Space: Affective Geography in a Post-War Polity*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2012, pg. 13.

⁵² Ibid, pg. 163.

“biblical time” of their Israelite ancestors⁵³—effectively, affiliating themselves with the “presence” of their predecessors. However, the “presence” of Palestinians is not rendered the same way, despite the litany of material signs indicating that, in fact, Arabs have long inhabited this landscape alongside Jews. In a sense, Israelis living in the Occupied Territories experience “the phantomic”—just not in relation to displaced Palestinians. Instead, they become develop affective-ideological ties that make the West Bank feel like “home”, rather than a zone of military occupation characterized by violent contestation.

Israelis are not the only ones who experience a peculiar sense of “presence” in the Occupied Territories. Whereas Israelis interpret the landscape they inhabit in light of its real or imagined suffusion with the history of the Jewish people, Palestinians are subject, I argue, to a sense of their own animatedness, and hence manipulability, by the Israeli military. I use the term “animatedness” in the sense employed by Sianne Ngai, who uses it to describe “the image of the overemotionalized racial subject...[whose constitution as such renders him or her] unusually receptive to external control.”⁵⁴ The peculiar feeling that one is, in fact, being manipulated through one’s “own” emotions is a common refrain among Palestinians living under occupation, who often suggest that Israelis “use” public outbursts of anger on the part of Palestinians to justify the perpetration of further violence against them.⁵⁵ In this case, the outrage of Palestinians—an “ugly” feeling if ever there was one—comes to function as a kind of puppet-string used by the Israelis to induce the occupied population to invite violence upon itself. The unmistakable feeling of “presence”, for Palestinians, is not unlike the uncanny feeling of being observed built

⁵³ Weizman, *Hollow Lands*, pg. 135.

⁵⁴ Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, pg. 91.

⁵⁵ Gordon, *Israel's Occupation*.

into the Panopticon-like structure of Israeli settlements—in both cases, the production and circulation of particular affects aims to produce Palestinian subjects who are, owing to their manipulability, more easily governed. After all, what, if not excess emotionality, can be more inhibitive of participation in the ordered, Habermasian public sphere in which equality itself is to be enacted?

Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to outline the dual function of the infrastructure employed by the Israeli state in its military occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip—namely, to ensure the “orderly” circulation of bodies throughout the territories, but also to produce particular types of subjects. Both goals are pursued through the manipulation of the spatial environment of the Occupied Territories, relying heavily on the disciplines of urban planning and architecture. Not only are architects and planners tasked with reconciling a landscape that is equal parts suburb and warzone, instead, they are also tasked with enabling Israelis to cultivate affective-ideological investments in the space they inhabit. In this way, organizing the space of military occupation becomes synonymous with constructing and enacting a particular “distribution of the sensible” that, at once, subordinates Palestinians *and* normalizes the violence of military occupation. While Palestinian resistance has focused on overturning this “sensible”, it is matched, at every step, by the Israeli military. Furthermore, as I have attempted to illustrate through my discussion of “phantomic presences” and “animatedness”, the conflict has generated “invisible” products—subjectivities, ideologies, and discourses—that are difficult to entangle from the contested landscape and the people who inhabit it. By turning our attention to the immaterial effects of

particular architectural configurations, we can perhaps, begin to imagine an approach to organizing space in a way that is emancipatory, rather than merely repressive.

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“Local Microbiology: A Biosocial Conceptual Framework for Antibiotic Resistance”

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I. Introduction

Microbial infections and antibiotic resistance represent a serious crisis in today’s world.¹ To explain antibiotic resistance, scientific researchers and biomedical practitioners have typically turned to the universal principle of natural selection.² They argue that antibiotic resistance is caused by the same forces all over the world: drugs are inappropriately administered or consumed, creating a selection pressure that will deterministically and inevitably drive the evolution of drug-resistant bacteria. Nonetheless, while evolution is central to understanding antibiotic resistance, universal theories of biology alone do not account for the powerful role local environments play in the experience of microbial diseases and the rise of antibiotic resistance.

To address the shortcomings of this deterministic biological universalism that reduces antibiotic resistance to an issue of evolution, Erin Koch has proposed the concept of *local microbiology*, riffing off Margaret Lock’s seminal concept of *local*.³ In particular, Koch’s ethnography of Georgian TB diagnostic laboratories and prisons entitled *Free Market Tuberculosis* introduces the concept of local microbiology and uses it to explain how TB microbes are rendered in a diagnostic laboratory through human-microbe interactions. Although

¹ “Global Pandemic,” *TB Alliance*, <http://www.tballiance.org/why-new-tb-drugs/global-pandemic>, accessed July 6, 2016; R. Feltman, “A ‘superbug’ emerges in China to remind us that antibiotics won’t last forever,” *The Washington Post*, November 19, 2015.

² “What is Antibiotic Resistance,” *Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services*, <http://health.mo.gov/safety/antibioticresistance/generalinfo.php>, accessed July 6, 2016.

³ E. Koch, “Local Microbiologies of Tuberculosis: Insights from the Republic of Georgia,” *Medical Anthropology* 30.1(2001); M. Lock and V. Nguyen, *An Anthropology of Biomedicine*, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2010.

Koch's local microbiology provides valuable insight on the issue of antibiotic resistance, she does not draw on her rich ethnographic findings to flesh out a more complete theoretical framework for what local microbiology encompasses and how it can be used to analyze and situate ethnographic data.

Thus, in this paper I will flesh out the term "local microbiology" by applying Lock's principle of biological and social entanglement onto human-microbe interactions. In doing so, I will present my own conceptual frameworks for thinking about the entanglement of the biological and the social in the context of dynamic human-microbe interactions. Specifically, I will draw upon Erin Koch's ethnographic findings in *Free Market Tuberculosis* to argue that local microbiology represents a triangulation between the processes of knowledge production and diagnosis, the local environment, and the microbes inside a patient's body.

II. What is Local Microbiology?

In many ways, local microbiology is a modified application of Margaret Lock's local biology onto microbes and human-microbe interactions. Like local biology, local microbiology illuminates how biological and social processes are coproduced and inextricably entangled. As Lock writes, "Local biologies refers to the way in which biological and social processes are inseparably entangled over time, resulting in human biological difference [...] We use the term 'biosocial differentiation' to refer to the continual interactions of biological and social processes across time and space that eventually sediment into local biologies. In effect, then, local biologies are artifacts – snapshots frozen in time of ceaseless biosocial differentiation."⁴ Lock's

⁴ Lock and Nguyen, *Anthropology of Biomedicine*.

conception of local biology criticizes notions of universal biology and asserts that biological and social processes are co-produced, resulting in biosocial differentiation across space and time. Similarly, local microbiology pushes back against universal biological explanations for microbial phenomena such as antibiotic resistance and argues that such phenomena arise from the local biosocial fabric.

Nonetheless, unlike local biology, local microbiology focuses on two distinct life forms that coexist symbiotically and therefore must account for how the biologies of both humans and microbes are intertwined with the social. Indeed, in this paper I will examine how local biosocial factors affect both the human experience of TB and the development of antibiotic resistance, a fundamental biological transformation in the microbes. In this way, though local microbiology parallels local biology in its consideration of how the biological and the social are co-produced, its focus on human-microbe interactions requires its own frameworks for understanding the dynamic relationships between the human host, the microbes inside the host's body, and the microbes in the environment.

III. Knowledge Production Enacts Local Microbiology Along Human-Microbe Interactions

1. A Conceptual Framework for How Knowledge Production Enacts Local Microbiology

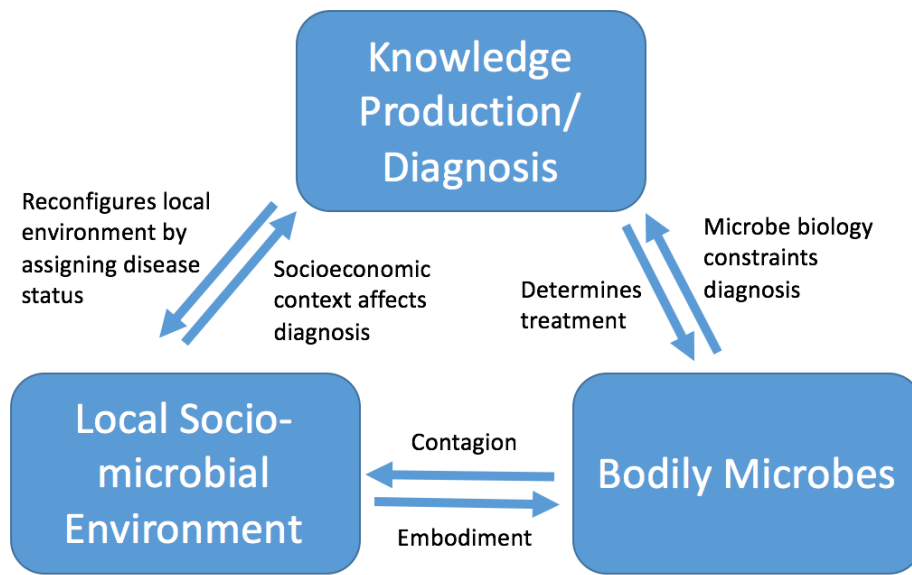
Knowledge production plays an essential role in local biology, and by extension, local microbiology. In describing local biology, Lock and Nguyen write, “Embodied experience is informed, of course, by language, culturally informed knowledge, and expectations. [...] Embodiment is also constituted by the way in which the self and others represent the body,

drawing upon local categories of knowledge and experience.”⁵ Similarly, when Erin Koch introduces her term local microbiology, she draws attention to the importance of “dialectics of biology and culture in which infectious diseases—and knowledge [...] about them—are produced.”⁶ Indeed, since diagnosis is a process of knowledge production that plays a critical role in the detection and treatment of microbial diseases, knowledge production figures prominently in local microbiology. Nonetheless, although Koch presents valuable ethnographic data on how TB is diagnosed in Georgia, she does not trace how diagnostic processes actually enact local microbiology and shape the biosocialities of microbes and humans. Hence, based on Koch’s own ethnographic data, I offer a conceptual framework illustrating how processes of knowledge production such as diagnosis perturb and alter human-microbe interactions, creating local microbiologies.

