



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

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DECLARATION OF OWN WORK

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that no part of it has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification. Except where explicitly mentioned by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented within is my own.

Shawn Bodden

August 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Legelőször köszönettel tartozom az auróráknak, a deviszontosoknak, a gólyásoknak, és a többi kedves és nyitott közösségnek, akik befogdatak a tereikbe, az életeikbe. Végtelenül hálás vagyok, hogy tanulhattam tőletek és beleépíthettek egy kicsit a sok projektjeitekbe. Különösen megköszönöm Horváth Juditnak, Gosztonyi Marcinak, Varga Zsuzsának, Nurbek Shadykenovnak, Viland Fanninak, Tollár Szilvinek, akik még ez a projekt előtt körbevezettek a pesti világban.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an ethnography of Budapest's community spaces and activist groups—a study of their members, their work and their many projects. By examining the situated, interactive and ongoing practices through which these communities work out 'what they're up against' and 'what should be done', I develop an argument for a respecification of political theory in terms of the practical decision-making and experimentation undertaken by people and communities in and as their work to enact social and political change. Through their everyday activities, plans and setbacks, these groups assemble a work-in-progress geography of Hungarian politics. In the words of Ethnomethodologist Harold Garfinkel, they offer a 'uniquely adequate' account of the work involved in creating, improving and sustaining their own better possible worlds. By drawing together Ethnomethodological studies of everyday interaction and Pragmatist understandings of practice ecologies, my analysis offers empirical and conceptual contributions to contemporary debates in Human Geography regarding the 'grammars' of political action. Through a combination of participatory ethnographic fieldwork, video-data and interviews, I examine the projects these groups work on, the protests they work up, and the objects they work with. In so doing, I give attention—and priority—to the methods, theories, and strategies used by these communities to make sense of their actions and how they 'fit' within Budapest and the wider world.

ÖSSZEFOGLALÁS

Ez a disszertáció egy néprajzi tanulmányt budapesti közösségi terekről és aktivistai csapatokról kínál, kiemelt figyelmet szentelve a tagjai munkájának és sok projektjének. E csoportok hétköznapi tevékenységeit és személyes kölcsönhatását elemezve felderítem a közös folyamatokat és tudati eljárásokat, ami révén szembenéznek a napi munkájukban felmerülő társadalmi és politikai kihívásokkal, így saját számukra kibogozva, mi a teendőjük a közösségi szociális javára. A cselekvésük, tervezésük elemzésével a politikafilozófia átképzése a politikai és szociális céljaihoz közösségek által végzett adott szituációkban lévő döntéshozatal és kísérletezések jegyében mellett érvelek. A praktikus munkájuk során „folyamatban lévő” politikai földrajzokat raknak össze, amik az etnometodológia alapítója Harold Garfinkel szavait idézve „egyedileg elegendő” értelmet adnak a körülményeinek, így annak is, hogy mit csináljanak, hogy alkotsanak meg, javítsanak ki, tartsanak fenn jobb tereket önmagukra. Az etnometodológiai módú tanulmányokat a hétköznapi életről és a filozófiai pragmatizmus „tevékenységi ökológia” koncepcióját etnografiai terepmunkával és videóelemzésekkel összehozva ez a tanulmány empirikusan is, teoretikusan is hozzájárul a politikai cselekvés „logikájára” vonatkozó vitákhoz a társadalomtudományokban. A projektjeit, tüntetéseit, tereit közös és praktikus módszereknek tartva fordítom figyelmet—így prioritást is—e csapatok szociális és politikai elméleteire, amin keresztül nyernek a saját maguknak betekintést a pozíciójukba, a szereplésükbe Budapesten, illetve a világon.

LAY SUMMARY

This thesis is an ethnography of Budapest's community spaces and activist groups—a study of the many people who work, socialise or simply spend time in them. I examine the ways people use projects to work together to make their spaces better and to communicate the meaning of their activities to others. I argue that the practical decisions, debates and actions of these groups show how political theory is an everyday and interactive process and not an abstract idea to be defined (solely) by academics or so-called experts. I build on a school of thought with a goofy name, but profound ideas: ethnomethodology—the study (-ology) of people's (ethno-) practical activities (methods)—argues that people are the experts of their own lives and ways of doing things. By studying the ways people work together on projects, we can understand how they develop their own ways of life and how and why they make space for one another—or not. I combine stories from my time volunteering in community centres in Budapest with photos, videos and interviews to show just some of the work these groups do to make space for themselves in the world today.

KÖZÉRTHETŐ FOGALMAZÁS

Ez a disszertáció egy néprajzi tanulmány budapesti közösségi terekről és aktivistai csapatokról. A tagjairól szól, kik ott dolgoznak, szórakoznak, vagy simán elvannak. Különösen a hétköznapi projektjeivel foglalkozik, mivel ezeket fontos eszközöknek tekinthetjük a közösségek együttműködésében a közös céljai megvalósításához. Azt állítom, hogy a politikát az emberek praktikus döntései, vitái, cselekvései jegyében kell megérteni, nem pedig szakértők által határozott elvont elméletek szerint. Egy fura nevű, pedig megdöbbentő ötleteivel teli szemléletmódban dolgozom: etnometodológia, a tudomány (-ológia) az emberek (etno-) a praktikus módszereiről (method). Eszerint emberek a legjobb hozzáértők a saját életkörülményeihez, cselekvéseihez. Megérthetjük, hogy is adnak értelmet a világnak és a helyüknek benne, ha az emberek együttműködését tanulmányozzuk, amit a hétköznapi projektjei jól tükröznek. Tehát történeteket, fotókat, videókat, interjúkat összehozok a kutatásaimból budapesti közösségi terekkel betekintést adni a munkába, amit ezek a csoportok végeznek, hogy teret teremtsenek önmaguknak a mai világon.

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WORKS IN PROGRESS

**THE PRACTICAL ACCOMPLISHMENT OF
ACTIVIST SPACES AND POLITICAL PROJECTS
IN BUDAPEST**

Miért nem

R33

Zöld Kultiflex

Tutu Tangó

Cha Cha Cha

Kertem

Mumus

Nap Bácsi

Córkőpón

Nokka Cuka

Rák Kert

Süss Fel Nap

Roham

Holdudvar

Sixtus Kápolna

Margit Utca

Örökmozgó

Viskarók

Pecsa

VOX CAFÉ

MERLIN

Bercsenyi Köli

Egyetemi Színház

Fő utca 1-3

Romhá

Vörös Észke Kultur

Faluta

Romkert

Eckertmann

AKKU

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Mentz ház

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FMK

Vörösmarkt

Supers

Utopia

Zöldeség

1000 B. Klub

1990
TILOS AZ
FEKETE YOK
AIR FACTORIES
IN BUDAPEST

SA

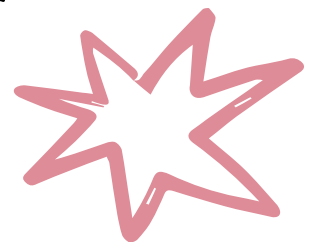
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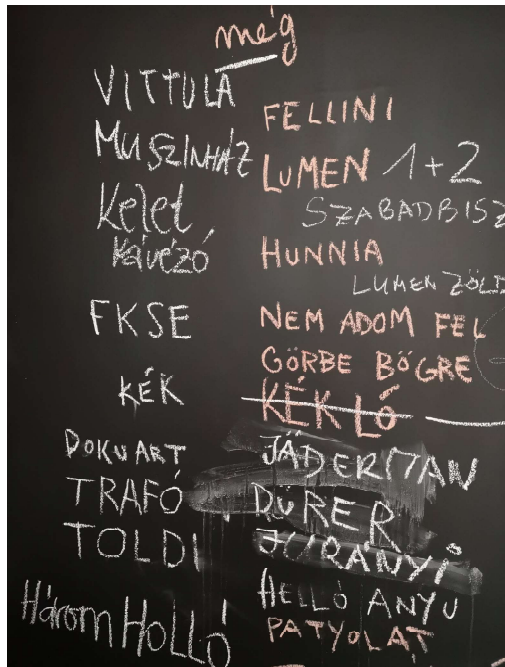
AIR FACTORIES

IN BUDAPEST



an introduction

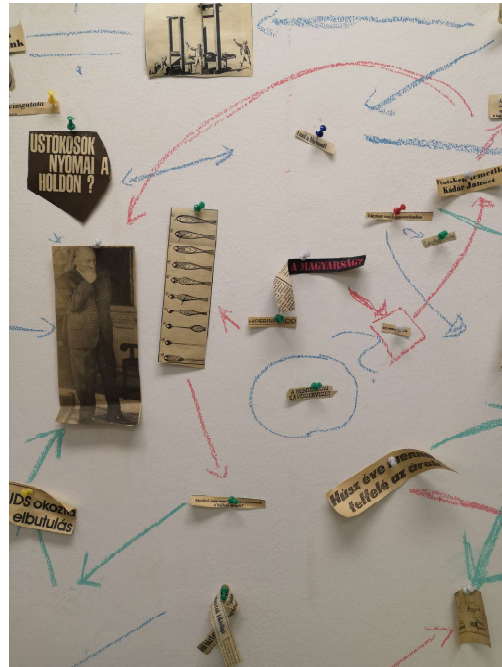
Réka sighs, then walks over to the wall with a large piece of chalk. She draws a line through Kék Ló, then an arrow from its current list 'Még' to a longer one beside it, 'Már'. The lists are jumbled with a wall-height map of Budapest and a series of red-and-green time-lines; a small



and strange title sits toward the top of the wall: 'Air Factories in Budapest'. Réka turns back to Gisela and me, and gives a grim smile. We return to our work, packing up the miscellany scattered around the room into a shopping trolley, and sorting the objects into piles to take and piles to leave.

The things in this room, along with a number of scribblings, drawings and paper signs, are the remnants of Pneuma Szöv's own air factory, a participatory art installation that formed part of the recent OFF Biennale. The installation was a temporary community space installed in the vacant former offices on the Heinrich Udvar's top-most floor. Visitors were invited to join an 'open conspiracy' inspired by the stories of James Tilly Matthews—an 18th-century political prisoner in Bedlam Hospital and, after a while inside, the first documented case of paranoid schizophrenia. The artists and visitors constructed elaborate air machines to influence opinions, moods and atmospheres. Each new visitor was given a tour and then invited to find their own place in the factory, as well as Pneuma's conspiracy to remake society toward vague—but emphatically nefarious—

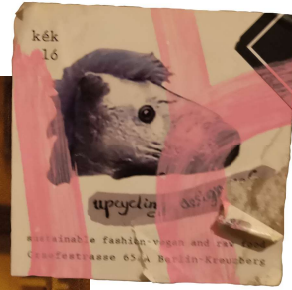
ends. Pneuma's fantastical stories, however, bear a striking resemblance to the conspiracy theories prompted by Hungary's Fidesz government—on billboards and public news—identifying



supporters as 'agents' of George Soros. In addition to the economic pressures of gentrification and neoliberal policies, the antagonism between Hungary's Fidesz government and a number of Budapest's alternative cultural spaces has forced many to close their doors. Now their factory too is to

be dismantled: the Heinrich Udvar has been sold to developers. Pneuma and the building's other tenants have to find a new space.

Pneuma's map shows this isn't a new story, however. I recognise a number of the names in the first list: they're cafés, bars and theatres, alternative cultural spaces, community centres and romkocsmák from around the city, ones that are 'Still' operating. Amid the tumultuous transformations of the city following the rendszerváltás and later the 2008 financial crisis, these spaces flourished in the gardens and vacant flats of dilapidated társasházak in central Budapest. The longer list is one of similar spaces 'Already' gone, now including Kék Ló, after the local government of Budapest's 8th District recently terminated their lease. When I went to visit Kék Ló on its closing night, the crowd spilled noisily out of the narrow bar and filled



the street. A week later, and the bar, the loft, and even the WC had been removed: it was a bare cement room, its only distinctive features a stray toilet bowl and the trace of paint on the windows. Not a month later, I started to hear stories of a new bar opened by one of Kék Ló's bartenders in a flat—it was self-serve and donation-based, so it wasn't a 'business', and since it wasn't a business, you could even smoke inside, my friends explained excitedly. Although Kék Ló had closed, much of its furniture and cutlery, as well as clientele, had found new spaces elsewhere in the city. Even though the spaces listed on Pneuma's wall were each distinct in many ways, there was by now a familiar pattern and a familiar matter of concern affecting them all: how to make space for one's own ideas and projects in a city where space and its uses are increasingly constrained.

Gisela, Réka and I were doing the same for Pneuma now, gathering things we thought they'd be able to use again in future projects. And not for the first time: we brought many of these objects from Műszi when it was closed down the previous year. Gisela and Réka led the way with a shopping trolley, winding through a narrow aisle lined with cardboard boxes, furniture and heaped bin bags. We tossed an apparently random assortment of things into the trolley—whatever you might use to make an air factory: a roll of reflective foil, a lamp,

a roll of tape, a tupperware tub full of colourful size tags. Now that Pneuma's space is closing too, Gisela sorts through the things once again, and we talk about where they're hoping to go and what they're hoping to get up to. Gisela's found a space she thinks they can rent within the headquarters of a labour union, but they've also been eyeing a long-vacant corner shop. "For now", she explains while rifling through a box of clothes, "we'll store things in Auróra". Eventually they'll find their own space, but for the time being they're still working out how to get there.

The displacement of Budapest's alternative cultural spaces and their communities has been discussed in many journalistic and academic accounts linking the ongoing rise and fall of the many more-or-less shabby, more-or-less trendy spaces to familiar trajectories of gentrification, post-communist transitions, and neoliberal development. In these grand theories of social change, the spaces themselves tend to be reduced to generic examples of essentially the same kind of thing fated



to end in more-or-less the same way. Yet Pneuma's lists tell the story of these spaces in a slightly different way: talked about, recollected, learned from and—as they pack shopping trolleys, heft tote bags, sift piles—transported in fragments. Pneuma's 'air factory' conspiracy stitches together a different story of spatial politics about these spaces—one about the 'air', but also the people, objects and ideas that circulate between them. In this case, rather than seeing the political question at the heart of the story as one about having a place, it's one about how people come to decide what to do, what to make with the spaces they find, what to take with them and what to leave behind.

This is a research project, which by convention necessitates a research question. In truth, the question animating this project since early in its conception is a simple one, naïve even: "What should we do?". In my first year living in Budapest, a series of chance encounters drew me deep into the shifting landscape of cafés and conspiracies depicted in Pneuma's Air Factory. I spent much of the year volunteering in Auróra, drinking in Gólya, watching experimental theatre in Műszi, and making art, guerrilla-planting trees and singing political Christmas carols with Pneuma. These projects took place against the backdrop of what has become known internationally as Hungary's "illiberal turn", the Fidesz government's campaign to consolidate power over public funds and institutions, but they offered a messier and more uncertain perspective than many of the 'grand narratives' I was reading in journalistic and academic articles about Hungary at the time. I also found that they offered a more hopeful perspective: stories of communities making their own spaces, working on their own projects despite the

apparent hegemony of Fidesz's register of right-wing populism. This is not to say that the mood was especially optimistic, but even in the face of neo-nazi attacks, looming bankruptcy and all too often closure, staff, volunteers, activists, artists, volunteers and other community-members returned time and again to the question of what to do—and then did their best to do *something*. Thoroughly troubled by the apparent direction of Hungarian and world politics in 2017—and not much relieved since—I likewise felt very unsure what *I* should do with myself. When the idea to conduct a research project with these spaces came to me, it was in large part in hopes of spending time with, learning from and perhaps in some small way contributing to these communities and their many projects.

1. See Kindon et al. 2007; Mason 2015: 500-501

2. Ingold 2013: 2-8; Mellander & Wiszmeg 2016

My project, therefore, has certain resonances with the 'ethics of care' advocated in Participatory-Action Research,¹ and my decision to organise it around long-term, participatory ethnographic fieldwork takes inspiration from recent accounts of ethnography as a committed, collaborative 'art of inquiry'.² Such approaches prioritise engagement with and care for the interests, concerns and projects of communities over and above methodological prescriptivism. This approach mirrors my ethical reflections during the process of designing and conducting a politically-engaged research project. In addition to conventional measures—completing an ethics review prior to fieldwork, anonymising the people who appear in my field stories, distributing Hungarian-language consent forms and plain-language statements—my research process has involved negotiating a balance between sustained engagement in the projects of others over and beyond my own and the need to maintain a relatively marginal role in these projects as someone

who must, eventually, leave. Sharing the work done in these spaces and taking seriously the logics through which these communities' projects come to be formulated is therefore intended as a gesture of gratitude and respect in addition to its academic aims.

One implication of this has been the ongoing development of my methodological repertoire along the way through involvement in others' projects. Volunteering, attending workshops, participating in meetings, dancing at concerts, sorting books, pickling cucumbers, playing foosball, copy-editing and attending protests constituted research activities through which I participated in, learned about and contributed to these spaces. I did employ numerous conventional research methods besides these, including participant observation, interviews, go-alongs, recording and analysis of video data and material culture, and experiments with zines and artistic collaborations.³ However, these methods were conducted in a mundane register⁴, useful not because they are 'technically sound' techniques for accessing knowledge, but because they are more-or-less familiar activities that a researcher might ask friends and strangers to take part in. They were useful methods, in that sense, for making my project available and understandable to others in the field of other projects and activities crowded into the spaces I was studying.

The other implication of my project's focus on participating in and supporting the projects of others is that, unlike most research in principle, the fieldwork itself was an end: rather than undertaking fieldwork to write this thesis, I agreed to (eventually) write a thesis in order to undertake the fieldwork. Thus, rather than discussing the methodological criteria of my

3. Approaches informed by the work of Kusenbach 2003; Ginn 2013; Knoblauch et al. 2006; Moretti 2011; Bagelman & Bagelman 2016

4. Holmes & Hall 2020

research, there is greater need for reflection on its assemblage as a *project*. Projects are an essential, yet critically unexamined element of geographical research, generally taken for granted as a finite and well-demarcated set of activities undertaken in the pursuit of research findings—and in some cases a degree. As readers will see before long, projects stand as a major topic of interest throughout this thesis. The people and communities that I worked with during my thesis debated, planned and worked on all manner of projects, making sense of the world and their own actions in the process. Rather than seeing projects as pre-defined itineraries to be implemented, I argue for the need to develop an account of projects as everyday and ongoing techniques for negotiating possibilities and values—projects as something to *work on*. Turning this to bear on my own research project and thesis, this means interrogating what it is I'm trying to work on by writing this document. This is to ask both how my research fits together itself and how it fits among other projects, or as I come to explain in more detail later, its “feeling[s] of *and*, of *but* and *if* and *with*” in a live and ongoing world.⁵

5. Savransky 2019: 11,
quoting James 1890

This is, in effect, a move to re-specify my research question in terms of the practical concerns and inquiries of the people and communities this thesis is about. In its disposition toward the methods and purpose of fieldwork, my research project is heavily influenced by the ethos of ethnomethodology as developed by Harold Garfinkel:⁶ this thesis aspires to show how the people and communities animating these spaces “concert their activities to produce and exhibit the coherence, cogency, analysis, consistency, order, meaning, reason, methods — which are locally, reflexively accountable orderliness — in and as of

6. Garfinkel 1991: 17;
1967

their ordinary lives together, in detail”. Ethnomethodology (EM) sees the social world as a practical accomplishment, sustained and re-made through ongoing and contingent interactive practices through which ‘members’ make sense of and act upon their circumstances, furnishing a setting with particular features and furnishing themselves with “resources, troubles, projects, and the rest”.⁷

7. Garfinkel 1967: 1-2

Although early registers of EM have been criticised by some as positivist, descriptivist and politically conservative,⁸ subsequent experimentations with and adaptations of EM’s outlook on ‘the social’ have developed novel approaches offering, among other things, more sophisticated perspectives on the non-human⁹ and morality.¹⁰ Drawing on such works, I aim in this thesis to develop a register of EM attentive to politics as the everyday experience of the consequence of action

8. See discussion in Lynch 2015

9. Latour 2013: 292

10. Bonner 2010



by people who know “that (they’re) participating in the world in ways [...] that might be otherwise”.¹¹ My field stories follow groups’ experiences of problems, possibilities, decisions and projects—

11. McHugh in Bonner 2019: 278

their techniques for working out what to do and imagining “something else” as a practical concern—by investigating the situated interactions, sense-making and projects of people and communities working to “make something of”¹² their often far from congenial circumstances.

12. Massey 2005: 141

In this vein, I spent my fieldwork as something of an apprentice, “the one whose *problem* is that of learning, of inquiring, of learning how to know [... t]he aim of the apprentice

is not to provide a solution to the problem that identifies a situation, but to risk inventing a manner of understanding how the problem may be defined, and how it might be developed”¹³

13. Savransky 2016: 218-219; see also
 Ingold 2014: 390-391

This turns on an understanding of ethnography as an *artful* practice of attention, in which the ‘artist’ is one “who has [their] problems and thinks as [they] work”—learning *because* of the troubles involved in the effort to make something—a thesis, a project—well.¹⁴ By the end, the experience is perhaps even more like that of a journey person, who moves between workshops helping as an assistant in many different projects, among different communities while gleaning skills, tricks and insights along the way.

14. Dewey 1934: 15-16

Rather than aspiring to a ‘solution’ to the problems and questions encountered in the field—an analytical diagnosis that ‘captures the past’—the object of my thesis is to synthesise these experiences into stories- and concepts-to-think-with in our own efforts to work on ‘as well as possible worlds’¹⁵ My approach is therefore compositional, “veering off the critical track of tacking perception, context, and cause onto an order of representations located nowhere in particular or in some paranoid hyper-place, like the state”, and instead “throwing together” stories, events, people and places that “pop with significance” through their interactions.¹⁶ This means, rather than aiming to develop an academic Theory of my own, I aim to describe and relate the many situated, working “field philosophies”¹⁷ of the communities I’ve worked with and learned from during my fieldwork.

15. Puig de la Bellacasa 2017: 7; see also Savransky et al. 2017

16. Stewart 2015: 19-20

17. Stengers 2018: 412; Despret 2018: 416

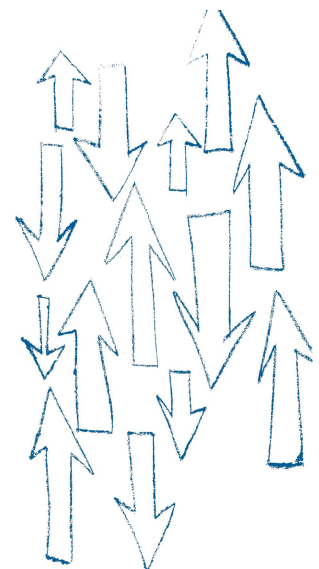
Working with the sort of ‘associational logic’ that Kathleen Stewart advocates, I intend for my thesis to spark ideas for future experiments in academic inquiry and political action by

offering possible ingredients for that future activity. The thesis offers a different kind of ‘solution’—an admixture, an alloy, a brew or, as Michel Serres¹⁸ terms it, a ‘confusion’. For Serres, a confusion is a ‘flowing together’ that “assists convergence, favours collusion, binds closer, enriches alloys, discovers new combinations on the spot and, through synthesis, learns how to know”.¹⁹ In this mode, what my thesis has to offer is a novel combination of problems-shared and lessons-learned that provide rich material with which to approach future projects. Thus, the atypical structure of my thesis is a product of adopting this compositional approach in both my writing and thinking regarding ways to communicate and share social and political knowledge.

18. Serres 2016: 161-162

19. Serres 2016: 166

For the reader’s sake, this merits a degree of guidance, a recipe of sorts. The thesis is organised into three empirical chapters sandwiched between this introduction and a final reflection. The title of each chapter is taken from a word or phrase encountered during my fieldwork, and the concept itself, as well as the situation in which I encountered it, furnishes the chapter with its broad topic. Each chapter moves between spaces and communities in a series of sections, each of which alternates between field stories and theoretical reflections. Rather than aiming to explain what’s ‘really’ happening in each field story, my intention is to explore resonances and dissonances between the ways of thinking described by a variety of academic theorists and the communities this thesis is about. Following the ethnomethodological critique of social science,²⁰ this is to treat theory not as an explanatory framework or interpretive lens created by experts, but as a source of mundane, practical deliberation about the world of the same order as other forms of



20. Garfinkel 2002: 65-68; 1991

21. See Button 2015:
140



practical reasoning.²¹ The references in this work are therefore never intended as appeals to authority—evidence that some claim is ‘objectively’ right. Instead they signpost for the reader whose thinking has become an ingredient in my own and where to find more of it.

Scattered throughout the text and among the margins, a variety of visual materials—photos, illustrations, sketches, video-stills, translations—support the main discussion in the text: offering context, illustrating a scene, evoking a mood. Beyond supporting the main argument, however, these items also suggest different trajectories, record stray observations, and dwell on stories the text marches past. In this way, the visual materials work to thwart the main text’s tendency to ‘straighten the path’ of fieldwork into a narrative through “the elimination of hap” and the urge “not to be distracted by what happens or by what you encounter along the way”.²²

22. Ahmed 2019: 204

As Sara Ahmed observes, research is often ‘hapful’—full of happenstance and chance-encounter—and researchers can and should “be redirected by what happens along the way” to learn what matters to the people and projects they meet en route.²³

23. Ahmed 2019: 12

By pulling the reader out of the text, this additional content seeks to be hapful, and to acknowledge those paths passed by and those stories that don’t fit in to a neat, linear, sequential narrative: they are openings for ‘minor’ stories,²⁴ events and projects that chapter topics, word-counts, deadlines and other imperatives risk forcing out.

24. Katz 2017; 1996

Ultimately, this approach draws on the marginal and scattered array of visual materials found in the spaces this thesis is about—graffiti, doodles, stickers, flyers, paper signs and cardboard placards cover their walls and tables, and they

say something about the people and projects that make up their communities even without giving all the details. They offer a messy, non-linear, idiosyncratic and pluralistic visual grammar for representing sociality²⁵—one rooted in the practices through which communities make a space their own—and they keep the possibility of other projects, priorities and perspectives in sight. They remind us that, while the field stories I share are happening, other things are going on too. As a whole, the field stories, theoretical reflections and visual materials offer an ethnographic account of the “living-space entanglements”²⁶ that develop as people and communities work out what to do and how to make space for themselves. My potentially naïve research question becomes instead a problem to follow as it arises again and again, in many different situations in these people’s lives. Their effort to furnish solutions from their circumstances, organised into three broad themes, is the topic of this thesis.

25. Learning from, but messing the frames of Laurier 2014; Dittmer 2010; Muñoz 2020

26. Tsing 2015: 6

In Chapter 1 *Nyitvatartás / Open hours*, I take a look at the work done to keep a community space open—and to close it down. The threat of closure, due to economic displacement and hostile interventions from the government, has become a defining element of the work both to keep Budapest’s community centres functioning, and to work out what roles these spaces can play in their local communities. However, by following the personal and political *projects* that the people involved



27. Garfinkel 1967: 97

compose along the way, I investigate how these communities' experiences of 'being closed' involve re-negotiating shared senses of possibility. Projects play an important role in the movement of people, objects and ideas on to new spaces and new experiments in 'being open': the composition of a new project takes inspiration from available materials and stories in order to propose specific possibilities as sensible, worthwhile or good enough for now. In this way, projects are one conspicuously ubiquitous practical means by which people deal with the challenge of what Harold Garfinkel²⁷ calls the "operational" or "how to bring it about from a here-and-now future" that remains characteristically sketchy for even those with a lucid vision of a better "possible future state of affairs". By following how these communities undertake and organise such project work within unfavourable circumstances, the chapter's field stories provoke theoretical reflection on politics as situated, provisional, speculative and pragmatic action taken to shape the world in certain ways. These accounts are developed while engaging with several modes of pragmatist philosophy, particularly the speculative pragmatism of Isabelle Stengers and Martin Savransky and the tragicomic pragmatism of Cornel West, to re-formulate political struggle in terms of collective assessments of possibility, meaning and value rather than the successful realisation of an ideal.

Chapter 2 *Rendszerhiba / System error* departs with these ideas into the apparently more 'familiar' form of political action of protests and demonstrations, following the wave of protests that erupted in December 2018 following the adoption of the so-called rabszolgatörvény, or *Slave Law* by the Hungarian government. This chapter's field stories explore how people



come to sense and report that ‘something’s happening’ that warrants attention or action—and how others try to make ‘something happen’ for just that reason. Taking the negotiation of the significance and status of an event—as political, as a waste of time, as what we need—to be a deliberated, situated, and interactive process, I push back against theories of affective atmospheres as pre-subjective environments that animate the feelings, beliefs and actions of political subjects. By following the ad hoc work that goes into making a demonstration the kind of thing that different groups want it to be, it becomes clear how concepts like atmospheres, spirits, moods and feelings are socially accomplished, *public* concerns to be invoked, debated and shaped by those who have a stake in what a situation will come to be. This leads to greater reflection on the phenomena of crowds in political protests, and I develop a description of the emergent local logics that crowd-members assemble as they make sense of possibilities, values and one



another. Rather than treating crowds—and by extension their participants—as inherently mad or impassioned, I outline a perspective on crowds as multiply ordered. In particular, the techniques used by crowd-members to make their own social and political concerns shared and shareable negotiate in situ the context of action and the meaning and value of forming an assembly—or not.

The third and final chapter *Az alaprajz (kb.) / The blueprint (more-or-less)* returns from the streets to the ongoing projects of Budapest’s community centres and activist spaces, but shifts focus onto the objects and material culture that fills these spaces—and the work their communities do with them. Bricks, spoons, books, foosball tables and many other items become crucial elements of the imagination and realisation of projects and possibilities in each of these field stories. More than mere paraphernalia, these things serve as tools and resources for assembling new projects and doing the “job of work”²⁸ of political action. Taking inspiration from Bruno Latour’s self-critique of Actor-Network Theory, I aim to move past the observation that

28. Button 2012: 679



these communities' plans, like so much else, are "composed in a heterogeneous fashion of unexpected elements revealed by the investigation".²⁹ Instead, in considering the constitutive role these things have in projects as situated grounds for action, I illustrate an interactive and ethological understanding of actor-networks and assemblage re-specified ethnomethodologically in terms of the 'folk' practices and theories that they are put to work in. This leads to greater discussion of the buildings harbouring these political spaces, specifically the ways that construction, maintenance and repair work make visible and enact moral and political relations. This account asks us to reconsider the role and process of design and the material environment not as conditions that prefigure the future, but as means through which we endeavour to "make something of" the world.³⁰ The chapter closes by returning attention to the communities that work with these things to make their spaces well together: it reflects on the implications of casting the work they do as 'political', and argues for the question of politics to be treated in terms of the projects and ways of life they set out to build together.

29. Latour 2013: 35

30. Massey 2005: 141

Rather than a conclusion, the final section of this thesis is a reflection. This section serves to introduce several questions related to the aim and value of ethnographic and more broadly geographical fieldwork—and the projects that animate it. I use this space to draw connections between the space-making projects of Budapest's activist spaces and community cafés and those that academic community-members get up to while trying to make their own institutions better spaces. I argue that learning about and thinking with projects and stories from elsewhere presents important opportunities for us as project-

31. Addams 1912



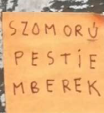
workers ourselves to learn from these experiments in making better, political, inclusive or liberating spaces. The chapter draws inspiration from the work of pragmatist pioneer Jane Addams³¹ whose work in founding and running the Hull-House settlement in Chicago, I argue, can be

viewed as a form of pragmatist—and ethnomethodological—theory in action. In keeping with my re-specification of the ‘solutions’ that academic research can offer, I neither claim to solve the problems of beleaguered universities, nor offer straightforward instructions how to ‘use’ the stories and ideas from my field stories in our university work. Rather, I push for academics to rethink the purpose and value of ethnographic fieldwork and geography projects as techniques for sharing, learning from, and working with the stories of others in our own work in and on the world.

The success of this project, as far as I am concerned, turns on the ability of its readers to learn from and think with the experiences of these people working on hopeful projects and making community spaces in Hungary today—not in theory, but in our own practices of making social spaces, be they cafés, pubs, holes-in-the-wall, clubs, libraries, museums, casinos, community gardens, seedy dens or even universities. In a beleaguered world where I don’t know what on earth to do with myself, I deliver a project in which I take interest in how

other people work out their own ways forward in the hopes that this might inspire still more projects elsewhere.

SHHH!
BE SILENT
AFTER 10 PM.
THANKS.



A BŐZSETVÁROSI ÖNKORMÁNYZAT FEGY-
ZŐSÉNEK DÖNTÉSE ÉRTELMEBEN A MAROM KLUB
KFT. ÁLTAL ÜZEMELTETŐ AURORA KONK. EGYEZÉSŰ VEN-
DEGLAND EGYSÉG NYITVATARTÁSI RENDJE MEGALAKOBT.

H-V: 12⁰⁰-22⁰⁰

AZ AURORA KÖZSÉGEI HÁZ EGYEB
TERÜLETEINEK NYITVATARTÁSI RENDJE
VÁLTOZATLAN, MERT ALÁBB LÁTHATÓ:



DEKONSTRUKT



AFA



NYITVATARTÁS
opening hours

H-K 12-23

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P-SZ 12-04

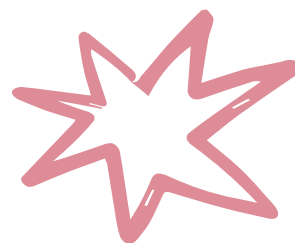
V 12-23



“In accordance with the decision of the Józsefváros local government’s office, the opening hours of the hospitality establishment operated by the Marom Klub Ltd. bearing the name Auróra Kioszk have changed:

Mon-Sun 12.00 -22.00

The opening hours of the other areas of the Auróra Community House are unchanged, which are visible below”.



 NYITVA
TARTÁS **1**
(Open hours)



Auróra is still open. The door is propped wide when I arrive, and the convivial buzz of conversation, music and clattering glasses drifts out into the street from the crowded courtyard inside, where patrons are making the most of these last warm autumn evenings. Despite the crowd, I only spot one familiar face. Benji stands smoking alone on the mezzanine, glumly watching the courtyard. Benji's one of the *aurórasok*, the shifting group of staff, volunteers and more-than-just-regulars who spend a great deal of time socialising, drinking and helping out at Auróra—often all at once. *Aurórasok* care for Auróra: they help keep the space going, and they look for help there too. Benji's a good example. He's an artist and graphic designer in an office upstairs, but also Auróra's volunteer coordinator for the community garden, a sound-technician, IT pro, MC, wall-painter, scissors-loaner or conversation-maker when you need him. He's been with Auróra from the beginning, since it opened in 2014. We exchange nods as I climb the stairs toward the Kioszk.

“How are things?”, I ask. He shrugs, grimaces, and exhales a cloud of smoke. “Szar”, he answers, “*shit*”. Earlier today, the 8th District's önkormányzat, the *local government*, declared it



would revoke Auróra's evening license, the latest in its years-long campaign against the space. It's a muddled story: where the önkormányzat cite locals' complaints about "the Auróra Kioszk's disruptive operation", the aurórálok see politically motivated discrimination against themselves, the civilek, the *civil society groups* based upstairs, and the diverse communities who socialise in Auróra. Over the years, the önkormányzat has ordered police visits and drug raids, revoked licenses, and even tried to purchase the building from Auróra's landlord. In response, the aurórálok have installed noise insulation, appealed citations in court, and organised countless fundraisers. Supporters have joined both sides: right-wing youth groups tag the building with 'Soros Club' graffiti and homophobic slurs, while NGOs and student groups issue statements of support for Auróra. With each challenge, the aurórálok do their best to work out what it might take—for now, this time, again—to keep open not just the bar, but also their idea of a közösségi ház: a *community house*. The önkormányzat's latest move is thus no surprise: it's shit and a shrug. "The others inside?", I ask, and Benji nods, cigarette already back in his mouth.

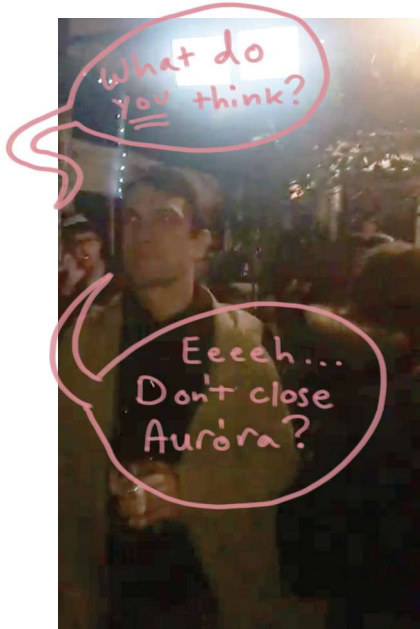


The Kioszk's as busy as the courtyard, and I spot Naómi and Lukács squeezed into a corner table crowded with beers, laptops, uncut flyers and takeaway. They're working on a social-media post, "Az Auróra nem zár be! *Auróra is not closing!*". Beside them Samu grins into the camera of Gábor's phone, "Hello dear aurórálok and Auróra-lovers and -supporters! As you know, this evening the 8th District's önkormányzat, referencing false complaints with all sorts of lies and illegal motivation, decided that it wants to restrict Auróra's open hours. Specifically, they've ordered us to close at 10 PM, which clearly is a death-sentence



for an Auróra-sort-of-place”! They pivot to get the crowded bar in the shot, “But fortunately I’ll emphasise one more time that this decision is completely illegal, but even better than that as you can see there’s a great mood right now in Auróra with just minutes until, in principle, we have to close”.