Local microbiology can be thought of as a triangulation between the process of knowledge production (or diagnosis) with what I call the “local socio-microbial environment” and “bodily microbes.” I use the term “local socio-microbial environment” to refer to the ways in which a person’s local environment is comprised of social relationships and identities at the same time as it harbors a distinct ensemble of ambient microbes. The local socio-microbial environment therefore underscores how one’s positionality in a local environment is both socially fraught and microbially fraught. Meanwhile, I use the term “bodily microbes” to refer to the microbes residing in the human body. I illustrate my conceptualization of this triangular relationship with the following diagram.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Koch, “Local Microbiologies.”



This conceptualization captures how diagnosis shapes a person's bodily microbes through the treatments it prescribes. It also captures how diagnosis shapes a person's local socio-microbial environment by imparting a social identity as either disease positive or negative. Furthermore, this model recognizes that a person's bodily microbes and local socio-microbial environment are not unrelated entities, but interact with each other continuously through the opposing processes of embodiment and contagion. Finally, this framework suggests that the the bodily microbes and the local socio-microbial environment can feedback and shape the process of knowledge production itself. Hence, knowledge production consists of a continuous process of human-microbe interactions. I will now show how this conceptual framework can be used to interpret Koch's ethnographic findings.

2. Knowledge Production Configures and Reconfigures a Person's Local Socio-Microbial Environment and Bodily Microbes

As a process of knowledge production, diagnosis shapes a person's bodily microbes by constructing the microbes' identity and biology anew and determining how the microbes will be

treated. Indeed, when microbes are made manifest during diagnosis through biological samples such as sputum, the microbes are not merely being read-out as they truly are; they are constructed anew and sometimes misrepresented. Koch writes, “I found that as laboratory technicians and scientists conduct everyday diagnostic work, tuberculosis is not merely ‘diagnosed’ as if it is something to be discovered, but it is produced and reproduced.”⁷ As a result, drawing on Berger and Luckmann’s theory of the social construction of reality, I argue that diagnosis is a biosocial process that socially constructs the presence and identities of bodily microbes from biological media such as sputum.⁸ These constructions then alter the bodily microbes through the treatments they dictate, enacting local microbiology.

At the same time that diagnosis renders a patient’s bodily microbes, it also reconfigures a patient’s local socio-microbial environment. In particular, it can assign a social status to a patient as either disease positive or negative that affects where the patient will live and who will be able to visit the patient. A TB-positive patient, for instance, might be placed in a hospital, sanatorium, or clinic, and family visits might be restricted. In other words, the social status that diagnosis affixes to patients can restructure the patients’ local environment in such a way that the patient is exposed to a different set of ambient pathogens and a different set of people. Their local socio-microbial environment is reconfigured.

In her ethnography, Koch provides a telling example of how knowledge production simultaneously shapes a person’s local socio-microbial environment and bodily microbes. Specifically, during her fieldwork in Georgia’s prisons, she observes healthy prisoners falsely

⁷ E. Koch, *Free Market Tuberculosis*, Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2013.

⁸ Ibid.

presenting the sputum of a TB-afflicted inmate as their own in order to gain access to a detention center exclusively for prisoners with TB, which provided better living conditions. Indeed, the TB detention center was “referred to as the ‘five star hotel’ of Georgia’s prison system, [where] the rooms were less crowded, detainees had more freedom of movement, there was less violence between detainees and guards and among detainees, and the food was better.”⁹ We see here an explicit example of how a prisoner’s biosocially constructed TB-positive status places him or her in a different local socio-microbial environment with elevated levels of ambient TB microbes and more sick people. Access to the TB detention center is contingent upon one’s social status as a TB-positive prisoner, and once there, one is exposed to a locally-specific ensemble of ambient microbes.

At the same time, however, a positive diagnosis requires the prisoner to consume antibiotics, exerting a direct effect on the prisoner’s bodily microbes by altering their biology and contributing to resistance. Moreover, this consumption of antibiotics occurs just as the prisoner begins embodying ambient TB microbes as bodily microbes. Koch writes, “[A healthy prisoner at Ksani] risks increased exposure to TB infection and would be required to take the difficult treatment regimen for months.”¹⁰ By simultaneously placing the prisoner in an environment with high ambient TB and forcing the prisoner to consume antibiotics, a positive (mis)diagnosis creates fertile ground for breeding resistance. Indeed, “if that person were to become actually actively sick with tuberculosis at a later date, prior months of exposure to the standard antibiotics

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

would put him at a higher risk for developing a drug-resistant strain.”¹¹ In this way, knowledge production simultaneously transforms people’s local socio-microbial environments and bodily microbes, an illustration of local microbiology.

3. Local Socioeconomic Circumstances Affect Knowledge Production

Knowledge production configures and reconfigures a person’s local socio-microbial environment and bodily microbes, but these relationships are mutual: a persons’ local socio-microbial environment and bodily microbes also structure the way knowledge is produced. For instance, Koch’s ethnography reveals how the local socioeconomic context in which knowledge is produced affects the production of said knowledge. Specifically, Koch’s informants frequently contrast the higher-quality diagnoses of the National Reference Laboratory (NRL) with the lower-quality diagnoses of the more destitute regional laboratories. For instance, Koch’s informant Lela reveals, “[The workers at the poor regional laboratories] have no gloves or masks, and they do not have many hoods or exhaust systems. ...They have no microscopes, they cannot do correct smears [...]”¹² Koch herself similarly observes, “Laboratory technicians outside of [the NRL] often go days without having to prepare or read a slide, which puts the quality of their work at risk. They may not have the opportunity to build a base of experiential knowledge necessary for distinguishing between a bacterial rod and scratch on the slide.”¹³ Koch’s ethnographic data demonstrates how socioeconomic and socio-spatial stratification leads to differences in the quality of diagnosis and, by extension, the local microbial palette. The

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

biological and the social are firmly intertwined and entrenched in the local when it comes to diagnosis and treatment.

4. The Biology of Bodily Microbes Structure the Way Knowledge is Produced

Just as local social circumstances affect knowledge production, the very biology of the bodily microbes that knowledge production seeks to illuminate feeds back and structures those diagnostic efforts, creating a full circle of human-microbe interactions. In other words, the properties of the microbe and our locally grounded attempts to render those properties are ceaselessly in dialogue with each other. In particular, Koch discusses how the slow-growing nature of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* places limitations on how fast diagnostic tests can be conducted in the lab. Indeed, Koch's informants assert that if *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* is not cultured long enough, the quality and accuracy of the diagnostic tests will drop.⁶ Such direct constraints that the biology of the microbe places on how quickly the microbe can be rendered through human processes of knowledge production has important ramifications. Koch writes, "Culture tests would take eight weeks to grow. During these eight to eleven weeks, an individual with active tuberculosis could infect several other people and become more ill. For these reasons, sometimes doctors started someone who presented with obvious clinical symptoms on a regimen of rifampicin and isoniazid, two of the most powerful and widely used antibiotics in TB treatment. However, this cautionary measure could also encourage antibiotic resistance if they prescribed antibiotics to someone who did not need them."¹⁴ Here, the slow-growing properties of TB unavoidably prolong the diagnostic timeframe, creating circumstances under which physicians might inappropriately prescribe antibiotics and contribute to antibiotic resistance. In

¹⁴ Ibid.

summary, we see that the biology of the microbe places constraints on human processes of knowledge production, which in turn exert effects back on the microbe. Thus, knowledge production, as it enacts local microbiology, represents an ongoing and reciprocal interaction between humans and microbes.