1. Auróra 2018



For most of the patrons, Auróra is open this evening as a matter of course, but the aurórasok are busy keeping it open—doing ‘being open’² in novel ways despite the threat of closure. They are keen to show potential guests that Auróra is open for a drink, but also to show other aurórasok—and, not so subtly, the önkormányzat—that they’re keeping the space open. Samu suggests they go outside to see whether anyone’s been sent to enforce the order: the street’s silent. “A cat! Is it possible the local government’s sent a cat?”, Samu proclaims, “The önkormányzat hasn’t arrived by 10 PM, so we take it that our open hours continue to be—as you can see—to operate, it’s Friday, so you can see this means 4 AM. So we’ll be here until 4 AM, so if

2. Sacks 1995



you come out, we'll be here to greet you!”.

The video is an impish provocation, but it also does important work by gesturing to the conditions of Auróra's openness, “the terms on which that openness/closure is established”.³ Although the önkormányzat's legal proclamation is intended as a conclusive end-of-operations, the aurórasok work to make something of their changing situation in order to keep Auróra open *differently*. The proclamation becomes another factor in Auróra's throwntogetherness,

what Doreen Massey describes as a “constellation of processes” that “necessitate invention”. “[L]oose ends and ongoing stories” continuously entangle, disrupting assumptions or prescriptions of an a priori coherence of space or community: instead, they leave us with “the challenge of the negotiation of multiplicity”.⁴ It is in



this sense Massey claims that space is always open—susceptible to change as ongoing “stories-so-far” implicate and entangle with one another—and argues that the *terms* through which its openness and closure are established is “the real socio-political question” of space.⁵ Specific possibilities are opened up—and closed off—as different people, things and beliefs are taken into account during this process of negotiation, giving rise to a fraught moral geography of the everyday.⁶ In this sense, the conflict between the aurórasok and the önkormányzat is a struggle over Auróra's permit to be open as a business, but also its possibilities as a community space open to certain kinds of people, practices and politics.

3. Massey 2005: 154

4. Massey 2005: 141-142

5. Massey 2005: 179

6. Wilson 2017; Ginn 2013

The aurórák stay open by showing the ‘great mood’ inside Auróra, appealing to their own open hours, and dismissing the önkormányzat’s order to close on grounds of its ‘lies and illegal motivation’. The video communicates to a wider public that this openness is at risk, but that it will take more work—like a visit from the police—to justify and accomplish Auróra’s closure. And although the police do arrive by 11 PM to close the bar for the evening, the aurórák continue to develop new techniques over the following weeks to keep Auróra open nonetheless. They appeal in court, offer ‘free’ drinks for ‘donations’, and launch yet another fundraiser.

The önkormányzat strive to close Auróra as a possibility in Budapest today, while the messy and improvised work of the aurórák re-work and re-create the terms of that possibility to keep it open—even if this means at times falling short of their vision to “bring together cultural programs, civil and activist work, community-building and entertainment”⁷ It’s not that Auróra’s ability to remain open is wholly contingent upon Benji’s worry or Samu’s video—after all, we might have Samu to thank for the night’s police visit! Rather, by taking Auróra’s (in)ability to stay open as a practical, shareable concern, the aurórák assemble a common project within their heterogeneous social practices. Taking tickets at the door, posting on social media, and even drinking with friends all acquire a situated “ethical meaningfulness”⁸ entangled with the challenge to keep Auróra open. They become “practical doings” that negotiate, to adapt Maria Puig de la Bellacasa’s phrase, ‘what Auróra’s possible involves’. Benji, Samu and the other aurórák *do being open* “as well as possible” by working out what Auróra’s ‘possible’ might involve given the circumstances, and by sharing an

7. <https://auroraonline.hu/>

8. Puig de la Bellacasa 2017: 152-155

accountability to Auróra and each other. These practices open, again and again, the possibility of Auróra in a world where it has been—legally—closed.

9. Stengers 2010: 37

Ecologies of practices⁹ develop as aurórasok, along with other workers, volunteers and guests, participate in and become entangled with the challenge of Auróra's openness, introducing other concerns, constraints and projects into the question of its possibility in the process. These combinations and interactions continuously re-create the terms of Auróra's openness, the entanglement of various ways of life in the space, and ultimately what might count as the flourishing of its communities. This involves a degree of risk, however, which helps explain Benji's continued worry despite the collective determination to keep Auróra open. The önkormányzat's work of closure might obstruct the possibility of certain practices, relations and projects that have become valued parts of Auróra even if *some* possibility of Auróra remains open, and this might unsettle his own 'fit' in the space.



10. See Giraud 2019;

Ahmed 2019

Fit is a useful concept with which to think about the ecologies of practices that entangle in and with Auróra: it keeps sight of the variable experiences and projects that animate its space, as well as those instances when a person, belief or thing does not 'fit in'.¹⁰ Just as we might say some people don't fit in among the aurórasok due to conflicts of personality or politics, Auróra might come to fit 'uncomfortably' in the 8th District today, be it on account of noisy concerts or left-wing politics. The question of fit is not pre-settled, but rather involves an ongoing negotiation of matters, constraints and projects within a thrown-together ecology of practices. When questions of how to care; what or who to take into account; and what to make



of a situation prove challenging, there is an uneasy fit. People are left to adjust, to work out how to make space for their own activities and projects. When Naómi calls a meeting of aurórasok to discuss how to respond to the latest threat from the önkormányzat, the group of staff, volunteers, civilek and friends discuss how the different people, organisations and projects of Auróra fit together, and how they might fit into a common project of keeping Auróra open.

There's already a large circle of aurórasok crammed into the Dor Hadas room when I arrive. I know most of the group, though there are a few volunteers and civilek who have only joined the aurórasok recently—by helping out at meetings like these. Dorka passes around post-its while Naómi explains what plans Auróra's staff have thought up so far. They're launching a donation campaign with support from Marom, a Jewish cultural organisation that sponsors Auróra, and they'd like to organise a

‘support week’ with numerous events and concerts that reflect Auróra’s diversity. Everyone agrees that Auróra should host as many events as possible. Even if it won’t make any money with the bar closed, it will show there’s still life in Auróra: it’ll show we’re open.

The goal today is to develop these ideas into concrete plans. “Let’s take 5 minutes to think about what we’d tell someone about Auróra, why they should donate, why what we do is important”, Naómi suggests. After a few minutes of pens scratching, Dorka hangs a mind-map on the wall and pops the cap off a marker, “who wants to share their ideas?”. One of the new volunteers Janka speaks up first, “I wrote that this is a complete community space, that it’s not just a bar or a club, but there’s sok minden, *lots of everything*. It’s not just the concerts, so I wrote down the civilek as well, that they’d like to, well, keep working”. Another volunteer Riti builds on her ideas, “I’ve been thinking about what we mean when we call it a bázis, that it’s a kind of *base* of resistance for young people





who are critical, and it tries to expand that community”. Pál makes a similar point about the *civilek*, noting that they reach many people besides their own supporters because they’re in Auróra, “we should really draw them in more, that they’re here, it’s not that they just exist here”. There’s a pause, then Janka adds, “I also wrote there should be food”, and the group laughs. Auróra’s kitchen is infamously unreliable, with most cooks leaving after a few months of minimal profit.

“Okay, but then all of this is mixed together with the question of Auróra’s *fenntarthatóság*, its *sustainability*”, Dorka offers from the board, “but I don’t see what kind of place it is, like vegan or green, or I don’t know what. I don’t see what it wants to be”. There’s brief, unenthusiastic debate about whether Auróra’s green—and what that would even mean. “Okay”, Pál cuts in, “but I think we should consider whether we really need some kind of unique selling point. I don’t think that’s the case, because we don’t really have that kind of thing. Ha megszűnünk, *if we cease*, then it won’t exist”. He pauses, but the rest of the group stays silent, “I was thinking about this more negatively, like we should draw the *civilek* into this, since if we’re closed down, they won’t have office space”. The group is quiet for a while, “Is there anything else we’d miss if Auróra ceased to exist?”, Dorka asks. Another pause. “My pay”, Pál jokes.

The *aurórasok* make sense of Auróra as a ‘complete community space’ by discussing the projects, communities and ways of life whose possibility is in some way tied to Auróra’s own as a *bázis*. In trying to articulate what the place ‘wants to be’, the group is reluctant to formulate one single ‘unique selling point’, turning instead to its various inhabitants and

visitors and reflecting on how they fit together. With the threat of Auróra's closure, the 'sustainability' of the ways of life of these groups comes into question, but as Pál articulates, it also provokes questions about how their different projects fit together and how they might fit together differently.

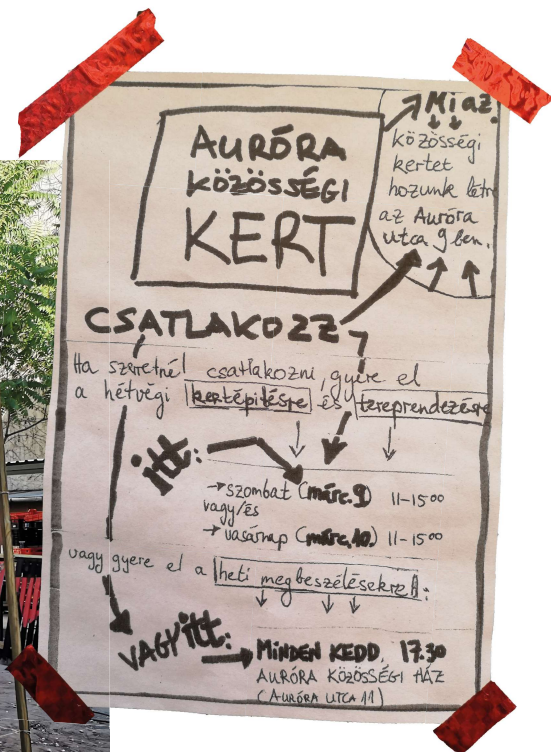


The possibilities of exchange, collaboration and growth that the aurórasok reference do not immediately follow from 'lots of everything' existing in Auróra: such possibilities develop through work done by the aurórasok 'to draw in' resistance-minded teens, entrepreneurial cooks, Jewish culture, punk concerts, a community garden, an after-school programme. The aurórasok look for an 'as well as possible' fit by accounting for the projects, interests and activities of others, while at the same time conceptualising what work needs done to bring them into better alignment.¹¹ This is a provisional and ad hoc inventory rather than a totalising list of Auróra's community members—and there are political implications when some groups do not fit into the picture—but it provides resources with which to describe how Auróra might be open *well* despite its uneasy fit with the önkormányzat.

11. Puig de la

Bellacasa 2017:

206



what they have on hand. With conversations and post-it notes they work out what they're dealing with, think with it, and find inspiration for new 'as best as possible' ways to be open. Following Massey, the 'lots of everything' at Auróra does not intrinsically fit together into a 'complete social space'; instead, the aurórák must work out how to coordinate what they find into a common *project* of keeping Auróra open. The raffle donations, compost workshops and language cafés that eventually go into Auróra's 'support week' are developed out of existing activities, groups and resources to be a part of this project. By drawing civilek, sympathetic neighbours and new volunteers into this project, the aurórák seek to make Auróra's sustainability an 'ingredient'¹² in their activities and other projects, to make Auróra's well-being a "way in which [they are] interested in what [they do]". Likewise, they take these ongoing practices, priorities and projects of others into account as ingredients in their own work to keep Auróra open 'as best as possible'.

12. Stengers 2010: 27

13. Massey 2005: 130

14. Sacks 1995 (Vol.
2): 236-239

15. Sacks 1995 (Vol.
2): 239

16. Wittgenstein
1958: §228-232

17. Bogen & Lynch
1990: 514

Formulating this project, then, is an issue of alignment and mutual accountability. The aurórasok's work to make a project of Auróra's collection of "stories-so-far"¹³ turns on what Harvey Sacks describes as "the formulation of their mutual projects as 'alike'", even if the parties involved, "didn't figure that they had such alike mutual projects" to begin with.¹⁴ Sacks' point is that the way people "conceive the event they are doing" is socially-constituted and subject to change as their activity encounters others'. Two friends might find they have the mutual project of 'going to Auróra' even while one is going to lead a workshop on civil disobedience while the other is going for a drink. Sacks shows how people establish this alignment through accounts and stories even though they often take it as a natural fact.

If Massey leaves us with the challenge of throwntogetherness, Sacks offers projects as one mundane technique with which people 'make something of' their world, how they come to find "that its parts fit together so nicely" and how they propose that orderliness to others.¹⁵ By piecing together the support week and fundraiser, the aurórasok do not calculate the essential steps to keep Auróra from closing, but rather craft possibilities for others to join in the project of Auróra staying open, for others to take that as an interest in their own activities. They look to the ongoing interests, practices and projects of others for inspiration, to find direction¹⁶ for how Auróra might become open 'as best as possible' in the present circumstances. In this way, their project is a search for agreement in the sense used by Ludwig Wittgenstein, an 'attunement' or 'harmony' between forms of life.¹⁷ The aurórasok's activities speak to the work involved in this search—particularly when things don't fit together easily in

an ‘as best as possible’ way. In such situations, piecing projects together can do important work to make the coordination and agreement of heterogeneous forms of life possible.

And projects seem to be everywhere—and endlessly flexible. It would thus be, at very least, imprudent to theorise ‘what projects really are’. My account of projects does not aim to describe the sum total of what they can be used to do, but rather attends to the *situated uses* of projects. On the one hand, this can draw attention to situations where participants themselves formulate a project as such—like the auróráók with the support week—as sites of consequential work, sense-making and the negotiation of possibility. On the other, such an approach provides a synthetical, rather than purely analytical, understanding of the practical and speculative work done with projects every day. In their meeting, the auróráók’s project serves as a technique of coordination, a mundane analytical tool to make sense of what they’re working with and how their ideas and actions might fit together. By watching, describing



and participating in projects, I seek to make available the terms by which their activities take on particular meanings and values, as viable ways to describe how their own various “stories-so-far” might fit together in the messy circumstances of a thrown-together world.

In this sense, projects offer one possible way to respond to and respecify what Martin Savransky, following the pragmatist philosopher William James, calls the ‘pluralistic problematic’ of everyday life. By working on projects, people and communities negotiate how different people, actions and possibilities might fit together, revealing and re-shaping a plurality of “feeling[s] of *and*, of *but* and *if* and *with*; for staying with the one *and* the many”¹⁸ The possible, and frequent, dissonance between such senses of fit leads Savransky to interpret the matter of experience as fundamentally problematic, giving way to multiple interpretations of the meaningfulness of various activities and ways of life. My intention is to respecify this challenge ethnologically, following Harold Garfinkel’s¹⁹ direction to take theoretical concerns as practically accomplished, situated and organised phenomena. Thinking with projects helps convey how, in their specific circumstances, groups do practical and speculative work to fit their actions and worlds together in certain ways. My interest lies in how the *aurórasok* and others make out their own ‘forms of life’ and work to fit them into the world.

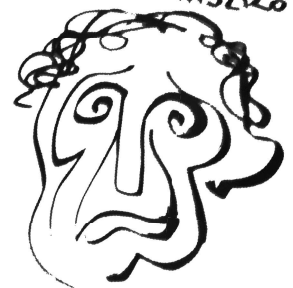
18. Savransky 2019;
following James
1996

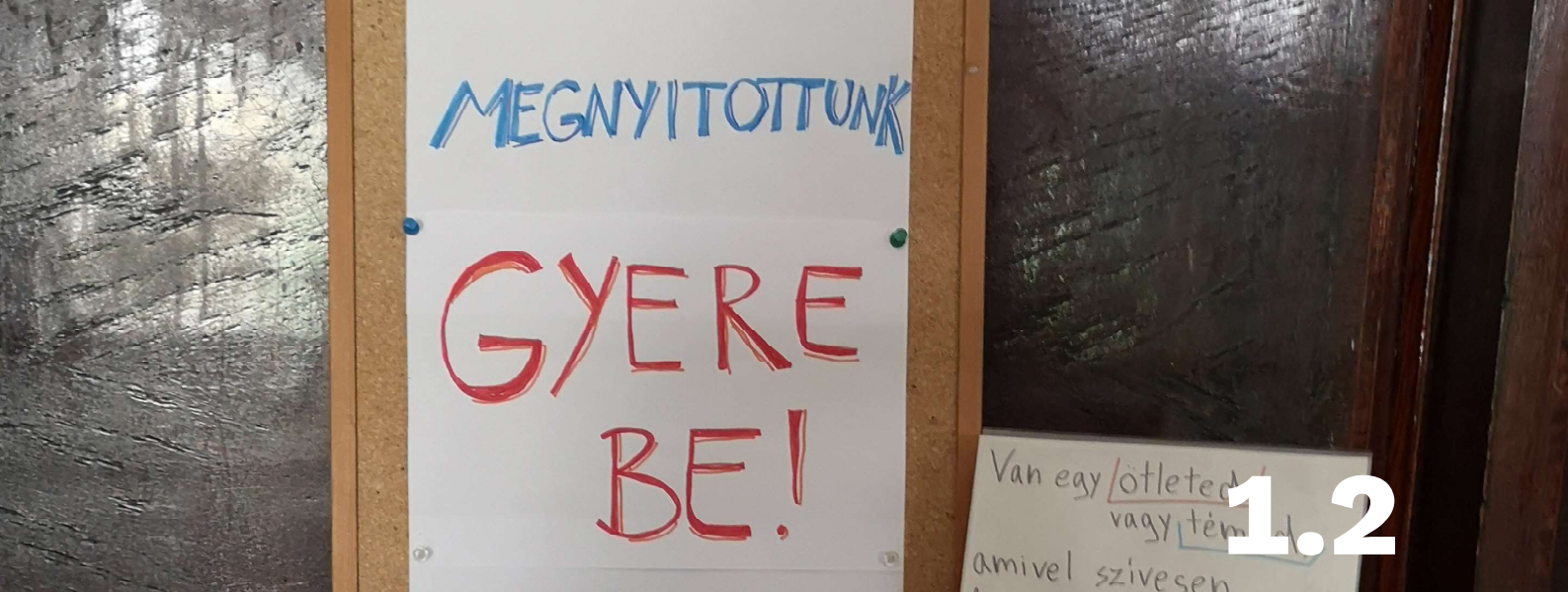
19. Garfinkel 2002

I take projects as situated and social ways that people work through feelings of possibility and relation, how different forms of life might fit together as well as whose interests are to be taken into account when deciding if that fit is ‘good’. This is a promissory formulation, however, and much the rest of this

chapter will explore what projects can be and can do, if for no other reason than the simple fact that projects seem to show up everywhere—and to lead, more often than not, to more projects. As the meeting with the aurórák comes to an end, we pass in our post-its and put up the chairs. Some groups break off to discuss specific projects for the support week, “I know who can print the socks”, while others have in mind more informal projects: let’s check out the concert downstairs, let’s do something this weekend. I head over to the nagyterem, though, to find Kamilla. She’s agreed to talk to me about some of her own projects—and she’s got *quite* a few.

ELSŐ VALAHINEK TANASZKODÁS
A NAPBAN





“Since I started working at the Közélet Iskolája in September I’ve been here quite a lot”, Kamilla observes as we settle into the empty nagyterem: it’s where she organises workshops, courses, film screenings and other events on critical pedagogy and civic activism as the organisation’s education coordinator. “And of course, besides that I have smaller projects too”, like the role-playing summer camp where she helps students invent their own fantasy-themed societies and the TEK kollégium where she runs classes, “but I’m working on time-management and saying ‘no’ to things more, since I’d rather do a few things well than a lot half-way”. Kamilla explains that she grew up at the summer camp and at TEK, so she’s enjoyed giving back, but lately she’s felt that it’s time to let the younger generations of students take the lead, to work out what they want to make of their ongoing projects.

This has the added benefit of giving Kamilla more time for her latest project: Deviszont, a community space for trade-school students in Kispest that promotes “thoughtful social action and a more just society” guided by principles of critical pedagogy.²⁰ “It’s our baby really, we came up with it ourselves!”, she beams, “It’s very cool that we created an organisation out

20. [http://](http://deviszontkozter.deviszontkozter)

[deviszontkozter.](http://deviszontkozter.deviszontkozter)

hu/

of nothing—first the group, then the place itself—*az nagyon durva. It's really crazy* that in this political climate we've been able to do that”.

Of course, the *deviszontosok* bring an impressive ensemble of skills, ideas and experiences from their other work—at Auróra, Gólya and other community spaces, but also as teachers and social workers. They serve as valuable resources for the group as they piece together what Deviszont's 'possible' might involve, but their skills do not provide a clear, prescriptive recipe for success²¹. Deviszont as a project is a collective experiment in ethical living, but not one that proceeds according to a 'fixed procedure' of self-improvement.²² It is rather an ongoing opportunity and challenge to develop 'means of accommodation' for the different voices, interests and ideas that participants bring in.²³ The *deviszontosok* spent nearly two years meeting, planning and fund-raising while they worked out the idea for their project, “but it was a bit like we had our needs, and then there was what people offered up [for donation], *és abból is alakult, hogy milyen lett a hely, and the place took shape from that too*”. Some plans never materialised, “like the computer area, which doesn't exist, you know, since we don't have a computer”, while other objects and activities become unexpected elements of their work only later on: a donated couch, a student's interest in Finnish culture, a dance class upstairs.

“It's still new, so it's more experimental”, Kamilla tells me. Even with the specific ideas they bring to the space, “it's about testing out how these pedagogical tools would work with the students. Things like opening and closing circles, how can we do them”. To open their new space 'out of nothing'

21. Puig de la

Bellacasa 2017: 8

22. Cf. Marres 2012:

78

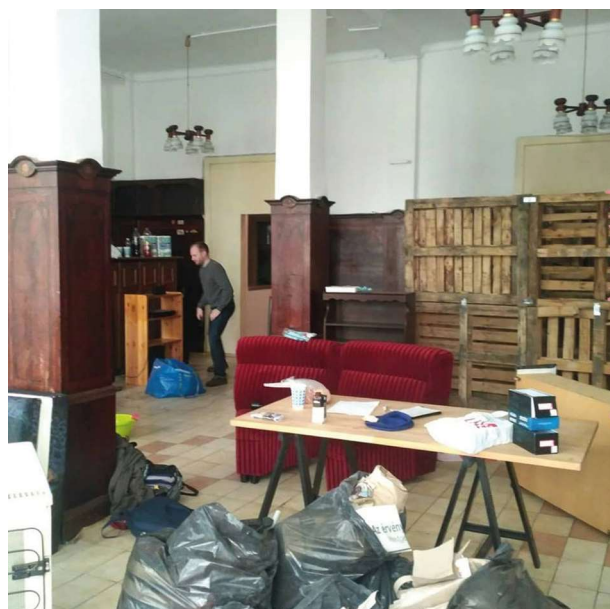
23. Massey 2005: 111

the deviszontosok have had to work out how these different interests, objects, spaces and people might get on together. “We planned these different spaces, but really hétről hétre alakul, *it takes shape week-to-week* because of the different activities”, Kamilla explains. Their new project is an open and ongoing challenge: a mundane, met-about and worked-on version of the pluralistic problematic.²⁴ For the deviszontosok, Deviszont is a generative problem where each new suggestion, improvisation and partial solution leads to new questions and new possibilities.

24. Savransky 2019

The deviszontosok’s project takes shape bit-by-bit, week-by-week, mirroring the “additive world” described by William James, the destiny of which “hangs on an *if*, or on a lot of *ifs* [...] the world being as yet unfinished, its total character [...] expressed only by hypothetical and not by categorical propositions”.²⁵ In James’ philosophy, this results in a “restless universe, in which no single point of view can ever take in the whole scene”. James offers this as a source of hope, but also responsibility, since “[t]he great point is that the possibilities are really here [...] the issue is decided nowhere else than here and now. That is what gives the palpitating reality to our moral life”.²⁶

25. James 1996: 229; quoted in Savransky 2019: 16



26. James 1884:

online

Keeping close company with Massey’s world of loose ends and ongoing stories, Savransky and James depict a pluriverse of

“partial stories” that coexist, intermingle and interfere with one another. Thus for Savransky, pluralism should not be taken as “an absolute celebration of the many”, but should rather provoke “political, experimental and pragmatic response[s] to the ongoing insistence of the pluralistic problematic”.²⁷

27. Savransky 2019:

14

Savransky distances his ideas from other contemporary scholars who take the pluriverse as “a world where many worlds fit”, as itself a goal to build toward.²⁸ Scholars such as

28. Escobar 2018: 17

Walter D. Mignolo see “pluriversality as a universal project” that should materialise an alternative to a monocentric Western hegemony by connecting numerous “coexisting decolonial projects”.²⁹ Although Savransky’s pluriverse, “may be a world of many worlds [...] it is not one where many worlds simply ‘fit’”.³⁰

29. Mignolo 2018:

94-95

30. Savransky 2019:

3

Instead, Savransky uses the pluriverse as a ‘generative problem’ to point to the ongoing and unfinished practices of collectives as they do the work of fitting together different social worlds, projects and possibilities.

Although at times overstated, the difference here lies in Savransky’s focus on the uncertain work of creating and connecting ethical projects, and in his rejection of the idea that an end—good or bad, pluralistic or monist—can be accomplished at all.³¹ The pragmatics of the pluriverse involves, “speculatively experimenting with problems not in order to find their ‘true’ solution, but to enable them to enable us to”—here one might raise an eyebrow—“impregnate [sic] the world with new differences”. Savransky, following James, is critical of experiments in ethical living that seek an ‘unproblematic communion’: the experimental pragmatics of pluralism means staying with problems, working out next best-courses-of-action again and again. This is why Savransky, dubious metaphor

31. Savransky 2019:

16; 2020: 4

aside, describes problems as generative, and how he comes to argue that we should “learn to stand by a perhaps” rather than overcome it.³²

32. Savransky 2020:
6; building on
Tsing et al. 2007

Savransky’s ‘perhaps’, like Puig de la Bellacasa’s ‘possible’, references the possibility of cultivating other forms of life. These authors offer a speculative, pragmatic, and ecological understanding of such experiments, where an “ecology of practices” also involves an “ecology of perhaps”.³³ It gives rise to questions about how we become available to one another: how we fit in, and how we accomplish that fit, among the plural activities, stories and projects of a shared world. Standing with a perhaps involves “dwelling on possible becomings, pressing for, insisting on, all those ‘might haves’ or ‘could bes’ implicit in situations”.³⁴ The relevance of others and their projects, “how, in what degree and in what manner, things come to matter within specific situations” is a situated, ethical and speculative challenge.³⁵ Thus Savransky seeks to follow ‘hypothetical propositions’ and the ‘feeling of *and*, of *but* and *if* and *with*’ that accompany the speculative and practical work people do to make something of their shared world of many ‘ifs’ through “the wager, but never the promise, that a situation might become responsive to our thinking”.³⁶

33. Savransky 2020:
12

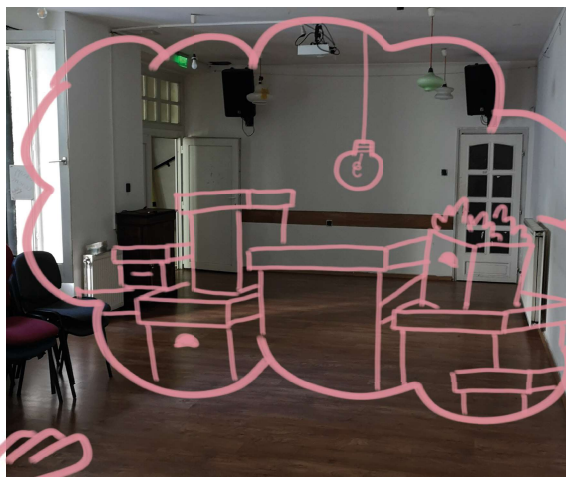
34. Debaise &
Stengers 2018: 17

35. Savransky 2016:
online

36. Savransky 2019:
17; 2017: 37; 2016

As a project occupied with social justice in an inhospitable political climate, Deviszont is an open-ended experiment in ethical living. The work of the deviszontosok to piece together the skills, resources and problems on hand does not uncover a conclusive ‘best-fit’ solution. The group negotiates the possibilities and problems that emerge ‘week-to-week’ as they try to fit into the lives of others in ways that make a difference. This is what lets the space ‘take shape’ as theirs.

At first, as Kamilla recalls, it was difficult for the deviszontosok to see what would be possible with the space, a former restaurant in an old vigadó. “The first time we went there, it was full to the ceiling with large shelves filled with stage-props”, Kamilla tells me, “It was a theatre’s raktár, its *storage*. Even the lamps were obstructed by the piled-up stuff, so it wasn’t exactly possible to see *what the whole thing was*, hogy mi ez az egész”. The image strikes a stark contrast to the empty,



echoey nagyterem we’re sitting in. She laughs, “but even like that we were happy with the space. We were glad it was in a good spot and quite large”. As the porters cleared out the

room, the deviszontosok got a better sense of what might be possible, “so then we began to tervezgetni, to *plan little-by-little* how it should be”. When I joined the deviszontosok and their team of volunteers to help clean up and get the space ready to open, we found still more possibilities and problems to work on.

Samu wobbles at the top of a rickety wooden ladder dredged from storage somewhere deep in the vigadó, and I do my best to hold it still. “I have a son, you know!”, he shouts to Gerle and the other deviszontosok watching and laughing from the window as he tries to reach the broken shutter. Samu knows some of the deviszontosok from Auróra, and he teaches at a school nearby as well, “so I thought I’d drop by and help out, and I’ve been telling my students they should come too”. We



wrestle the ladder back inside, where the group is discussing how to arrange the furniture. Gerle and Pál find a spot for the donated bookshelves, where they're hoping to organise a small library for the future students. Peti is building a makeshift wall out of pallets, while Kamilla sits at a sewing machine, working over a large blue fabric. "The önkormányzat are leasing us the space", she explains when I ask what it's for, "and they want us to protect the wood panels from damage". "They're historical", Gerle knocks the wood with her knuckle, "even if they look like shit". The deviszontosok have done their best to turn the unexpected problem of the wood panels into an opportunity for the students to fit into the space, as Kamilla explains, "the kids will be able to decorate and hang things on the fabric, so they can make it more their own". Pál helps Kamilla test it out on the wall, and they try to work out how to attach it.

Gerle asks if I can help in the kitchen, so we go to join the volunteers scrubbing the dirty floor. "This might be the first

time these have ever been cleaned!” one volunteer laughs as we kneel down beside her in the thick, grey layer of foam. Gerle reassures her, “it doesn’t have to be perfect, just usable!”. The plan is to have Deviszont’s first open day in a fortnight, and it’s clear the broken oven, empty bookshelves, tower of pallets and bags of materials won’t be completely resolved by then. We just have to get things presentable, good enough for things to get started—then the deviszontosok can figure out the rest as they go.

As we fix up the place, the deviszontosok and volunteers look for valuable possibilities within the constraints of a government’s rules and a dilapidated kitchen, both developing novel ideas like the blue fabric as well as adjusting their standards for a ‘clean enough’ kitchen. They present Deviszont as a ‘work-in-progress’, rather than ‘finished’, as an open project that other ideas and people might—and need to—fit into. The organisers of Deviszont want their future students to feel that the space, but also the project of Deviszont is ‘theirs’ too. The deviszontosok work out a good set-up in part by taking into account how they think—and hope—the students will come to inhabit the space, then laying grounds for particular practices like decorating the blue curtains, learning to cook or building a book collection—‘techniques of habitation’, through which to participate in and re-shape Deviszont as a shared ‘habitat’ composed of heterogeneous habits, interests and patterns of relevance.³⁷

37. Savransky 2016:

online

If Deviszont as a project is about taking a chance at making a new kind of ethical space, this is only worked out—and constantly re-worked—by the various practices and responses, the various people and interests that join in the

making of the space week-to-week. Thinking about Deviszont in this way draws attention to the ongoing, creative practices that allow the space to ‘take shape’ in addition to, and at times in spite of, preconceived plans and ideas. It also acknowledges the creative capacities of disagreement and differing priorities within the shared ‘habitat’ of a project. Since the deviszontosok and students each have different interests, priorities and other projects, they do not have a uniform experience of their nonetheless-collective project. The result resembles what Jacques Rancière³⁸ calls dissensus, “a difference between sense and sense” that characterises situated confrontations with the pluralistic problematic: the deviszontosok each have their own ways of making sense of a student’s favourite hobby or a local government’s favourite ugly old wooden panels. This means, however, that disagreement or conflict alone is not enough to explain the failure or exclusion of a practice, person or possibility from a project: dissensus can also present a generative problem to work on. “Of course there were feszkós moments too”, Kamilla tells me as we think back to those first days of cleaning the space, “you remember the mobile walls?”.

38. Rancière 2011: 1

When I come out of the kitchen with a bucket of fresh water, Pál, Peti and Kamilla are standing around a set of dividers made from pallets and mounted on wheels. “It doesn’t seem stable”, Pál says sceptically, gingerly testing the wobbly structures. “It’s sturdy enough”, Peti says, giving one a sharp whack. He jumps quickly to catch it when it starts to fall over.

“They were életveszélyes, *life-threatening*”, Kamilla recalls with a laugh. The plan had been to arrange the mobile walls between the pillars to create separate rooms for concurrent activities: a way for students with different interests to fit into

the space together. The group came to the unhappy conclusion that the walls couldn't be used, but they also disagreed about what to do with them now, "some people thought we should have planned more about where the furniture would go, while others thought it would be clear where to put things when the time came". The trouble wasn't just that it wouldn't work, Kamilla points out, "Peti had made them and transported them there". The walls—and the possibilities they would enable—had become a valuable possibility for Peti, without which Deviszont wouldn't be quite how he had imagined. It's clear from Kamilla's story that the tensions surrounding the wall affected some members' experiences of Deviszont significantly and others' less so. Such conflicts and failures could become constitutive components of the space and its projects just as its successes did.

The walls were eventually dismantled and stored in the back of the kitchen, but despite their absence from the events of Deviszont's actual open sessions, they still formed part of their project's 'ecology of perhaps', affecting how different ideas, plans, objects and interests would come to matter within the activities and techniques of habitation underway at and as Deviszont. Thinking about the coming-together of Deviszont in terms of collaborations and compositions alone is therefore not sufficient: ruled-out possibilities and differences of opinion have also shaped the project week-to-week, showing that the productive and creative capacities of exclusion are an important part of their story as well.³⁹ While the deviszontosok test out how Deviszont will be through discussion, repair-work and improvisation, "certain realities are materialised at the expense of others": they negotiate together the terms of still-possible

39. Giraud 2019: 4



and no-longer possible worlds for their shared project.⁴⁰

40. Giraud 2019: 180;
Osborne 2018

For such reasons, Albena Yaneva argues that ‘failed’ projects must be taken as equally significant to ‘successful’ ones, since they “do not remain simply ideas”, but exercise influence on the world.⁴¹ Rejected proposals and fallen-through plans go on “recruiting new crowds of allies, and employing a diverse repertoire of strategies of conviction, thus gaining a degree of reality that sometimes competes with the successful ones”.⁴² For Yaneva, the various plans and ideas that go into a ‘building project’ make it a ‘multiversal’ accomplishment, where different possibilities gain a ‘degree of reality’ through the assemblies of human and non-human supporters that work around and with the idea.⁴³ The process of design and re-design in architecture, which Yaneva calls “learning about a building’s unknown”, likewise aptly describes the experimental work of the deviszontosok as they collectively test out possibilities and learn how they can make their space good enough for themselves and for future students. Yaneva’s understanding of

41. Yaneva 2009: 16

42. Yaneva 2009: 16

43. Yaneva 2005:
535; Yaneva
2009: 16-17

44. Savransky 2019: 12 projects helps to perceive Deviszont as a space of convergence *and* divergence, where those coordinating around a common project must also negotiate feelings of *but*: ideas and activities that fit together uneasily, leading to dissensual interactions.⁴⁴ Such differences and disappointments necessitate workarounds and compromises to keep a common project going.

45. Yaneva 2009: 14-15 However, it can also be valuable to resist Yaneva's willingness to treat a building as a single project contested in competing plans and anticipated futures. For the deviszontosok and volunteers, the tasks of building mobile walls, sewing customisable curtains, scrubbing perpetually mucky floors and planning a library were personal and collective projects themselves, and their value was defined only partly in terms of their contribution to Deviszont. The teacher-volunteers and deviszontosok discussed future classroom visits and lessons on social inequality. Visitors from the önkormányzat found photo-ops for their next election cycle. Peti applied his skills and interest in DIY construction. In contrast to Yaneva's⁴⁵ description of rival architectural designs pulling the 'project-to-be-built' in different directions, thinking about Deviszont as an ecology of projects shifts emphasis onto the question of how numerous ongoing projects make themselves available to one another as cohabitants of Deviszont's own common project.