IV. Conclusion

Local microbiology is a multi-faceted concept. At its core, it illuminates how biological and social processes are entangled in the dynamic interaction between humans and microbes in a local biosocial space. In particular, it can show us how knowledge production, the local socio-microbial environment, and bodily microbes affect each other to produce phenomena such as antibiotic resistance. Indeed, local microbiology positions antibiotic resistance at the center of a network of biosocial factors, including the construction of microbes during diagnosis, the biological properties of the microbes, and local healthcare structures. It paints antibiotic resistance not as a stand-alone, inevitable phenomenon arising from misused drugs, but considers how a variety of biosocial factors engender, and are shaped by, antibiotic resistance.

From a broader perspective, local microbiology demonstrates the invaluable insight that medical anthropology offers onto difficult problems such as antibiotic resistance. Even as biomedicine and the natural sciences attempt to explain antibiotic resistance and other phenomena through deterministic, universal scientific principles, medical anthropology reminds us that local circumstances matter profoundly. And even as biomedicine and the natural sciences continue to drive problems like antibiotic resistance down into the microscopic realm of

molecules, medical anthropology draws our attention to how these problems are the product of macroscopic patterns in the biosocial fabric.

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“The Dying Wish of a Terminally Ill Cancer Patient”

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Introduction: Facing the End of Life

While death is a universal human experience, it is not a purely biological one. Dying occupies a liminal space “fraught with uncertainty” between normal social life and biological death, and thus between culture and nature.¹ Dying is intimately connected to the meaning people attribute to living.² But although there is clearly a cultural component to death, the process of dying has become medicalized, turned into an “objective, biological process” that places the dying person under the supervision of medical professionals, away from everyday life.³ Medicalization reflects the transformation of the social process of dying into the biological process of receiving aggressive treatments involving medical technologies and formal end-of-life arrangements.⁴ There are many ways that dying can occur, and the diseases and treatments leading up to death take place within a cultural context through which people interpret their experiences. An exploration of end-of-life decisions should consider the numerous influences on how people live as they approach death within each society, such as financial situations, institutional structures in which they receive treatment and care, and social hierarchies.⁵ The concept of a natural death has multiple interpretations that are historically and socially contingent. For example, Taiwanese

¹ S. Long. “Becoming a Cucumber: Culture, Nature, and the Good Death in Japan and the United States,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* vol. 29, no. 1, 2003, pg. 38.

² Ibid, pg. 37.

³ Ibid, pg. 34.

⁴ N. Scheper-Hughes and M. Lock. “The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology,” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, vol.1, no. 1, 1987, pg. 10; Long, “Becoming a Cucumber,” pg. 36.

⁵ Ibid, pg. 34.

culture highly values *shou zhong zheng qin*, or dying naturally of old age at home in one's bed. Such a death is the "most glorious and fortunate way of dying."⁶ Therefore, examining the ways in which ordinary people talk about and conceptualize death and looking at decisions made by individuals, families, and physicians about dying can lead to a more robust understanding of cultural differences and similarities.

A cancer diagnosis is often viewed as the "beginning marker" for an extended period of suffering that ultimately ends in death.⁷ In Taiwan, death is highly institutionalized for cancer patients despite the preference of most of the cancer patients to die at home. The discrepancy between the actual place of death for Taiwanese cancer decedents and the preferred place of death documented for Taiwanese terminally ill cancer patients may result from an "inadequate social infrastructure and insufficient reimbursement by the NHI [National Health Insurance]" to support home care.⁸ Factors influencing where cancer patients die are complex and multifaceted, including individual preferences, availability of informal and social support systems, and access to health care resources.⁹ Studies have shown that many Taiwanese cancer patients who could potentially benefit from hospice care do not receive it in time.¹⁰ Most cancer patients in their terminal stage are still receiving "highly technical, depersonalized conventional care" in acute

⁶ S. Tang, Ean-Wen Huang, Tsang-Wu Liu, Hung-Ming Wang, Kun-Ming Rau, and Jen-Shi Chen. "Aggressive End-of-Life Care Significantly Influenced Propensity for Hospice Enrollment Within the Last Three Days of Life for Taiwanese Cancer Decedents," *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*, no. 41, no.1, 2011, pg. 572.

⁷ Long, "Becoming a Cucumber," pg. 45.

⁸ Tang, et al. "Propensity for Home Death Among Taiwanese Cancer Decedents in 2001-2006, Determined by Services Received at End of Life," *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2010, pg. 571.

⁹ Ibid, pg. 567.

¹⁰ S. Tang, Mei-Ling Chen, Ean-Wen Huang, Shin-Lan Koong, Gia Li Lin, and Shu-Chun Hsiao. "Hospice Utilization in Taiwan by Cancer Patients Who Died Between 2000 and 2004," *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*, vol. 33, no. 4, 2007, pg. 41.

care settings in Taiwan.¹¹ By identifying factors that encourage home death as opposed to hospital death, appropriate services and policies can be implemented to allow infrastructure to be most responsive to the needs of most of the terminally ill cancer patients.¹²

In this paper, I aim to examine the end-of-life (EOL) experiences of terminally ill cancer patients in Taiwan, analyzing how Taiwanese culture and the economics of care impact the process of dying. Through the lens of the anthropology of embodiment, I will examine how the world is experienced through the terminally ill body and challenge the notion of death as a purely biological construct. I will draw on the ideas presented in Susan Long's cross-cultural study of the factors that contribute to the cultural definition of a "good death"; Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock's idea of the three approaches to a mindful body; and Byron Good's analysis of how objects are constructed within the field of medicine, as well as his concept of subjunctivity.

Affordable, High Quality Health Care: National Health Insurance

Taiwan's National Health Insurance (NHI) began in 1995 as universal insurance coverage, and provides comprehensive services as a single-payer system with the government as sole insurer. Patients have free access to any health care system and provider they choose. Health care systems are reimbursed for services provided, and copayment is waived for patients with "recognized major diseases, including malignancy."¹³ The feasibility of a hospice home care

¹¹ K. Yang, Teresa Jeo-Chen Yin, Li-Chuan Lee, Nanly Hsu, and Jui-Mei Huang. "Holistic Outcome Measurement for Terminally Ill Cancer Patients in medical Centers in Taiwan," *Journal of Nursing Research*, vol. 9, no .3, 2001, pg. 44.

¹² Tang et al., "Propensity for Home Death," pg. 567.

¹³ Tang et al., "Propensity for Home Death," pg. 567.

program was first tested under the umbrella of general home care services starting in 1996. Even though the coverage and payment for this program was limited, it was the government's "first initiative that directed health care resources toward end-of-life care for cancer patients". Taiwan uses the NHI as its major policy instrument to encourage the spread of the hospice movement, improve access to hospice care, and further promote utilization of those services. New reimbursement regulations were issued by the Bureau of NHI to provide inpatient hospice care to cancer patients who were "recognized as noncurable" and were willing to receive hospice care.¹⁴ This classification of cancer patients exemplifies the embodied notion of the "body politic", which involves the regulation, surveillance, and control of bodies. Cost of care is determined to some extent by the "curability" of the disease, which is not always a clear-cut diagnosis and demonstrates the idea that the body is simultaneously "naturally and culturally produced."¹⁵ The question of who has the authority to produce this diagnosis reflects the way that the body and disease are formulated in a "culturally distinctive fashion" at the intersection of health, politics, and culture.¹⁶ The personal experience of cancer intersects with the medically-determined definitions of terminal illness, which then together influence the economics of care, ultimately affecting the process of dying for the terminally ill cancer patient. Compared to hospice home care, the use of inpatient hospice care for cancer patients during their last year of life increased more rapidly. The major reason for such a disproportional use of inpatient hospice care may come from the different reimbursement schemes and scope of services covered by different types

¹⁴ Tang et al, "Hospice Utilization," pg. 447.

¹⁵ Scheper-Hughes and Lock, "The Mindful Body," pg. 7.

¹⁶ B. Good and Mary-Jo Del Vecchio Good. "In the Subjunctive Mode: Epilepsy Narratives in Turkey," *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 38, no. 6, 1994, pg. 65.

of hospice care. Because there is a great difference in the rates of reimbursement between the two types of hospice care (US \$42-\$48 per home visit vs. US \$142 per day for inpatient hospice care), there may be an “incentive for hospitals to provide inpatient hospice care” compared to hospice home care services. It is evident that the economic structure of the health care system has a significant impact on the experience of dying through the influence it has on recommended care options.

Where Should I Die?: Hospice Care in Taiwan

Hospice care in Taiwan covers a wide variety of services, provided by various professionals and volunteers in multiple settings with different care patterns, such as home hospice care and inpatient hospice care.¹⁷ The hospice movement has been slowly adopted in Taiwan since 1983, motivated by a growing recognition of and dissatisfaction with the “futility and indignity of expensive and intrusive medical treatments” for terminally ill cancer patients.¹⁸ But despite enthusiastic promotion of hospice philosophy in Taiwan and recent increased availability and acceptance of hospice services, hospice care is still underutilized.¹⁹ Hospice and palliative care services have been proven effective in enhancing the quality of end-of-life (EOL) care, which has been recognized as one of the major goals of the National Cancer Control Program.²⁰ An important consideration in evaluating the outcome of EOL care is the timing of hospice enrollment, because late enrollment can create medical, emotional, and financial problems not

¹⁷ Yang et al., “Holistic Outcome Measurement,” pg. 44.

¹⁸ Tang et al, “Hospice Utilization,” pg. 447.

¹⁹ Tang et al, “Aggressive End-of-Life Care,” pg. 69.

²⁰ Tang et al, “Hospice Utilization,” pg. 447.

only for patients and families but also hospices and society.²¹ Studies have found that patients with hospice services, whether inpatient or home, reported greater scores on quality of life and satisfaction with care than those with conventional care. The hospice inpatient group had “less physical symptoms” and “greater financial and physical well-being”, while the home hospice care group had “better psychological well-being.”²² The advantages of hospice care include reduced medical costs and greater satisfaction for terminal patients and their families, shorter hospital stays, and fewer invasive procedures. The differences in payment policy also results in savings on medical resources in hospice care.²³ It is important to consider the dynamics of home versus inpatient hospice care. The hospital is not only the site of the construction and treatment of the medicalized body, but also the “site of moral drama”, human suffering and fear, and the “confrontation with illness and death” on the part of both the sick patient and the physician in charge of their care.²⁴ Thus, the discrepancy between patients’ desire to die at home and the reality of dying in the hospital is significant in that the location of death clearly shapes the experience of dying for the patient as well as for the family.

The Doctor Will See You Now: The Role of the Medical Oncologist

The availability of new treatment technologies, such as chemotherapeutic agents, has lengthened the timeline for advanced cancers and increases the likelihood of receiving chemotherapy near

²¹ Tang et al, “Aggressive End-of-Life Care,” pg. 69.

²² Yang et al, “Holistic Outcome,” pg. 55.

²³ S. Kang, Ming-Hwai Lin, I-Hsuan Hwang, Ming-Hsien Lin, Hsiao-Ting Ching, and Shinn-Jang Hwang. “Impact of Hospice Care on End-of-Life Hospitalization of Elderly Patients with Lung Cancer in Taiwan,” *Journal of Chinese Medical Association*, vol. 75, no.1, 2012, pg. 223.

²⁴ Good and Good, “In the Subjunctive Mode,” pg. 85.

death, which may not benefit cancer patients. Overly aggressive chemotherapy use at EOL has been recognized as representing poor quality cancer care.²⁵ Taiwanese medical oncologists are able to build long-term relationships with their terminally ill cancer patients, which means they recognize how hopeful they are for small benefits of chemotherapy and are empathetic to their desperation. Cancer patients are willing to endure major negative effects associated with aggressive treatment for a small and often non-significant survival gain to avoid death at any cost. The continuation of chemotherapy close to death may reflect medical oncologists' respect for a decision made by cancer patients and their family caregivers. Thus, they may agree to provide chemotherapy while patients and families struggle with coming to terms with the prognosis. This delays enrollment in hospice care, but also gives the family time to "adjust to the reality that more treatment is not curing their disease."²⁶ On the other hand, since they are more familiar with caring for terminally ill patients, Taiwanese medical oncologists may be more likely to understand the futility of life-sustaining treatments and be more likely to "facilitate timely hospice referral."²⁷ It is interesting to consider the role of the medical oncologist and how their medical training teaches them to construct the body of the terminally ill cancer patient. There are generative processes at work through which "illness and other dimensions of medical reality are formulated", in this case the medical reality of a terminal illness.²⁸ Physicians have been trained to "construct sick persons" as patients who are presented as "appropriate for

²⁵ T. Liu, Wen-Cheng Chang, Hung-Ming Wang, Jen-Shi Chen, Shin Lan Koong, Shu Chun Hsiao, and Siew Tzuh Tang, "Use of Chemotherapy at the End of Life among Taiwanese Cancer Decedents, 2001-2006," *Acta Oncologica* vol. 51, no. 4, 2012, pg. 505.

²⁶ Ibid, pg. 509.

²⁷ Tang et al, "Aggressive End-of-Life Care," pg. 75.

²⁸ B. Good. "How Medicine Constructs Its Objects," in *Medicine, Rationality, and Experience*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pg. 69.

medical treatment” and reconstituted as the “object of medical attention.”²⁹ The choices that medical oncologists make in deciding whether or not to prescribe chemotherapy or other forms of aggressive end-of-life treatment reflect the way that they have learned to see the cancer patient through the medical gaze, but also must take into account the desires of the patient and their family members.

There is also a cultural tendency of Taiwanese physicians to not disclose prognosis and discuss EOL care options with terminally ill cancer patients; the patients often do not know their prognosis and have not discussed EOL care options with their physician, usually at the request of their family members. This failure to disclose prognosis and discuss EOL care options may be more prominent for Taiwanese physicians compared to medical oncologists because they are less familiar with the care of terminally ill cancer patients, resulting in the transition from curative to palliative care being delayed to the last few days of life. Therefore, these physicians’ “indirect communication style with terminally ill cancer patients” and their tendency to treat dying cancer patients more aggressively with life-sustaining treatments may make them more likely than medical oncologists to enroll patients in hospice care in their last few days. If life-sustaining treatments are used when there is only a small chance of recovery, they exact a substantial toll from patients and their families in terms of “financial cost, emotional burden, and failed expectations”, and also “decrease the likelihood of dying at home”, as most cancer patients prefer. Thus, the appropriateness of such life-sustaining treatments at EOL should be carefully

²⁹ Ibid, pg. 76.

evaluated; it is important to ensure that patient preferences for treatment should direct use of chemotherapy and other aggressive life-sustaining options at EOL.³⁰

Me Versus Us: The Influence of Family Dynamics

Family support is integral to helping patients cope with terminal disease, and this is especially true in the Chinese culture.³¹ This is also evidence of the concept of the social body, which speaks to how the body is seen as an “integrated aspect of self and social relations”. There is a constant “exchange of meanings” between the natural and social worlds, as the social structure of the family influences how they make medical decisions that impact that physical experiences of the patient.³² Due to the rapidly changing sociocultural climate in Taiwan, however, families may not be available to take care of dying patients at home.³³ Additionally, the final months of life can be devastatingly overwhelming emotionally and financially for families. Because there is currently “no formal compensation for the substantial amount of time, efforts, and financial costs” that family members devote to caring for terminally ill patients at home, families may tend to choose inpatient hospice as a mode of EOL care for cancer patients out of financial necessity, despite there being “strong evidence to show that the great majority of Taiwanese cancer patients prefer to die at home.”³⁴ In countries with cultures of “family consent for disclosure” and “family autonomy” such as in Taiwan, patient prognosis tends to be disclosed to families, and family

³⁰ Tang et al, “Propensity for Home Death,” pg. 573; Liu et al, “Use of Chemotherapy,” pg. 509.

³¹ H. Lang. “Willingness to Pay for Lung Cancer Treatment,” *Value in Health* 13.6(2010):747.

³² Scheper-Hughes and Locke, “The Mindful Body,” pg. 7.

³³ Tang et al, “Propensity for Home Death,” pg. 572.

³⁴ Tang et al, “Hospice Utilization,” pg. 450.

members have “legitimate superior decision-making authority.” Quality of life is an underlying goal of quality of care for patients and their families, including maximizing comfort and maintaining dignity in the terminal phase, yet studies have shown that Taiwanese family caregivers adopted a “significantly more aggressive attitude toward life-sustaining treatments” than the patients’ own stated preferences. The terminally ill body is thus the site of intersection between the social realm of the family and the biological realm of treatment. Cancer patients “without adequate knowledge of their prognosis” overestimate their chance of survival, leading them to request more aggressive EOL care.³⁵ These patients are employing Good and Good’s notion of “subjunctivizing tactics”, where they are “engaged in a quest for a cure”—in imagining alternative outcomes, evaluating the potential meanings of the past, and seeking treatments.³⁶ Specific subjunctivizing tactics are present in the narrative representation of illness, and these allow sufferers and their families to justify continued care-seeking and to “maintain hope for positive, even ‘miraculous,’ outcomes.”³⁷ The patients seek to portray a “subjunctive world”, one in which healing is an open possibility, even if miracles are necessary.³⁸ This continued openness to change and healing may lead patients and family members to choose aggressive life-sustaining treatments, meaning they are more likely to die in the hospital and less likely to die at home.

³⁵ Yang et al, “Holistic Outcome,” pg. 44; Liu et al, “Use of Chemotherapy,” pg. 510.

³⁶ Good and Good, “In the Subjunctive Mode,” pg. 838.

³⁷ Ibid, pg. 837.

³⁸ Ibid, pg. 839.