46. Savransky 2020: 12 The project in this sense resonates with Savransky's⁴⁶ idea of an 'environmental agencement' as work-in-progress, "the way in which the multiple heterogeneous participants that compose an environment render each other available to one another, laying out together the manner in which they and the environment come to exist". Thinking with projects, however, re-specifies Savransky's environments in terms of the contexts

identified, evaluated and worked on by members as they move through a landscape of numerous, shifting environments marked out by individuals' differing priorities, interests and values into 'plural geographies of worth'.⁴⁷ Savransky argues that, "values and meanings inhere in environments themselves, instead of being added to them by a human mind",⁴⁸ but an ecology of projects asks which environments and possibilities come to count—and how—if "the coordination of actions in time and space [is] understood to operate through the negotiation between multiple practices of evaluation, justification and accountability".⁴⁹ The moral geographies of Deviszont take shape as the deviszontosok work out not only how they might fit within this project, but also how this project might fit among the many smaller and greater projects in their lives.

47. Barnett 2014: 157

48. Savransky 2020:

49. Barnett 2018: 8





During my fieldwork, it becomes clear quite quickly that everyone is and has been involved in many different projects. When Anna, a mutual friend and former employee of Auróra, puts me in touch with Lotti, it's for this very reason: for the past two decades, Lotti has taken part in numerous community spaces, cafés and collective experiments. When I arrive at the Downtown Café where she works now, the lunch-rush has packed both its main room and sunny courtyard, so it takes a minute for us to find each other—and we only just manage to snag a small table after it's vacated. “So, Anna tells me you're studying community spaces in Budapest”, she notes while lighting up a cigarette. “Sziaztok, hey!”, she adds, waving to a group sitting down at a nearby table. I ask how they know each other, and Lotti explains that they worked together at Sirály, a bar-turned-squat evicted by the city government in 2013, and which served as a direct predecessor to Auróra—but, she clarifies, Lotti's story starts quite a bit earlier.

“More than 17 years ago, when I graduated from secondary school, I didn't go straight to the university, and instead I put it off for a year. And so I started working at a place called Eckermann kávéház”. I jot it down, the first in a long list of new

names of places and people I've only heard briefest reference to before. "It took shape a bit strangely in terms of its community, because Wilhelm Droste", another name added to my list, "he started making the place. He's the current owner of the Három Holló, by the way. And the whole thing started out with him actually making a community space while researching the relationship between coffeehouses and literature in Budapest at ELTE University. He delivered a seminar series about this, and *the students were so inspired*, annyira lelkesek voltak—and this was 20, even 25 years ago—they established the Dürer kávéház at the University. This was a community project in the sense that—sziasztok!", Lotti waves to more passers-by, "that the University wasn't really—sziasztok! Sziasztok! The university wasn't really, well, it didn't try to influence how the café should operate. Instead Wilhelm and the students built up the whole thing practically like a theatre set".

Lotti's story hops between people and places for the next two hours, pausing only now-and-then to answer my occasional questions and to greet passing friends. "At Wilhelm's café there was never a boss. Tasks just got divided between the people working there. Someone would take care of the tea, someone else the coffee, someone else [would ensure] that broken chairs were fixed and so on". Eventually the Goethe Institute invited them to open a café in their premises: hence, Eckermann opened its doors in 1998. The Institute paid for the rent, and the income belonged to the café workers, "and Wilhelm continued his kísérletezés, *his experimenting*". Eckermann café moved spaces and reinvented itself several times before finally closing for good,⁵⁰ but Lotti doesn't go through the details of the closure since it, "doesn't have to do with the rest of the

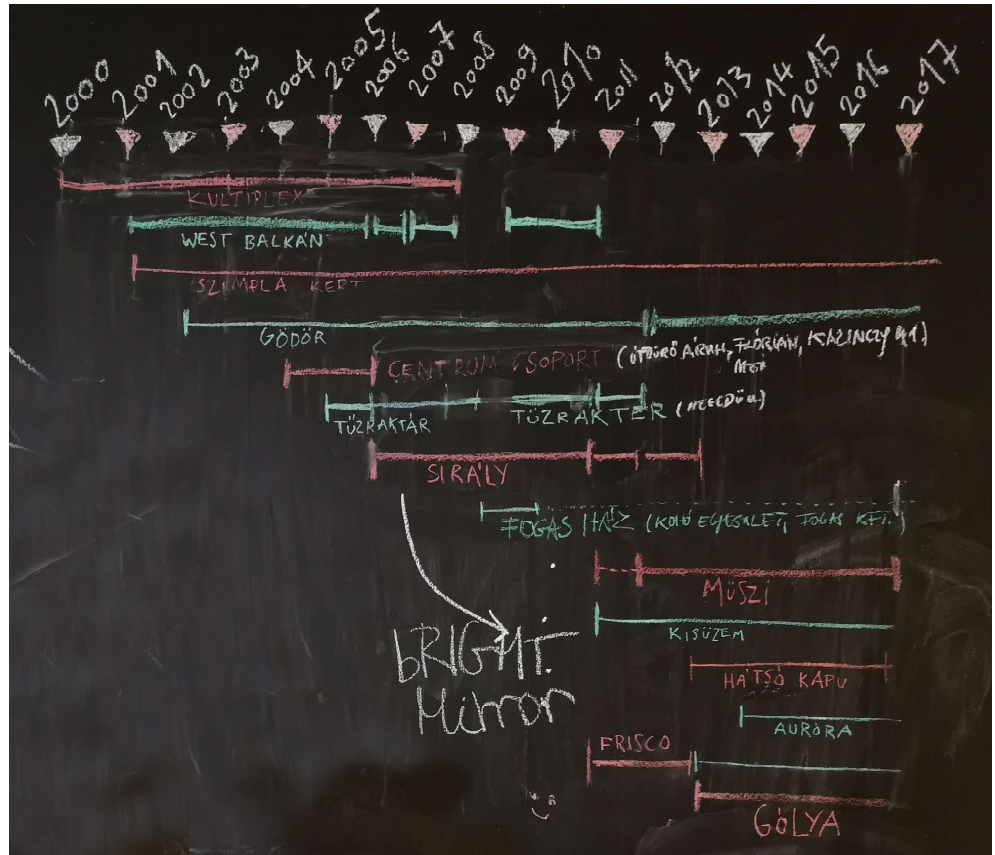
50. Sturnus 2010

story”—her own part in all of this.

“Around the time Eckermann was closing, a person started hanging around by the name of István Szalai-Szabó, who you’ve probably heard of”. I add another name to my list. He was a theatre-maker with an idea for a new space, and he liked how ‘Wilhelm’s collective’ had operated their café, so he wanted to work together. This new place would become Sirály. “We each saw the same fantázia, that we could make the space together as a community space, and that’s where we actually first said this phrase—community space—aloud”, Lotti explains.

With the end of each café come stories about new ones starting. After a number of years, Sirály closed too, “so I found myself in an empty space yet again”, Lotti notes. “With the closing of Sirály, the entire crew who’d worked there won some kind of momentum, and it was as if something would have been lost—so Sirály really *was* lost, but a bunch of *new* places opened. So for example, the people who took care of the hospitality work in Sirály—but now this is going to be a stupid simplification of our crew—but this café”, she gestures to the one we’re sitting in, “took shape out of that group. Tehát abba mentem én is bele, so *I got into it too*, and then I also became a downtown-os”. Thinking of these spaces as mere descendants or re-locations of other spaces may be a ‘stupid simplification’, but Lotti’s account offers a more sophisticated picture of a complicated field of experiments and possibilities that learn from one another. By describing the opening of Auróra, the Downtown Café and ‘a bunch of new places’ both because and in spite of Sirály’s closure, Lotti outlines a process of composition that draws on empty spaces, trusted friendships, free-time, financial support, and a fantázia of inspiration.





In public interviews, both Droste and Szalai-Szabó echo Lotti’s emphasis on imagination—the fantázia at play in the creation of Sirály, Eckermann and their other experiments. “Behind the formation of every cultural place there’s always a dream, a belief, a vision”, Szalai-Szabó says, tracing his own inspiration through a host of places visited, worked in and heard of:⁵¹ Tilos az Á, Stúdió “K”, Egyetemi Színpad. Droste takes a more historical perspective, referencing the Abbázia, the Meteor and the original Három Holló from the 18th-century ‘highpoint of the coffeehouse’ in Budapest, “you can get great coffee [today], but the social life around it is poor; great friendships, debates, rivalries, loves don’t form around coffee [anymore]. We want to bring this back”.⁵² For all three, different spaces—cafés, and cultural institutions, theatres and universities—are ‘important parts of the story’ of how their own experiments have come to be, and how the crews working on them decide how to make

51. Kovács & Bárdos

Deák 2011: online

52. Urbán 2017:

online; Droste

1996

them *well*.

It's possible to understand these stories as something of a composite biography of the Budapest community space, a current-day correlate of Jürgen Habermas⁵³ well-known history of a public sphere constituted and transformed by such public spaces. Habermas argues that 18th-century coffeehouses helped foment democracy as spaces for public debate and rational discussion, but also as “nodes set within an overall network” of periodicals, newsletters and public discourse, leading to a “measure of overall cohesion [...] a society of sorts”.⁵⁴ More agonistic accounts of democracy have since critiqued and re-worked Habermas' ideas,⁵⁵ and the celebration of the coffeehouse as a place of necessarily *generative* social mixing has been tempered in light of writings on the risks and exclusions of encounter.⁵⁶

Studies of cafés, but also libraries, bars and autonomous centres among many others have therefore investigated empirically the collaborative *and* conflictive practices done to ‘get on with others’ in such spaces today.⁵⁷ Of particular note is Chatterton and Pickerill's discussion of the “experimental, messy and heavily context-dependent” work done by the organisers of activist spaces to build toward desirable social and political futures.⁵⁸ By characterising such spaces as ‘place projects’, these authors usefully shift focus from broad political theory onto the situated, ‘messy’ practices by which these communities try to build a better world. Nonetheless, by conflating the ‘project’ with the ‘place’, Chatterton and Pickerill preserve the spatial logic of Habermas' coffeehouse society, treating each space as a ‘hub’ of political activity within a broader ‘network’.⁵⁹

53. Habermas 1989

54. Philo 2004: 9

55. Mouffe 2005;
Flyvbjerg 1998

56. Wilson 2017:
464-465;

Valentine 2008

57. See Laurier &
Philo 2006;
Lees 2001; Yates
2015a

58. Chatterton &
Pickerill 2010:
476

59. Chatterton &

- Pickerill 2010: 476
- Lotti's story, in contrast, describes an entangled coexistence of projects in and between spaces that do not 'add up'. Instead, the different crews, experiments and fantázia take on meaning ecologically as they introduce, justify, interest, account for, and address one another through their practices.⁶⁰ Rather than treating each community space as a discrete 'unity of different roles', Lotti's account of experiments emerging from one another, crews forming and dissolving, and inspiration circulating between community spaces illustrates a more complicated context of practices which gives their ongoing experiments meaning as 'working acts'.⁶¹ Different crews pragmatically and speculatively work out "what we may expect to happen when we act in such and such a fashion" in part by drawing on their practical experiences and fantázia of other cafés and projects.⁶²
60. Stengers 2010: 34, 56-57
61. Rawls 2006: 43
62. Strauss 1964: xx; quoted in Wills & Lake 2020: 19
- This suggests an alternative image to that of the cohesive society, network or public sphere pieced together from various 'place projects': the places in Lotti's story are shot through with projects that combine, conflict and alter one another. Lotti pieces together each project from a context of collaborations and meetings, people and crews, experiments, inspiration and, of course, more projects. Rather than a 'unified' genealogical history of the community space, Lotti describes a 'discordant landscape of knowledge', where the intelligibility of different experiments and projects "*must be made to exist*" compositionally, drawing together practices, stories and possibilities to negotiate the sense of past—and present—action.⁶³ Such an approach leaves community spaces open to many projects, but it also changes the implications of the closure of a space: although 'something was lost' when Sirály
63. Stengers 2010: 182-183; Barry 2015: 92

closed down, its ‘social life’ continued on through inspiration and lessons-learned for new crews and experiments despite-and-because of its own project’s ‘failure’.⁶⁴ A project might be taken up again, adapted or learned from even after the doors have been locked for good as Sirály’s were in 2012.

64. Appadurai 1986;

Yaneva 2009

When the city government decided to close Sirály permanently, Lotti and the others from Sirály’s crew found themselves in an ‘empty space’ once again, but they also found a new ‘momentum’, reassembling different practices, crews and experiments from its pieces. This proliferation of projects was not an automatic consequence of Sirály’s closure: during the space’s last days, people gathered to resist the eviction, but also to discuss what they should do and—like the aurórasok in the Dor Hadas, like the deviszontosok during their prep work—how and why their actions mattered. Lotti describes the scene harshly, “yeah, I knew about the secret back entrance and everything. But it was 15 people sitting in a basement, and they didn’t know what they were defending. There was no statement”. Video footage⁶⁵ of the group’s discussion documents their struggle to find an overarching ‘statement’—but it also records their provisional formulation of projects as justification for their actions along the way.

65. Csillag 2013

Dávid, one of the organisation’s organisers and an eventual founder of Auróra, gives the small group assembled in Sirály’s basement a lengthy explanation about why they’ve decided to remain in the building: speculative legal advantages, positive attention from the media, a place to meet. He pauses to gather his thoughts, and someone shouts out from the audience, “mit csináljunk? *What should we do?*”

“Ah right, the—”

“Should we stay here?”

“—question is, eh, that’s it, so that’s the question, and I think that’s the direction we should go in these coming hours”. The audience starts talking, with several people calling out questions and proposals. Someone should always be at the door. There should be shifts. “We should form



working-groups”, one man shouts, “I mean, after we’ve decided what we’re doing”.

Dávid agrees with various suggestions, but also pushes the conversation in a new direction in search of a broader ‘statement’, “And so it’s significant why we’re holding the door, we have to start setting a goal why we’ll hold it. There are all sorts of possibilities”. The crowd buzzes again as they search for these possibilities: some participants ask for clarification of the legal situation, while others try to link their struggle with wider social issues—while others object. Despite the lack of any clear consensus, Dávid eventually needs to go upstairs to talk with a reporter. “I’ll tell them currently as a goal—we’ve decided there’s two kinds of goals, that Marom Klub needs time to remove its belongings from the property, and that the people here—I’ll call us klubtagok, club members to avoid identifying anyone individually—they want to hold a forum where they’ll decide next—”. Someone loudly drags a chair, drowning out his voice: a fitting conclusion to that first uncertain conversation.

As Lotti recalls during our interview, the group in Sirály’s basement struggles to state ‘what they’re defending’. By the end, the two “minimál” goals that Dávid offers to reporters—that Marom Klub needs to retrieve its belongings, and that the klubtagok want to use their meeting space to decide what to do—resonate less with a coherent political project, and more with the situated value of the material and social space to the group assembled. The chosen course of action, ‘remaining inside’, is justified and formulated into the collective project of ‘keeping Sirály’. Similarly, when Dávid discusses the conflict with reporters later on, he characterises the government’s goals in opposition to the group itself rather than an ideology, “they

essentially want to take away the property from the Marom organisation, regardless of the fact that they have no idea how they're going to put it to use in the future". In this way, 'keeping Sirály' does offer a working 'statement' of what the group is doing, but the warrant and logic of this project might have limited purchase with a hostile government, and it might not convince all of the klubtagok that the best way to keep what they value in Sirály is by 'staying inside'.

The klubtagok's goals work to communicate what they, collectively, are doing, but the ongoing discussion and re-formulation of these goals happens *amid* their activity, after they've assembled to 'remain inside' and 'hold the door'. This does not sit with most popular theoretical accounts of projects, which consistently treat them as a series of tasks undertaken toward a *pre*-defined goal. In the field of time-geography, for instance, Torsten Hägerstrand⁶⁶ uses the 'project' as a highly-theorised analytical concept intended to bundle "all those 'cuts' in evolving situations that an actor must secure in order to reach a goal [...their] going concerns in the flow of real life". In Hägerstrand's diorammic model of action, projects "relate events that happen to the strivings for purpose and meaning that we know are hidden behind many of them", depicting their collision as a causal force behind diverse phenomena, ranging from car accidents to migration.

Yet time-geography's projects always add up—remarkably so. Their positivistic approach to causation misses Sacks' lessons on the sense-making work done in situated *formulations* of projects, treating as natural fact the remarkable coherence of their own narrative. The klubtagok's project, in stark contrast, is formulated both provisionally and uncertainly during and

66. Hägerstrand
1982: 324–325;
Pred 1981

as the activity rather than in advance. They ‘set a goal’ to explain why they’re ‘remaining inside’, “to assert how [their] behaviour is socially intelligible [...] to make some behaviour possible, to limit the use of other behavioural possibilities”.⁶⁷ The provisional projects to ‘keep Sirály’, ‘get their possessions’ and ‘use their meeting space’ provide a grammar through which the klubtagok’s actions may be evaluated, condemned, joined, amended or abandoned. It speculatively fosters a new ‘perhaps’ from within their circumstances.⁶⁸

67. McHugh et al.
1974: 24-26

68. Savransky 2020



Rather than using a “revelatory model of demystification” in which the identification of projects seeks to unveil hidden motives and, “lay bare the devices of people’s own subjection”, a grammatical interpretation of projects situates them within “plural rationalities of action”.⁶⁹ Such a perspective treats intention, emotion and mindedness ‘ecologically’, according to Clive Barnett, “located in situated interactions between humans and nonhuman animals”.⁷⁰ Discussing the work of Ruth Leys⁷¹, Barnett observes that such an approach “rearranges the logical geographies of intentional action” by taking intentionality—and thus projects with it—as “folded into broader ecologies of deliberation, habit, reflection, routine, and technology (you could just call it ‘practice’)”.⁷²

69. Barnett 2017: 274

70. Barnett 2019a:
online

71. Leys 2017

72. Barnett 2019a:

online

73. Massey 2005: 141

74. Zerilli 2016: 234;

Barnet 2019b

Composed from within an ecology of practices—meeting together, holding doors, changing locks, staying inside—the projects of the klubtagok piece together a logical course of action that not only accounts for what they’re doing now, but also creates meaningful possible futures to work toward. This is important not only because it acknowledges the work of the klubtagok ‘to make something of’⁷³ their unclear circumstances, but also because it recasts the ‘momentum’ Lotti and others found afterwards as alternative projections of select values, practices and communities from Sirály into new world-building experiments—not ‘genetically’ inherited from, but rather inspired by their previous shared projects. If the klubtagok’s lack of a ‘statement’ can be seen as a situation “where justification *actually* runs dry” for Lotti and others, their later projects can be seen as experiments with new ‘styles of reasoning’ within unclear and even inhospitable circumstances.⁷⁴ The fantázia of each community space, in this sense, is not ‘behind’ them at all, but is rather a shared experience storied, critiqued and wagered in successive projects and experiments.

The political and social possibilities of these community spaces is negotiated by crews of klubtagok, aurórasok, deviszontosok and downtownosok as they work out and work on shared projects. They are, of course, subject to alternative accounts of their actions too: the government and its supporters routinely label the communities of Sirály, Auróra and other spaces as ‘Soros agents’, ‘druggies’ or ‘trouble-makers’ pursuing pernicious projects to damage the ‘public good’—projects they ‘know’ are hidden behind their actions. In this way, the grammar of conspiracy functions in a similar manner to the ‘model of demystification’, where ascriptions of projects



claim to unmask concealed goals of profit, power or political gain. Such formulations create alternative logics of action in the present by prescribing threatening projects and possible futures onto and ‘behind’ others.

The denunciation of these community spaces as, “George Soros-funded nest[s] of duplicitous ‘civil-society’ dissidents”⁷⁵ fits within a history of governments and other defenders of ‘moral decency’ labelling coffeehouses, clubs, bars, gambling parlours, theatres and other public institutions as spaces of ill-repute and therefore deserving to be shut down.⁷⁶ Silvia Federici makes a similar point in her reflection on the relationship between real-life peasant gatherings and persistent imaginaries of the witches’ Sabbat in 16th-century Europe. She writes that “any potentially transgressive meeting—peasants’ gatherings, rebel camps, festivals, and dances—was described by the authorities as a virtual Sabbat”.⁷⁷ Here the glimmer of distant campfires served as inspiration for accounts of secret plots and midnight rituals, which in turn served to dismiss or distort the accounts of those accused who had actually been there.⁷⁸ Such a hostile imagination formulates alternative projects that change the social intelligibility of these communities and their

75. Ferenc 2019:
online

76. Ellis 2004;
Laurier 2008;
Saly 2004

77. Federici 2004:
176, 196

78. Ginzburg 2012

79. Savransky 2020:

10

activities as ‘potentially transgressive’. Yet it is “the glimmer of a perhaps”;⁷⁹ rather than any certitude, that provide space for intervention into this ecology of practices, “the dim intensity of a minor opening”, through which ecologies may be worked upon otherwise, re-evaluated and fostered—or squelched. While claims that a community space is a ‘Soros-funded nest’ might sound ridiculous out of context, such descriptions—and the pernicious possibilities they imply—are made persuasive by assembling projects from glimpses, glimmers, and claims of ulterior motives.

Rather than taking such conflicting perspectives over the meanings of projects as rival truth-claims, it can be useful to consider how their different formulations of projects produce rival logics of action that *all* intervene within an ecology of practices. Neighbours, onlookers and other potentially interested parties make sense of such a space in their own ways, and they respond with varying actions that carry implications for the ways of life animating it. In this light, we might see why having a ‘statement’ appears as a valid concern for those spaces struggling against the threat of closure: of crucial interest is how they might make their practices available to others as meaningful, valuable and sensible projects. The question is therefore less about how a ‘place project’ manages to stay open, and more about the work taken to open different projects so that others might join their effort to



"FREE SPACES" a network of cultural spaces in Hungary

led by Auróra:

it takes work (and often more than a few projects)

to find ways for spaces to "add up" into something "bigger"



build toward better possible futures. It asks not how the space as a 'place project' adds up into a wider social movement, but rather how different ideas, morals, political convictions, ways of life come to bear differently on one another when put into an ecological world occupied by this project too.



1.4

Walking back from the Downtown Café to the 8th district, I pass through the Corvin Negyed neighbourhood, a sprawling, government-led ‘rejuvenation project’. It doesn’t take much to recognise the tell-tale signs of gentrification⁸⁰ in the concrete-and-turf parks and towers of private flats stretched between a glittering shopping centre and the foot of the new Nokia office tower. I stop in at a small, squat pub, huddled at the edge of the rejuvenation project in the shadow of the tower and the construction cranes swinging overhead, called Gólya.

80. Kovács et al.
2013

The Gólya community space and *szövetkezeti presszó* hosts a day-care, craft fairs and political debates alongside the more usual bar and concerts. The building itself has been a bar named Gólya for decades, and it appears as a raucous *késdobáló* in the cult classic *Roncsfilm*’s portrait of the area in the early nineties. As their website explains, the current iteration of Gólya has its roots in a different project, a small city-centre café open from 2012 to 2013 named Frisco.⁸¹ The group has grown and changed since they first moved to Gólya, and the collective continue to develop new initiatives, build new alliances and open up their space in different ways.

81. <http://golyapresszo.hu/>

Gólya’s mostly empty at the moment, although there’s

still a few Nokia employees finishing a late lunch. I join the short queue at the bar, and hear the woman in front ask for the Wi-Fi password. “Költözikagólya”, comes the reply, “Gólya is moving”. I get an espresso and go to find the volunteer orientation I saw advertised on social media this morning, but the room’s empty. I’d been picturing a room packed with university students, civilek and other regulars buzzing with energy. The gólyások would be on the stage, walking us through what they’re planning—and how we can help. I’m surprised, then, when Peti and Ibolya round the corner with just two prospective volunteers. “If you’re here for the volunteer meeting, we’ll get started shortly”, they announce. I join as they get a laptop ready, and they jump right in, “Thanks for coming. So as you know, Gólya is moving”.

These days, Gólya is in the business of moving, and that involves more than simply carting boxes and furniture from point A (Bókay János utca 34) to point B (Orczy út 46-48). With new passwords and volunteer orientations, social media posts and public interviews, the gólyások are ‘doing moving’,⁸² which

82. Sacks 1995

Some things
don't go
as planned



itself is a way of staying open. With the new construction sites right on their doorstep, the move isn't much of a surprise. As one of the gólyások explained to me earlier when I first heard about the move, "we've known we'd be forced out ever since they started building. The only thing that's surprised us is how fast it happened".



By communicating their move to the wider public, the gólyások create new ways for people to relate to their exit from the corner of Bókay utca and new ways to join in the work to keep Gólya open. Their move is an ongoing project that makes their troubles shareable,⁸³ that not only allows others to "feel that something has to be done", but also indicates 'logical' ways⁸⁴ to help out, get involved and make the move happen. Calls for help locating a new space, reminders that the kitchen is still open, and their plans for a weekend-long closing party are each techniques for making the move happen: they work out with others what the 'possible' of keeping Gólya open elsewhere will involve.⁸⁵ With a new building finally purchased, the group is planning a major renovation, and that's why they've put out a call for volunteers.

83. Sacks 1995 (Vol. 2): 245

84. Barnett 2019a;
Barnett 2019b

85. Puig de la
Bellacasa 2017

"Tonight we'll show you some of the new building, and also how to sign up to volunteer in the renovation", Peti explains, turning his laptop towards us. Its screen displays a crisp, orderly blueprint in harsh white light. Ibolya walks us through the plans, zooming in on various rooms-to-be: a pottery workshop, a news office, a radio, a day-care, a gym. They've planned the new layout with partner organisations, but there's a lot of work left to do before the building starts to look anything like this. "We have to seal the roof and clear the debris. And we have to clean everything", Peti explains. "We'll work on the upstairs

offices first, so the tenants can move in as soon as possible”, which will help Gólya stay afloat once the old bar has to close: the renovation is on a tight schedule and a tight budget. “That’s why the volunteers are so important. We really do need your help if we’re going to make this happen”, Ibolya assures us, “anyone who works gets a free lunch, and if you take regular shifts you’ll get a discount at the bar”.

During the volunteer orientation, Ibolya and Peti use the blueprint as a persuasive object, which makes certain actions suggestible, imaginable and tellable. The blueprint provides a snapshot of a possible future Gólya, which the gólyások use to communicate and recruit others into certain activities that serve as the ‘practical accomplishment’ of the

86. Garfinkel 1967:
288

project to move Gólya.⁸⁶ Although the blueprint provides an ‘authoritative vision’ of the future Gólya, the very point of the presentation is that its project is *contingent*, depending on the

87. Sennett 2008;
Degen et al. 2017

decisions and actions of others to take up and contribute to its future course.⁸⁷ They use a logic of free lunches, hands-on construction experience and Gólya’s social mission to make that project available and appealing to potential volunteers. At the end, Ibolya and Peti invite us to sign up on the laptop. I tell them about my research while I wait my turn. “We don’t mind if you have ulterior motives”, Peti jokes, “of course you can help!”.

88. Sacks 1995 (Vol.
2): 236-239

People might join the project for any number of reasons, but Gólya’s move is an opportunity—and a challenge—to formulate those various projects as ‘alike’ with that of supporting Gólya, working harmoniously with the gólyások’s efforts to re-open their space.⁸⁸

Gólya’s move, as a work-in-progress, creates space for a shared concern in Gólya’s continuing openness that functions

through “plural rationalities of communicative action”, which Barnett and Bridge, building on the pragmatist philosophy of James Dewey, describe as ‘transactional’.⁸⁹ Dewey takes action as an ongoing co-constitution between organisms, environments and objects, which functions on a problem-responsive logic of inquiry, “a dynamic give and take between causal processes and a pluralized sense of engaged, embodied, responsive capacities to apprehend these processes in their myriad implications”.⁹⁰ Seeing this action as “generative of rationalities geared to contextual situations”, Barnett and Bridge use it to re-conceptualise democratic politics, “as a mode of collective action that emerges around situated problems generated by indirect consequences and indefinite effects”.⁹¹

89. Barnett & Bridge

2013: 1029

90. Barnett & Bridge

2013: 1030

91. Barnett & Bridge

2013: 1030, 1036



This leads to a process of “ongoing speculation and experimentation” as affected publics form around and work on problematic situations; for Bridge, this means that “ends-in-view” should not be, “conceived as anticipations of future states [...] not propositional states and contents but rather qualitative

92. Bridge 2014:
1647-1654

and holistic and performative”.⁹² Ends-in-view are methods of organization: ends and means have a ‘transactional relationship’. Projects like Gólya’s move do not have a pre-determined ‘end-in-view’ that directs all further action: instead, the activity of working on their project illuminates new possibilities for the gólyások to work toward, new emergent and contingent ‘ends-in-view’.

93. Barnett & Bridge
2013: 1032

In this sense, the work of *doing Gólya’s move* speaks to the effort to create a sensible, possible form of action as a response to the threat of closure, and to do so in such a way that the problematic situation gains a different degree of ‘publicness’.⁹³ The project of the move creates a space of coordination, discussion and confrontation in which common ends-in-view can be wrought from a shifting problematic situation.

94. Barnett & Bridge
2013: 1036

By talking and posting online about their project, the gólyások make the problem of their situation available to others, thereby making a transactional space in which that problem is negotiated available to the perspectives, motives and resources of a wider public. This turns questions like ‘what should we do?’ and ‘how can I help?’ on their head: they performatively generate space for coordination, rather than producing a concise solution to be ‘merely’ implemented. Following Barnett and Bridge,⁹⁴ the gólyások make their move a space of ‘public action’ by creating opportunities and challenges for others to be affected by not just Gólya’s future state of affairs, but also the experimental work done to get there.

Although Gólya’s move projects a speculative future, it is also a practical one, which “attempts to come to terms with practical circumstances as a texture of relevances over

the continuing occasions of interpersonal transactions”.⁹⁵ The project provides a new texture of problems and meanings to actions like having lunch in Gólya while the kitchen’s still open or shovelling a heap of rubble at the renovation site: they are taken to actually and potentially affect its outcome. Although the end of Gólya’s project as such cannot be said to depend on the labour of any given volunteer or the profit of any given bought-lunch, the gólyások need the help of volunteers ‘if they’re going to make this happen’ in consideration of, to use Harold Garfinkel’s phrase, the project’s “operational future”, that is, its “how-to-bring-it-about-future-from-a-present-state-of-affairs-as-an-actual-point-of-departure”.⁹⁶

95. Garfinkel 1967:
177

96. Garfinkel 1967: 97

For Garfinkel, this kind of future is a matter of practical decision-making. It leads him to reconsider how decision-making ‘actually happens’ in everyday situations, and he rejects the common assumption that, “persons know beforehand the conditions under which they will elect a set of alternative courses of action, and that they correct their previous elections on the way through the action as additional information turns up”.⁹⁷ Garfinkel inverts this formulation, noting that “*the outcome comes before the decision*”, that is to say, “[w]hen the outcome was in hand they went back to find the ‘why,’ the things that led up to the outcome [...] to give their decisions some order”.⁹⁸ A decision, following Garfinkel, is a situated grammatical account of the meaning and relevance of a course of action.

97. Garfinkel 1967:
96-103

98. Garfinkel 1967:
114-115

Thus, an ethnomethodological perspective—in contrast to the interpretation found in pragmatist theories of action⁹⁹—takes decision-making as an ongoing practice of justification, an ascription of ‘legitimate histories’ to present circumstances.¹⁰⁰ This formulation lays the grounds for an alternative understanding

99. Rawls 2011: 279;
2006

100. Garfinkel 1967:
114

101. Emirbayer &
Maynard 2011:
227

of the pragmatist interest in problematic situations as a ‘fork in the road’ which generates creative problem-solving, practical reasoning and experimentation,¹⁰¹ wherein the problem is not a prior state to be resolved, but rather an ongoing aspiration which lacks a legitimate, rational history or cohesion. In Garfinkel’s research with Agnes, a transgender woman struggling to secure permission for sex reassignment surgery, he notes that “[v]ery few things could occur for Agnes, bearing in their relevance on ‘her problem,’ in an accidental or coincidental manner”, which he contextualises earlier, “her problem being to obtain a competent, guaranteed, and low-cost operation [... while] protecting her privacy”.¹⁰² Agnes’ problem is what she is working on, and it requires the ordering of legitimate histories *and* legitimate futures to manage others’ perceptions of herself and her own moral claims.

102. Garfinkel 1967:
164-180

103. Lynch 2019: 184

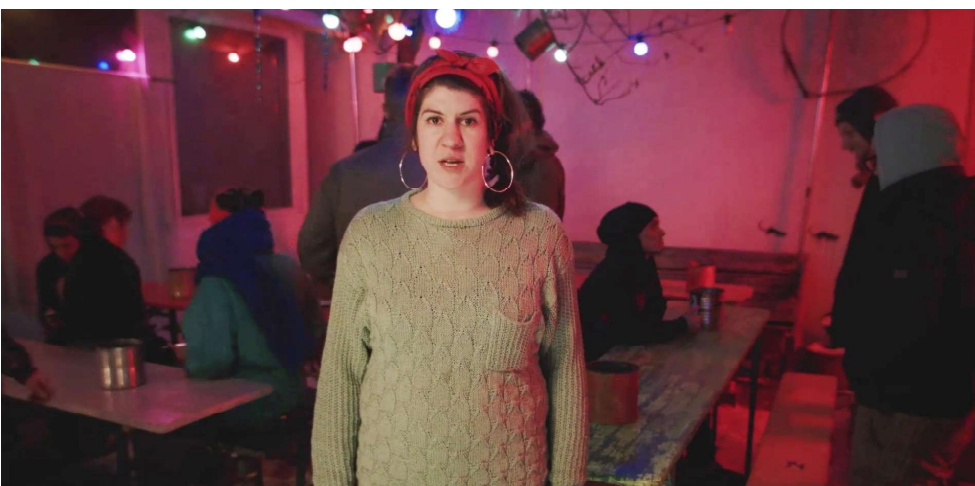
The ethnomethodological attention to situated and everyday ordering respecifies the matter of ‘cohesion’ in terms of the “embodied actions that constitute social order”.¹⁰³ This reorients the account of political action in spaces like Gólya in terms of situated projects, and the ongoing, speculative and interactive *work* done by the people involved to establish their projects’ social and political value here-and-now. Rather than seeing Gólya’s move as a project of ‘creative problem-solving’, it might be better to consider it as a form of creative trouble-making that makes available some of the difficulties of their ‘generative problem’ to a wider public.¹⁰⁴ The call for support presents the contingency of Gólya’s project as a work-in-progress, sharing their trouble with others by provoking the question of how to help.

104. Savransky 2019:
5

Among many other efforts to spread the word about and

recruit support for their move, the *gólyások* release a video¹⁰⁵ to illustrate their project. The narrator begins by explaining the reasons for the move, describing the negative pressures caused by the neighbourhood's transformation, but also noting that the group has 'outgrown' their current building. She explains that Gólya is "not just a bar", since it "gives space to more-and-more community events and initiatives", then outlines how the offices, workshop and gym in the new building will allow them to improve their work. The result is a montage of persuasive possibilities that might fit together in their project, but *only if the gólyások receive help*. "Ez a hatalmas feladat ami áll előttünk ebben az évben: *this is the enormous task that we face this year*, and this is what we're asking for your help with". The narrator then introduces specific methods of helping:

105. Gólya 2018





donations of money and training in construction and trade-skills. In conclusion, she draws a connection between their work and their vision, “our everyday work is defined by our *vizió*: that we want to live in a society based on fraternity, sustained by people sharing power and living in love and acceptance for one another”. The *gólyások* gather in a group around their flag and shout together, “*köszönjük!*”

The video’s montage of actual and prospective activities composes the move-in-progress as the group’s project, which members of the audience can help out with in certain ways. Its representation of the future *Gólya* creates a convergence of “constraints, expectations, demands, attitudes and other sorts of concerns” into a prospective model, itself a bid at “reassembling and reconciling bits of reality” such that “the



move’ is a good decision and ‘helping out’ is an available and sensible course of action.¹⁰⁶ Yaneva argues that models and representations of future buildings are particular and multiversal in their use: they do not seek to represent a future building in entirety, but rather illustrate certain necessary functions or address particular concerns. Likewise, the *gólyások* make possible comments, critiques and—hopefully—offers of support by producing certain “publicly displayed features”.¹⁰⁷ These provide material for inspiration, with which *gólyások* and members of the public alike can jointly imagine not just what the new Gólya will be like, but also their own participation in its ongoing project as socially-and-materially possible.¹⁰⁸ The *gólyások* make a trouble public and ask for help imagining its here-and-now possibilities.

106. Yaneva 2005:
530-535; 2009:
16

107. Murphy 2005:
115

108. Murphy 2004:
277

109. Barnett 2019a

However, the video introduces a noteworthy addition to the project at its conclusion when the narrator describes Gólya's collective vision and links it back to their everyday work. She creates Gólya's *fantázia* as a publicly available feature of the bar and their project to stay open. Recalling Barnett,¹⁰⁹ this vision submits another logic of action to public scrutiny, which not only makes it available to a retroactive account by someone as to, "why they decided to volunteer". It also makes Gólya's project available as a space within which to discuss, critique and contribute to some vision of a future society in part by asserting that the society of tolerance, shared power and equality does not already exist—it is instead a problem that needs and can be worked on here-and-now. The *gólyások* make no claims that their project will itself *create* the better society described by their *vizió*, but in sharing their vision they ground their work in the here-and-now struggle to work out what such a society might involve.