“Equal” Access?: The Impact of Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status (SES) has been shown to contribute disparities in health care. Low-SES patients have less access to medical resources and service providers. Patients with lower educational levels receive less information and are less involved in therapeutic decisions.³⁹ Terminal cancer patients with low-SES are associated with more aggressive EOL care. They are more likely to “receive chemotherapy, to have frequent ER visits and ICU admissions, and to die in an acute-care hospital.”⁴⁰ Patients with lower SES are further disadvantaged due to the doctor’s misperception of their desire and need for information.⁴¹ Public health strategies should therefore focus on providing low-SES patients with high-quality EOL cancer care, and on better allocating “health care resources for a sustainable health care system.”⁴² Quality palliative and end-of-life care can be considered an international human right, aligned with the themes of “inherent dignity of the individual” and the principles of universality and nondiscrimination; however, “less than 8% of those who would benefit from palliative care” are able to access it. While reducing untimely and preventable deaths is currently a global health priority, improving the quality of life of those who are dying should also be considered. Dying is expensive, but high costs do not necessarily produce a good death. The burden of cost in providing EOL care in high-income countries is usually incurred in the final few months of life, as doctors, patients, and families scramble for exhaustive measures to extend life by a few days. Caring for the dying is

³⁹ C. Chang, Chin-Chia Wu, Wen-Yao Yin, Shiun-Yang Juang, Chia-Hui Yu, and Ching-Chih Lee. “Low Socioeconomic Status is Associated with More Aggressive End-of-Life Care for Working Age Terminal Cancer Patients,” *The Oncologist*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2014, pp. 1241-42.

⁴⁰ Ibid, pg. 1244.

⁴¹ Ibid, pg. 1247.

⁴² Ibid, pg. 1241.

fundamental to reduce unnecessary suffering. It also requires good stewardship of national health care resources for the sustainability of the increasing demands of health care expenditures.⁴³

Conclusion: What We Can Do

Hospice and decisions against continued aggressive therapy are a final cultural method of creating a “good death” by shifting the dying process from that of a medicalized battle to one of acceptance and “nature.”⁴⁴ Clinical and health policies should aim to ensure that cancer patients at EOL undergo aggressive life-sustaining treatments *only if* such treatments meet the patient’s needs and interests in achieving optimal EOL care and high quality of death; the expense of life-sustaining treatments should be avoided when they will not benefit patients.⁴⁵ The fine line between deciding to continue chemotherapy and starting palliative care remains a challenge, since anxious patients and families may desire to continue chemotherapy to avoid death at any cost. Patients’ and families’ over-estimating the effectiveness of chemotherapy may be minimized if palliative care was integrated into routine oncologic care. This could take the form of a palliative care hospital consultation team who “facilitate adequate prognosis disclosure” and appropriate discussion of the “transition from curative to palliative care”, thus ensuring that EOL care best meets cancer patients’ needs and preferences.⁴⁶ Shifting treatment approaches away from fighting cancer towards providing access to supportive care and encouraging cooperation with social welfare workers who will help patients understand the prognostic information will

⁴³ Ibid, pg. 1246.

⁴⁴ Long, “Becoming a Cucumber,” pg. 62.

⁴⁵ Tang et al, “Propensity for Home Death,” pg. 573.

⁴⁶ Liu et al, “Use of Chemotherapy,” pg. 510.

increase family satisfaction and support. These policies would ensure better use of health care resources for a sustainable health care system and quality EOL care for terminal cancer patients.⁴⁷ Terminal care, with the combination of home hospice care and inpatient services, can be fused into the existing health care system to best serve dying patients. The components of this system of care should provide equal access and insure a balance of reimbursement and resources to allow patients a choice of care. Choice is the “hallmark of the hospice concept of care of the dying.”⁴⁸ The choices that people make about dying reflect the accumulated experiences of their lives, “legitimated by the notions of good and bad deaths” that these experiences have generated.⁴⁹ The process of dying for a terminally ill cancer patient is enmeshed within a web of cultural ideas about death, the impact of national health insurance on care, social structures of the family, and socioeconomic disparities. Death is anything but a purely biological phenomenon, and it is crucial to probe the interrelated factors that influence this experience so that quality of care can be improved for the terminally ill cancer patient and tailored to their specific needs. While we do not have answers for what comes after death, we have the power to shape the process of dying; doctors and family members alike can work together to bridge the gap between medicine and culture and fulfill the dying wishes of a terminally ill cancer patient.

⁴⁷ Chang et al, “Low Socioeconomic Status,” pg. 1247.

⁴⁸ Yang et al, “Holistic Outcome,” pg. 56.

⁴⁹ Long, “Becoming a Cucumber pg. 68.

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“The Global Representation of the Socio-Political Geographies of Contagious Diseases in the Digital World”

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Introduction

The socio-economic order of the 21st century is characterised by interconnectedness and transnational flows of capital, in the form of goods, people, and information. Despite the post-colonial political landscape and the increasingly de-colonial discourses, the world still retains strong international hierarchies in terms of population access to information, and the representativeness of global events in the media, in addition to many other socio-economic inequalities. This bias towards Western-related events in information-provision agencies is evident both in the quantity and quality of news reports. Media coverage is directly linked with public awareness, and, therefore, with socio-political relevance. This particular context translates in a disparity in the celerity and generosity of aid provision and public support to tragedies in the Western sphere in comparison to those taking place in other areas, such as Africa. The coverage of conflict victims and terrorist attacks suggests that this is a more general phenomenon worth of a broader analytical study, but in this article we focus on the response towards infectious disease epidemics. Thus, uneven media coverage is arguably a relatively unaddressed source of global inequality, systematically maintained in spite of the supranational spirit of certain organisations, such as the United Nations (UN), or the World Health Organisation (WHO). The links between transnational flows of people and infectious disease transmission and vulnerability suggests that

the increasing mobility characteristic of the twenty-first century may well foster a pandemic scenario provoked by a contagious disease. We present a review of four recent ‘global’ health crises and their socio-economic context. In order to test the hypothesis that global media coverage of the epidemic would grow considerably once it transcended into the socio-political realities of Western citizens, we incorporate quantitative data from Google Trends. This application presents the evolution through time of searches of certain keywords. These searches are considered proxies for initial public awareness, which can be extrapolated to signify media coverage and political relevance of the epidemic phenomenon.

Case Studies

Avian Flu

The 2003-2006 Avian flu (H7N9) epidemic developed in East Asia. It required the sacrifice of nearly 200 million birds. In relation to its economic impact, it had estimated costs of over \$10bn. This stronger, faster and lethal strain of flu is characterised by higher fever temperature, and it was transmitted through eating or handling infected animals, or from contact with infected fluids, including human-human transmission. Avian flu was mainly treated with Oseltamivir and Zanamivir. In the following graph (Fig. 1), it is evident that the greatest variation is a considerable increase in the number of searches of these keywords in October 2005. During this month, the first infected birds in Turkey, Romania and Greece were detected or suspected, and avian flu appeared in the cover of National Geographic magazine, even though it had already infected more than a hundred million birds in Asia and killed around 50 human beings.

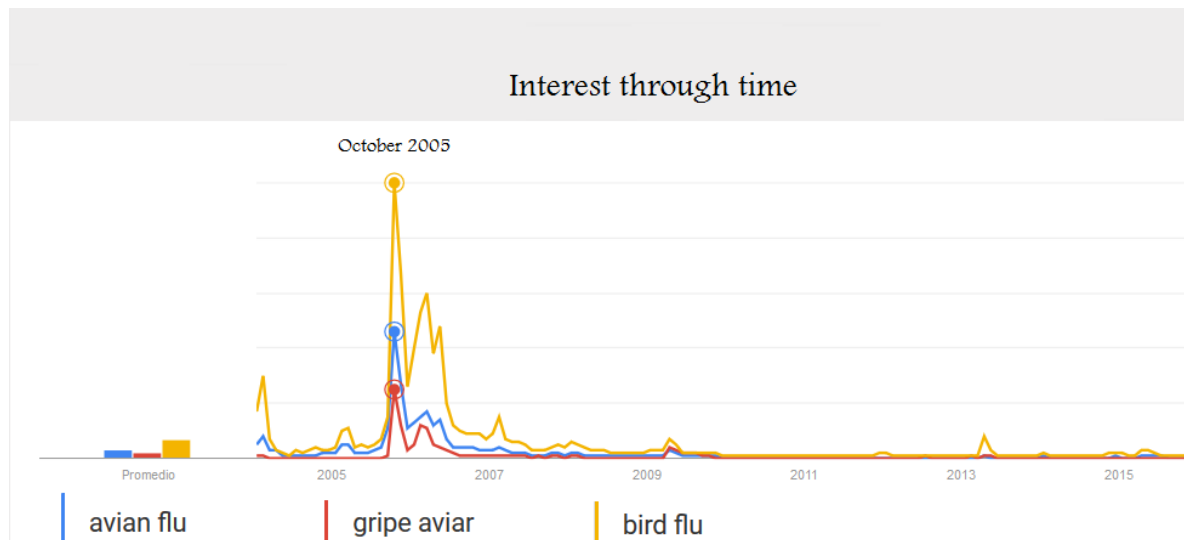


Fig. 1: Global changes through time in the number of keyword searches in Google. After: <https://www.google.com/trends/explore#q=avian%20flu%2C%20gripe%20aviar%2C%20bird%20flu&cmpt=q&tz=Etc%2FGMT>