110. Sacks 1995 (Vol. 2): 245

This sketches out an alternative imaginary for the politics of community spaces when compared to the accounts discussed thus far which presume that the activities of such spaces should accrue a causative force that reshapes a new, better society. If the world is full of troubles,¹¹⁰ a call for help on a project offers a subtler, but no less important advantage: it creates and shares a workable trouble among the others. By inviting people to donate, lead trainings or otherwise volunteer at the construction site, the *gólyások* establish such practices as meaningful contributions within their project to build a new space and, by extension, within the uncertain terrain of social justice.

This is a picture of democratic action that is more

pluralistic, dissensual and perhaps tragic than the “constitutive sense of optimistic confidence [...] in the capacity of collective action to resolve pressing issues” found in many formulations of democratic progress.¹¹¹ Barnett, for example, calls for an ‘agonistic’ sense of pluralism that would take “more serious consideration of sharing as an inherently divisive activity”.¹¹² This resonates with Savransky’s preference for James’ pluralistic problematic as opposed to what he characterises as Dewey’s search for a solution “that would unify divergent publics [...] *overcoming* their plurality”.¹¹³ Following contemporary pragmatist philosopher Cornel West, a ‘tragic’ pragmatism is better suited for understanding the persistence of ‘stubborn circumstances’ that do *not* become responsive to efforts to ameliorate them.¹¹⁴ Drawing on the works of W.E.B. Du Bois and Sydney Hook, West argues that intractable problems like racial discrimination and the Cold War demand a messier and pluralistic understanding of problems and what gets done about them.

111. Barnett 2020:

280

112. Barnett 2020:

281

113. Savransky 2019:

15-16

114. West 1989: 119

For Hook¹¹⁵, a tragic sense of experience comes from a pluralistic understanding of consequence: “[e]very genuine experience of moral doubt and perplexity in which we ask: ‘What should I do?’ takes place in a situation where good conflicts with good”, he writes. Hook’s pragmatism, according to West,¹¹⁶ is one of ‘inescapable limitations’ and ‘piecemeal losses’, one that “wants to take with extreme seriousness Marx’s insight that people act and create but not under circumstances of their own choosing”. West¹¹⁷ develops these ideas further in his own ‘prophetic pragmatism’, which he describes as a form of hopeful truth-telling that “promotes the possibility of human progress and the human impossibility of paradise”. This progress, West writes, emerges from human struggle, which he places at

115. Hook 1960: 13-14

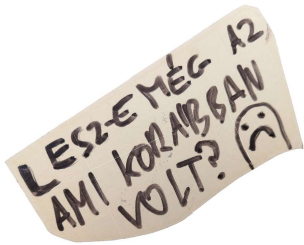
116. West 1989: 114-

116

117. West 1989: 229

118. West 1989: 229

the heart of prophetic pragmatism even though such efforts never guarantee progress, and that progress itself can produce new evils. Referencing Raymond Williams, West¹¹⁸ characterises ‘tragic action’ as the experience of disorder: Williams writes, “we follow the whole action: not only the evil, but the [people] who have fought against evil; not only the crisis, but the energy released by it, the spirit learned in it. We make the connections, because that is the action of tragedy”.



119. Wills & Lake
2020: 3-4 on
uncertainty

In this tragic mode of pragmatism, the social and political struggles to make a better place in the world cannot be equated with ‘making the world a better place’, but they stand all the more significant as situated attempts, to rework Massey’s phrase, to make something *good* of a confused, uncertain or straightforwardly hostile situation.¹¹⁹ Yet West has also re-formulated his own understanding of pragmatism in recent years, reshuffling the straightforwardly tragic sense of political action thrown against insurmountable problems into a more enigmatic ‘tragicomic sensibility’. “The tragicomic is the ability to laugh and retain a sense of life’s joy—to preserve hope even while staring in the face of hate and hypocrisy”, West explains.¹²⁰ Adapting the concept from African-American Blues Music and Russian Literature, West embraces the tragicomic over the tragic because people ‘keep keeping on’ despite stubborn circumstances, developing ways to “look catastrophe in the face, understand radical incongruity, the inability to make sense of it in any holistic, coherent, and consistent way”—and to act meaningfully nonetheless.¹²¹

120. West 2004: 16

121. Strube & West
2013: 293

“[Y]ou still find something—fragments, pieces, relics—and deploy it in an improvisational manner to keep keeping on”, West explains. The tragicomic acknowledges the feelings

of futility, failure and defeat¹²² that form part of the experience of social and political action in a fraught world. Yet, at the same time, it also finds inspiration and resources ‘among the ruins’¹²³ with which to improvise new courses of action, new possibilities and new projects to ‘keep keeping on’. It may be tragic that these projects do not ‘solve’ the world’s problems, but this cannot nullify the situated value of those spaces of hope, celebration and community they open up along the way. Indeed, a tragicomic perspective rejects the notion of any single, coherent solution *or problem*: of greater interest is how, in their everyday activities, people find, describe and share troubles—and work to make something of them.

122. Osborne 2018

123. Tsing 2015: 131

West’s tragicomic pragmatism re-reads political action in terms of situated, speculative and improvised struggles to make something good in a world of incongruent logics, values, possibilities and projects. Working on projects such as Gólya’s move in such a world might be understood better as the creation of manageable troubles, rather than the solution



124. Stengers 2010;
Puig de la
Bellacasa 2017

of all-encompassing ones. This is not a tragic downgrading of the horizon of human emancipation, though: it illustrates the importance of contingent ecologies of practice and possibility¹²⁴ for the practical work of *doing* politics—and the struggles that emerge as people and communities cultivate, shape and resist them. In contrast to those analyses that hope to piece together a better world out of coffeehouses, autonomous centres or multifarious public spaces, we have reason to dwell on the emergent logics of action and senses of possibility that arise within the situated struggle to open space for meaningful action.

125. Cf. Barnett 2020:
277-279

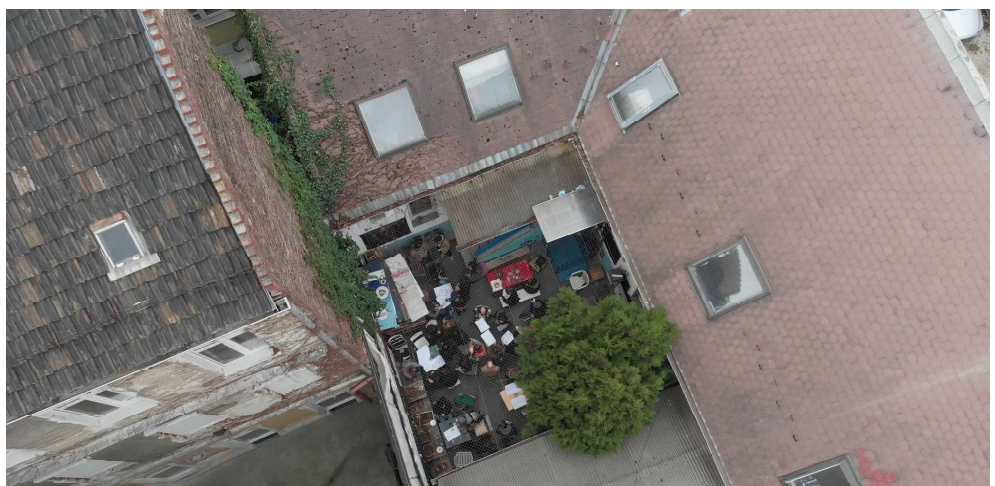
The gólyások have an expansive, critical and inspiring vision for society. Far from dismissing this ideal, I am rather arguing that we take it seriously as an animating fantázia in their struggle to work, act and build well in an uncertain, discordant, hostile world. This is not merely a matter of examining situated rationalities of ‘what is good in belief’:¹²⁵ it means giving serious attention to *the ways* groups struggle in a collective yet dissensual project, rather than stopping at the post-hoc formulation of ‘good reasons’ why it was done some particular way. For this reason, studies of political action would do well to take seriously the terms on which both requests for and offers of help are conducted, rather than the apparent lesser-or-greater consequences of that help, which can only be appraised provisionally with minimal insight into future projects and moments of inspiration.



A chattering and animated crowd fills Auróra's courtyard, an unusual event for a Tuesday afternoon. I see many familiar faces, but not just the regulars I know from hanging out in Auróra most days: I recognise Katta, who I volunteer with at another organisation, and even a few of the gólyások are there. I get the impression that although they're not all regulars of Auróra, the people in the courtyard all have some links to the space that might, in the right situation, include them among the aurórasok. Today seems to qualify as one of those situations: a documentary film-crew—and former office-tenants—of Auróra known as Zöld pók are shooting footage for the support campaign's promo video. The team have asked us to make a human chain 'around the building'; we'll be given signs to hold, each with a single word on it describing Auróra. Naómi and some of the other staff members are gathered around a table, hastily coming up with the impromptu Auróra vocabulary: underground, club, office, cute, artist—a piecemeal biography of Auróra. The line of people and words stretch to the corner of Auróra utca once we're assembled, where we're left standing about, chatting, and swapping signs when we spot a new one we like more.



The film-crew messes with a drone at the end opposite of where I'm standing with Gisela and Adél, two artists from Pneuma. They're bored, and wave dramatically at the drone as it flies over to entertain themselves. Other groups chat more calmly; some seem solemn, others smiling as they catch up with friends. The film crew bring the drone back down then



call out directions for us all to hold our signs at chest height: the drone will do a slow pan at face-level. Later we're told to look at the camera, then to act natural. Gisela and Adél get a bit impatient—we're not really sure what they're imagining for this film, just that Naómi sent out a call for help in one of the 'Auróra crew' Facebook groups, and this is what they've told us we can do to help. After several pans and fly-overs, there's an audible sigh of relief when we finally get the 'okay!'

We trail back inside while the camera team explain the next part of the shoot: they're going to shoot interviews with a number of the participants about what Auróra means to them; they'll overlay these soundbites atop the footage. They set up near the door and find their first volunteer, Mókus. "Szóval, mi az Auróra?", they ask her. Her eyebrows jump and she laughs once, looks away, looks back. "Neked mi az Auróra, *what is Auróra for you?*". This one she has an easier time answering, "Nekem az Auróra az a, az a—*for me Auróra's* the place where I can go anytime whether it's just for a szörp or to chat or, or just to stay for as long as I like".

The interviewer follows up with several quick questions looking for more details, until they come to another tough one, "and why do you think you come to Auróra specifically?". The look of surprise again, "ehh", there's a pause, "one sec, ehh, I've never felt like, like, like I come here out of obligation, so I come to Auróra because, uh, because I know that there will be the kinds of programs I like, ones that interest me, or if I just want to chat with someone about a problem that interests me". At the end of the interview, she says something the interviewer really likes: he has her repeat it again, "that's really good, just don't, just finish it off, so let's have it one more time". She

laughs, muttering, ‘just one more time’ aloud to herself, “I don’t think Auróra is just a bar where someone just goes for a beer, but rather it’s a—a kind of *eszme*, an *ideal* which we can collectively live together every evening”.



126. Auróra 2019

“We’re all set”, the interviewer wraps it up. They’ve found their story: it’s the last quote that makes it in the promo video¹²⁶ when it comes out later that month. The camera pans in slow motion over the human chain’s signs, wanders through a lively evening in the courtyard, jumps to a shot of the bartender and bar, flashes between the interviewees. The result is a montage of auróras moments and figures, a type of Auróra-as-it-ordinarily-is, which has come to be storyable in the context of the support campaign and the work to share their troubles.

The aurórasok are used to telling “Auróra’s story” by now—in social media posts, interviews with journalists, chats with ethnographers and presentations to US senators. These stories are always situated, told in context of the recent goings-on—police raids, lawsuits, protests, activist workshops—that have led to the question, “What is Auróra?” being asked in the first place. In the interview with Zöld Pók, there’s an interest in capturing someone’s “everyday Auróra”, showing how much it

means to certain kinds of work, everyday folk, the civil sector. This is because the stories told are not merely retroactive accounts of what happened, but also propositions regarding Auróra's future: they make of the present situation a project. In Mókus' interview, we see her struggle to provide a generic, all-encompassing explanation as to what Auróra is. She struggles until prompted to describe Auróra through her own relation to it, which she explains in terms of her activities there. Auróra is the place where she goes to drink szörp, to talk with like-minded people, to attend interesting events, but not *just that*. She and the interviewer work their way toward a reflection that explains why Auróra 'specifically'—why not just any other place? She links Auróra to an ideal—an *eszme*: translatable as theory, idea, proposition—but one that remains unspecified in the interview. We hear instead where to look to observe it, "lived together every evening".

Mókus adds the notion of an *eszme* to the *fantázia*, inspiration, dream and *vizió* shared by other groups and spaces, and it serves the similar function of illustrating how Auróra is 'not just a bar', but rather—recalling Janka's observation at the planning meeting weeks before—a complete social space, replete with different communities, activities, events and projects. These *fantázia* are selectively-referenced and improvised answers to questions about the value of these spaces and the activities that go on inside them, questions that presuppose that ultimately all of this activity should cohere into a social, political force of good that justifies donations, volunteering or other forms of support for their 'vision'. Because these *fantázia* are what the spaces are, in a sense, working *toward*, even detailed compositions like videos and heaps of

post-its do not suffice as ‘complete’ depictions of “what this space is”, since they too function as works-in-progress with ongoing aspirations.

127. Zerilli 2016: 228-230; referencing Grassi 1976: 8

The practices of imagining, describing and sharing these fantázia are, following Linda Zerilli’s reading of Wittgenstein, acts of persuasion that work to conjure “[a] *sensus communis*: an agreement in judgments (not in opinion but in form of life) that is creative [...] ‘the activity of *ingenium* [which] consists in catching sight of relationships, or *similtudines* among things’”¹²⁷

128. Zerilli 2016: 237

In contrast to deductive reasoning which limits itself to what is found “in the premises”, Zerilli offers the *ingenium* of persuasion as an artful invention, “the basis of persuasive reasoning whose ground is aesthetic [...] the ungrounded ground of the reasons we give”. Fantázia help “at getting the shared world in view”, by sharing different perspectives, senses of fit and logics that come to ‘agree’ within a community space as a worked on and worked for ‘form of life’¹²⁸

129. Garfinkel 2006: 81

Yet Garfinkel’s critique of pragmatist inclinations to interpret the individual as a ‘mosaic of roles’ is also salient in this context.¹²⁹ Forms of life emerge through numerous actions and interactions, and the formulations of “projects in the reflective mode of attention to life” arise amid and as part of this activity. In Garfinkel’s interpretation, “projects are organized, manifest, and made recognizable in and through situated details of practices [...] actors can only come to recognize and understand the possibilities for their own projects in and as practices unfold sequentially. The possibilities of projects are seen emerging in the looks of things”¹³⁰

130. Rawls 2006: 19

Discussion and debate over these community spaces’ fantázia negotiate what they’re in the middle of, and strive to make still-possible, better



here-and-now futures sensible. Yet as Lotti's history of pesti community spaces shows, inspiration and experiences travel between these spaces in passed-on stories and shifting crews, creating a 'society of sorts', not as a cohesion, but as an *interplay* of ideas, experiments and ongoing projects.

The situated, speculative and *joinable* proposals of a project nevertheless involve a degree of risk¹³¹ since the fantázia they contain—of a better society, of a diverse community, of a comfortable place to have a szörp—involves, “the wager, but never the promise, that a situation might become responsive to our thinking”. Their presence among calls for help, donation campaigns and efforts to stay open is significant, because it also marks the need to formulate an account that satisfies others—one that inventively persuades them to sign a petition, volunteer on a Saturday, or just end the interview so you can go back to your friends. They contribute to the creation of sensible courses and coordination of action. The risk involved is not just a matter of whether people will be persuaded, however, but

131. Savransky 2016:
online

also a matter of how the project becomes accountable to their other interests and agendas.

This tension lies at the heart of certain strident critiques of projects as a form of labour managed by large funding bodies with fundamentally different priorities to the activists, artists and community of a place like Auróra. Building on Henri Lefebvre's¹³² analysis of the project as 'parcelled' labour, Simon Bayly writes that projects operate on a "logic of future improvement, development and progress [...] through a chain of implications and associations, the concrete and limited realization of a project takes on the transformation of the whole world".¹³³ According to Bayly, "[w]orking on the project, I live and work in and for the future, not as something merely open and unspecified but literally as a projection that either will or will not turn out to be the particular version of the future to which the project has dedicated itself". Bojana Kunst¹³⁴ takes this concern further in her analysis of the Contemporary Art industry, in which socio-economic precarity leaves the work

132. Lefebvre 2002:
184

133. Bayly 2013: 164-
165

134. Kunst 2015: 158



of the artist to the mercy of wealthy institutions and patrons who “administer the contexts of the future”. In this vein, calls for projects serve as mediated ‘flows of opportunities’¹³⁵ which govern projects by defining the criteria to which they must remain accountable, extending power-relations of the present into the future.¹³⁶

135. Szreder 2015

136. Han 2017: 15

This critical response to the manipulation of projects provides useful insight into the complexities involved in formulating a *fantázia*, which creates a space of accountability to others and to certain types of futures. Yet this critique of power risks giving too much credit to the particular formulations that go into a grant-application, and thereby overlook the creative appropriation, improvised renaming and subtle glossing-over that goes into the work that follows. Rather than taking projects as probabilistic wagers on whether the future will correspond to our imaginings, it’s necessary to stay with the speculative, experimental and creative work done through projects-in-progress to make something of ‘the plurality of the present’.¹³⁷



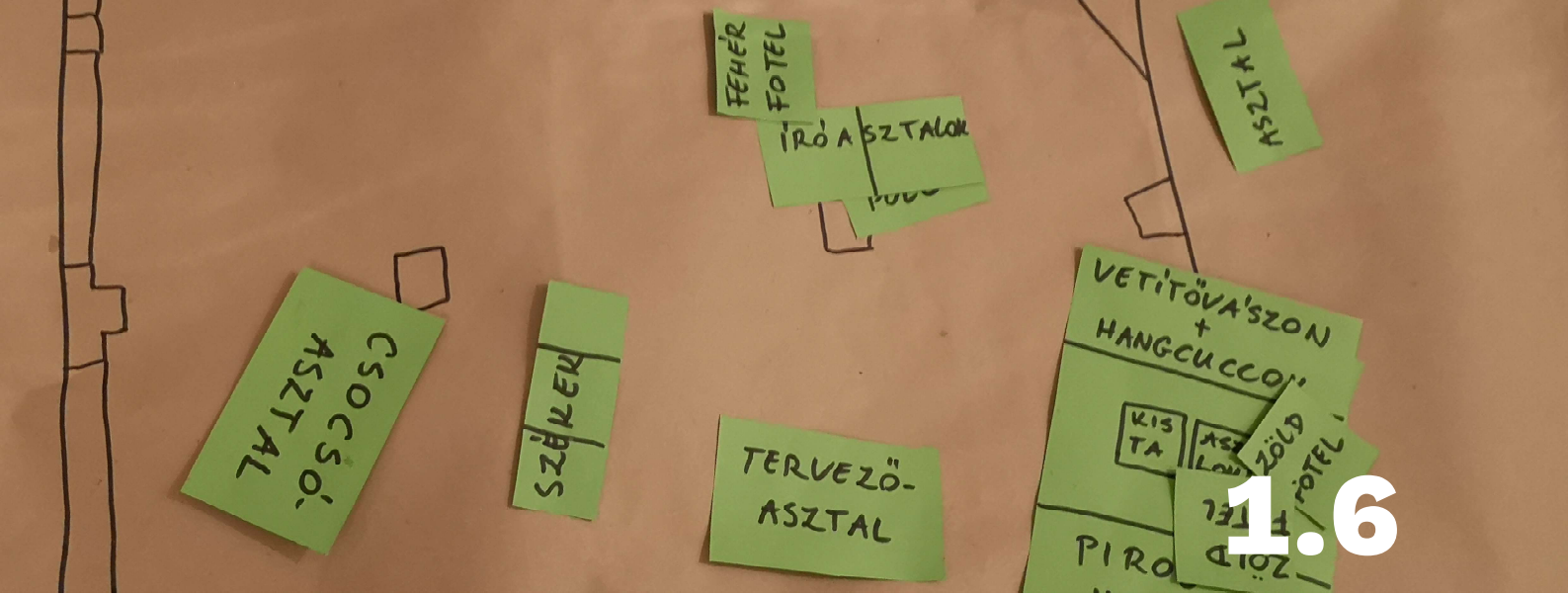
137. Savransky et al.

2017: 8

Although there are many projects that come and go, the *fantázia* that appear again and again in situations when these spaces are threatened with closure speaks to the *ongoing* sense of projects worked on in the present and mindful of the future—collectively discussed, fretted over and acted upon. Contrary to Bayly’s focus on a project’s apparently inevitable *end*, here priority goes to the numerous, situated attempts to open, keep open and re-open projects in the face of adversity and uncertainty. Despite the prevalence of discussion and story, description and claims-making, the possibility of inspiration that comes from such work is not merely discursive, but travels as well in the embodied, performative, and material work done

to make something in the present: making a video, scrubbing a floor, attending a meeting are each ways a project might be worked on and kept open. This does not mean that each of these community spaces should be reduced to a single project, but their availability as *sites for many projects* suggests an important political role—not as an engine of political change, but as sources of inspiration.





As the akció finishes, the crowd of activists filling Auróra gradually transforms into a lunch-rush. The tables fill with mugs of coffee, glasses of fröcs and laptops as friends catch up with one another and colleagues plan over lunch. I spot several of the deviszontosok gathering in the kioszk, and I head over to join their table. After years of organising, months of negotiation and weeks of scrubbing, sewing and dusting, Deviszont first opened its doors to the public a few months ago. Every Thursday evening, the deviszontosok hold an ‘open session’, but it’d be misleading to say Deviszont is only open once a week.

The organisers manage numerous side-projects for the space all week long, and there are always at least two group meetings to work out what they need to do next. Today’s meeting makes it clear there’s a lot going on: Gerle is arranging a collaboration with the Budapest Bike Maffia. Pál and Kamilla did a radio interview. Etelka reports on the finances. Kisó’s arranged for a couch to be donated from Gólya. Mandula’s working on the cover photo for the open session’s social media post. “And we still need to talk about the elvonulás”, Gerle reminds us. “A whole *day* of meetings, finally something to look forward to!”, Pál jokes.

The open sessions are the main topic of the meeting, though. Each session is organised into a broader thematic project, and the devizontosok divide the projects between them. The themes are based on the interests of the students—rock music, foreign cuisine, Manga—and their own interests—gender equality, workers’ rights, counter-culture. “You have to imagine a big arc”, Peti explained to me once during an interview, “imagine it like a process where the end will be a strong community of young people and us. And we can be a supportive group, where we can articulate what we want in life”.

Planning and hosting a *good* open session thus involves working out how to ensure that the srácok enjoy themselves, but also how they might come to value, join in and shape a particular community project envisioned by the organisers. The open sessions, Peti explained, are building blocks toward a new community. “We can put them one after the other to work toward this [...] and when we have visszajárók, students who *come back* each week, we can start planning things collectively”.

Everyone expected this to take at least a year, but a small group of srácok have already begun attending regularly in the first months, so the organisers have had to work out how to plan things collectively with them now. It’s proven a challenge so far. “Last week I wrote to Áliz to see if she’d pick some manga to share with others”, Gerle tells the rest of us. We’d learned in previous conversations that Áliz was a huge fan of all things Japanese, so the group thought that an open session about Japanese culture could be an opportunity to get her involved. “Well, I never got a reply”, Gerle continues, then laughs to herself, “when I asked her if she’d seen my message, she said yeah, but

didn't know what to say!". Some of the other srácok had been quicker to respond to messages from organisers and make suggestions, but this also raised important questions about the kind of community Deviszont would become. "There have to be limits", Kamilla stresses after Pál mentions invitations he's received from one of the srácok to hang out outside the open sessions. While the deviszontosok hoped to include the srácok in the collective planning of Deviszont, the srácok—or at least some of them—were more interested in trying to hang out. By the end of the meeting, the group agrees to plan excursions for some open sessions as a compromise—and to make clear that they'd be able to hang out *only* during the open sessions.

The open sessions serve as building blocks for the deviszontosok as they work to make Deviszont a functioning, desirable, *open* space in Kispest, but their role is also crucial to *how* the deviszontosok go about building their community with the srácok and establishing rules and boundaries for that community. Thinking in terms of open sessions is thus an important step in joining the Deviszont community; planning and attending open sessions is an essential way to shape that community. The open sessions, as 'building blocks', offer a way of working out what the space's possibilities involve even beyond its open hours.¹³⁸

The srácok, too, work out Deviszont's possibility in their own lives and the lives of the organisers by engaging with the open sessions. Miki commutes an hour into town to attend. Dáni swaps shifts at work to keep Thursdays open. And some of the srácok have been coming earlier and earlier. Just before the next open session, Gerle messages the group. "Damn! I got here early to show our space to the guys from BBF, but Leila

138. Puig de la

Bellacasa 2017: 6

walked in a minute later”. It’s common enough for one of the *deviszontosok* to head over early to tidy up, give an interview or buy groceries—to do some of the prep work needed to get the open sessions going—but *srácok* living nearby had taken notice of the open door and begun dropping in early too. This would cause problems when the organisers had specific tasks to do, like in Gerle’s case, so the *deviszontosok* were forced to adjust. The group began asking the *srácok* ahead of time if they were coming that week, and roughly when, and the weekly cooking session was shifted earlier, before the sessions’ opening circle—an opportunity to alleviate some of the stress of the many activities planned for each opening session.

Thus, the open sessions themselves were re-imagined along the way in the process of using them as community building blocks. Much as Kamilla had intimated in her interview, the *deviszontosok* had ideas of building blocks—open sessions, themed projects, co-planning—but they had to work out “how to do them” week-to-week. Tensions develop along the way, but not as a dialectic between two competing visions—*deviszontos* and *srácas*—of a ‘good’ open session. Rather, all of the individuals negotiate how *Deviszont* might *fit* in among the many other projects and interests in their lives, experimenting with its possibilities in the process. As they share the space and the ‘building block’ of the open session, they interactively shape what that session comes to mean for each other.

139. Manzini 2019: 49

140. Manzini 2019: 37

It can be useful to think about the pluralistic experience of *Deviszont*’s open sessions with Ezio Manzini’s¹³⁹ concept of *partial* projects, “which focus on various aspects, problems, and moments” that arise “along the way”, rather than building inevitably toward a pre-defined goal. Manzini¹⁴⁰ describes

projects broadly as “[any] sequence of conversations and actions on the world, the aim of which is to bring it closer to the way we would like it to be”, and he consequently interprets everyday life as a ‘mesh of projects’ shaping one another. Individual projects emerge within an environment of other ongoing, possible, and failed projects, “[and] people adapt what they find along the way, reinterpreting it, and modifying its meaning, its use, and sometimes its actual physical constitution”¹⁴¹ The result of adopting this perspective is a picture of everyday life as a process of ongoing bricolage, in which the socio-material forms, meanings and uses of things develop interactively, provisionally and on an ad hoc basis. To treat the open sessions as building blocks, in this sense, is to open them up as a resource to a plurality of projects got under way at, through and as Deviszont.

141. Manzini 2019: 49

The efforts by the deviszontosok to design open sessions that combine their interests in social issues with the cultural and artistic interests of the srácok reveal a similar logic at work in their efforts to foster a shared community in Deviszont. Tensions could emerge, however, in those situations where the srácok would interpret and use the open sessions in unexpected ways and for alternative purposes. These did not bring the open sessions to a halt, but rather pushed the deviszontosok to negotiate new ways of ‘how to do’ the open sessions.

Leila’s early arrivals, for instance, introduced practical challenges to the deviszontosok’s earlier plans for the open sessions, but they also made apparent particular ways she had come to value the open sessions within the circumstances and ‘mesh of projects’ in her own life. It’s precisely by taking alternative values such as these into account that the deviszontosok work to build their shared community with the



srácok. As illustrated by the tensions that emerged when some of the srácok wanted to hang out beyond the open sessions, however, this process does not simply entail making Deviszont what any particular person wants. Instead, these tensions become fertile grounds for articulations of what Deviszont's community is and can become. Week-by-week, new ideas and actions such as these reshape what Deviszont's 'possible' involves,¹⁴² and the work done in the deviszontosok's planning meetings to make something of these new possibilities re-makes the open sessions and just what it is they're building each week, "each another next first time".¹⁴³

142. Puig de la
Bellacasa 2017: 6

143. Garfinkel 1996:
10

Thus, it is not that the open session or other building blocks, like opening/closing circles and house rules, offer immutable foundations upon which Deviszont's shared community sits. Instead, it is the ongoing negotiation of these mutable things-in-common that gives space for their shared community—in spite, and as much so because, of the pluralism of values and possibilities brought into interaction by Deviszont's participants. Each of the deviszontosok and srácok "proceed through a series of findings", working out how Deviszont will matter to them along the way, but as Manzini¹⁴⁴ also explains, they proceed "by working to make [these findings] happen". Deviszont as a project enjoys a plurality of social lives.¹⁴⁵ Its building blocks are taken up by its participants again and again for their own uses, re-shaping the group's more-or-less formal goals along with the priorities and personal projects of others in the space.

144. Manzini 2019: 50

145. Appadurai 1986

Rather than seeing this pluralism as one particular challenge—the question of what, in the end, Deviszont's community is going to be—thinking in terms of partial projects

helps to identify a process of many emergent challenges. Members work out how to get on with others by negotiating the fit between their various projects. They use and share feelings of *and*, or *but*, or *if*¹⁴⁶ to interpret and describe these relations—feelings that come to characterise the community of Deviszont as its members ‘hang out’ *but* ‘only in open sessions’, ‘plan collectively’ *if* ‘the topic interests the srác’, *and* ‘articulate what they want in life’ *with* each other.

146. Savransky 2019;
James 1996

The members of Deviszont’s community do not have to share the same goals or aspirations to share a project. Rather than an ‘agreement in opinion’, they negotiate contingent and provisional ‘agreement[s] in activity’,¹⁴⁷ working out new forms of life for a community-to-come through ongoing, engaged, here-and-now negotiations of the values, interests and troubles introduced by its members. Building blocks like Deviszont’s open sessions offer a means to make sense of and act on “what is given together with what can be initiated”.¹⁴⁸

147. Wittgenstein
1958: §241-242

148. Barnett 2017: 54

In this way, the deviszontosok’s characterisations of their experiment in community-building *as a project* demonstrate that and how the community of Deviszont is a presently-relevant challenge—the thing they’re ‘working on’—rather than an ends-oriented task-to-be-completed. By identifying a ‘strong community’ as the end of a long arc, Peti does not and could not detail precisely everything and everyone the deviszontosok want that future community to consist of. Rather, his vision of a ‘strong community’ describes the process of sense- and judgement-making that informs their group’s decisions about what to do together here-and-now—*how* to build their place as a strong community as a situated and ongoing concern.

As the deviszontosok and srácok test out and adapt

various potential building blocks, the open sessions themselves settle into a rough, though ever-evolving routine. Each session begins with free time, allowing the srácok to arrive early or late as desired without disrupting the planned activities. Eventually one of the deviszontosok initiates an opening circle, which gathers everyone together to share how their weeks have been and to begin the day's planned activities—DIY workshops, jam sessions, presentations, debates. These are punctuated with short breaks, when the srácok can run to the store for soda or head outside to sneak a smoke. Meanwhile, the deviszontosok can talk to individual students about how they're doing in school or head outside to sneak a smoke. Things always run later than expected, but eventually the session concludes with



a closing circle—first with the srácok, then again with just the organisers once the students have all left. The pattern develops as the deviszontosok and srácok, both formally and informally, negotiate and participate in these various activities, reimagining the open sessions and Deviszont in the process—sometimes in unexpected and difficult ways.

Today's opening circle, for instance, has gone off track.

After checking in with the other organisers with quick glances, Gerle starts things off while tidying away the last of the vegetable scraps, “Na srácok, how about we do a how-are-you circle now?”. “I thought we’d already started!”, one of the srácok retorts through a mouth full of sandwich, as the others continue animatedly sharing school gossip from the past week. “Today we have another question though. Today’s theme is ‘body image’, so we’re also asking ‘how do you feel in your own skin?’”. Gerle offers to go first, and we begin around the circle so all nine of us have a turn. The opening circles are important to the Deviszontosok not just because everyone has a turn to say something, but because everyone listens to them while they do. But now Diána’s on her phone. Szilvi doesn’t sit down. Bacsó jibes Sanyi incessantly—until Botond starts telling a long story about his week. Botond always shares detailed, day-by-day accounts, but this one’s pushing 15 minutes already. Gerle and Peti exchange concerned looks, both trying unsuccessfully to guide him back to the day’s theme.

Worse though, Botond launches into an embarrassing story involving some of the other srácok. Bacsó and Sanyi are clearly agitated, and the organisers only notice the unusual tension between the friends midway through. “Let’s hear what the others have to say”, Kamilla edges in, and after a painfully drawn-out conclusion, we move on to Szilvi’s turn. The rest give brief answers, sharing updates about a job-search, a cousin’s wedding—and only at the end do we realise the ‘body image’ question has disappeared entirely. The rest of the session goes well enough, but when Peti tries to talk with Bacsó about the conflict, he gets an uncharacteristically terse reply, “I’d rather not talk about it, actually”. Other srácok fill in some of the

details later, and over the coming weeks the friends eventually reconcile—but that happens elsewhere, and the *deviszontosok* are largely left in the dark. It was a difficult event for Deviszont, since the *srácok* involved were some of the most dedicated *visszajárók*. The *deviszontosok* all agreed that this was not the strong and supportive community the group had been envisioning—it was not how they intended to build with the opening circles.

Although Deviszont’s project is to build a community, this process develops in relation to the communities and projects that its members are involved in elsewhere, and which they introduce into the space in various ways. The organisers are aware of this, and their hope is for the strong community that forms in Deviszont to positively affect its neighbouring communities. Botond’s story, however, revealed how the practices and traditions developed in Deviszont could be put to alternative purposes—such as publicly shaming a friend. Although the open sessions and opening circles continued to function as ‘building blocks’, as resources for shaping Deviszont’s community and social relationships, they are open to appropriation for other purposes and projects too.

But this example also shows that such challenges do not cause Deviszont to ‘fail’; the group’s experiment doesn’t break down. The opening circles give the *srácok* ‘a say’ in Deviszont, and they use these building blocks in their own ways, re-working Deviszont as a partial project taking shape in among others. This leads to tensions when the *srácok* introduce versions of ‘doing opening circles’ that fail to match the expectations of respectful attention that the organisers have in mind. However, the sometimes challenging contributions of the *srácok* (and

organisers and volunteers) *do* shape Deviszont’s community, reworking everyone’s senses of what its ‘possible’ might involve and provoking reflections on what to do as a result.

Such challenges develop into what the philosopher Étienne Souriau¹⁴⁹ calls ‘questioning situations’ for the members of Deviszont’s community. For Souriau, “those who think about a future world to be made to come into being”, develop sketchy understandings of the possibilities of their ‘work-to-be-made’ by responding to ever-evolving present circumstances.¹⁵⁰ In what Souriau¹⁵¹ describes as the ‘dialogue’ that develops between a work-to-be-made and those working on it, the work does not say, “Here is what I am, here is what I should be”, but rather repeatedly asks, “And what are you going to do now? With what actions are you going to promote or deteriorate me?”. Writing about Souriau’s work, Isabelle Stengers likens such a process to a ‘testing experience’ for those implicated in the work and its questions.¹⁵² However, those involved are not independent “intentional subjects, choosing how to answer”, nor “puppets of forces or structures that determine them”.¹⁵³ Instead, Stengers describes the experience of the obligation, responsibility and even ‘haunting’ of the work: each response is an entangled and situated experimentation “among others”, exploring possible changes and leading to more questions.¹⁵⁴ The open-endedness of the work-to-be-made tempts and lures those involved, who are left to come up with ways to respond over a “journey of accomplishment”.¹⁵⁵

For Stengers, this journey “is actually the exact opposite of a *project*” since its completion does not involve some “final coincidence of a plan with reality, the two finally conforming”.¹⁵⁶ Rather than enacting “pre-set intentions and projects”, the

149. Souriau 2015:

232

150. Souriau 2015:

230

151. Souriau 2015:

232

152. Stengers 2019:

3-8; Souriau

2015: 235

153. Stengers 2019: 8

154. Stengers 2019: 2

155. Souriau 2015:

231

156. Stengers &

Latour 2015:

16-17

response to the work-to-be-made's questionings "plays out along the way" as those who have come to be accountable to it test out possible ways to make something of it.¹⁵⁷

157. Stengers 2019:

8; Massey 2005

Yet, Stengers depicts projects as pre-planned and ends-oriented, missing the sketchy, ad hoc work involved in real-life projects such as Deviszont's. Although the deviszontosok are able to describe the community they're building toward, as well as building blocks like the opening and closing circles that will make it possible, unexpected challenges, opportunities and inspiration develop along the way. Botond's (mis)use of the opening circle to embarrass his friends served not as the project's failure, but rather as a questioning situation prompting reflection, discussion, adaptation and new experimentation among the deviszontosok and even some of the srákok.

Thus, Deviszont's *ongoing* community project greatly resembles Souriau's concept of the work-to-be-made: descriptions of the deviszontosok's 'final' goals, such as a supportive community between two groups of young people, are situated negotiations that work to open up possibilities for acting and building well in the present. They are not positivistic representations of the future since they cannot (and do not seek) to disclose 'every' intimate detail of this future community or the plurality of reasons, goals and projects its various participants might have for joining in.

158. Souriau 2015:

231, 238-239

As a work-to-be-made, Deviszont's community-building project establishes socially accountable, and thereby socially malleable, grounds for possibility and contexts for finding and responding to questioning situations. Indeed, if as Souriau¹⁵⁸ writes, everyone is implicated "with respect to all the incompleteness of the world [...] only partway along its course",

the concept of the work-to-be-made risks offering only an overwhelming barrage of questions with little recourse toward mustering the innovative acts and concrete proposals that make up the ‘journey of accomplishment’. Projects are practical means for understanding situations and their questions and for collectively negotiating grammars of response—sensible action in a potentially overwhelming, often tragicomic, always unfinished present. Yet they are socially contingent and *partial*, intertwining with other projects in both harmonious and dissonant ways, denying to any one work-to-be-made totalising explanatory power over a situation. They are thus contingent and provisional assemblages of meaningful action, composed artfully and sketchily from practices, accounts, events and resources in ‘a present’ undertaken by all “who endeavour to give practical responses, under many and sometimes contradictory forms, to what they have come to think of as a problem which requires both experiencing the limits that are imposed on them and experimenting with the possibility of going beyond them”¹⁵⁹

“Deviszont is a thing”, proclaims a brief introduction included at the bottom of each social media post by the group, “a community space created for young people by young people”. Week-by-week the deviszontosok work to open up their vision of a community space to others—all the while revising, adjusting and learning how to keep such a space open with the srácok who show up. Their slogan “If you need a place” anticipates the many reasons someone might drop by: to learn a hobby, to chat, to study “or simply if you need a place, ahol ellehetsz, *where you can be for a while*”. The vision of a community of young people doesn’t prescribe precisely how it will work or what they will spend their time doing, but it proclaims a commitment



159. Stengers 2019: 11; discussing Foucault 1984

to finding ways for various interests and projects to be given space together. Challenges arise as srácok, deviszontosok and volunteers alike work out how their own projects might or might not fit together in their shared space.

This was the process Kamilla described at one of our closing circles about half a year after Deviszont's first open session, when we were reflecting on our experiences so far. "What I'm proud of is how a csoport, a *group*, has transformed into a közösség, a real *community*", she beamed. The evolution of Deviszont's crew from a csoport that simply met each week to a közösség of deviszontosok, srácok and visszajárók has involved not only the development of shared practices like opening circles, but also participation in the sometimes challenging work to give space to the interests and values others bring into Deviszont's project and its community-to-be-made.





There's been a similar process on the worksite of Gólya's construction project, I realise one day during a chattering lunchbreak. The table's overflowing with volunteers and gólyások, a number of us leaning against the walls of the bázis while we eat because we've run out of seats. Karl and Csámpás are heatedly debating kifli portions for the workers while others teasingly egg them on. The group's come a long way since that first, sparsely attended volunteer meeting at the beginning of the move. There's more than five of us, first off, and we've all gotten to know some of the others while working together on the dozens of smaller projects that make up Gólya's renovation.

There's always plenty that needs done, and long-time volunteers increasingly know where they left off on their last shift, and where they'll start up next—what they can do to help Gólya today. It's not just a matter of jumping in, however: each morning when the workers arrive, we check in with the day's brigádvezető to ask or confirm what we should be working on. The gólyások in the construction working-group have even reorganised the workday to make sure this can happen without interrupting the brigádvezetők during their work: while in the early days volunteers could drop in whenever they had the

time, now we're are expected to start in the morning and to all take lunch together. Today's brigádvezető Macsuga spends lunchtime checking that everyone has a task for the afternoon: installing electricity in the hall, starting the brick walls for the pottery studio, demolition downstairs in the bar-to-be, glettelés everywhere.

Each of the brigádvezetők have their own style. Macsuga's is clattering, covered in dust, power-tool in one hand, bottle of Klub Maté in the other, maniacal laughter ricocheting through the plasterboard wall he's building. Earlier this week—between whines of his saw—he'd sent me to help a band of new volunteers with the glett. "You know how to do it, right?", he'd asked, before lopping off the end of a board, "It's pretty simple. Ritu can help if you need it". When I found the group back in the WC, Ritu had already started a brief tutorial, "so you lay the netting over the cracks, then smooth on the glett. It should look like a perfectly straight, smooth wall by the end—even though it's not!". Pointing out the glett ingredients on the floor, Ritu ended the brief training. "Help yourself!", she proclaimed and left us to scrape, smooth and chat on our own. We'd stop occasionally to compare patches, to see if they looked 'perfectly straight', and the day passed quickly enough.

There's a slight scandal that night, however, when Csámpás messages the group: she found some rubbish glett. "I'm not saying it needs to be perfect, but in some places it's worse than if there had been no plaster. Someone clearly didn't give a shit about their job!", she writes us. The next morning I sneak back to inspect the area where I'd been working—just in case!—but I don't spot any obvious problems. Over lunch, I ask Dezső about it too: I have more glett ahead of me in the

afternoon. “Oh that. It was no big deal”, he shrugs, “Csámpás says we should give volunteers more training. But the thing is, short-term volunteers don’t take this seriously. They’re just here for fun, and after a day of work and a few selfies they leave”. Glettelés is an easy job with minor consequences, he explains—it’s better than having them do the electricity!

The construction project is a different experience for the short-term volunteers, and their motives, skills and understanding of what counts as ‘good enough’ don’t necessarily match up with the others’. Csámpás, Macsuga and Dezső each have their own styles and different concerns too, but they and the rest of the gólyások use emails, meetings and passing conversations to coordinate both about what needs done and how to do a ‘good enough’ job of it. Even when they have different ideas about it, they find ways for the project to go forward without falling apart. Re-doing glett, providing ad hoc trainings and starting new email chains along the way helps to ground the gólyások’s work in a common project, but short-term volunteers frequently miss this coordination. The



evidence, according to Dezső, is in their work: messy glettelés shows him that some people have different motivations from the rest of the crew. Although volunteers may themselves have ‘good’ reasons for ‘bad’ glettelés,¹⁶⁰ these reasons can fail to be ‘good enough’ for the gólyások and their construction project when, as in this instance, they’re neither acquainted with the crew’s “prevailing rules of practice”, nor privy to the conversations and practices that adjust and re-make those written and unspoken rules day-to-day.

160. Garfinkel 1967:
186-191

The dissonance here is not merely between the volunteers’ “differential technical skills” at glettelés, but also the “differential moral value attached to the possession and exercise of [these] technical skills” within the collective project of the renovation.¹⁶¹ For the short-term volunteers, the moral obligation “to make good sense of their work circumstances”—

161. Garfinkel 1967:
194-195



*gólyások work together
to see what needs
done*

*Visiting
Students use
Selfies to see
the work site
in other
ways*

to do a good job—entails a different sense of accountability to the collective project of the gólyások, as well as limited access to the spaces in which such accountability is offered and negotiated.¹⁶² The consequence is not that there *are* troubles—a regular and mundane part of the project’s ongoing process, albeit much to Csámpás’ dismay—but rather that the work team’s troubles become misaligned. Their various partial projects—to learn new skills, to get out of the house, to help the gólyások, to take some cool photos—come to fit together poorly within the renovation. Dezső can use such other projects to account for lousy glettelés, since the volunteers ‘had their fun’, but he also makes visible tensions between expectations and moral obligations relating to the ‘bigger’ project to construct and operate a new independent community space.

162. Garfinkel 1967:

195

The lousy glett can be seen as a questioning situation,¹⁶³ one that asks the gólyások ‘what will you do with me?’. However, the variable reactions to the situation make visible a plurality of registers in which this question may be posed, and within which sensible, ‘good enough’ answers may be mustered as part of various more-or-less harmonious projects. Even Csámpás and Dezső take account of the situation in different ways—in terms of unreliable workers who need to do better, or in terms of drop-in volunteers just looking to have fun—sketching out different circumstances to respond to. Finding a questioning situation is therefore not straightforward, and some situations can require more work to describe, clarify and respond to ‘well enough’.

163. Souriau 2015

As lunch winds up, Füle reminds everyone that we’re meeting for the third eligazítás today. A few weeks prior, the brigádvezetők had decided to introduce weekly briefings,

during which they would provide updates, discuss issues, coordinate schedules, and field questions with the entire work team. Although the construction working-group and the other gólyások discuss these issues during their regular heti gyűlés as well, the eligazítások would be a space for everyone involved in the renovation to discuss the project together.

We're outside today: the smokers' pleas and the nice weather have won out. "Let's all be in the courtyard in 5 minutes", Füle announces, adding his plate to the pile of dirty dishes in the corner. Dezső and I head out with a few others who've already finished lunch. The group gradually squeezes into the small courtyard. "Ehm, so there's a bunch of questions that have come up", Füle starts things off once most of us have arrived, "which connect to everything. Ehh, so I'd like to talk about a few things from a, eh, point of departure: what I want to ask you all, why— why are we building this place?". There's an awkward pause—nervous laughs. "Macsguga?". "I don't know!", Macsguga shouts to a round of loud laughter. "That's a pretty big problem", Füle laughs and toes the ground, "well—". Macsguga repeats the question aloud to himself, "Why are we building this place?". "Let's help Macsguga", Füle looks around at the rest of us, "Why are we building this place?".

The conspicuous silence and laughter that greets Füle's question confirms this isn't a typical one for an eligazítás. Even Macsguga and the other brigádvezetők are unsure what Füle means at first. However, as Füle re-formulates the question for the entire group to 'help Macsguga', he asserts that this is a question that everyone should be able to answer. Erzsi raises her hand, "I'm building it because I'd really like to hang out here eventually". Füle nods his head, but seems dissatisfied, "but in

that case couldn't others build it?". "Then I don't know either!", Erzsí retorts.

Two more gólyások arrive late. Csámpás turns to them as they enter the courtyard, "Do either of you know why we're building this place?". "The question is", Füle adds, "why are we building this place?".

"We outgrew the old place", comes another reply. "So that Gólya can exist", another offers. "To fill a role in Budapest's subculture scene?". Some of the answers start to sound more like guesses, but the various group members add their own answers: we'll gain new practical skills, we're building a team, we're stockpiling resources for future work. Füle continues to ask for more answers, "Gabó, why are we building this place?".

"What you all said!".

Some of the group keep offering answers, while others look amused or annoyed. After a long pause, Macsuga speaks up again, "and I'd like to believe that if we build this place as a collective then maybe others might start similar initiatives".

The conversation goes on for 20 minutes, until after another pause, Füle offers his perspective, "Yeah, you've all said really, really good things... I think everyone's sensed this is a difficult task. What we're doing, it's difficult in lots of ways, the physical work, the organisational work... So it's important we understand why we're doing this at all. I'd add to what we've heard already that Gólya has a vision, that we want to live in a society based on fraternity, sustainability, and power shared between people". The group continues with mixed responses: some listening quietly, others chattering, Dezsó munching loudly on an apple. "And if we examine it, that vision in a lot of ways explains why—why we're here now, why we're doing this, what

our goal is, what will be the result and why that’s important”. There’s a pause as Füle finishes, and Macsuga shouts a light-hearted, “Aye-aye!”.

Füle doesn’t dismiss the other perspectives that were shared with his explanation, but he does offer it as, in his own sense of the project, a necessary addendum, one that formulates the renovation and Gólya in terms of a particular socio-political goal—one valued by members of its collective, and shared with wider publics in their meetings, events and other projects. In Füle’s account, the other interpretations shared by the rest of the group have a place in Gólya’s vision, but are, without that vision, insufficient. The long and at times halting conversation, along with the differing answers and displayed attitudes of the gólyások, makes it clear, however, that the answer to Füle’s question is not self-evident. The gólyások work together to develop and evaluate possible responses—offering up ideas, responding to one another, laughing, nodding, or chomping apples with audible disinterest. While the gólyások have become adept at working out what needs to be done day-to-day within their various roles in the renovation, Füle *creates* a questioning situation by pressing the group to consider what projects they’re working on by building this place.

With each formulation of their goals, the gólyások elaborate the circumstances of their project and the meaningfulness of their actions. The need to justify their course of action in the face of Füle’s question involves assigning their project “legitimate histories”,¹⁶⁴ like having ‘outgrown’ their old building and lacking the money to hire professionals, but it also involves sustained investigation of what their project’s ‘possible’ might involve. In collectively and speculatively negotiating the ‘might



164. Garfinkel 1967:

114-115



have dones’ and the ‘could bes’ of the project,¹⁶⁵ the gólyások also work out its *legitimate possible futures*—not just anything that could come about, but those hopes, dreams and visions of possibility that might convey the good sense of their work-in-progress in the absence of an outcome. These possible futures help make their actions at the renovation recognisable,¹⁶⁶ yet they do so in numerous ways. They are each crafted ways of telling how the gólyások are ‘ethopoietically’ implicated in the renovation project, how that collective project comes to matter in their lives and amid their various other projects.¹⁶⁷

165. Stengers 2018:

17

166. Rawls 2006: 7

167. Stengers 2019

168. Garfinkel 1967:
114-115

The gólyások are not responding to a straightforward query of ‘what will you do with me?’ offered by a questioning, but clearly defined situation as Souriau would cast it: they are involved in “discover[ing] the nature of the situation in which they are acting” and thereby composing the grammar of both its questions and answers.¹⁶⁸ Füle’s conclusion in particular makes it clear that the situation itself is a question, that the good sense of Gólya’s project cannot just be understood in terms of the building, its community and their concerts, workshops and protests to come. Füle’s vizió of a more equitable world asserts a meaningfulness for the gólyások’s activities by simultaneously invoking a felt sense of injustice¹⁶⁹ regarding the present state of the world. By building this place, the gólyások do not claim to solve these injustices, but the possibility that others will be able to benefit from their work or might take inspiration from it provides grounds for them to account for the meaningfulness of their project.

170. McHugh, in
Bonner 2010:
259

This formulation mobilises Gólya’s renovation project as a way to conceive the world otherwise, an interactional space in which “to ground [their] own orientation in something other than the world itself [...to] imagine something else”.¹⁷⁰ It is not that this is the ‘real’ socio-political reason behind their project—the numerous responses make clear that the renovation is *multiply* accountable. Instead, situating Gólya’s project in terms of a problematic society provides grounds for seeing work on the renovation as possibly, hopefully, *accountably* work on a better society too. Füle does not assert that the renovation project offers a solution to these social problems, but rather opens up the situated understanding of the work on their project to a broader socio-political situation by invoking Gólya’s vizió,

shaping the questions—and responses—the situation might call for.

Füle pushes for this reflective moment because ‘a bunch of questions have come up’ about the difficult task of



the renovation project. The group’s collective work to compose answers to these questions during the eligazítás produces numerous possible understandings of what it is they’re doing rather than a single, all-encompassing goal. Although they respond

to ‘questioning situations’ everyday over the course of their work, the gólyások negotiate the meanings and values of their project in different scales and contexts during the eligazítás. They open the possibility of Gólya’s vízió as a work-to-be-made here-and-now, amid and as part of a wider world of political projects and values.

Füle’s final point includes this vízió among the ecology of possibilities that might fit harmoniously together within the renovation project—and in doing so he makes the better society described by the vízió available as a practical possibility and source of inspiration to the renovation crew. This is an important—albeit uncertain—moment for those individuals who are disappointed, disheartened or demotivated,¹⁷¹ who might otherwise struggle to convince themselves that they have good reasons for doing the ‘hard work’ of Gólya’s renovation or other kinds of political projects. If the problem of the “waning powers of wilful persons against stubborn circumstances” leads to a



171. Osborne 2018;

Cvetkovich 2012

172. West 1989: 113
173. Strube & West 2013
174. Savransky 2019; Barnett 2017
175. Garfinkel 1967:
- tragic sense of political action, the provisional and situated negotiation of a collective project offers a way to move forward *together*.¹⁷² A lack of ‘meaningful change’ in society following these projects might lend the fraught political situation in Hungary—and the world—today a feeling of the tragicomic absurd,¹⁷³ but this need not lead to naïve futility or moralistic self-sacrifice. Such tragicomedy characterises the pluralistic problematic of politics,¹⁷⁴ in which questioning situations are perceived and negotiated in different registers of meaning- and value-making in action. Projects, however, serve as practical, workable tools with which to make sense of the world and one’s actions in it—to open possibilities in the present in our responses to the questions of a ‘how-to-get-there-from-here’ future as a here-and-now, always ongoing problem to work on.¹⁷⁵

MIELŐTT ELMÉSZ
ZÁRD EL A VIZET
&
SZEDD LE A LÉTRÁT
KÖSSZ



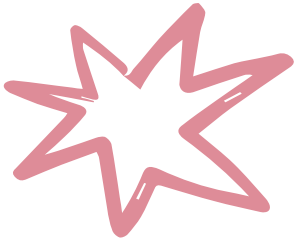
RENDSZERHIBA!

AVÁOSMNEKE

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One sign reads 'Rendszerhiba', *system error*. A problem in the system, sure, but I suppose there might be more behind it. After all, numerous people have mentioned, casually, that the Rendszerváltás, the *System Change* from Socialism to Democracy in 1989, 'didn't really happen'. It's more of a continuation, they say, then something different: it's the system that's the error.



RENDSZERHIBA! 2

(*System error*)



2.1

The crowd floods Kossuth tér. Cheering protesters stream through the rain toward the stage at the opposite end of the square. People wave Hungarian and EU flags, while others hold banners of trade unions and opposition parties up overhead. “Sza-bad or-szág, szabad egyetem!”, a group of students shouts. The chant sparks here-and-there across the crowd as others join in, until it booms louder than the shrieking whistles and noisemakers, “Sza-bad or-szág, szabad egyetem! Free country, free university!”

The students shout louder and hold up a banner emblazoned with large, hand-painted letters, ‘Students with the workers against the Slave Law!’. Throughout the crowd, cardboard signs are inked full of similar slogans and jibes against the government. ‘Why are you afraid of education?’, ‘System Error’, ‘Refugees welcome’, ‘If it turns into a soccer team, can it stay?’. A group of student-activists known as Szabad Egyetem organised today’s protest against Fidesz’s decision to force the Central European University to close its doors in Hungary. The chants and signs make it clear, however, that it’s become about much more besides: exploited workers, government-funded football stadiums, pressure on independent journalists, violence



against asylum-seekers, and Fidesz's ongoing consolidation of unilateral control over the country.

Jan, Phine and I go out to cheer the crowd on as they draw near our small encampment, while other volunteers take photos and prepare cups of tea. After today's protest, the Szabad Egyetem students will begin a week-long 'Occupy' in front of the Hungarian Parliament, including a 'Free University' of public seminars, concerts and speeches. The hope among the students is that today's protest will be the start of something: their Occupy will give space for new coalitions and collaborations to form between students, workers, civilek and their supporters. Even if the CEU is forced to close, they might find new ways to resist and find alternatives to Fidesz's plans here together.

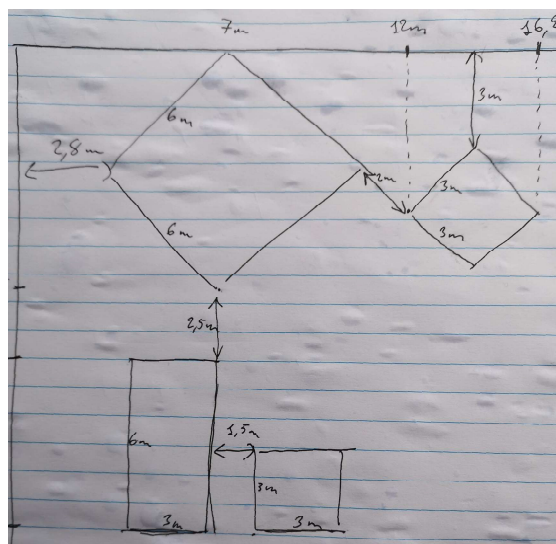
"So much for the sleeping tent", Jan notes dryly as students and supporters from the crowd deposit bags, signs, banners, snacks and even a set of bass drums in the encampment before hurrying toward the stage for the night's speeches. Jan and I arrange the stowed personal items in the former sleeping

tent—now a storage facility—then make room for the displaced chairs and space heaters in the press tent, which is rapidly filling with donated snacks, heaps of soggy cardboard placards and spray-painted fabrics. By the end, we're hanging up signs to let them dry as much as to show them off.

Phine and the rest of our team do their best to answer questions from the crowd and to direct where to put their things. “Well”, Phine laughs when Jan and I bring over more of the chairs, “at least there are people”. We've been out on Kossuth tér all day, wondering whether anyone had shown up for the demonstration and trying to work out how best to set up the encampment.

That morning, Jan had arrived with a plan. He'd visited during the week to scope the space out and he'd prepared a small diagram of the encampment. He did his best to explain

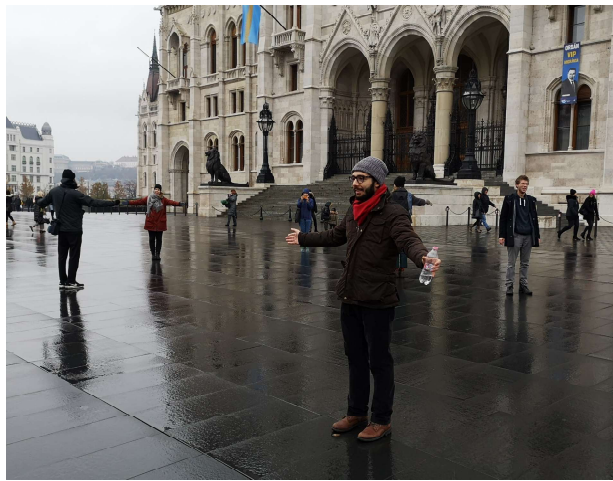
it to the rest of us as we bounced and shuffled in place to stay warm in the frosty weather. The tents still hadn't been delivered, and the folding chairs, tables, sleeping bags and other equipment the students



had gathered was stowed in nearby flats. It's early morning. The square's still empty, save for the Ceremonial Guard wheeling around the large flagpole nearby and tourists posing for photos. We do our best to imagine the coming week and to plan for any potential problems. The student group had had numerous discussions and debates over the preceding weeks about

how to organise the camp, about safety precautions, sound equipment, night shifts and communication with the police.

“But it turns out we’ll have to be in this corner”, Jan points our attention away from the diagram and toward the Parliament, “so we can reach the power sockets over there”. The group had already grudgingly come to terms with the irony of buying electricity from the government—they wouldn’t permit us to bring generators on the square—but we were only now learning where exactly we’d be tethered. “So really we need to figure



out how it would look here”, Jan says, “Maybe if we could have everyone stand at the different points, we can work out how big this really is?”. We laugh

and arrange ourselves according to Jan’s directions, miming walls and doors with outstretched arms to get a feel for the space.

The process continues as we learn what we’re working with: when the tents arrive, we spread them further apart than we’d planned to leave room for their weights. When a security guard tells us we’re blocking the route of the Ceremonial Guard, we pivot and squish the tents together. When a message arrives from another organiser about a press conference, we set up a long table where representatives will be able to take questions. The camp is a series of approximations. Jan’s diagrams, the volunteer team’s enacted mappings and the conversations and speculations from the previous weeks’ planning meetings each

serve as resources for evaluation, means for our group to decide whether our plans are good enough—for now. “Will there really be a press conference?”, I ask. Jan shrugs, “Just in case. We can always change it later”. We spend all day getting the camp ready, learning how to do ‘Occupy’¹ over and again with each new warning, piece of furniture and forecast for snow.

1. Sacks 1995

Our chats, guesswork and campsite-pantomime furnish “hands-on seeable answer[s]” to the practical problems we find ourselves “up against” while trying to create a good (enough), warm-ish, just-in-case camp for the group.² Our team’s ongoing negotiation of present and possible problems—the talk over and work around them—develops a shared sense of “just-here just-how”³ our circumstances and actions matter and, along the way, a shared grammar of how we can protest *well* here-and-now. That is, through the work of making and remaking the camp, the members of the group craft a shared style of reasoning⁴ about the possibility of political action in and as their grounded, situated concerns. The student-activists work out how to keep their camp standing, but also in so doing how to take meaningful action “as well as possible” together, from here, with what we have.⁵

2. Garfinkel 2002:
202

3. Garfinkel 2002:
202

4. Zerilli 2016: 238;
Garfinkel 2006:
182-183

5. Puig de la

Bellacasa 2017:
4-7

Although the fate of the CEU and the corruption of Fidesz politicians seem to be settled far away behind closed doors, the student group uses the camp to find space for acting on those issues here-and-now. Their political action does not issue a priori from the form of their activities as a ‘protest’ or an ‘Occupy’—and in many ways *doesn’t* resemble the extra-legal, indefinite form of other ‘Occupies’. Accounts that reify and romanticise the ‘rupture’ and ‘spectacle’ of protest or Occupation as an interruption of “the established order of

6. Dikeç 2012: 670; Fuist et al. 2018
7. Garfinkel 1967: 115
8. Hughes 2019: 2-3; Barnett 2017
9. Garfinkel 2002: 202
10. Bridge 2014: 1648; Barnett 2020: 275-276
11. Woodward et al. 2010: 273
- things”⁶ take the meaningfulness of the students’ struggle as a matter of course—or dismiss its value as other to or less than ‘the real thing’. They overlook the sporadic shuffling of tents and the other messy, ad hoc “career of actions” through which the students *struggle* to make sense of their shifting situation and the meaningfulness of their activities.⁷ To presuppose the (in)significance of the occupation is to miss out on *how* it comes to be meaningful for those involved through their ongoing and contingent accomplishment of that collective project. In effect, these stories fail to see how the tents come to be meaningful ‘emergently’ within the local and practical challenge to make a good protest—to make the camp safer, warmer, legal, welcoming, tolerant, radical, progressive within the protest’s practical accomplishment.⁸
- The students make political action through their ongoing and interactive negotiation of what resistance, opposition and well-we’ve-got-to-do-*something* will come to look like “*as their day’s work*” in and as part of the political situation they’re acting in and as.⁹ Thus, agreeing to buy electricity from the government becomes as much a constitutive part of their political action as disrupting traffic with a demonstration: both are practices through which the students negotiate, speculatively and experimentally, how to create a meaningful ‘Occupy’ by learning what the situation “does and does not yield to [their] ongoing action”¹⁰
- In working to make their encampment a space of political protest, the students create a socio-material context—expressed in tents and pallets as well as ‘bodies, doings and sayings’¹¹—through which to consider, evaluate, respond to and incite public issues. These mundane interactions express and



negotiate the political ideals, concerns and goals of the students and their encampment, much as others have observed about the ‘formally-recognised’ politics of sites like parliaments and community assemblies.¹² Thus, the ongoing changing arrangement of the camp is not trivial: it reflects the students’ situated negotiation of “what is good, and [...] *how* best to bring good, just rightful outcomes about”¹³ from their own position. They might not find a way to save the CEU, but they can work to make CEU’s-closure-despite-protests-from-its-students or CEU-students-creating-a-new-Free-University-since-the-government-destroys-theirs. The students develop *in vivo* a shared sense of political action and, hopefully, find ways to render that sense *shareable* with others beyond the group.¹⁴ Part of the way they do so is by working on their camp and finding ways to ‘do Occupy’ well.

This work continues after the crowd arrives—and well after they leave. The press conference never materialises, and in its place the snack-littered table becomes the natural gathering place for the students. Thermoses of tea and throw-blankets get passed around, while Jan and Phine work out where to stand a slumping cardboard donation box. I clamber over piles

12. See Dányi 2017 and Angouri & Mondada 2017

13. Barnett & Low 2004: 3

14. Garfinkel 2002: 202-204



of backpacks and bass drums to help people find their belongings in the supply tent. We help the rest of the group get oriented: to find a dry place for their sleeping bags, to gather all the volunteers' yellow vests. "And what

should we do with this?", Phine asks, affectionately slapping the side of a large plywood coffin: *RIP Free Education 1990-2018* reads the front in large red-and-green letters, while other slogans are scrawled on the sides: *we're not angry, just disappointed*. No one seems to know where it came from or whose it is.

"Let's put it outside", Kat suggests, "maybe it will get people's attention". I help Phine and Kat drag the coffin out of the crowded tent and into the centre of camp. "Do you have a sharpie? Anyone?", Kat asks as we go back. She digs around in her backpack, "I'm sick of being *just disappointed*". She finds a pen and goes to revise the coffin: *We're ~~not~~ angry just^{and} disappointed* it reads once she's through.

"Can two people carry it, do you think?", Kat asks, popping the cap back on the pen. We lift it. Sturdy, but not so heavy. Kat tells us about a river-boat dinner happening on the opposite side of the river tonight. Diplomats are meeting with Hungarian representatives to discuss education exchange, "and it turns

out we're not on the agenda. So maybe we should pay them a visit?". We gather a small group of volunteers and set off for the metro—the meeting's just one stop away. "They won't mind that we have a coffin?", Jan grins as we round into the station. "It's private property, we're just transporting it", Kat assures him with a wink. He laughs, "Don't mind me, just taking my coffin for a stroll!". The ticket inspectors are surprised too, but we flash our students passes and they let us by. One gives it a quick knock as we manoeuvre it onto the escalator. "Még üres? *Still empty?*", he grins.

The coffin attracts plenty of stares and even the occasional surreptitious photo as we make our way to the dinner party. We attract an accidental audience as passers-by and passengers get a 'sense of something happening'¹⁵ here on the metro—something curious, a story to tell. Some might notice the political messages, but our group, laughing and chattering as we cram into a metro car, hardly looks like a protest. Kat was right: based on the available details of our group, our relaxed behaviour, our colourfully painted and still-empty coffin, anyone can see that 'we're transporting something that belongs to us'—the fact that we're 'going to a protest' isn't particularly relevant or shared beyond our group.

The people on the metro recognise¹⁶—and, in watching, photographing and nudging their neighbours, demonstrate to one another that—our group's coffin-carrying is an unusual, yes, but also unthreatening, there-it-goes and the-things-you'll-see-on-the-metro kind of activity. Our troupe is one metro scene among many that the other passengers "get the measure of", working out "what can relevantly be said to be happening" and what implications it might have for them.¹⁷

15. Stewart 2011: 449

16. Sacks 1995 (Vol. 2): 237, 135-136

17. Mair & Sharrock

18. Sacks 1995 (Vol.
2): 245-246;
Garfinkel 2002:
182

Despite our grave luggage and its many protest slogans, our group does nothing to *make* a protest here-and-now in the metro car. If anything, by standing close together, chatting and laughing, we do our best not to get others involved—and not to get thrown off the metro. Thus, even passengers who see the political slogans, know about the CEU’s closure or otherwise recognise us as protesters see that they don’t need to be involved, that the coffin belongs to us and that, here-and-now, any political troubles do too.¹⁸ Seen abstractly, the closure of the CEU would have significant social, political and economic consequences for just about anyone on that metro, but our group’s trip through the metro doesn’t become a public issue or a political debate because—unlike at the camp—no one’s trying to share it as such: we’re ‘transporting what belongs to us’, our coffin and our conflict.

When our group reaches the boat, though, we make our protest heard: “*What do we want? Free education! When do we want it? Now!*”, we shout in unison as we hold the coffin high on display, stumbling our way over cobblestones and mooring ropes toward the queuing dinner-guests. “*What do we want? Free education!*”, we catch their attention like on the metro, but differently: some guests look away, hurry onto the boat, smile awkwardly, look askance, step around us. “*When do we want it? Before dinner!*”, some of the dinner-guests on the boat wave to us and take our picture, offering thumbs-up to show their support. A guard hurries to the door when Kat leads some of our group down the boarding ramp. We stay at the docks, chanting—louder each time the door opens for a tardy guest—until the boat casts off.

In contrast to our passing-by audience on the metro,

the dinner-guests see—in our marching, chanting and coffin-touting—a protest, and they come to see as well that and how the protest implicates them. They might recognise the shared ‘theme’ of our gatherings or simply observe our march down the boarding ramp and, in doing so, see *our* activities as an ‘organisational’ feature¹⁹ of *their* dinner—something to shut out, thumbs-up or otherwise respond to. Our techniques of protest publicly assert a shared context of action and they work to make certain concerns, objections and events from our lives relevant and talkable for the dinner guests as well.

19. Garfinkel 2002:
225-226

As far as we know, the dinner continues much as it would have without our flash-mob, although, we speculate, it did seem like they left in quite a hurry. For our group, however, the dinner-party offers a protestable moment: we’re right there, just one metro stop away, talking about the same issues—and we have this coffin after all. The possibility of protest develops emergently²⁰ from the resources, ideas and actions at hand—and our protest techniques do practical work in sharing our troubles with certain people, in certain ways. It’s not just that *our* group can recognise this as an occasion of resistance,²¹

20. Hughes 2019: 11

21. Hughes 2019



but that we develop ways to make that resistance seeable and seeably relevant to others as a practical matter: the diplomat dinner-guests, the door guard, and *not* just any passer-by on the metro. For Kat and the rest of the group, attending to the emergence of ‘meaningful’ political action does not turn on the ability to formulate exactly how their protest will come to matter.²² Rather, it builds on their skilful techniques for making the sense of their discontent shareable and seeable in certain situations—to shape a broader ‘we’ capable of recognising that resistance, protest and politics is happening as a here-and-now, what-does-this-have-to-do-with-us sort of thing.²³

22. Garfinkel & Sacks
1970: 359

23. To put a spin on
Hughes 2019: 16



This is important precisely because not everyone comes to see the students’ protest as meaningful. Throughout the week, tourists and locals, variously curious, supportive and combative, stop by the camp to ask what it is—and to offer their own evaluations about its worth or lack thereof. Pro-government bloggers make the camp out as ‘privileged students goofing around’; the state-media overlook it completely. Even some activist groups broadly aligned with the student group’s political ideals offer critiques. “What’s the point?”, activists from one

organisation ask when we invite them to present in the camp's 'Free University' seminar series. They point out that another group had organised a similar occupation on Kossuth tér a few years prior. Others query the location, "no one goes there!", while some question the form of protest, noting that other, much longer 'Occupy' movements in the city hadn't altered the government's policies. Over the course of the week, even some of the students leave the group following disagreements of opinion—over political views, personal conflicts and group decisions.

Through their differential evaluations, accounts and subsequent actions, these various individuals and communities enact "plural rationalities of action"²⁴ that give shape and reason to the week's protests—different practical understandings of the meaningfulness of the student group's political work. These develop in and as ordinary, praxiological concerns with the "actual real worldly contexts of [their] action".²⁵ Through processes of deliberation, evaluation, and accountability,²⁶ the encampment becomes recognisable as a form of 'spectacular' and 'radical' protest, but also as 'flawed', 'unoriginal' or 'nonsense'. As practical ascriptions of 'social identities',²⁷ these characterisations do not so much offer rival truth-claims about the camp as qualify and justify the activities various parties take—or don't take—in response.

To discount the messy, at times fractious interactions of the *plural* socio-logics²⁸ through which the students' encampment is evaluated would lose sight of the *work*—sometimes as subtle as moving a tent, sometimes as dramatic as confronting diplomats with a coffin—done by the students to make their occupation meaningful for themselves and, as best

24. Barnett 2017: 274

25. Jayyusi 1991: 235

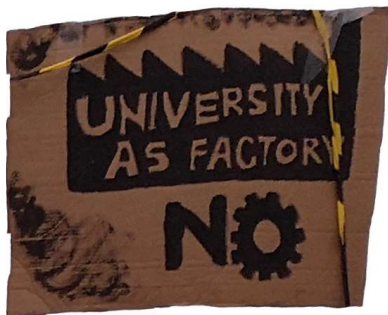
26. Barnett 2017: 9

27. McHoul 2007:

461-462

28. Jayyusi 1991: 234

they can here-and-now as they find opportunities, resources and reasons for doing do, for others. It would lose sight of the work done by the students in order to be *doing something* about the political troubles they've experienced.





“At least they’re finally *doing something*”, Remi notes wryly as our group stands around on a frosty Kossuth tér, one small crowd within the much bigger crowd filling the square. We’ve been here since the morning, shortly after I first noticed the live-stream video of a small group of protesters sitting out in front of Parliament to show support for the opposition politicians’ intervention inside.

Today the government was set to ratify the rabszolgatörvény, the *Slave Law*. Given Fidesz’s two-thirds ‘supermajority’ in the National Assembly, the law would be adopted over any objections from the opposition parties. By now, the process was a familiar one: after re-gaining their majority in 2010, Fidesz began a protracted campaign of unilateral legal revisions, re-writing the constitution, centralising government control over public institutions, public tenders and the distribution of EU funding. Opposition votes, rallies and speeches against these policies were ineffectual in slowing Fidesz down, and government influence over public funds helped ensure the opposition remained a minority. Sentiments of frustration and exasperation had become commonplace among activists and civilek: in op-eds and social-media debates, people criticised

29. See Szűcs 2018

30. See Csaky 2020

the opposition politicians for ‘not doing enough’, for ‘doing nothing’²⁹ or for lending legitimacy to Fidesz’s democratic ‘façade’.³⁰ That the opposition included far-right nationalist, centrist liberal, green and socialist parties only further eroded belief that they could collectively resist Fidesz’s agenda.