Swine Flu

The second zoonotic disease presented as case-study is the swine flu, another variety of *Influenzae* (H1N1n). It is also a stronger, faster and more lethal flu, with higher fever temperature. It is transmitted through contact with infected fluids or consumption of affected animals. Swine flu was the first international public health emergency, and received relatively significant coverage in audiovisual media (Pan & Meng 2015). It is believed to have started in September 2008, but the first diagnosed cases in Mexico and Spain were in April 2009 (Fig. 2), after which the EU recommended not to travel to Mexico. The denomination of 'swine flu' had major economic consequences: it caused pork to become the second-worst commodity investment of 2009, due to the ban of pork imports from countries such as China, Indonesia and other Asian and Arab countries. In certain Muslim countries, such as Egypt, the generalised pork

slaughter within selective pathways of intervention had a serious impact in the socio-economic conditions of the local population, particularly within Coptic Christians (Leach & Tandros 2014). It was also argued that the label ‘pandemic’ was the result of multi-national pressures, with the aim of selling vaccines. Swine flu caused 14,286 deaths worldwide. This set of global factors and consequences fostered the development of new perspectives in medical anthropology (Singer 2009), reconsidering the role of anthropological enquiry in the study of social responses to health crises, and the politico-economic consequences of disease epidemics.

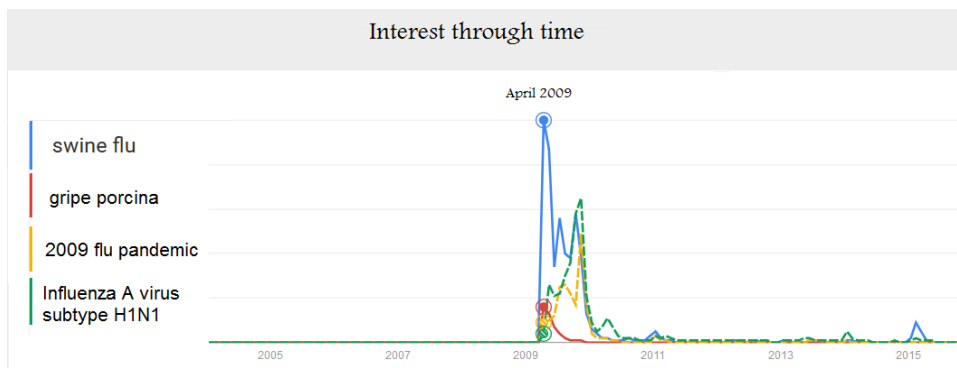


Fig. 2: Global changes through time in Swine Flu keyword searches (Google). After: https://www.google.com/trends/explore#q=swine%20flu%2C%20gripe%20porcina%2C%20%2Fm%2F05zs0_7%2C%20%2Fm%2F087t7g&cmpt=q&tz=Etc%2FGMT

E. Coli

In May-June 2011, there was a localised outbreak in Europe caused by the bacillus *Escherichia coli* O104:H4 (ECEH). Its symptomatology is haemorrhagic colitis, and it is transmitted through

direct or indirect consumption of infected faeces of ruminants. In this particular episode, the main focus was Germany, and certain infected vegetables were the most likely source. 53 people died. Due to its regional nature, global coverage and public engagement was not as considerable as, for example, swine flu worldwide (Fig. 3). Nonetheless, as expected, in Germany it had a considerable coverage, and “e. coli” was searched even more frequently than “swine flu” (Fig. 4). Although “swine flu” is in English, and thus may not encompass the totality of searches about the topic in Germany, the national impact of the E. coli outbreak in the media was considerable.

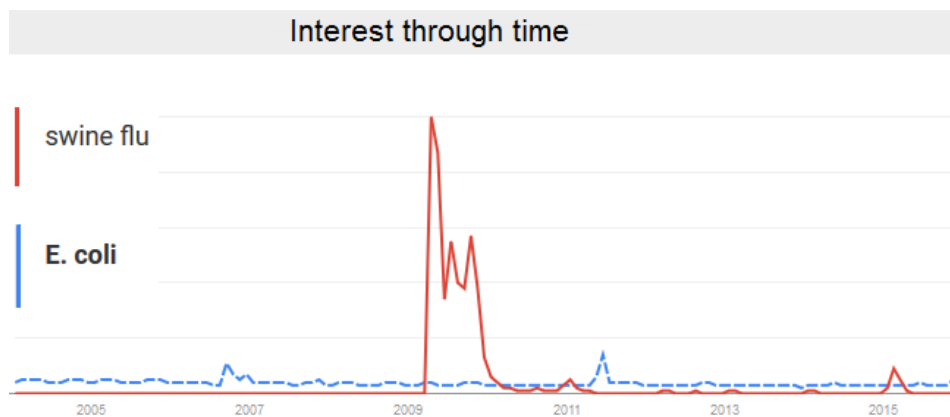
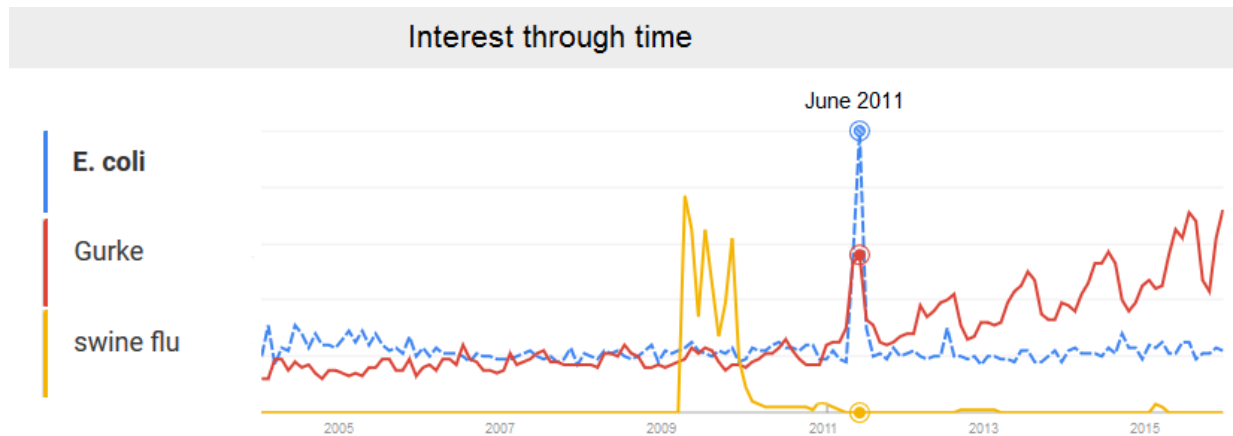


Fig. 3: Graph showing the changes through time of the global comparative of searches of the terms “swine flu” and “E. coli” in Google. After: https://www.google.es/trends/explore#q=%2Fm%2F09_y1%2C%20swine%20flu&cmpt=q&tz=Etc%2FGMT



4. Graph showing the change through time of keyword searches in Google, in Germany. See https://www.google.es/trends/explore#q=%2Fm%2F09_yI%2C%20Gurke%2C%20swine%20flu&geo=DE&cmpt=q&tz=Etc%2FGMT

German authorities initially blamed cucumbers (“Gurke” in German) imported from Spain as the source of the outbreak. These false accusations generated an atmosphere of insecurity and mistrust which had serious socio-political and economic consequences, as bans in importations within the Schengen area of the EU fostered further bans from other countries, such as Russia and Qatar, to European and Spanish agricultural products. This situation generated stock excesses in Spain (“crisis de los pepinos”; Fig. 5), accompanied by a lack of supply in Germany and other affected countries. Losses were estimated at 200 million euros a week, which were covered by EU Funds. Analyses by the EU concluded that Spanish cucumbers were not the source of the outbreak, and that contamination within Germany was most likely (WHO 2011). In a context of open borders and free market, rapid responses may effectively contain the expansion of the outbreak, but decisions have to be taken responsibly; misinformed responses can have wide-ranging socio-economic consequences.