This morning, however, the opposition had tried something different. After the Chair dismissed their previous bureaucratic attempts to postpone debate over the law—by submitting over 3,000 other addenda for the day’s agenda—members of the opposition resolved to *physically* obstruct the law’s adoption. Before the day’s session convened, members from several opposition parties occupied the chamber’s ‘pulpit’, inhibiting the Chair from taking his chair and, hence, from calling a vote. As the Fidesz politicians arrived, other members of the opposition unfurled banners, showered the chamber with flyers, blew whistles and confronted their Fidesz-party colleagues.

31. Tordai 2018

Bence Tordai, spokesman for the party Párbeszéd, broadcast the events in a live-stream video³¹ on social media.

Tordai was able to use his video as a tool to narrate, influence and provoke action inside, and, eventually, outside the chamber by making those confrontations ‘live’. “Élőben vagytok”, Tordai notes to a group of his colleagues as they squeeze into the pulpit’s



entryway, “*you’re live!*”. The group chats excitedly while the Fidesz politicians enter the chamber, exchanging quips with some—“nothing to see here!”—and crowding together for a selfie. “Oh, Tordai, you’re shoving your way into the girls’ photo, what the hell”, one of them teases. “Watch what you say”, he jokingly retorts, “the viewers are listening!”

“Élőzől?”, she laughs, “*you’re live-streaming?*”

“Children might be watching this broadcast too! Élőzők!” Another colleague leans over, “Shall I share the message my children sent?”.

“What did the kids say?”, Tordai asks.

“They said that we should strike the first blow, because we’re adults and they’re children, and we can defend their future”.

“We won’t be exchanging blows with anyone, but after all they’re right, we’re the ones who have to take the first step”.

Tordai’s live-stream is not simply a recording of witnessed events: he and his colleagues use the video and its *liveness* to occasion evaluations, qualifications and instructions that shape and constitute the demonstration’s unfolding activity. By invoking the ‘live’ status of the video—through pointed camera

and pointed comment—Tordai works to reconfigure the moral order of the events in the chamber, (re)negotiating “the context in which it is engaged” and (re)appraising its “purpose and setting [...] a practico-moral context”.³² Tordai’s video-recording does not offer “a passive and mechanical reproduction of ‘what has happened’” in the chamber, but rather provides a workable resource for reorienting the meaningfulness of his colleagues’ activities as well as those of the viewers outside.³³

32. Jayyusi 1991: 251

33. Raffel 1979: 48

While waiting for a response from the Fidesz politicians to the opposition’s protest, Tordai moves around the chamber, inviting members of the opposition for opinions on the situation, and offering his own evaluations in turn. “What’s important is that our resistance is free of violence”, Tordai observes at one point, “We’re using peaceful civil disobedience, in the interest of obstructing the adoption of the Slave Law, since the debate already concluded unlawfully [...] this cannot in any way be adopted lawfully, so we will continue this violence-free act of disobedience [...] so, eh, all justice and every right is on our side. From now on I think Fidesz’s parliamentary majority will have a difficult task”. These narrations are social actions within the events themselves,³⁴ “provid[ing] important clues regarding the project in which they understand themselves to be engaged” and accounting for those activities in terms of now-possible, this-way-justifiable futures.³⁵

34. Garfinkel & Sacks
1970

35. Jones &
Raymond 2012:
122

36. Barnett 2017: 271

As a situated practice of “public reasoning”, Tordai not only creates an account of the opposition’s project, but also exhibits that particular justification to viewers—viewers who might adopt his context of meaning and grammar of a success “justly arrived at”.³⁶ Tordai’s moral claims are grounded in the ‘undemocratic process’ through which the Slave Law

has been composed and, imminently, passed, not just the objectionable content of the law itself. Rather than seeing whistle-blowing, siren-wailing, flyer-throwing, banner-furling and pulpit-occupying as a disruption of the procedural orders of a democratic institution, these activities, in this account, interrupt the Fidesz politicians' 'unlawful' course of action in a broader context: the illegitimate dismissal of 3,000 addenda in one sense, and at the same time an 'illiberal' dismantlement of Hungarian democracy.

The opposition's action is seeably 'non-violent civil disobedience' within the right context of sensibility, a particular "texture of relevances [comprising] the changing actual scenes of everyday life".³⁷ Tordai's 'live' audience provides the occasioned public he needs to formulate the day's events with a justified and justifying context. In turn, to conclude that Fidesz will henceforth have a 'hard time' is to look beyond the interruption of the norms and procedures of 'today's session'. The disruption of the assembly also disrupts its untroubled justification as a democratic operation undertaken by elected officials.

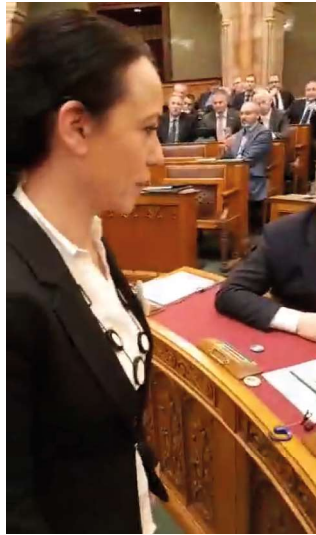
37. Garfinkel 1967:

118

Of course, the Fidesz politicians and their supporters are unlikely to be persuaded by Tordai's claims. "Let's go ask the Prime Minister what he thinks about this", Tordai's colleague Timéa Szabó suggests an hour into the occupation. They head over to confront Viktor Orbán together. "Just for the benefit of the broadcast", Tordai notes, "we'll show the Prime Minister's face up close, because it's rare to be able to see him in such a bother!".

They greet Orbán, then Szabó queries why he wants to take the Slave Law further despite widespread public disapproval.

“Naturally,” he says gesturing down toward the papers on his desk, “I’m completing my work as a representative”. “Really?



And sup- and and Mr. Prime Minister likes, that is Mr. Prime Minister supports this—”, Szabó begins, before Orbán jumps in on her pause. “—I’ll gladly give you an interview—”, he starts. Tordai quickly retorts, talking over the Prime Minister, “You’re giving an interview right this moment. I’ll note that 6,000

people are watching *live*, Mr. Orbán”.

“I’ll gladly give you an interview, but I feel that”, Orbán gestures out, then back at his papers, “just now we’re needing to make a law”. Szabó offers a quick rejoinder, “We-ell, it *is* a law we need to create, just not this kind”. Several



of the nearby Fidesz politicians join the conversation—and bring it to an end. “An interview isn’t possible at the moment”, one taunts. Tordai feigns surprise, “Not possible? This is the best forum for publicity, parliament.hu is broadcasting too!”. “That’s right”, the Fidesz politician replies, “the parliamentary session has started”. After a few more back-and-forths, Tordai and Szabó decide to return to the pulpit.

When Tordai and Szabó ask Orbán ‘what he thinks’ about the situation, they do not provoke a debate over the law’s merits. Instead, Orbán constructs an alternative moral order from which to view the opposition’s activities: they are disrupting the law-making work of parliamentary representatives. He

gestures toward the legal papers on his desk as evidence. Later he builds upon this, gesturing toward the chamber itself, appealing to the parliament’s mundane, procedural context to categorise the opposition’s actions out of place—even laughably so. While Tordai uses his ‘live’ broadcast to see their interaction as a ‘public interview’, the Fidesz politicians use this interview-request to see two-parliamentary-representatives-failing-to-fulfil-their-mandate. The normative procedure of the parliament, including its material accoutrement and referable ideals of transparency, provide at-hand resources with which to *publicly* see the opposition as confused, unprofessional or neglectful of their responsibilities.

Indeed, by ‘co-opting’ Tordai’s description of the confrontation as an interview,³⁸ the Fidesz politicians *use* that categorisation and their rivals’ act of categorisation³⁹ to trivialise and dismiss the opposition’s demonstration. In drawing a member-known, mundane moral order⁴⁰ from the socio-material landscape of the parliament, Orbán works to reappraise the meaning and consequence of the event as an unlawful disruption of the institutions of democracy. The opponents construct and enact two rival grammars of practical

38. Goodwin 2017: 6

39. Laurier 2005: 3

40. Jayyusi 1991: 235



He finds a resource for seeing the situation otherwise – and for a smile

justification through which to understand the day's events and, subsequently, to act differently—and differently sensibly—thereafter.⁴¹

41. Barnett 2014: 158;

see also Lynch &

Bogen 1996

42. Cf. Staeheli 2010:

73

43. Barnett & Bridge

2013: 1024

44. 'Liberalism'

according to

Mouffe 2007: 2

45. Cf. the 'known-

in-common'

social world of

Jayyusi 1991: 246

Here it is not that the demonstration disrupts an established 'settled order',⁴² but that 'disruption' provides a situated grammar of ordering practices, that is, the techniques of sense- and claims-making used to negotiate what it is that's been 'disrupted' in the first place. This resonates with what Barnett and Bridge⁴³ describe as the 'agonistic dynamic' of democracy involving "negotiations of competing rationalities generated by situations that demand concerted public action". The confrontation does *not* "require us to make a choice between conflicting alternatives".⁴⁴ Rather, the 'multiple rationalities' made available for understanding this action interactively constitute a shared, known-in-*conflict* social world: grammars of disagreement that append differential costs, conditions and consequences to the events underway—and with practical bearing on reasoning over what should be done next.⁴⁵ It is as though to say, yes, you're stopping the government, but you may lose your job, or yes, you're doing your job, but you may lose your government.

A short while later, when the Fidesz politicians eventually decide to call a vote on the law from outside the pulpit and with the opposition politicians' voting machines disabled, the opposition's disruption of the chamber's procedural order is offered as justification. The opposition politicians, however, take this work-around as (one more) disruption of the proper function of democratic governance. "What's happening in the chamber is shocking", one opposition politician says to Tordai, "Viktor Orbán is leading this vote in a style like Rákosi

Mátyás, like a dictator. We are going to stand up not only in this parliament, but also in the street no matter what, because in Hungary a dictatorship has definitively arrived on December 12, 2018. This is shameful, and we are going to protest against it with every means”. Other members of the opposition echo the same sentiment to Tordai, at times directly addressing the ‘live’ viewers as well, encouraging them to come protest the law in the streets.

Here again, beyond the injustice of the Slave Law itself, the opposition politicians decry the *style* of its approval. This is how the day comes to be seeable as ‘the arrival of a dictatorship’ in Hungary, rather than simply the democratic ratification of an unfavourable law. What comes across as a strong, perhaps overly dramatic description out of context, functions in context—as language-in-action⁴⁶—as a practical evaluation of the meaning, reasoning and value of possible events to come.

46. Laurier 2005

This evaluation offers a sense-making resource for members of the ‘live’ audience: the opposition’s exhortations to ‘take to the streets’ are not so much instructions to follow as publicly-displayed orientations to the possibility of taking to the streets as a now-justified, now-democratic course of action.⁴⁷ It provides resources for new forms of “co-operative” action—in and as which, different individuals use, work with and elaborate upon the actions of others—across a diffuse setting.⁴⁸ ‘Taking to the streets’ comes to be a jointly accomplished activity undertaken in response to ‘unlawful’ disruptions of Hungarian democracy. At the same time, it offers resources for other, *agonistic* co-operative activities,⁴⁹ like ‘staying at home’ or ‘taking to the streets to counter-protest’, which are themselves predicated on an understanding of this

47. See Wittgenstein
1958: §232-235

48. Goodwin 2017: 11

49. Goodwin 2017: 6

rival grammar. Here Tordai's 'live' audience comes to matter yet again in their capacity to act on, with, in and as part of the events shared through the video. Going 'live' provides grounds for situated productions of *public* moral orders—not the disruption of latent 'background' orders—and in doing so broaches new possibilities for widespread, co-operative action in a 'here-and-now' political event.

In a broader sense, we might re-consider debates over the 'status' of Hungary's government—as a 'soft' authoritarian regime or an 'illiberal' Christian democracy—and the cultivation of rival "historical memories"⁵⁰ in a similar vein: as co-operative, though not particularly cooperative, orientations and appraisals of the 'textures of relevance' of current events. 'Symbolic' debates and acts⁵¹ themselves constitute practical orientations to, claims about and reappraisals of moral orders as resources for the formulation and justification of action in the present. These claims and accounts themselves constitute social action that "extends and elaborates indefinitely the circumstances it glosses and in this way contributes to its own accountably sensible character"⁵² as a political event relevant to and by means of various other times, places, lives and communities. Conflicting beliefs, memories, endeavours and struggles are interactive resources for shaping the here-and-now meaningful geographies of political conflict rather than its automatic and inevitable cause.⁵³

The small crowd that gathered outside of parliament that morning because the opposition 'was finally doing something' continued to grow as events unfolded inside, and the evening culminated in one of Budapest's largest and most violent protests in over a decade. It is not that the opposition politicians

50. See Ágh 2016
and Toomey
2018

51. Illés et al. 2017:
120-121

52. Garfinkel & Sacks
1970: 245

53. Garfinkel & Sacks
1970: 355-356

caused the crowd to assemble or to act—after all, student groups and trade unions had been organising and protesting for weeks by this point. Nonetheless, the work done by the opposition politicians to make sense of their own actions as reasonable and consequential is important to consider because it extended the event of their protest beyond the local moral order of ‘a session of parliament’ to one with ties to past and possible future events. At the same time, it produced a situated, local negotiation of the moral order of ‘Hungarian democracy’ not predicated on institutional authority, but rather situated expressions of events *unjustly* arrived at.⁵⁴

54. Barnett 2017: 2

The opposition’s demonstration does not achieve a pre-set goal: the law is adopted despite it all. Yet, they are able to affect the course of events and the ‘style’ in which



things play out. They resist being governed “thusly, like that, by these people, at this price”⁵⁵ by *creatively* staking out alternative terms, conditions and potential courses of action. To adopt the Slave Law, Fidesz must nullify 3,000 addenda, ignore certain procedural orders, and override the opposition’s voting machines. The act of

55. Foucault 1997: 72

resistance does not stop the Slave Law’s adoption, but it does generate new resources with which to see Orbán’s ‘style like a dictator’ and thereby grounds for claims of injustice—and recourse. Rustling in my friend Remi’s back-handed compliment

that *finally* the opposition is ‘doing something’, there is a note that—in contrast to votes-against, election campaigns, and visits to Brussels—*this* can matter to us because *this* is a thing we can do something with.



A grainy microphone-amplified voice echoes down the residential streets surrounding Horvath Mihály Square, where this year’s march for the Day of Roma Pride will begin. I’ve never been there before, but the sound of the echoey microphone shows me the way to the square, where I find a small crowd gathered in front of a mobile stage. Groups of police officers stand outside around the perimeter of the park, while the ‘yellow-vest’ volunteers hired by the organisers gather in a loose, smaller circle between the police and the crowd. I pass two of the organisers handing out vests as I walk inside, and one pauses to offer me a small paper Roma flag. Both the vests and the flags offer different ways of joining the demonstration, different ways to be part of it. I thank her, and join the crowd.

People mill about the park, chatting with friends, taking photos, waving flags. A group of music students rehearses a song for the march. A journalist sets up a small camera on a tripod to live-stream the event.⁵⁶ From the stage, two MCs ply the crowd. “This here is the Day of Roma Pride!”, one says to a few scattered cheers. “Where”, he continues, “more-and-more of us are gathering together”, then turning away from his partner, he gestures out toward the back of the crowd, “Are

56. MÉRCE 2018a

you *here*? Are you *with us*?”. There’s more scattered shouting, “We’re he-e-ere!”.

“Let’s make ourselves heard, that we’re here, that we’re together on this significant day”, the first MC continues, “I’d like to put a simple question to you. I’d like a good and loud answer from the crowd”. The second MC adjusts her clipboard and holds up six fingers as her partner begins, “Who knows which annual celebration of the Day of Roma Pride this is?”. One crowd member raises her fingers to mirror the second MC, and the first MC readies the crowd for one ‘good and loud’ response—though a few voices pre-empt the shout—“One, two, Thre-ee!”.

“The sixth!”

“The sixth!”, the crowd and the second MC shout together.

The two MCs use their question to *gather* the crowd of people on the square, prompting them to confirm whether they are ‘part’ of the demonstration. The crowd members’ cheers, by way of answer, demonstrate *how* they are here, what sort of participants they are in the event. They indicate both that they have come to the square with a common project and that their manner of participation includes cheering, waving and responding to the speakers. The people filling the square are not here-with-us-merely-as-onlookers or park-goers, but rather as responsive participants willing to take up and go along with the speakers’ projects in various ways.

In this sense, the first MC’s question also orients being ‘here’ to the declared purpose of the demonstration: the cheering participants can be heard as shouting their support for Roma Pride—that they are here-with this cause. They make themselves



57. Sacks 1995

hearably ‘here together’ much as their paper flags make them seeably so. Both become techniques for ‘doing’ Roma Pride⁵⁷ thanks to the organisers’ coordination work. By formulating the crowd’s hearable ‘here-togetherness’ explicitly, the first MC shares with the crowd a grammar of participation in which cheering becomes a technique with particular applications.⁵⁸

58. Wittgenstein

1958: §520

He walks them through a short call-and-response exercise by asking which consecutive Roma Pride march it is, and—helped along by the second MC’s prompting—the crowd shouts back the answer, ‘the sixth’. The MCs give direction about *how* to be Roma-Pride-here-together—that is, by shouting, attending to the MCs, and responding to their questions—while the second MC’s visual cues help to ensure that would-be-participants in the crowd are *able* to join in. The question, the visual prompts, the paper flags ‘instruct’ members of the crowd how to be members of Roma Pride by provisioning them with resources for participation in particular ways.⁵⁹

59. Garfinkel 1967:

20

After the crowd’s response, the first MC brings his mic up and pauses, “That wasn’t so convincing”, then raising his voice more energetically, “that wasn’t so good, so I’ll wait for a *proper* response”.

“Si—”

“One, two, thre-ee!”, the first MC counts off another response, though not without a small slip-up from his partner.

“The sixth!”

“The si-ixth!”, the crowd and the second MC shout together.

“Now that’s more like it. Now that’s *more like it*. We’ve prepared for today with monologues, poems, quotes and performers for you all”, the first MC continues, “There’ll

be quite a lot of us on this day, on this holiday. For us this is a holiday, the Day of Roma Pride”.

The MCs’ call-and-response cheers provide a ‘here-together’ technique for participation in Roma Pride, but in doing so they also establish grounds for that participation’s evaluation: the MC’s expectation and knowledge of “the type of responses that would meet these expectations”.⁶⁰ As the second MC shows through his admonitions, the practice of ‘making ourselves loud’ is open to appraisal and subject to revision—especially by him. The crowd responds to his request for a second shout. In repeating the shout, the crowd members do not merely continue this method of showing ‘Roma Pride’, but assert (or indulge) the MCs’ entitlement to evaluate and direct their efforts to make themselves heard as ‘Roma-Pride-here-together’.

This instruction, much like the poems and performances to come, are equally valid techniques for MCs to take part in doing ‘Roma-Pride-here-together’. At the same time, these techniques take work and are open to appraisal and correction, as the second MC’s small slip-up shows. It is not that the MCs do whatever they please or command the crowd just however they like: they work with the crowd—and are accountable to its members—in order to find ways to make ‘Roma-Pride-here-together’ a hearable, shareable event. The crowd’s second shout, at least in terms of volume, does not seem so very different from their first response, but the MC, on-stage and with the crowd’s attention, is in the position to provide that evaluation publicly to make the crowd’s *gathering* and a building sense of ‘Roma-Pride-here-together’ detectable, accountable and ‘tell-a-story-aboutable’.⁶¹ Conversely, the crowd’s second shout

60. Bonner 2016: 204; see also Blum and McHugh 1984

61. Garfinkel 1967: 33

allows the MC to see that now *‘that’s more like it’*: the crowd and MC accomplish-and-hear the building crescendo of Roma Pride together.

In this way, the significance of the MCs’ contribution is not straightforwardly derived from their ‘official’ capacity as organisers, nor are their contributions fundamentally more significant than the crowd members’ many other ‘recognisable’ practices of Roma Pride—of laughing, of thematic t-shirts, of homemade signs. Rather, the MCs work to compose a common project and in so doing they compose the crowd, showing its members *a way* to act ‘in agreement’.⁶² The crowd becomes seeable, to its members as to passers-by, as a ‘here-together’ oriented, *concerted* gathering. In its concertment, it bears witness to a particular public experience “really happening”⁶³—it accomplishes Roma Pride as shared, shareable and, indeed, headed in a *good* direction.

However, the creation of this shared affirmative experience also establishes a degree of accountability to it, providing grounds for the practical organisation, evaluation and critique of practices in the crowd through the desire to keep Roma Pride headed in that good direction.⁶⁴ The interchange between the MCs and the crowd create a public event, experience and emotion of Roma Pride that ‘laminates’, to use Lena Jayyusi’s term,⁶⁵ normative, logical and practical concerns in an “actual real wordly context of action”. The crowd should shout for Roma Pride to be hearable, yet this does not hinge on every single member of the crowd shouting—some do not. Rather, it makes their shouting *and* not-shouting—as well as their paying-attention, merry-making, topics of conversation, vicinity to others—susceptible to evaluation by the members involved

62. Or ‘in harmony’, Wittgenstein 1958: §224-228, §240-244, §429; Bogen & Lynch 1990: 514

63. Sacks 1995 (Vol. 2): 174

64. Barnett 2014: 156

65. Jayyusi 1991: 235

in that now-shared, now-public project. Members of the crowd do various things, but this publicly shared, publicly accountable project provides a “laminated organization of action” through which those involved “construct a single action”⁶⁶ done ‘by the crowd’⁶⁷ and an attendant local moral order through which to evaluate any individual’s part in it.

66. Goodwin 2017: 14

67. Cf. Kerrison 2018: 134-13; 171 on ‘non-individual social actors’

As the opening events kick off, participants are thus able to take part in Roma Pride in different ways: the MCs lead a round of trivia, a microphone is passed around the audience to share personal experiences, the group of music students are asked to perform. Finally, one of the organisers announces the beginning of the march, then helps different groups line



up, making space for the banner-carriers, a drum-line and camera crews in the crowd as it takes to the street. Police officers and yellow-vests stay along the edges, keeping the crowd off the tram tracks, stopping traffic, directing the crowd into one lane to allow an ambulance past. Participants also organise themselves within the crowd: a couple pushes further ahead in the line to escape the music blasting over a nearby loudspeaker—and I follow their lead. A photographer asks a school group to stop so he can get a photo of their banner, and those nearby pause or step aside to make space. Chatting, singing, dancing, marching, Roma Pride fills the street.

A little ways ahead, one of the organisers steps out to film the crowd as it turns onto the Körút, but he lowers the camera and gestures to a man standing just in front of me. He's holding a sign that reads 'Roma against fascism' on the front and—he spins it around—'Fuck you, Orbán!' on the back. The organiser gestures again, waving his hand downwards, until the man realises it's directed at him—that he's being told to put it away. He spins the sign again to conceal the slur from the camera, but the organiser isn't satisfied and approaches. "Please", he implores, "don't hold it up. This isn't the spirit of the day". The man concedes, shifting the sign awkwardly under his shoulder, though afterwards he and his friends discuss the encounter at length.

When the organiser objects to the sign, he does not voice complaint with its message in isolation, but rather its implications as witnessably, reportably *part* of Roma Pride. By invoking the 'spirit of the day', he references the very sense of 'Roma-Pride-here-together' that the MCs, crowd members and other supporters had been helping to make and to make visible

all day. Seeable as part of that common project, the sign could jeopardise or unfavourably alter its status as ‘good’ or ‘headed in the right direction’. That is, Roma Pride becomes seeable as an occasion where people trade insults, speak vulgarly or attack the government, which could lead to different treatment from other people, such as members of that government.

Yet the organiser does not speculate about such consequences: instead, the ‘spirit of the day’ and the ‘like that’ of the shared event provide grounds for his querying the man’s *style* of participation, the “expressional aspects” of his behaviour⁶⁸ in relation to Roma Pride and its values and meaning. The shared moral orders of the event provide a local ‘vocabulary of style’⁶⁹ through which people’s comportment, objects and decisions can be evaluated as an expressive part of it, that is, with bearing on the activities of other crowd members and the different possibilities for what our ‘here-together’ crowd might become. In this way, seeing and referencing style is one way that people can decide what kind of ‘something’ circumstances can become, and thereafter how they ought to act to maintain, tailor or disrupt it.

By invoking a spirit of the day to ask the man to lower his sign, the organiser draws on the crowd’s seeable local moral order to assert, firstly, that his sign is an unfit way of doing Roma Pride, and secondly, how the man might change his behaviour to fit in. As a part of the publicly shared project of here-together-Roma-Pride, the sign is subject to ‘laminated’ moral and aesthetic evaluations as a “distinctive, and therefore recognizable, way in which [that] act is performed [...] or ought to be performed”.⁷⁰ The sign becomes a relevant factor in the “distributed and embodied [...] geography of cognition” through

68. Garfinkel 2006:
182-183

69. Garfinkel 2006:
182-183

70. Gombrich 1968:
129

71. Goodwin 2000:
1490

which the organiser and man *reason together* how Roma Pride should happen here-and-now, given the circumstances.⁷¹ In part, the sign gives the circumstances, and the organiser's actions do so as well: the man with the sign must decide what to do with his *objected-to-sign*. Its 'accountably sensible character' changes along the way, as different parties evaluate how Roma Pride is going and enact moral *orderings* to shape it in different

72. Garfinkel & Sacks
1970: 345

ways.⁷²

The confrontation over the sign reveals how a question like 'what should be done'—to create here-together-Roma-Pride, to promote Roma culture, to have a good demonstration— involves ongoing and situated public reasoning concerned with interactively sensed, addressed and debated relevant possibilities. Such questions are not determined once and for all, say, at the start of a march, but rather emerge as the shifting circumstances of a publicly accountable project-in-common are appraised. Thus, opprobrium and exclusion play an ongoing "constitutive role in the composition of lived reality" throughout

73. Giraud 2019: 2-4

the entire course of events.⁷³ An *objected-to-sign* is the kind of sign to hold low and out of sight: the man does not necessarily begin to disagree with his own sign, but given its objection sees reason to hold it low as requested.

74. Giraud 2019: 2-4

As Eva Giraud⁷⁴ notes about political movements more generally, even 'open' and 'pluralistic' groups rely on exclusion to "contest certain relations in order to clear space for alternatives". Exclusion is a technique of an 'everyday ethics'⁷⁵

75. Ginn 2013: 10

used by members to open up new forms of life that might otherwise be foreclosed. By making visible⁷⁶ the exclusion of the 'kind of messages' like the sign's, the organiser asserts that 'such signs' aren't absent from the protest as a matter

76. Giraud 2019:
18-19



of course, but as a concerted effort to allow a certain kind of ‘here-together-Roma-Pride’ to exist. He prompts the man to see how he is making Roma Pride differently:⁷⁷ it is to say what you do is seeable as part of this, and what this is depends in part on what you do.

The organiser’s objection makes the man *aware* of the situation and his sign in a different way, as consequentially different sorts of things meriting different grammars of judgement. It offers rules of Roma Pride, “rules as assumptions that actors make [...] that an actor will *use* [...] *during* an interaction”.⁷⁸ Yet, importantly, the injunction to ‘not hold up’ the sign is not grounded in the organiser’s authority, but rather in the shared valuing of a shared ‘here-together-Roma-Pride’. The ‘spirit of the day’ provides grounds for “spirited assent”, for the man to see a mutual grammar in which ‘lowering the sign’ is the principled action “that *must* be done”.⁷⁹ Sign-making, sign-holding, chanting, flag-waving and marching along bring the crowd’s participants together in a local order that makes the ‘spirit’ of the day seeable, storyable and *usable*, but the ‘spirit’ itself is unsettled—it is (inter)actively sensed, shaped and shared throughout the march. Both ‘making a sign’ and ‘lowering a sign’ can be principled ways to take up and be part

77. A shared, if not ‘professional’ register of scrutiny, see Goodwin 1994

78. Contesting, as McHugh 2019: 46-48 writes

79. Blum & McHugh 1984: 124

80. Blum & McHugh
1984: 135

81. Rawls 2006: x-xi

82. Stewart 2015: 21

83. Goodwin

2000; see also

Stengers 2018:

412

84. Stewart 2011: 449

of Roma Pride, but their moral sense develops *en medias res*,⁸⁰ in lively constellations of signs, slogans, objections, crowds, organiser vests, laughter ‘and so on’.⁸¹

The organisers and participants of Roma Pride see the ‘spirit of the day’ as a practical and moral concern from—and indeed, in a Deleuzian register, *via*—the middle of things. Their practices of noticing, evaluating and reporting ‘attune’ to the spirit of the day through what Kathleen Stewart calls an ‘associational logic’:⁸² they make sense of what’s happening, what they’re a part of, and what they should do publicly, distributedly and interactively with the people, practices and things around them.⁸³ The two men—and sign, and crowd—develop a “sentience of [the] situation” that allows them to affect and be affected in different ways.⁸⁴



85. Engelmann &
McCormack
2018: 187

However, their interaction offers an important contrast to presently dominant accounts of ‘spirits’, ‘moods’ and other ‘atmospheric’ phenomena as ‘immersive spacetimes’ which, ostensibly, are “somehow directly and immediately sensed in and for human bodies”⁸⁵ while at the same time require the development of “new methods for sensing atmospheres”.⁸⁶ These accounts routinely project atmospheres as always-already

affective, yet vague and latent forces in the world to which sufficiently 'attuned' researchers obtain privileged-if-tentative access.⁸⁷ Here, Roma Pride "feels like something"⁸⁸ through mundane, interactively-accomplished practices of shouting in concert, waving flags, marching together, making signs and even lowering them, namely, practices that enact, maintain and negotiate the spirit of the day, the spirit of the crowd's being there *together*. This is not a mysterious force enveloping the crowd, but rather a shared and shareable grammar of public accountability evoked here-and-there, ongoingly negotiated in situ, and experienced in numerous ways. Participants in that grammar *attune* one another to the things going on and the things they mean, although this does not mean that they always agree: I spot the sign up once again held high in the centre of the crowd at the demonstration's final stop, a sign the man and his friends came up with their own attunements to Roma Pride, what it could mean, and how it could go well.

86. Engelmann & McCormack 2018: 187, 191

87. See Thrift 2009a: 123, McCormack 2015: 97, Adey 2015: 59

88. Stewart 2007: 2



“The problem is everyone wants a turn”, Lincoln rolls his eyes, “every organisation wants their representatives and flags on the stage”. Given the growing coalition of unions, opposition parties, students, activist groups and other supporters that had joined the protests against the Slave Law, this involved quite a few people. Lincoln, Mirko and I shift our Szabad Egyetem banner impatiently as the protest organiser announces the 6th speaker—this one a video-recording, “they’re not even here?”. We’ve been listening to speeches in front of Kossuth tér for almost an hour, and we know there’s at least a few more speeches left, including one from a representative of the student group. At least there’s one we’re excited about. It’s great to see so many organisations speaking out in solidarity on the same issue, but it’s also very cold. “They do the same thing every time”, Lincoln gripes, “a march, speeches, maybe shout a bit in front of Parliament, then everyone goes home”.

In the lead up to the protest, there was a sense that today could be something different. “Workers-rights representatives and organisations demonstrating solidarity with the workers are preparing for the final (?) large, but beyond doubt one of the most significant protests of 2018”, one news site had

declared that morning.⁸⁹ Student groups had been similarly optimistic, brainstorming ideas about how to make this protest better than the ‘standard formula’ Lincoln was describing. The Hallgatói Szakszervezet and Szabad Egyetem decided to host a community forum during the downtime at the start of the protest, when the crowd would be standing around and waiting for something to happen.

After carving out space with chairs and a semi-circle of banners, Lana invited nearby members of the crowd to come share their reasons for protesting the Slave Law. Gradually Lana and the other students were able to attract a sizable audience within the crowd, and several people volunteered to speak. Nurses, teachers, union reps, students and retirees take the microphone, sharing stories about unpaid overtime, joy at the large and diverse crowd, and hopes that there might be a change of government sooner rather than later.

The comments are halting and meandering at times, and they don’t really respond to one another, but the students nonetheless manage to open their forum for other members of the crowd to join. Lana’s friendly invitations—helped along by the circle of chairs and banners, the sound-equipment and her fellow students—make ‘something happen’ by making the student group’s shared project shareable for other members of the crowd. They make ‘something happen’ in such a way that other members of the audience can join in and co-operatively use the space “to do the things they want”.⁹⁰ The forum allows them to build their different messages, experiences and actions “in concert with others”,⁹¹ as an observable public accomplishment of a common activity and their part in it.

90. Goodwin & Bjørndahl 2018: online

91. Goodwin & Bjørndahl 2018

The forum provides a space and a grammar through which



A microphone, but also chairs, banners, and even gestures are ways of working together to make 'something happen'

92. Savransky 2019: 11 participants cultivate an experience of collective action and collective concern, what William James describes as a ‘feeling of *and*’.⁹² James, however, treats such feelings as ‘inward colourings’ of an individual’s experience of the relation between things and ideas in the world: these interior, psychological experiences, he argues, are outwardly expressed in each “conjunction or a preposition [...] adverbial phrase, syntactic form, or inflection of voice, in human speech”.⁹³ At the student’s forum, in contrast, the participants *publicly* accomplish a ‘feeling of *and*’ within and as an interactively accomplished, accountably shared event by forming an audience, volunteering, sharing personal stories, making arguments, orienting their accounts to common issues, applauding and so on. “*In these ways* they have come together”,⁹⁴ and *in these ways* they “create an arena for sharing and calibrating experience”.⁹⁵ The participants develop an ‘organizational’⁹⁶ grammar through their activities in and as the forum allowing them to develop ‘congruent’ experiences⁹⁷ and, in doing so, *tune* one another to a shareably significant event of which they’re a part.⁹⁸
93. James 1890: 537–538
94. Garfinkel 2002: 226
95. Goodwin 2017: 147
96. Garfinkel 2002: 233
97. Goodwin 2017: 147
98. Attuning an ‘agreement in judgements’, following Wittgenstein 1958: §241–242
99. Goodwin 2017: When it’s finally time to begin the march, Lana hands the microphone over to the protest organiser with a few concluding words, “I hope we’ll meet again, and that our shared, collective march will be full of joy!”. The common activity of the forum is directed into a shared and collective march. The students use their forum as a technique to publicly re-shape the ‘communicative intention’ of the march, to allow members of the crowd to see and to shape what their collective action is—to publicly orchestrate ‘what-we-are-doing-together’ as a member-relevant topic and concern, to work out how to “inhabit each other’s actions”⁹⁹. The forum is only one means by which

this sense of concerted action is worked on and referenced— simply gathering at a pre-defined time and place can make a cohort with common concerns seeable¹⁰⁰.

147

100. Garfinkel 2002:

224

The forum can thus be seen as one of many occasions in which participants attune to a sense of significance about the march, “to possibilities opening up”¹⁰¹ in its wake. The practical work done by the students and volunteers at and as the forum displays, however, *that and how*¹⁰² attunements to this crowd—as an impassioned, justice-seeking, down-to-earth, momentous, speaking-for-the-worker kind of thing—are practically, interactively and contingently accomplished through ongoing occasions of appraisal, claims-making and negotiation with others over their collective action’s meaningfulness. They tune one another to new possibilities.¹⁰³ The students’ forum does practical work to make the crowd understandable in new ways, to make the protest seeable as something more than the ‘standard formula’—as an occasion when consequential political action is possible.

101. Stewart 2011:

449

102. Garfinkel 1967:

180

103. Attunement

by mundane

method,

not esoteric

elemental

sensitivity, cf.

Engelmann &

McCormack

2018: 188

104. Garfinkel 1967:

97

Now though, shuffling about in the cold while the speeches drone on, it feels—at least for Lincoln and Mirko—like nothing’s happening, that there’s nothing for the crowd to do. We may listen and occasionally cheer, but there’s nothing for us to do with them here-and-now, going forward.¹⁰⁴ From the perspectives of Lincoln, Miro and other exhausted protesters, the sense that ‘nothing is happening’ reflects a member’s concern with the laminated practical, moral and political meaning and meaningfulness of surrounding activity—and their part in it.¹⁰⁵ The many practices of waiting, chatting, watching, applauding, whistling and speech-giving are seeable as ‘nothing happening’ if they merely serve to accomplish the ‘standard’ protest event

105. Jayyusi 1991: 242

and have no bearing on members' here-and-now sense of what should be done next to pursue the kinds of political action and change they sensed together, for instance, at the students' forum. To dismiss these practices as 'nothing' is not to overlook the things 'really' happening there, but to reflexively call their good-sense and meaning into question, to take 'accomplishing this protest as an official event' as an inadequate sense of the crowd's concerted action if, as many members shared earlier in the day, they're also-and-rather about 'demanding legal and political change'. As "reflexive feature[s]" of the protest, devaluations and frustrations such as Lincoln and Mirko's are situated resources which members can use "to assess and demonstrate the rational adequacy"—or *inadequacy*—"for all practical purposes of the indexical question and its indexical answer".¹⁰⁶ They create space to suggest alternative courses of action—dismissing, modifying, supplanting or demanding account of given suggestions of what should be done, such as listening to one more speech.