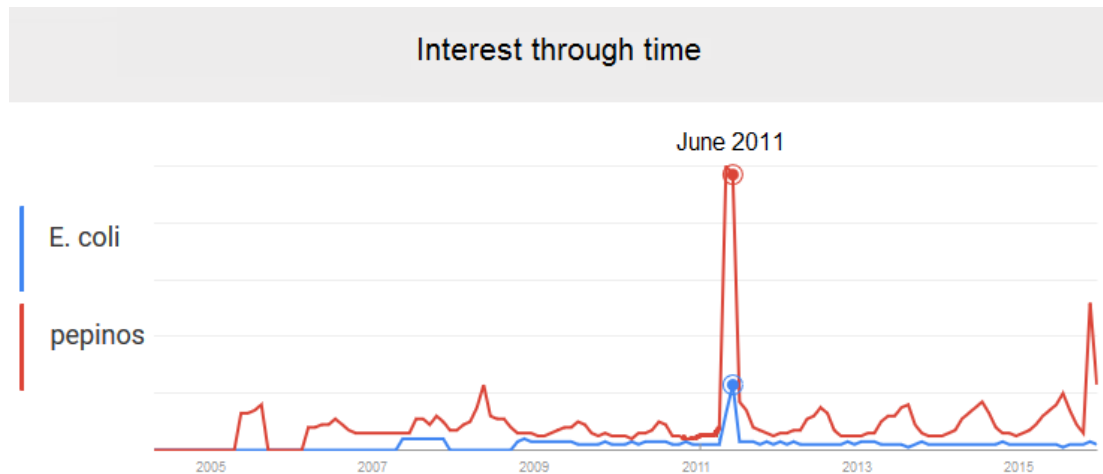


Figure 5: Showing changes through time of keyword searches in Google, in Spain. After: <https://www.google.es/trends/explore#q=E.%20coli%2C%20pepinos&geo=ES&cmpt=q&tz=Etc%2FGMT>

Ebola

The agent causing the Ebola disease is Ebolavirus, a Filovirus belonging to the haemorrhagic fevers' family (Kagan 2005). Bleeding is its pathognomonic symptom. It can be transmitted through human-human contact (Park *et al.* 2015). The absence of a vaccine during the 2014 outbreak required a treatment based on isolation of the patient, and the maintenance of their vital signs (Danis 2015); the administration of experimental or unproven drugs and treatments to Ebola patients has raised considerable moral and ethical concerns (Shah, Wendler & Danis 2015). The global repercussion and media coverage of the 2014 outbreak was considerably higher than all other case-studies considered (Fig. 6).

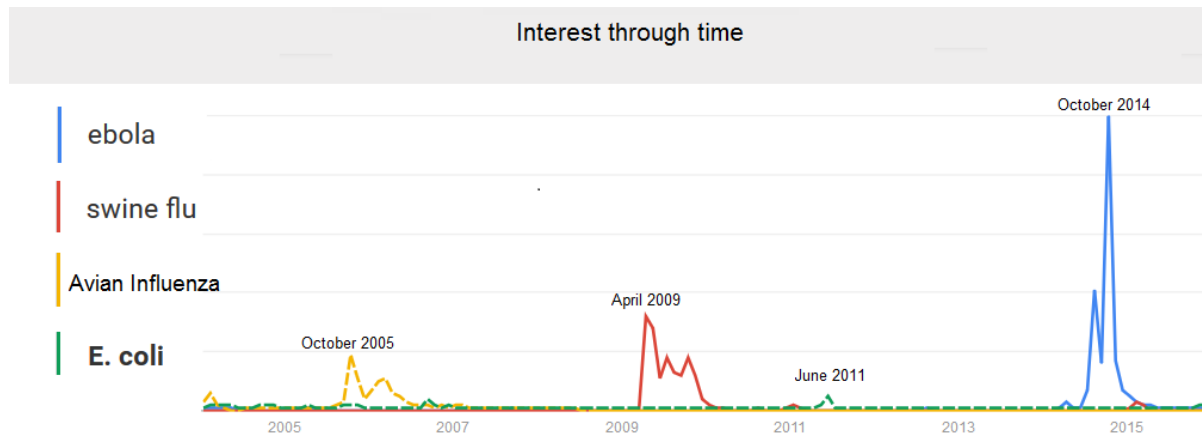


Fig. 6: Showing global searches of keywords in Google. Note the blue peak in the graph, corresponding to the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa. After: https://www.google.es/trends/explore?date=all&q=ebola,swine%20flu,%2Fm%2F0292d3,%2Fm%2F09_y1

The outbreak, which had a total of 28,637 cases and 11,315 deaths by 30th December 2015 (CDC 2015), was confirmed in March-April of 2014 (Baize *et al.* 2014; Gatherer 2014; Gire *et al.* 2014). The confirmation of the Makona variant of the Ebola virus (Park *et al.* 2015) as the infectious disease responsible for the epidemic caused a great increase in the number of national searches in West African countries (Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone; Figs. 7-9), but only fostering a minor variation in the number of searches globally (Fig. 10). The peak in August perceived for the graph corresponding to Liberia (Fig. 8) can be attributed to the increasingly dramatic conditions which led to the national declaration of the state of emergency, given that it was the first time that an Ebola epidemic had spread into urban contexts (van de Pas & van Belle 2015).



Fig. 7: Showing the evolution of national Google searches about “Ebola” in Guinea: <https://www.google.es/trends/explore#q=ebola%2C%20ebola%2C%20ebola&geo=GN&date=1%2F2014%2012m&cmpt=q&tz=Etc%2FGMT>



Fig. 8 showing the evolution of national Google searches about “Ebola” in Liberia. <https://www.google.es/trends/explore#q=ebola%2C%20ebola&geo=LR&date=1%2F2014%2012m&cmpt=q&tz=Etc%2FGMT>



Fig. 9 showing the evolution of national Google searches about “Ebola” in Sierra Leone. <https://www.google.es/trends/explore#q=ebola&geo=SL&date=1%2F2014%2012m&cmpt=q&tz=Etc%2FGMT>

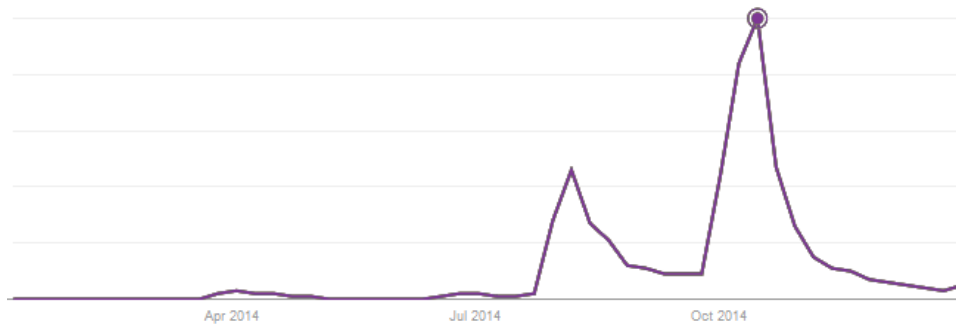


Fig. 10 showing the evolution of global Google searches about “Ebola” <https://www.google.es/trends/explore#q=ebola%2C%20ebola%2C%20ebola%2C%20ebola%2C%20ebola&date=1%2F2014%2012m&cmpt=q&tz=Etc%2FGMT>

In an opposite fashion, the greatest global interest in ‘Ebola’ was between October 5th-25th 2014 (Fig. 10), a period of time which did not show particular increases in West African countries, other than minor peaks within decreasing trends. The reason behind this curious circumstance was the identification and repatriation of infected European and North American citizens in late September, together with the contagion of sanitary assistants from these countries in the process of treating the repatriated patients. Although their numbers were minimal (7 medical cases and 1 deceased), particularly in comparison to the global dimension of the epidemic, their impact in the media was huge, to the extent that Ebola even became the most urgent disease-related health problem in the US during November 2014, higher than cancer or heart disease (SteelFisher, Blendon & Lasala-Blanco 2015).

The outbreak needs to be contextualised in the socio-political history of the region. West Africa was particularly vulnerable because the nature of the decolonisation process generated an unstable political landscape, characterised by institutionalised corruption and constant military coups. Civil wars, such as the two experienced by Liberia (1980s, and 2003), and one in Sierra Leone (1991-2001) precipitated the construction and maintenance of refugee camps, which fostered overcrowded population environments. We argue that the stream of developmental aid from Western countries and supranational organisations generated further ties of politico-economic dependence, as explored by Ferguson (1990). These asymmetrical relationships can prove insufficient in the long-run for the continuity of service-provision and personnel training, given the lack of internally-managed resources destined to the maintenance of the underlying infrastructure. Therefore, the lack of readiness for an international response (Gostin & Friedman 2014; Perkins & Kessel 2015), and the halt of the trade flows between those West African countries affected by the Ebola epidemic -marginal players in the global economic landscape (van de Pas & van Belle 2015)-, and the rest of the world caused major disruptions in the provision of foodstuffs, medical services, and sanitary products, in addition to infrastructure maintenance, worsening the palliation of the crisis (Bausch & Schwarz 2014). The situation was further aggravated when alternative political priorities collide: China, an increasingly major economic player in Africa (Wang & Elliot 2014), postponed all their major projects in West Africa and evacuated most of their workers (Taylor 2015). Besides, in mid-October 2014, a private company (Sihuan Pharmaceutical), purchased the rights to commercialise jk-05, an experimental anti-Ebola drug; thousands of doses were sent to Africa, “albeit only to treat

Chinese personnel who have been sent out to help with the Ebola epidemic, not African patients” (Taylor 2015, 50).