106. Garfinkel 1967:
180; Garfinkel &
Sacks 1970: 344

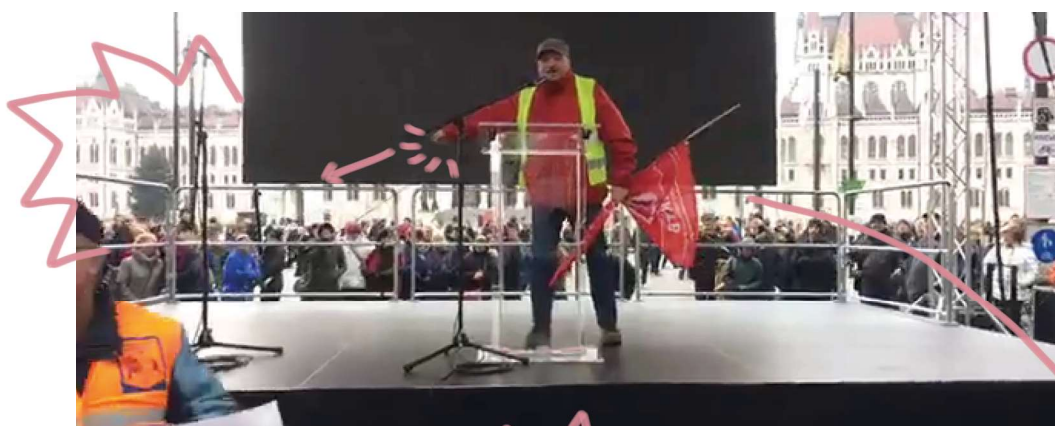
With varying degrees of attention and enthusiasm, the members of the crowd applaud each speech and wait as they usher the protest toward its 'standard' and legally mandated end. "Just one thing remains", the protest organiser reports, consulting her clipboard after the final speech, "to thank you for your participation today. I hereby declare that the Hungarian Trade Union Alliance's event has reached its end. We ask everyone to peacefully leave the area of the event. Safe travels, and look out for our future actions".

"[It was] the classical end of a protest, there were speeches, there was a bit of clapping and whistling", one reporter summarises the day's events, "then yeah what happened was

that the protest concluded, everyone was sent home, *but*!¹⁰⁷ A union rep, one who had spoken at the students' forum earlier, briskly walks onto the stage and over to the second microphone. "Don't go home!", he shouts into the mic, "don't go home, that square is ours!". He points behind him at Kossuth tér, closed to the protest by police on account of a visiting dignitary from Poland. "They cannot close it down. Come everyone behind me if you're brave!", he urges to the crowd of onlookers and cameras.¹⁰⁸

107. Diószegi-Horvath et al. 2019

108. MÉRCE 2018c



Showing the crowd how to see (and join) what's happening

Movement is slow in the crowded street, but crowd members near the stage start filing toward the square. Photographers scramble to gather their equipment and position themselves closer. “They cannot close it down, that square is ours, Hungarian people’s! Let’s show them that we’re brave, come on, after me!”, the union rep shouts before dashing off stage and into the crowd. Most of the crowd presses forward slowly, but a few individuals, the union rep included, dash ahead toward the square. Police rush over to stop them, tackling one man to the ground.

“Now, now, now, now, c’mon, c’mon, c’mon!”, one reporter shouts to his crew as they rush toward the tussle, “As you can see right now, the crowd did not want the event to end”. More police and protesters arrive and they draw up in opposing lines. “The System Change is starting now!”, one protester shouts into the camera as he passes by.

By urging the crowd to take to the square, the union rep projects a new possibility for their here-and-now shareable event, something that members of the crowd can respond to, co-opt and make happen in various ways. Pointing at the square and appealing to the crowd to follow, he gives *inspiration*¹⁰⁹ toward the sorts of things they might do here-and-now, seeably together. Protesters, journalists, police, brave people, Hungarians act on the union rep’s appeal—but also the movements, gestures and shouts of others around them—at different speeds and with different projected objectives. They compose a ‘charge’ as a collectively relevant, seeably shared event through the many ‘local careers’¹¹⁰ of their situated embodied reactions and verbal appraisals. In so doing, they project a sense that now—indeed, now, now, now—*something* is happening and *something* should

109. Wittgenstein

1958: §232

110. Garfinkel 2002:

225

be done, that something is at stake in the crowd members' actions as a 'laminated' matter of practical and moral concern.¹¹¹ Their activities produce "many partial stories that run parallel to one another, beginning and ending at odd times [...] mutually interfere[ing] at points" throughout the crowd, as the charge but *also* as numerous situated negotiations of what to do with(in) local circumstances.¹¹²

These interferences, convergences and con-fusions¹¹³ create observable scenes of ordering-practices that furnish the 'charge' its own organisation as a recognisably accomplished event.¹¹⁴ At one point, protesters at the front of the line turn their backs against the police, relying on the pushing of those further back in the crowd to edge them forward, while at the same time obstructing efforts from the police officers to ascribe individual blame for that pushing. A conventional individuated understanding of agency struggles to cope with the type of co-operative action, the *interactive* agency displayed here. This obstructs altercations between individual police and protesters, but also inhibits interpretations of the event in terms of any one interaction or intention. Participation in the charge may be one 'matter of concern' and 'practical accomplishment' of a crowd member, but so too is keeping one's footing, mitigating violence, confronting the police, escaping the police, or taking a video.

Participants in the crowd find resources for their own "relevant next action" within the environment of surrounding activity, which itself is occupied with variously similar and divergent interests.¹¹⁵ The crowd members are involved in 'seeing sociologically' to determine what's going on around them, how it might be meaningful, what needs to happen and

111. Jayyusi 1991: 242

112. Savransky 2019:

14, quoting

William James

113. Serres 2016: 161-

162

114. Smith et al. 2021:

3; Sacks 1995

(Vol. 2): 240



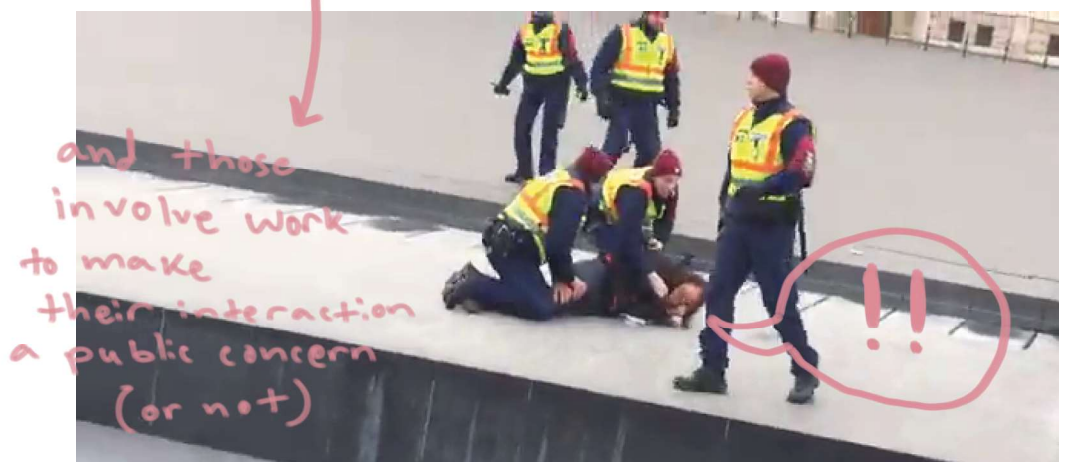
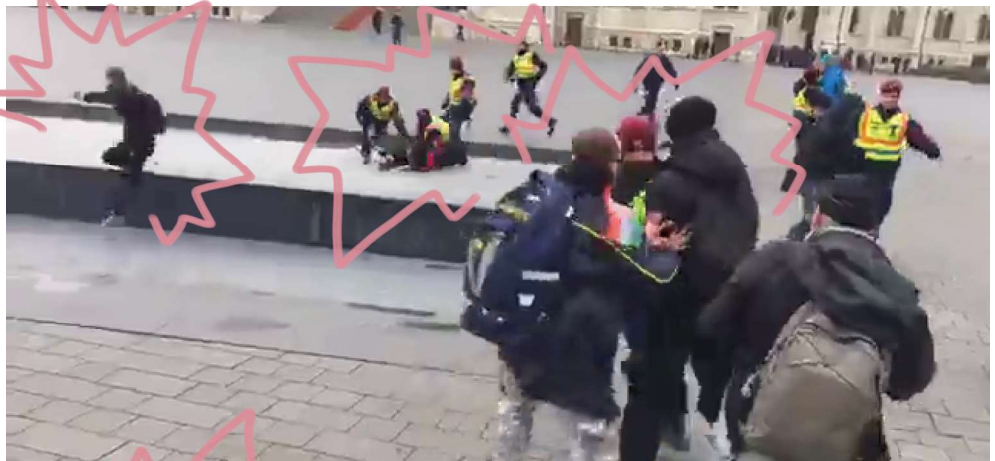
115. Goodwin 2017:

38-39; Bridge

2020a: 351



as the charge
begins, those
in the area
negotiate a
landscape of
scattered
interactions



and those
involve work
to make
their interaction
a public concern
(or not)

how to make it happen.¹¹⁶ Yet, they do so within a multiply-ordered, ‘con-fused’ scenario rather than a uniformly ordered ‘charge’ or a fundamentally disordered ‘mob’. Whilst one group might push forward, another can form a circle to make space to lift someone to their feet: these projects affect one another and how they are accomplished. Their con-fusions shape how and take shape as crowd members work out their own place in the crowd.

The ‘charge’ that develops is a common concern, but one negotiated, appraised and acted on in local interactions, through situated ordering and sense-making practices. This observation is important because it offers another way to see the charge than that of the apparently disorderly behaviour of a ‘madding crowd’. A crowd is not ‘irrational’ due to rash members ‘blinded by emotion’, but rather by consequence of the crowded plurality of rationale put to work by its *competent* members. The ‘charge’ is *multiply*-organised as its participants work out what to do in and as part of that shared event.

Understanding this pluralistic, potentially problematic orderliness¹¹⁷ requires a pivot away from the “pervasive preference for agreement” characteristic of much study of social interaction.¹¹⁸ It merits greater attention to other forms of observable-reportable social action beyond mere ‘interaction’ such as ‘association’¹¹⁹ that arise in diffuse contexts subject to diverse “plural rationalities”.¹²⁰ For the watching reporter, for instance, the ‘charge’ develops as an ‘observable-reportable’ action done by the crowd—even as an expression of the crowd’s desire—and this reportable phenomenon is a reflexive feature in how he decides where to go, what to record, and how to narrate the day’s events to audiences at home. The

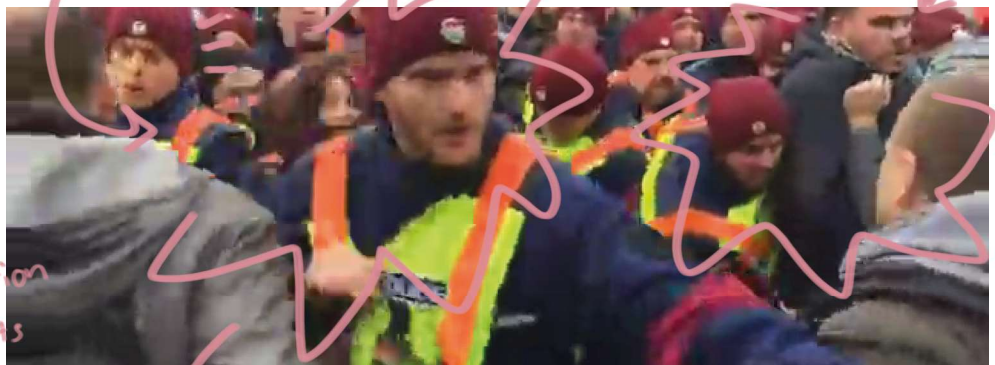
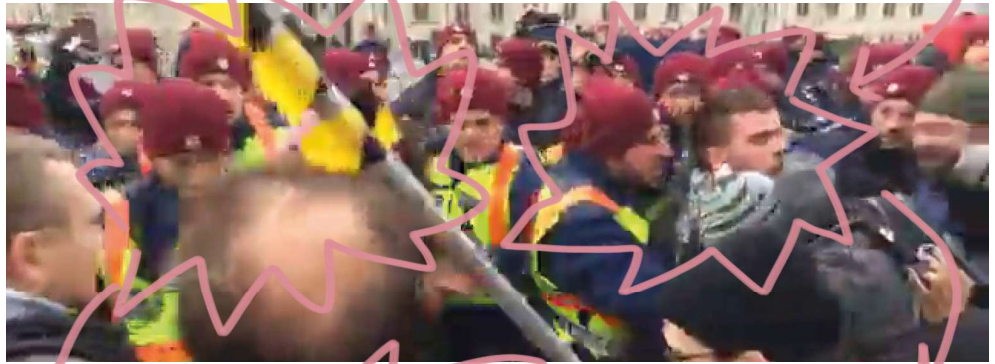
116. Garfinkel 2006:

117. Savransky 2019

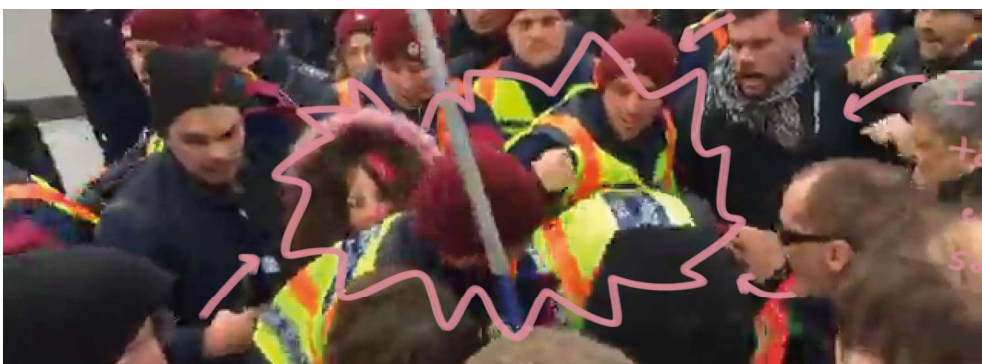
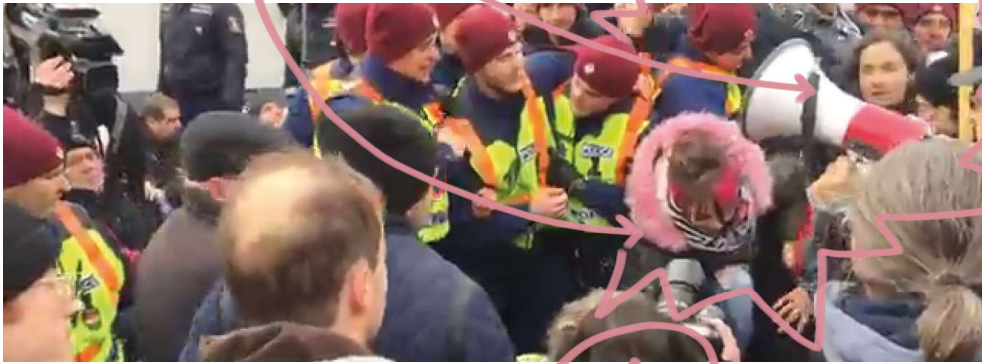
118. Goodwin 2017: 6;
Barnett & Bridge
2013: 1028

119. Anderson &
Sharrock 2017: 15

120. Barnett & Bridge
2013: 1028



Although interaction
in the crowd gets
confused, discernable
scenes emerge —
and crowd-members
actively attend to
these scenes as they
decide what to do.



For police, protesters, and even photographers, such scenes are useful resources for seeing what a 'crowd' is doing — and their own place in it.

It can become hard to see what's happening even when it's clear something is.



‘crowd’ itself develops as a “visibly-rational-and-reportable-for-all-practical-purposes” resource for glossing this plurality of practices as a single event and interpreting its relevance to others outside the tumult.¹²¹

121. Garfinkel 1967: vii

This conceptualisation of the crowd’s action also gives reason to resist seeing it as a ‘rupture’ in a background order¹²² of, for example, Hungarian law. Instead, Hungarian protest law becomes relevant as *part* of the crowd’s plural local organisation as police deliver warnings and orders to disperse, as student protesters encourage their international counterparts to shelter at the back of the crowd, as a protest organiser declares the legally-accountable event over—then steps aside for someone else to take the mic. This is not to discount the *sense* of rupture that the charge elicited, but rather to treat it as a practically accomplished, publicly accountable ‘feeling of *but*’.¹²³ Experiences of tear-gas and large crowds from the night before, discussions in the media, experiments by student protesters worked to create a sense that this could be more

122. Cf. Dikeç & Swyngedouw 2017: 14

123. James 1890: 538

than a 'standard' protest. The protest's apparent 'standard' end provided occasion for a union rep to suggest that *now* something else should be done. The charge did not 'rupture' the well-ordered 'standard' protest: rather, a sense of *but*, a sense of *now, now, now* could be invoked and conveyed by building on and from the protest and the particular 'standard' ways it happened. 'Don't go home!' co-opts the suggestion to go home, that is, it elaborates a 'reportable' alternative *from* it.¹²⁴

124. Sacks 1995 (Vol. 2): 171

A sense of the ruptural, then, may be seen as a form of passionate expression and claims-making about a present situation and what can or should be done with it.¹²⁵ It is referenced and invoked as a technique to show alternative courses of action and to lay grounds for seeing them as reasonable, convincingly worthwhile considerations: the referable sense that this event can accomplish more than a 'standard' protest lends reasons for action such as 'the square is ours' their persuasive "reasonableness" in situ.¹²⁶ In effect, it makes 'demanding political change' a here-and-now accessible, actionable, shareable project. Yet, such evaluations are situated and contingent reflections, and the meaningfulness of actions like the crowd's 'charge' is subject to ongoing revision and contestation as participants, opponents and members of the public at large work out what can or should be made from those events thereafter. Conversely, the 'ruptural moment' might end if there are no more suggestions as to what might be made from it.

125. Barnett 2017: 245-247

126. Zerilli 2016: 227

After the crowd breaks through the improvised police cordon, they surge onto the square and gather at the foot of the Parliament building in front of a much larger line of police officers. The crowd heckles the police and pushes against

them, but there is no great effort to get past. The gate that had been open for the visiting dignitary itself has been closed.

“This always happens”, Csabi says as a group of students gather around the nearby flagpole, “so we shout at parliament a while, then we get tired and go home”. Someone suggests holding another forum to help keep people on the square, but only a few passers-by join the circle of students this time. “People are *tired*”, Mirko observes, “let’s get lunch”. The rest of the group agrees, and we gather our things.

“You’re Szabad Egyetem?”, one man stops to ask as he leaves the crowd, “But that’s it? What did this accomplish?”. There’s not much response. Mirko shrugs, “it’s lunchtime”.

The charge itself becomes ‘what always happens’, questionable and lacking *accomplishment* when those involved see nothing to be done with it. These queries express a member’s situated concern with the practical bearing of the charge and the day’s events on here-and-now questions of what should be done.¹²⁷ Although the participants can make something of it as an eventful, storyable occasion, their query suggests a degree of estrangement from the logic of those events and the ‘good-sense’ and reasonableness of their participation in them. It is not the absence or confusion of collective and co-operative ordering practices that creates such “dispirited” feelings of estrangement: rather, these activities come to be “present in the absence of principle”.¹²⁸ For this crowd member, there is nothing to be done *hence*, that is, following from this event. The situation is what Harvey Sacks characterises as ‘absurd’, “where events occur that have nothing to do with anything except that they occur, and you can’t, then, latch onto anything to know if you take good account of this”.¹²⁹ Rather than

127. Garfinkel 1967:
97 on the
‘operational
future’

128. Blum & McHugh
1984: 138

129. Sacks 1995 (Vol.

dismissing the good-sense activities of the protest outright, such a query *extends their circumstances*¹³⁰ and seeks their here-and-now sense as meaningful actions, that is, in terms of their own contexted meaning-making practices,¹³¹ with bearing on a member's how-and-what-now concerns with what to do.

2): 238-239

130. Garfinkel &

Sacks 1970: 345

131. Sacks 1995 (Vol.

1): 516-517; Lynch

2019: 194

The query does not mark a shift from one distinct 'frame' of understanding to another understanding of the 'same event',¹³² but rather constitutes an ongoing, situated negotiation of the event's implications for that particular actor. The politicians, students, teachers, parents, volunteers, agitators, camera teams, the *and-so-on* participants of the protest did not need to understand the event in the same way, but rather established here-and-there concerted activities that brought off a recognisably public situation. Likewise, this situation's ongoing relevance, value and *meaning* is not resolved the same way by all those involved. For one participant, it fizzles out as the crowd goes home. For a group of students, it tests new protest techniques and generates promotional material. For one union member, it marks *something different*, an event to

132. Cf. Goffman

1981: 68



be referenced, storied and learned from as he takes political action in the future. There is a dissensual plurality of practical and moral concerns among the many members of the crowd. The protest should not be reduced to a single ‘confrontation’ between police and crowd: it consists of numerous co-operative confrontations in which participants negotiate their place here-and-there. They “*make* a setting out of [that] course of activities”¹³³ and differently extend it each into their ongoing, future-facing lives.

133. Sacks 1995 (Vol. 1): 521

Rather than romanticising or essentialising the *rupture* associated with protest, treating this sense of events and their meaning praxiologically, as participants do, requires an examination of the possibilities and good-sense subsequent actions that diverse participants *build* from them along with the mundane orders they, albeit often fleetingly, produce. A crowd is not irrational or mad, but multiple and ongoing. Likewise, the radical politics of protest is not a *rupture* of order or reason, but rather a situated and interactive occasion for members to make alternatives together. The value of such techniques for political action is found by participants, in grounded aspirations to build here-and-now possible, *worthwhile* futures ‘worth living’¹³⁴

134. Stengers & Latour 2015: 37; Blum & McHugh 1984: 135



2.5

Spirits are low. The group of students at tonight's protest is far smaller than usual: after nearly a week of long nightly protests, people are tired and disappointed that the 'movement' doesn't seem to be leading anywhere. Some of the students blame the opposition politicians: they've co-opted the protests, the theory goes, competing among themselves to be seen as the leaders and to gain support in upcoming elections. The students mock the small bands of political party flag-bearers who jockey to be at the front of each march—though not without a few sarcastic mutters about the students doing the same thing with their banners. Others are frustrated with the trade unions, who stopped short of calling for a general strike. A few partial road-closures and pickets had sprung up, but now according to the most recent news, the unions had decided to postpone any further actions until the New Year. "So really", Aubrey observes, "we should blame Christmas". The workers are under more pressure than ever at work, and many of the protesters are looking forward to a break from the cold. "And now we're going to march 5 kilometres to the State TV headquarters *again* because a politician thinks it's a good idea, and for what?", Dezső remarks caustically, "let's get the crowd to occupy a

bridge instead. We have to do something that will get attention, not march 5 kilometres out of town where no one will see us”.

The students try Dezsó’s plan, starting a chant to “Stop here! Stop here!” when the crowd reaches Margit híd. Some people pause, while others keep marching, “Come with us! Come with us!”. The rival chants project—and loudly—two “competing rationalities” about what the crowd should do, producing an ‘agonistic’ public encounter that the crowd members must negotiate to continue acting together.¹³⁵ The chants do not, however, simply offer two contradictory courses of action for the crowd members to choose between: their differing rationalities are made accountable to one another. ‘Marching on’ becomes seeable as ‘not stopping’, while ‘stopping here’ can be reported as ‘not doing the same old pointless thing’ or ‘not blindly taking orders from politicians’.¹³⁶

Each chant is an appeal to the crowd that qualifies and queries crowd members’ competent ‘here-and-now’ participation—in the crowd, but also in the movement to resist the Slave Law—by calling attention to their concerted activity in different ways.¹³⁷ The tension between the chants does not stem from inherently irreconcilable assessments contained in each: one could ‘come with us’ then ‘stop here’ then ‘come with us’ again as protest crowds frequently do. Rather, a situated tension develops between the chants in the discordant *way they meet*,¹³⁸ as techniques for publicly negotiating the meaningfulness and good sense of the crowd’s concerted activity. They are *contingencies* of the crowd’s concerted action, and they themselves “[contribute] to its own accountably sensible character”—what this crowd is and what it means in what it does.¹³⁹ In this sense, chanting from the crowd provides

135. Barnett & Bridge
2013: 1024

136. Sacks 1995 (Vol.
2): 171

137. McHugh 2019:
69

138. Zerilli 2016: 224-
226

139. Garfinkel &

a 'style of reasoning' about what the crowd should or shouldn't do by creating new ideas and possibilities for its members' consideration,¹⁴⁰ while the *competition* between these chants is a technique for calling into question the justification of the crowd's continued concerted action.¹⁴¹

Sacks 1970: 345

140. Zerilli 2016: 229-230, 238

141. Garfinkel 1967: 114-115

Watching with wry smiles from atop a nearby guardrail as the crowd works out what to do, two teenagers join in with a third chant, "Általános zűrzavar! *General pandemonium!*". Eventually the majority of the crowd leaves the bridge for the TV Headquarters, with smaller groups that had stopped briefly hurrying to catch up. The students gather around to decide what to do. "And then the plan didn't happen", Aubrey notes.



The student group chats a while longer on the bridge, but then decides it's time to go home.

Meetings like this one, alongside the group's weekly formal 'General Assemblies', provide space for the students to discuss and plan their involvement in the protests among themselves. By sharing and discussing concerns, experiences and suggestions with one another, the students use meetings as techniques to 'sync up' their activities, political convictions and the 'common story' of their group¹⁴²—not by making every member believe the same things, but by negotiating what their *group* should accountably do and stand for through “communicatively related [...] working acts”¹⁴³. Meetings are a good way to 'join' the group¹⁴⁴ because they provide frequent, clear occasions to work together *as* the group.

Yet acting as the group—with their own perspectives, practices and plans—at a protest presents certain opportunities and challenges not least because the crowd itself is another meeting-space in which people group together. Chanting, chatting and marching are ways to act together across groups *as* a crowd with “concerted, collective agency” rooted in interactively negotiated, shared and shareable concerns, interests and projects.¹⁴⁵ Such techniques practically accomplish the crowd's 'agency' as a large group acting in concert, not by each individual doing the 'same thing' or possessing an 'identical motive', but in their constitution of a “congregationally embodied and congregationally witnessable” field of accountable action between crowd members.¹⁴⁶ The crowd's 'collective' goals, meanings and motives sit “*between* actors”¹⁴⁷ in contingent, here-and-there negotiations of their accountability to one another.

142. Bayly 2015: 47

143. Garfinkel 2006:
189

144. Bayly 2015: 47

145. Barnett & Bridge
2013: 1028-1029

146. Garfinkel 2002:
109

147. Rawls 2011: 279

For the student group, this provides an opportunity to publically question and re-shape the crowd's sensible activities. When the other crowd members 'march on', however, they provide an embodied disagreement: members of the student group who 'stay on the bridge' no longer act accountably in concert with the crowd. This is not an automatic consequence of their leaving the crowd—other protesters coordinate with the crowd from afar, for example, taking a train out to meet them at the TV headquarters—but rather because the student group's plans do not find a fit within the locally, contingently sanctioned activities of the crowd and its members. The crowd's chanting—and shouting, laughing, chatting, marching, photo-taking, flag-waving—constitutes distributed 'plural modes of expression' of public reasoning¹⁴⁸ by which crowd members negotiate how the crowd should act by acting as the crowd here-and-there. The students create a new possibility for the crowd to 'stop here', but it is not *taken up* by others: the students can change to keep in with the crowd, or leave and go home.

148. Barnett 2017:
253; Bridge
2020b: 8

I say goodbye to the students at the bridge, and hurry toward Buda to catch a train to catch up with the crowd. By the time I reach the TV headquarters, things have already settled into the usual standstill: the crowd of heckling protesters drawn up along a line of armoured police. "People are waiting around, nothing more notable is happening", I hear a reporter explain into a camera. People are staying busy—socialising, drinking, spray-painting the pavement, tossing firecrackers—but there's nothing to report because the crowd's doing nothing. I spot Mani as I manoeuvre through the crowd; he's standing with a few of the Hungarian students who decided not to go home with the group. They're unenthused.



“Are we just going to stand here?”, Mani fumes, “Where are the hooligans?”. Mani echoes the numerous other accounts that ‘nothing is happening’ during the crowd’s frequent ‘pointless standing-around’, but he also gives some indication of the sorts of things he’s looking out for. Hooligans are people who start trouble, and their trouble can develop such that it’s the crowd’s trouble too. That invites a degree of risk, such as days before when police pepper-sprayed the crowd when the hooligans up front got too rowdy. The hooligan’s unruly activities reshape local moral orders within the crowd, creating space ‘up in front’ or ‘thrown from the back’ where new forms of troublemaking are possible if not permissible, that is, where they can ‘get away with something’. These here-and-there provocations and experiments implicate fellow crowd members: they reconfigure “the practical intelligibility of moral standards”¹⁴⁹ for participation in the crowd as well as treatment of the crowd by others. Hooligans are ‘unruly’ not because they break rules, but because they create situations that subject the going moral order—we stand, we shout—to new rule-making

149. Jayyusi 1991:

procedures and logics of justification¹⁵⁰—you throw bottles, we deploy tear gas.

150. Barnett 2014:

156

Watching for hooligans is therefore one practical technique by which crowd members, but also police or passers-by can monitor a crowd's 'situation' and get a sense for the way things are heading—a grounded but contingent "attunement to possibilities opening up".¹⁵¹ It is not a matter of whether a person 'really' is or isn't a hooligan, but of 'seeing a hooligan' sociologically¹⁵² as a practical method to describe, evaluate and justify "opportunities for action" among a crowded "co-existence of evaluative orders";¹⁵³ be that an opportunity to 'avoid a hooligan', 'follow a hooligan', 'arrest a hooligan' or 'tear-gas a hooligan'. For Mani, there's opportunity in hooligans' troublemaking since he and other members of the crowd might join in, take up, or co-operatively build on the trouble that they start.¹⁵⁴ A hooligan's unruly behaviour becomes a way to get up to something in the crowd and a way to get the crowd up to something as well. *Not* seeing a hooligan or, better put, 'seeing that there are no hooligans here', however, is a way to report that this crowd's not getting up to anything—for better or for worse—and that maybe someone should try something. My first thought hearing Mani's comments was ungenerous—Mani, be the hooligan you want to see in the world! But I was missing the point of Mani's missing hooligan as a matter of situated practical reasoning:¹⁵⁵ a crowd without hooligans might not support someone who gets up to trouble, and their seeable absence from this crowd had practical bearing on Mani's own styles of participation.

151. Stewart 2011:

449

152. Garfinkel 2006

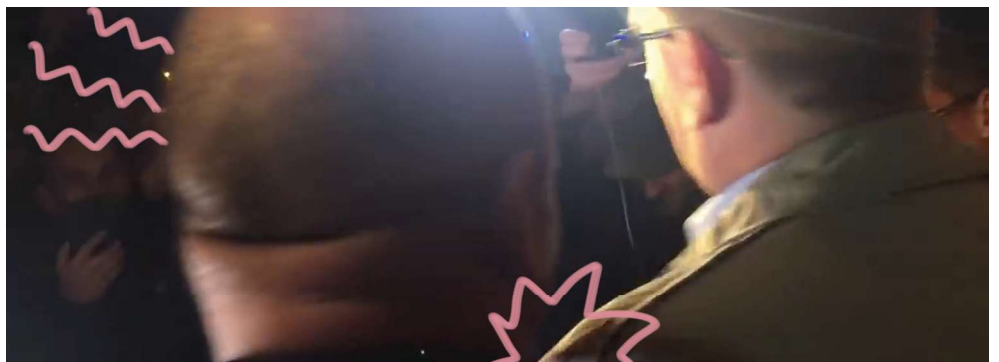
153. Barnett 2014:

156

154. Goodwin 2017: 1

155. Barnett 2014: 157

I continue walking around to see what else is happening in the crowd, until I notice a large group of Jobbik-supporters

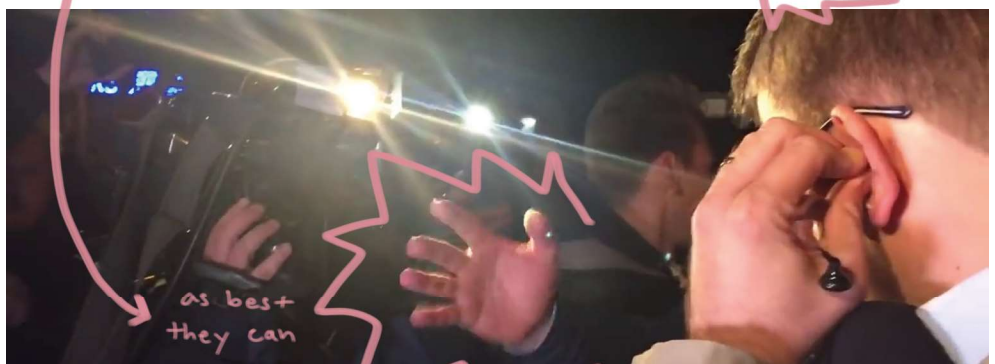
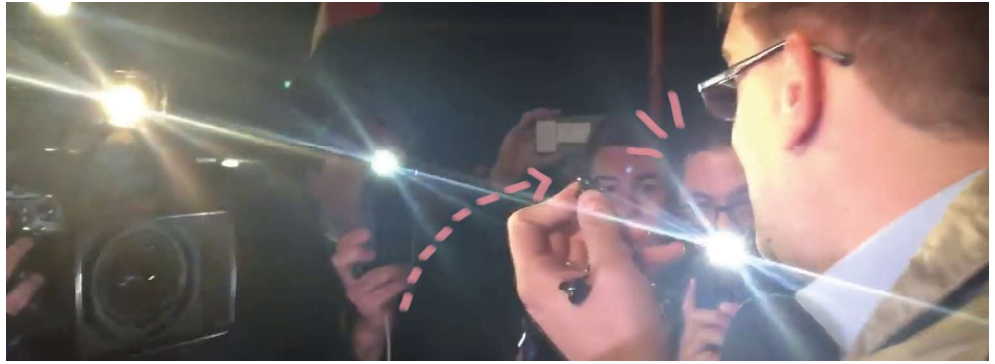


chanting loudly, “Patkány tévé! Patkány tévé! *Rat TV!*”¹⁵⁶

They’re gathered around a team of reporters from one of the government-affiliated news channels. Although the protesters jostle and shout at the reporter, he studiously focuses on the camera and ignores their provocations. Then, however, one protester reaches from behind and yanks out the reporter’s earbuds, which fall to the ground. When the reporter bends down to retrieve the earbuds, another man leans in and shouts the crowd’s current chant directly into the reporter’s ear. When the reporter stands up, he returns his attention to the camera, visibly ignoring the protester’s provocations by working on and publicly displaying his work on ‘reporting the evening’s events’.

The protester persists, leaning in again and shoving the reporter with his shoulder while continuing to chant. This escalation finally elicits a direct response from the reporter, who turns to meet the protester’s gaze, “he-ey”. The shove attracts the attention of a young protester standing nearby as well, who then motions to the aggressive protester. The young protester leans behind the reporter, first pointing at the aggressive protester, then spreading his hand wide in an ‘easy there’ sort of gesture. A third protester caught in the middle echoes the young protester’s warning, shaking his head and saying something to the aggressive protester—but it’s lost in the crowd. The aggressive protester heeds their advice by moving away from the reporter and re-joining the crowd’s chant—with a notably louder and angrier voice.

In contrast to the feeling of ‘waiting around in the cold’ while ‘nothing happens’, in this corner of the crowd someone ‘tries to start something’. By leaning in to shout into the reporter’s ear, the aggressive protester adapts the crowd’s chanting into



a provocation for direct confrontation between the two men. In so doing, he not only elicits a personal interaction, but also reconstitutes the moral order of the crowd's confrontation thus far. Where the crowd had collectively accomplished and in so doing collectively licensed 'chanting loudly to disrupt the broadcast', the aggressive protester's shove introduces the new interactional possibility of physical contact and physical violence.

If we were to ask Mani, he might say *here* is our hooligan. Indeed, the reporter is able to object to the shove *and* the threat of more violence by turning and confronting the aggressive protester directly. The aggressive protester's actions may develop co-operatively on the crowd's disruptive techniques of surrounding, chanting and earbud-yanking, but his shove becomes witnessable and accountable individually rather than as 'belonging to the crowd'. Although this is a bid to start something, the admonitions from the other protesters show their unwillingness to allow, much less join it. They praxiologically enact the crowd's social order¹⁵⁷ as fellow crowd members by evaluating and counteracting the shove. The aggressive protester returns to chanting as one, albeit emphatically angry, member of the crowd rather than the crowd joining in his project of assailing the reporter.