The consequences of the epidemic varied in the different regions where they had any influence. For example, in West Africa, the closing of the borders significantly disrupted tourism to the region, and fostered tensions between neighbouring countries (Shrivastava *in press*). These social tensions were also present in migration-receptive areas of Europe and the Americas. In the latter cases, they were accompanied with racial stigmatisation against people of African origins, imagined to be ‘infection-bearers’, in a situation relatively similar to the context generated with the global spread of AIDS (Whiteside & Zebryk 2015). Thus, people perceived to ‘embody the epidemic’, including aid workers, health care professionals, or patients’ relatives, were more likely to be regarded suspiciously in airports and public places, key places for the control of epidemic expansion (Budd 2009). Thus, personal suffering was three-fold: not only the physical pain of the disease, or the social dimension of patient caring and duel (Rosoff 2015), but also the psychological stress of displacement and discrimination.

Ebola also devastated economically West African countries: in Sierra Leone, the restriction to exportations and the preventive investments in mining exploitations of other countries, such as Australia and Brazil, collapsed the iron mining industry, the largest contributor to the national GDP (El Nuevo Día 2014). On the other hand, the Ebola crisis encouraged a research boost and public and private multi-million investments in medical sciences for the discovery and testing of a vaccine for Ebola (Branswell 2015). It is worth noting that, until the 2014 epidemic, Ebola was considered a ‘neglected tropical disease’, which receive little research investment and global relevance (Harper & Parker 2014; Parker & Allen 2014; Rezza 2015).

Moreover, the shares of companies involved in the manufacture of anti-contamination equipment or pharmaceuticals increased or decreased considerably, depending on the medical evolution of the Western patients receiving the treatments (Cinco Días 2014). Therefore, the socio-economic impact of epidemics varies considerably within a global context, in relation to factors such as mortality, representation in mass media, political relevance, and resource mobilisation capabilities.

Conclusions

We have approached the study of the socio-political dimensions of the differences in the global and national representations of infectious diseases in social media through the interaction of globalisation trends and vernacular tensions. Vernacularisation, the opposite and complementary dimension of globalisation, could be defined as the exaltation of a local culture, as well as the political reclamation of those restricted socio-cultural features considered paradigmatic of a particular place. A suitable example present in this analysis may lie in the fact that the social repercussion of Ebola in the USA was relatively insignificant until an American citizen was infected. In short, it would be the study of a local dimension in relation to a global phenomenon.

The anthropological analysis of new forms of social connectivity within the virtual sphere can help us understand the impact they produce on our individual and collective lifestyles, reflecting the political relevance that information technologies have achieved as catalysts of interpersonal relations (Castells 1996). These insights can be perceived particularly in the graphs or in the differential frequencies of information access and availability in social media or in the World Wide Web. Moreover, the socio-political dimensions of activity in social media and

changes in public opinion within the context of emerging epidemics can be considered through a series of diverging factors, such as the diversity in medical prevention schemes followed by the different countries involved in the epidemic to prevent further contagions; the economic losses suffered by affected countries; the halt of socio-political interactions between nation-states; the panic caused by the overwhelming amount of available information, saturated by catastrophic predictions, contrary to specialist recommendations (Briggs 2011); border closures; the limited arrival of humanitarian aid, as well as the generation of avoidance patterns within the public consciousness in relation to naming former diseases epidemics.

Anthropological research within a globalized context has changed considerably since Malinowski explored the microcosm of long-distance interactions in relation of the social universe of the Trobriand Islands. The study of global phenomena needs a thorough assessment of the socio-political and historical context of the ethnographic population, which is no longer restricted to a single site, but often engaged in intercontinental interactions and diasporic communities. It should also consider the multiplicity of meanings and interpretations of the social reality, which at the same time is being modified by a series of different facts and factors, according to Hannerz (1992). At the same time, an awareness of the transnational flows of people, information and capital can contribute to refocus the ethnographic process as a method of inquiry in anthropological research. These sets of global flows are directly related to disease transmission and health vulnerability (Sargent & Larchanché 2011).

In order to contribute to the prevention of further epidemics, it is precise to engage in a two-way dialogue with local communities, actively listening and engaging with their views (Liu 2015), considering the potential cultural distrust of Western medicine, including foreign medical

staff and vaccines (Rezza 2015), exacerbated by the adoption of indiscriminate mass treatments (Gryseels 2006). The acknowledgement that multiple perspectives can coalesce into a more efficient sanitary scheme (Briggs & Nichter 2009), in line with local values and medical prescriptions, will foster a more robust and supported action protocol, with more effective preventive measures in the mitigation of health crises (Butler 2015; Thompson & Listz 2015). This international commitment ought to be motivated by global citizenship ethics, rather than simply the biosecurity priorities of individual nation-states, given the disparity in health provision standards (Hayden 2015).

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“What Makes Me Happy”

Audrey Schield, Washington University in St. Louis

Two things make me really happy: people and dessert.

A few months ago I was searching for something to satisfy my sweet tooth in a market in Delhi. I met Aadya, a college student who was taking a dinner break from her internship at a local law firm. I asked her for a recommendation on the syrupy sweets, and then I decided to ask her the question I asked everyone I met in India: what makes you happy?

“Meeting someone new, like you, that makes me quite happy,” said Aadya.

I am a twenty-year-old college student just like Aadya. I know that meeting new people also makes me happy, which is why I decided to volunteer abroad alone. I had what is jokingly called “fomo,” or the “fear of missing out.” When making my plans, I was worried that choosing my solo journey meant losing the social interaction I could get 24/7 in the dorms and online, but I found a more meaningful way to connect: through my happiness question.

I started my trip in India. As an anthropology major, I was hoping that individual stories could tell me more about a person and where they came from than what dessert they recommended. This was truer than I could have expected, and the project has become a regular part of how I get to know people.

I always began my interviews with a brief introduction, and then I would let people talk. When they started to pause, I would smile, nod my head, and wait for them to keep going. This moment of awkward silence allowed people to grow one thought into something more elaborate.

In one of my first interviews, a young businessman left me imagining how many mangoes he ate every day to finish six hundred in one summer (the answer is roughly seven). He told me, “So what honestly makes me happy is mangoes,” and he went on to describe the types of mangoes that grow in India and the agricultural challenges of the country. Eventually he said, “Mangoes are like rich man’s happy food. They say being rich doesn’t bring you happiness, except through mangoes.” From something small came great insight. We all know that money can’t buy happiness, but having enough to eat is a luxury for many in India.

My formal role in Delhi was performing health screenings on women and children. I am an EMT, which I soon realized made me woefully unprepared for the complicated needs of my patients. Many of the children I examined complained of bellyaches. On my college campus, stomach pain usually indicates a hangover or menstrual cramps. In India, it meant hunger or chronic diarrhea. Even if the kids had enough to eat, it was usually just chapati, a type of bread. A fresh mango would have meant more than happiness to any of them.

One teenage boy became my translator. He treated the younger kids with a patience that was uncommon in the crowded Delhi streets. In my last week, I found drawings on the notes he kept of our findings. Over sips of chai tea so sweet it tasted like melted ice cream, I asked him what makes him happy. He told me about his passion for art and how he hopes to use his English to pursue a career sketching the scenes he sees before him. However, he feels obliged to stay in his community to use his good English to help others learn and translate for Westerners like me.

Another Delhi community leader I met was Jaya, an older woman who leads workshops for local groups about feminism. She started by explaining, “Modernity has created this whole thing of, ‘You have to be happy if you look at that, or if you enjoy that.’” She was critical of how

Bollywood has glamorized appearances and material goods while so many children lack proper nutrition. At the end of her interview, Jaya started singing, “Om.” “Whenever I am disturbed, I try to relax and think of the ‘Om’ here,” and Jaya pointed to her heart. She reminded me that happiness is deeply personal and comes from within.

Jaya went on to explain how technology has made it easier to compare ourselves to others by keeping us constantly connected. However, we only see the images that people want to project. This has created an artificial and uniform definition of happiness as something seen only in big Indian weddings or semesters partying abroad. As I saw smiling pictures of my happy college friends in Paris, I found myself defining my own happiness as the study abroad experience I turned down. Jaya reminded me that happiness is individual, even when the media tells us one story.

As I reflect on this semester, I realize that the lessons from my interviews do not come from the answers themselves, but from the people who shared their answers with me. Now, I will smile when I eat a sweet mango, not just because I love all the sugar, but because I know how lucky I am to buy them at will. The next time the student in front of me in lecture is doodling instead of taking notes, I will remember my translator’s dream of becoming an artist. When I hear “Om,” I won’t just think of yoga moms and meditation. I will think about Jaya singing and the beautiful temples I visited in Delhi.

I learned that talking with people makes me happy because I can take their wisdom with me. I am twenty, and I have many more stories to hear, but remembering the best of what people want to share with me helps me tune out the noise of social media and focus on my own “Om.”