157. Jayyusi 1991: 244

Hooliganism, troublemaking and starting something are all subject to—and witnessed by means of—the public praxiological moral reasoning of its crowd members. Activities in a crowd are open to extension and creative repurposement, but also to evaluation and criticism by fellow crowd members. Crowd members interactively and contingently develop a crowd's capacity for collective action *here-and-there*, through

situated negotiations of possibility and permissibility. That other crowd members interrupt their aggressive actions speaks to a certain level of entitlement—though always contestable—to a shared moral order as members of a shared crowd. An apparently individual conflict between two people is—and is made—available as a joinable event to the rest of the crowd: this implicates the two other protesters, who can signal that they’re not willing to go there right now. A warning could signal the possibility of police reprisal, but it also communicates something important to our would-be-hooligan: it’s possible the crowd would not join, and his act would remain his individually. Participants display their concern for their crowd as a risk, resource and moral compass when instigating, joining or resisting witnessable techniques of protest on the scene.

Rather than taking crowds to be animated by irrational passions—or pheromones, or pre-cognitive affects, or contagious group minds¹⁵⁸—the altercation between the protesters and the reporter here shows how techniques of discontent are tested, evaluated and adopted or rebuked as possibilities by particular crowd members for a particular crowd. As Wetherell¹⁵⁹ notes, accounts of crowd behaviour that invoke notions of ‘involuntary’ and automatic affect fail to explain why these processes stop; she queries, “Why does others’ anger sometimes provoke anger in me, but also just as frequently anxiety, laughter, indifference or sadness?”. Likewise, analyses of protest that overemphasise social identity explain the demographic composition of a crowd, but “are insufficient to explain the intergroup dynamics of the event”:¹⁶⁰ they misleadingly treat crowds and groups as largely homogeneous entities¹⁶¹ while failing to attend to the contingent interactional accomplishments of a crowd’s socio-

158. Wetherell 2015:
152-153 trounces
such ideas nicely

159. Wetherell 2015:
154

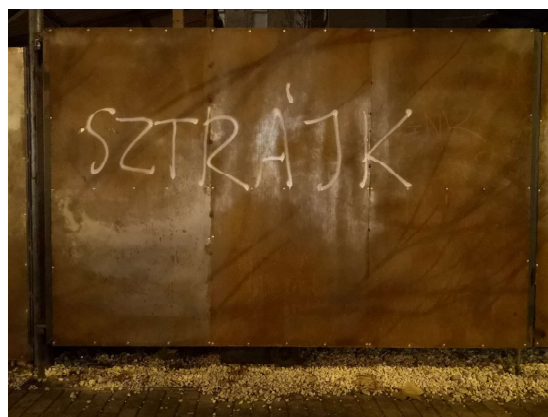
160. Ball et al. 2019:
501; Reicher 1984

161. Reicher 1996: 126

logics, the terms and methods by which activities come to be tolerated or not.

Wetherell draws on social-psychological accounts¹⁶² to emphasise the importance of context, practice and “complex acts of *meaning-making* and *representation* [...] in the spreading of affect, no matter how random and viral it appears”¹⁶³. Impassioned claims, invocations of social identity and appeals to affective atmospheres are all practices of situated, public reasoning¹⁶⁴ by which crowd members can negotiate, justify and reject activities during a protest. However, as the confrontation with the aggressive protester shows, these are only a select few techniques by which crowd members may find and create ‘emergent affordances’¹⁶⁵ for action within public space and others’ activities¹⁶⁶—techniques frequently privileged by researchers and participants reflecting on crowds after the fact, from afar and “*from the outside*”¹⁶⁷

In and as the crowd, crowd members employ and improvise a wide range of techniques to reason out what should be done: they propose ideas by chanting, they read the crowd by watching for hooligans, they shout louder to escalate, they make gestures to caution. These are all *here-and-there* practices, locally situated yet crowdedly accountable—they convey the ongoing and interactive negotiation and constitution of social grounds for moral conduct¹⁶⁸ rather than a ‘transparent’ revelation of group identity and ‘psychological nature’¹⁶⁹. Crowd members develop, subject to public scrutiny



162. Reicher 2001;
Reicher 1996: 117

163. Wetherell 2015:
154

164. Barnett 2017: 271

165. Ball et al.
2019: 483, 485;
Baudains et al.
2013

166. Goodwin 2017

167. Wetherell 2015:
153

168. Bonner 2016:
220

169. Here cf. Reicher
2001: 24

170. Barnett & Bridge
2013: 1024

and deliberate public theories of what should—and shouldn't—be done through “a broad range of communicative practices [... and] agonistic encounter”¹⁷⁰ The crowd is a space of rapid ‘publication’, where individuals and groups experiment with and orient to proximal interests and activities to test whether and how their gathering might work together.

171. Garfinkel 1967:
97

In this way, the crowd also works to negotiate here-and-now political possibilities,¹⁷¹ to locate themselves and their actions within a wider social and political world by working to get up to something, to make ‘something happen’. Making ‘something happen’ is in this case not an automatic product of labour, energy and effort, but rather depends on others’ ability, good faith, and willingness to ‘make *something* of it’¹⁷²

172. Massey 2005:
141, emphasis
added

Assessments from others that ‘nothing is happening’ can therefore be exhausting and demoralising for those who have been in the thick of the action, while at the same time those who feel that ‘nothing is happening’ might be frustrated by those who claim an accomplishment when they cannot see how that accomplishment amounts to a ‘something’ they can put to use. The political question of *what* is to be done for a better future is negotiated in crowds, debated in meetings, argued in books, tested in conflict as participants work out *how* to do something meaningful here-and-there, again and again, as an ongoing and interactive concern.



2.6

“What do I have to do with all this?”, one frustrated man addresses a police officer from inside the crowd, but he gets little by way of response, “so what I have to do, it’s not my problem. What I have to do here? It’s not my problem, it’s you, Hungarian between Hungarian, so what’s—my problem?”. Today’s protest escalated. On Kossuth tér, the usual standoff on the steps in front of parliament grew heated. Police and protesters exchanged volleys of teargas and glass bottles. Protesters dashed to nearby shops and returned with cartons of eggs; others pressed in around the enormous, twinkling Christmas tree in front of Parliament, wrenching apart the decorative fence made of toy sledges surrounding it. Police rushed in to extend their perimeter around the tree as a novel chant grew louder throughout the crowd, “Let it burn! Let it burn!”. There had been worries that the upcoming holiday would extinguish the protests—rumour had it that the unions were going to call off further marches until the New Year—but today it looked as though the holiday might become kindling for the fire. In the back of the crowd, one group piled together a bench and some sledges then set them alight. The police were quick to respond, ordering the crowd to disperse over loudspeaker then



rushing the protesters nearest the blaze and grabbing people haphazardly from the crowd.

The crowd had thinned throughout the evening, so it's eventually only a small band that sets off into the streets to take the protest elsewhere—and to avoid the police. They move quickly ahead of the police down a large road, toppling the occasional sign and garbage bin, before plunging into the narrow lanes of the 7th District and among the gaggles of party-goers loitering in front of the district's many bars and clubs. Turning onto Dob utca, the protesters realise they've made a mistake: besides the line of police following close behind, another line has assembled at the far end of the street. The police manage to kettle the last of the protesters—but, as it turns out, not without catching tourists, pub-goers, local residents and one particularly unlucky dog-walker as well.

It's a mess: crowded together within the police kettle, most of the protesters and passers-by are indistinguishable from one another. It's the police officers' task, however, to make a distinction between these two groups, and to make that distinction fast, “subject to supervisory review for truth,

correctness, and other adequacies of the recognition [...] and having among its consequences that various parties, who as members of populations can properly become involved, become forensically interested parties to issues of truth and correctness”¹⁷³ The police have to make this distinction accountable to their superior officers over the radio, to later public inquiries, and to the frustrated pedestrians inside the kettle. Here in this narrow, crowded corner of the 7th District, however, the police have lost a crucial resource for seeing such differences accountably:¹⁷⁴ they may have caught a crowd, but they’ve lost *their* crowd-of-sledge-burners-and-trashcan-topplers. The police have lost the grammar of the crowd as a means of discerning between those “party-to-the-scene” and

173. Garfinkel 2002:

182

174. Goodwin 2017:

284

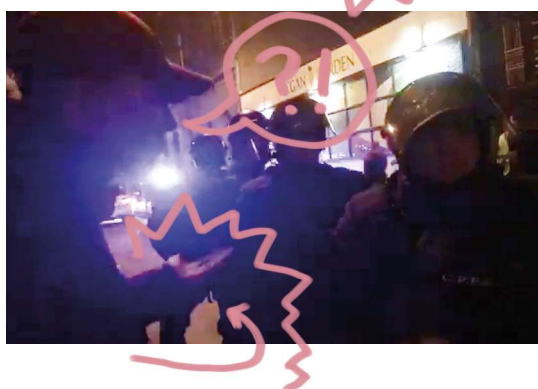
those with “legitimate audience status”¹⁷⁵

175. Sacks 1986: 137

Their method for catching the crowd has made it observably, reportably—and at times loudly self-accountably—“thrown-together”¹⁷⁶ a gathering by happenstance. While the police work on the challenge of negotiating practical and *practicable* here-and-now differences in the crowd, many of its crowd members are coming to terms with the

176. Massey 2005:

140



177. Reicher 1996:

125

fact that they've gotten 'caught up' in something they hadn't previously; they had simply been 'in the wrong place at the wrong time'.¹⁷⁷ As the frustrated crowd member puts it, the protest, these police and this crowd aren't *legitimately* 'his problem'—to his great irritation, however, they've become his *problem-nonetheless*.¹⁷⁸

178. With a 'sense of

but', Savransky

2019

"It—it's my, I have my friends there", he points down the street past the cordon of police officers, "what's the problem, I need to go to them". He steps as though to leave, but the police officer puts his hand out to stop him. "Why you hurt me? Don't touch—".

"Pardon—okay", the police officer lowers his hand.

"Don't touch me".

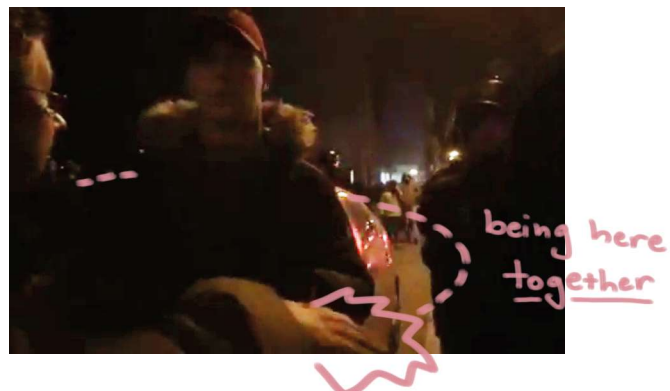
"I'm sorry".

179. Átlátszó 2018a;

Átlátszó 2018b

"I have to go to *my* friends. I'm *not* Hungarian, I'm not doing *anything*, I just need to go. I'm going home", but the police officer stops him once again. The altercation attracts the attention of a reporter who's recording a live-stream video¹⁷⁹ of the crowd, enjoying the chance to lampoon the police while they slowly, uncertainly sort out what to do. "They boxed in tourists too and they're not letting them out", she remarks in Hungarian

with a mischievous laugh, stepping in close to the pleading man. She stops short, though, when he turns to her, "Please, tell them in



Hungarian what's the problem!". He turns back to the police again, "I have my friends, please, I'm not Hungarian—".

The reporter continues her narration without getting

involved, “And the police officer’s telling him ‘No English’, and now-and-then says something in German”. Another police officer joins the conversation and tries to reassure the man, “stay calm!”—but his explanations aren’t very clear. Finally, another crowd member intervenes, “I’m here because they told me ‘stop’. Stop? Okay, I stop. And then—they will go and tell you, ‘you can go’—*okay*”, he mimes resignation, rolling his eyes, shrugging, and throwing his hands up, “wait until they call you. They tell you can go, and you can go”. The frustrated man isn’t entirely placated, but he does turn from the police and wait alongside some of the other crowd members. He explains his predicament to them; they explain the Slave Law. Meanwhile, the police set about checking *everyone’s* ID.

The frustrated man’s complaints illustrate just how he is to be seen as a legitimate bystander to the night’s events, as a pedestrian ‘just going to his friends’ and as a foreigner uninvolved in Hungarian politics. He does not simply explain that he was up to something other—and more seemly—than ‘holding a protest’: by complaining, he publicly “finds himself” in a problematic situation,¹⁸⁰ sharing a sense of what he’s ‘up against’¹⁸¹ in being here in this kettle and asking, pleading, demanding that others share in this sense of the things as problematic, inconvenient and unjust.¹⁸² The situation is exacerbated by the language barrier, but the police officer’s response in stopping him from leaving makes it sufficiently clear to the man that their judgments do not agree.¹⁸³ They may come to agree verbally at some points—that, for instance, the police officer should not grab the man—but they are not “in agreement throughout”¹⁸⁴ the situation: they inhabit different senses of what should happen now.

180. Barnett & Bridge 2016: 1193; drawing on Dewey 1986
181. Garfinkel 2002: 212-214
182. Barnett 2017: 268
183. Wittgenstein 1958: §242
184. Cavell 1999: 32

- The frustrated man's complaints are thus a way of discovering, but also negotiating this disagreement and the open-ended, "ever-contested" question of how these various crowd members, police officers, reporters and down-on-their-luck dog-walkers are going to manage "being-together"¹⁸⁵ *together* in the crowd they've found themselves in. The man's complaints—and so too the police officer's grab (and apology), the reporter's narration (and refusal to help), the reassuring crowd member's intervention (and shrug)—enact different "styles of reasoning" about and as this particular crowd and this particular situation, generating new "candidates for judgments of what is true"¹⁸⁶ or necessary, or reasonable, or preferable here-and-now. Put differently, the assorted members of this crowd find their situation through attention to one another's different styles of membership. They do not rely on hidden "background understandings", an "implicit social contract", a "common stock of knowledge" or "trust" that the other crowd members share a held-in-common understanding of what should and shouldn't happen in this crowd.¹⁸⁷ Rather, their shared situation is "only the occasion to discover what [they] actually do and do not share with others and on what things [they] agree and disagree"¹⁸⁸ here-and-now, as "foreground", public matters of concern.¹⁸⁹ Treating the crowd members' different activities as styles of membership acknowledges their ability to choose¹⁹⁰ to participate in the situation in different ways and, in so doing, "make a difference" in how that shared situation "comes to be meaningful" for others.¹⁹¹
- As cooperative, patient, wronged, indignant, bemused, stern, conciliatory, confrontational, resigned parties-to-the-scene, the members of the 'accidental' crowd on Dob utca
185. Massey 2005: 142
186. Zerilli 2016: 231-234
187. *Pace* Rawls 2019: 134; Button et al. 2015: 146; Rawls 2008: 709; Sharrock & Anderson 1991: 60; Jayyusi 1991: 236-237; Garfinkel 1967: 49-55
188. Zerilli 2016: 272
189. See Pollner

attune one another to “how other people see the world”¹⁹² and work on “the challenge of negotiating a here-and-now”, better or worse, problematic or bearable shared situation.¹⁹³ These styles of participation are artful methods¹⁹⁴ for making *this* situation and *this* crowd publicly meaningful¹⁹⁵ in different ways, announcing whether and how this event, “works, succeeds in engaging or involving us”¹⁹⁶—and that it could go otherwise. Rather than speaking of a singular ‘common-sense’ understanding of the situation shared by ‘competent’ crowd members with “the same experience of meanings [...] the same recourse to reason, or because they are immersed in the same linguistic universe, or finally because their imaginative capacities are structured by the same resources”,¹⁹⁷ it is thus important to consider how crowd members establish plural, contingent and mutually-negotiated common *grounds* for judging and acting in sometimes like, sometimes different ways. That is to say, finding themselves unexpectedly members of this crowd, the crowd members set about “locat[ing] and defin[ing] the *symptoms* of membership and not just the essential criteria of membership”: they negotiate how an action “makes a difference” or comes to be “meaningful” as part of this crowd.¹⁹⁸ They find their problems—and grounds for their solution—within the situation they find themselves in,¹⁹⁹ yet they work out how to act not by “ignoring differences of interpretation”,²⁰⁰ but learning from the differential public judgments and styles of participation throughout the crowd which, each in their own way, show how to participate and *at what risk*.²⁰¹

When the reassuring man approaches the frustrated man, for instance, he does more than suggest an alternative course of action. By sharing the story of his own accidental

2012: 10

190. McHugh, P. in

Bonner 2019:

278

191. McHugh 1968: 18

192. Zerilli 2016: 272;

280, see also

Barnett 2017:

268

193. Massey 2005:

140

194. McHugh et al.

1974: 164

195. Blum 2016: 284

196. McHugh 2019:

113

197. Boltanski 2011:

55

198. McHugh 1968: 18

199. Barnett & Bridge

2016: 1193,

following Dewey

1991: 564

200. Cf. Boltanski

2011: 61

201. Garfinkel 1967:

146

involvement in the crowd, his own resignation, but also his own ‘willingness to wait’, he creates new affordances for action, a new grammar through which wait-until-they-call-you is a possible, reasonable course of action. He finds grounds for redefining the trouble of the situation—from that of ‘a man illegitimately caught in a crowd’ to that of ‘a crowd illegitimately caught together’—and in so doing establishes that (and how) the frustrated man can wait: they can wait together. Although in his complaints to the police officer the frustrated man sets out to avoid becoming part of the crowd—or to mark his becoming part as illegitimate—with the intervention of the reassuring man, they instead come to remake the kind of crowd they’re participants of.

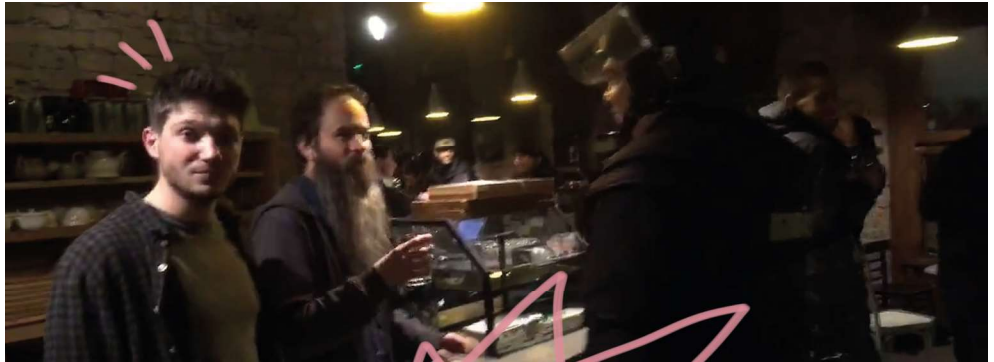
In contrast, the reporter’s response to the frustrated man’s appeal for translation—that is, her silence—displays a different project and different style of participation in the crowd. She chooses not to get involved in the man’s trouble—perhaps facing a language barrier herself, perhaps committing to journalistic conventions ‘not to take part’ in events being reported on—but in so doing plays a part in marking that trouble as *not* shared and in distinguishing other types of membership in this crowd. Faced with the grammar of the crowd as a marker of participation in a situation, crowd members develop an ongoing and contingent grammar of practical judgment in the ways they work out how (by what terms) they are present together.²⁰² The reporter has her project, as she mentions throughout her broadcast, to show viewers at home ‘what’s happening’ on Dob utca, but this is not a given. She works on it—sticks to it—instead of getting involved in things in other ways. She participates in the crowd in this way and, eventually,

202. Garfinkel 2002:
182; Zerilli 2016:
280



it's the way she enters a nearby pub as well.

“And what’s happening is that they’ve come into the pub, which they’ve cordoned off, so no one goes out, no one goes in”, she pans the camera after a police officer in body armour working his way between chatting patrons, “the police came in and they’re IDing the people who, by the way, are here *inside* the pub”. She squeezes down the aisle toward one end; two police officers are taking down a man’s details while a table of his friends watch with mild, if tired curiosity. She wheels the camera around to show another police officer talking to two of the bar staff. The music and chatter filling the pub drown out their conversation, but they look nonchalant, and the police officer even grins slightly. One bartender turns and notices the reporter and her camera; this catches the other bartender’s attention, and he stares at the camera as well, and the police officer turns to go. After a brief silence, the first bartender takes a dramatic step in front of the others, gives two thumbs up, grins and waggles his head back and forth. “Super good mood”, the reporter observes for the camera. “I’ve got a *friend*”, the bartender gestures with irony after the departing police officer. The reporter doesn’t say anything in response, but turns to



follow the police officer past a group of chatty patrons sitting at the bar. One leans out and shouts with a laugh, “Turn off the camera already!”.

“And what’s happening now is that there’s a pub on the corner of Dob utca that the police cordoned off when they started this action. No one could go out, but now the police have come in and they’re going through IDing everyone”, she narrates the situation once again, approaching another set of police officers talking to patrons at the far end of the pub. One man raises a finger when the police ask whose ID they have, then leans in to answer their questions, raising his voice over the thumping bass. “The most”, she pans the camera over the crowd, “*abstract* part is that no one here saw any sign of all the things that happened in the past hour out on the street”. She walks back-and-forth throughout the pub. “It seems as though the clientele aren’t taking this thing seriously. They’re still just sitting at their tables carrying on their conversations. The police are trying to get on with IDing”, her voice jumps with a laugh, “but truth is, people don’t *believe* it”. Then, in the background, the straining of a violin: someone’s changed the music to Blue Danube.

“For those who are just joining, what you’re seeing is a pub on Dob utca where the police have been IDing everyone after they finished outside, or I assume it’s progressing a bit. They came inside to ID the clientele”, she laughs again, “the majority of whom are foreigners and they don’t understand what’s going on. They’re sitting calmly at the table. The waltz is playing. The police are checking IDs”. The patrons at the nearest table chat and laugh—though they look up startled when they realise the reporter is recording them. She turns again, but finds herself

stuck: two women, drinks in hand, are hugging and swaying to the waltz in the middle of the aisle. She pans over the crowd again, but nothing new catches her eye, “That’s all I’d wanted to show. If anything more interesting than this happens, then we’ll check in again. For now I’ll end the broadcast”.

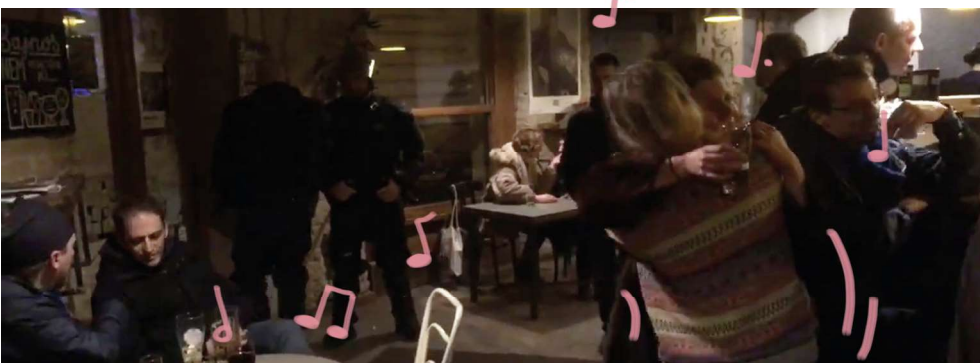
203. Garfinkel 2002:
203;

The reporter sees a particular kind of situation in the pub—a laughable, unbelievable, ridiculous, ‘abstract’ police encounter—and her video and narration show viewers at home how to see the night’s event as just that sort of situation.²⁰³ She finds another group of people for whom the protest has become a problem—nonetheless by observing the many ways they have-nothing-to-do-with the situation: they’re inside, they’re foreigners, they don’t even know about the events outside. In particular, by seeing that the police are working on a project of checking IDs, but that—drinking, chatting and even waltzing undisturbed—‘no one’s taking it seriously’, she also finds that, for the police, it’s an *embarrassing* situation. She establishes quite quickly that ‘armoured police inside a pub’ count as “non-standard”, but she finds that ‘embarrassing situation’ over the course of her broadcast, in the actions and embodied judgments of the pub’s staff and clientele: she finds a “we” who publicly agree that this situation is ‘not serious’ by responding to it in ‘non-serious’ ways.²⁰⁴ She looks for a crowd that sees the situation she is seeing, that “serves to make the event the public event that [she] thinks it is”,²⁰⁵ a shared and shareable farce that viewers at home can see—and see us seeing—too.

204. Cavell 1999: 13-
14; 30-31

205. Sacks 1986: 135

Yet the reporter’s account offers little commentary on some of the other events in the pub, and in particular the responses of staff and patrons to her broadcast. She



wryly comments on the ‘super good mood’ in the pub when a bartender breaks off his chat with a police officer to offer a theatrical double thumbs-up. She ignores the patron who tells her to turn off the camera from the bar, and offers no explanation to the table of patrons who turn to stare at her while she describes them as foreigners—rightly or wrongly—who don’t know what’s happening. In content and manner, the reporter’s narration shows viewers a particular situation in the pub, but it also gives indication “regarding the project in which [she understands herself] to be engaged”:²⁰⁶ she makes visible her own style of participation in the crowd as, once again, a disengaged observer and chronicler of the night’s events.

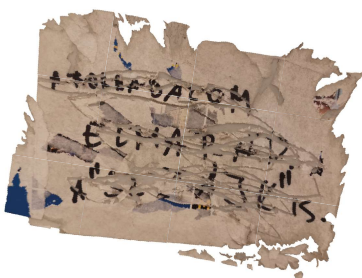
206. Jones &

Raymond 2012:

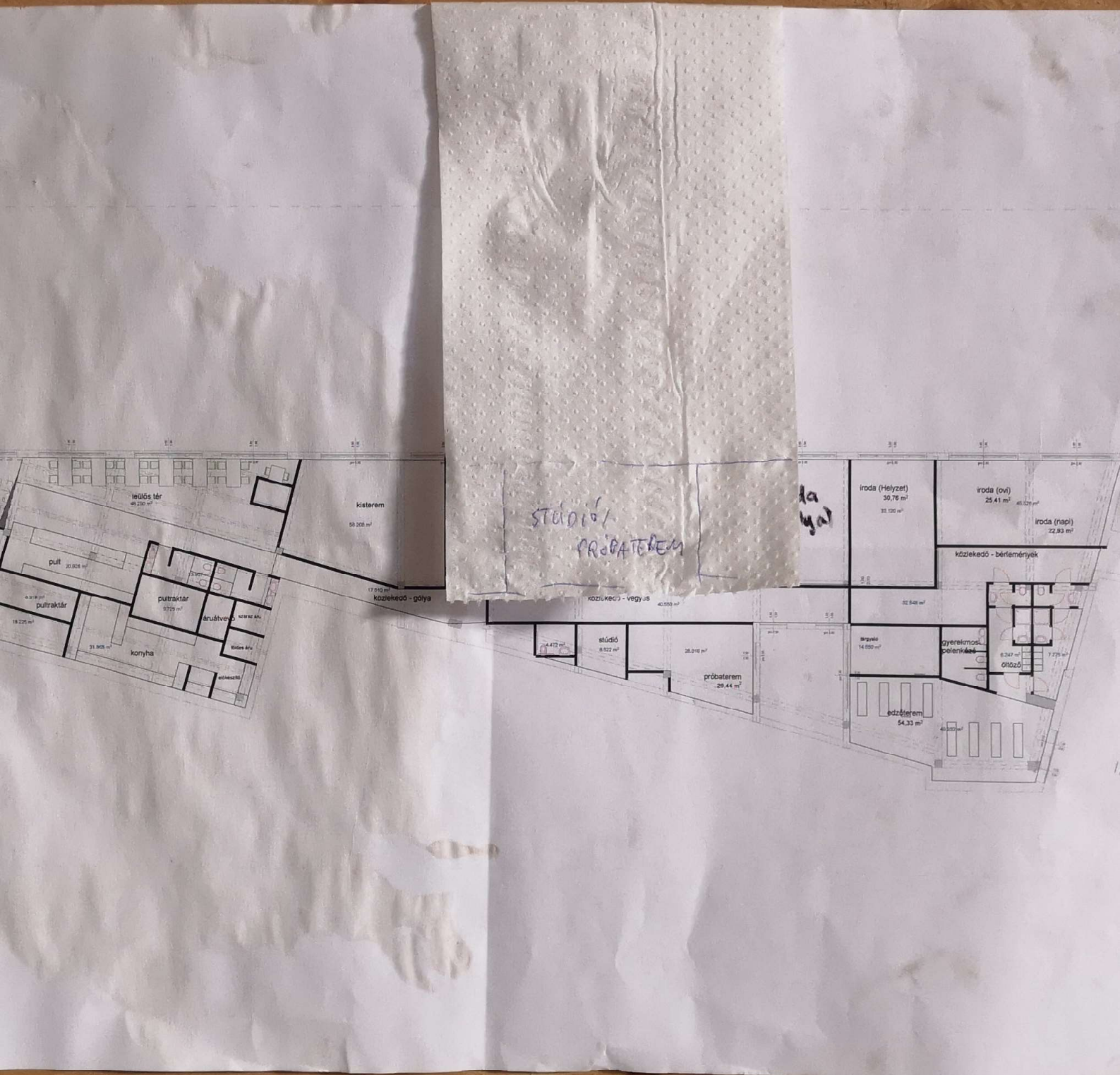
118; 122

The staff and patrons respond to her style of observation as another here-and-now part of the event, however. Activities like confused staring, playful scolding and a dramatic thumbs-up orient to her practices of narrating-these-events-for-a-wider-public-as-a-disengaged-observer, and in subtle ways *resist* her ways of seeing and sharing the night's events. The activities in the pub do not become the 'anything more interesting' that the reporter would like to have shared because they are *made* uninteresting as a way of managing the situation—and what it could become. Chatting, drinking and playing the waltz are also ways of seeing getting-caught-up-in-a-farcical-situation, but they publicly share the possibility of getting-on-nonetheless and laughing-it-off-together.

Among the night's spectacular events—the chanting crowds, clouds of teargas and burning sledges—the staff and patrons on Dob utca are not the most obvious subjects of resistance, but there is value in observing the way their ordinary, convivial and playful activities together are able to resist other 'more interesting' possibilities. It speaks, in a sense, to the ways that people get caught up in public events, but also how public events get caught up in people's lives: how they become relevant, interesting, exhausting, stressful, worthwhile, pointless, disruptive or a minor inconvenience here-and-now, as people work out what to make of it together. It can be easy to criticise (or castigate) those who don't join in a particular protest or movement, but giving attention to the work people do to *not* join opens up questions about what *else* they're working on.



AZ ALAPRAJZ (KB.)



The blueprint hanging on the wall at Gólya's renovation keeps changing. Version 3 is covered in handwritten notes and coffee stains—and now even a toilet-paper annex. The gólyások know what they're building though; they just keep finding ways to make it better.



AZ
ALAPRAÉZ (KB.)

3

(The blueprint + (more-or-less))



3.1

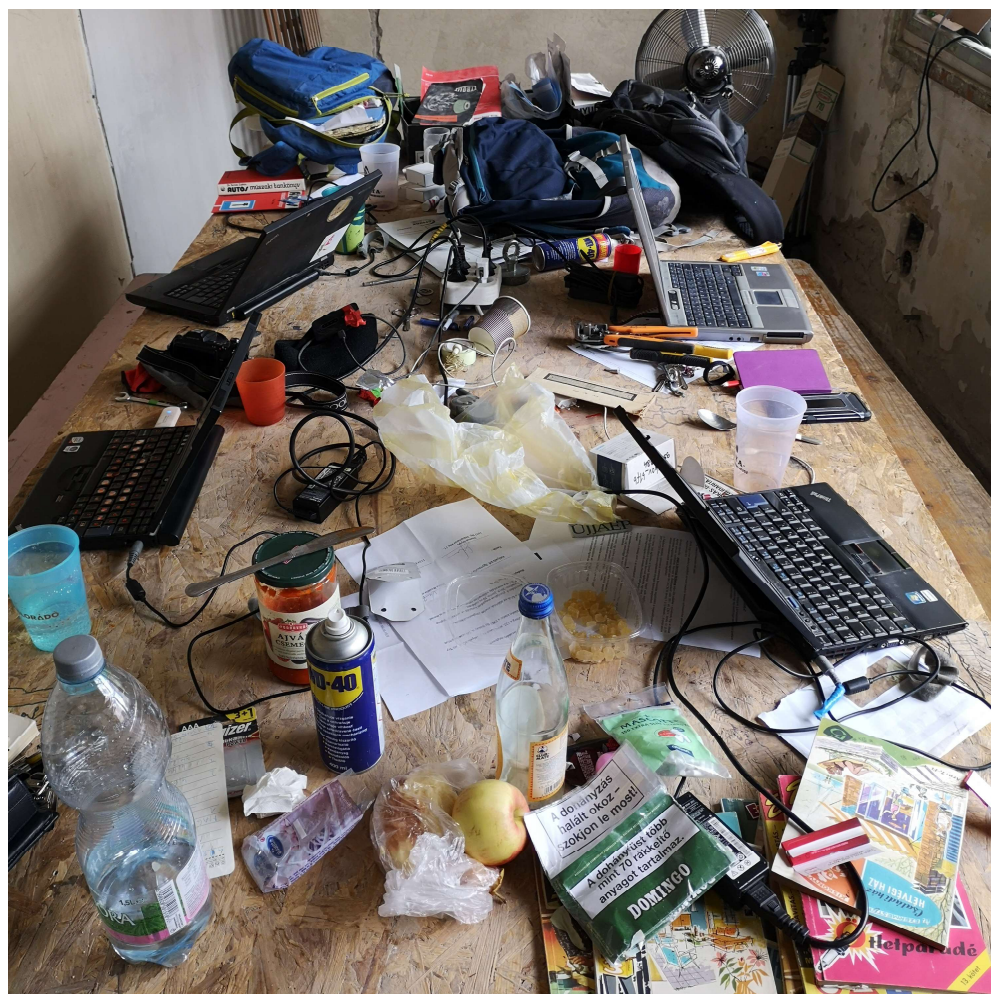
Karl pushes the door open and waves me inside, “Welcome back! It’s just us so far, but Macsuga and the others will be here soon”. It’s been several weeks since I’ve been able to come volunteer at Gólya’s renovation, so I explain where I’ve been as we head upstairs to the bázis: attending and writing about the recent protests. I ask if Karl had gone to any, but he shakes his head, gesturing around, “we’re working here!”. He’s right: things have changed a lot since I was last on site. Most of the brick walls reach the ceiling now, dividing the once-sprawling hall into half-finished offices, workshops and toilets. The heaps of debris have been carted away or sorted into usable materials. The bázis—is gone! “Oh, we moved it further down”, Karl explains, noting my surprise. We walk into the large open space at the far end of the hall—the future site of the community centre’s café and bar—and I spot the ramshackle walls of the bázis, jury-rigged from plasterboard, OSB and repurposed frames in the far corner.

Karl shoves the door open as we step inside, then props it closed behind us with a makeshift plank-turned-latch. The bázis is the renovation’s HQ. It’s where tools are stored, where volunteers gather for lunch, where Karl and the other

brigádvezetők plan and coordinate the renovation's many work projects. Thanks to a small space-heater labouring in the corner, it's even slightly warmer than the rest of the frigid, open-windowed building.

The interior is just as motley as the outside walls. Two ancient folding tables stand in the centre, cluttered with laptops, hand tools, pouches of rolling tobacco, half-eaten pastries and an assortment of other more-or-less useful, more-or-less curious items that help compose, mediate and 'occasion' day-to-day life on the worksite.¹ This is where people leave things for others to see: a jar of olives for sharing, a periodical from the 80s full of faded illustrations of hand-tools—I even spot the 'plain language statement' form I left with the brigádvezetők on an earlier visit. The bázis is brimming

1. Latour 2005: 59-



where we pick back up in the morning. As such, the gathering of objects offers a collage of the worksite’s stories and ongoing projects *in medias res*. When workers arrive for the morning shift, they rely on and work with the things³ left around the bázis—or gathered in a cart, arrayed on a tarp, a workbench, a scaffold elsewhere on site—to pick back up with things, to furnish practical answers to questions like ‘Now, where were we?’ and ‘What next?’.

These things can be seen as ‘objects-in-action’ with a contexted “intelligibility, visibility, and accountability” as part of the ongoing renovation,⁴ and seeing them as such is an essential technique of the project’s members to work out just-here, just-now where the project’s at. Volunteers can get a sense of yesterday’s headaches, today’s possibilities, what we’re working with, what we’re up against—an assembled ‘disposition’ of things⁵—by treating the objects as ones ‘in play’⁶ in some particular ‘project game’,⁷ as part of the “ongoing *in-vivo*, in-courseness of [our] project” of the building’s renovation and the worksite’s other smaller projects besides.⁸

Fitting into the project involves seeing the right things in the right way together⁹ with the other gólyások and volunteers throughout the day—or figuring out how to. You don’t ‘steal’ someone’s level because you can see they’re using it—or you ask first

3. Laurier & Lorimer
2012: 208;
drawing on
Ingold 2000

4. Mondada 2012:
329

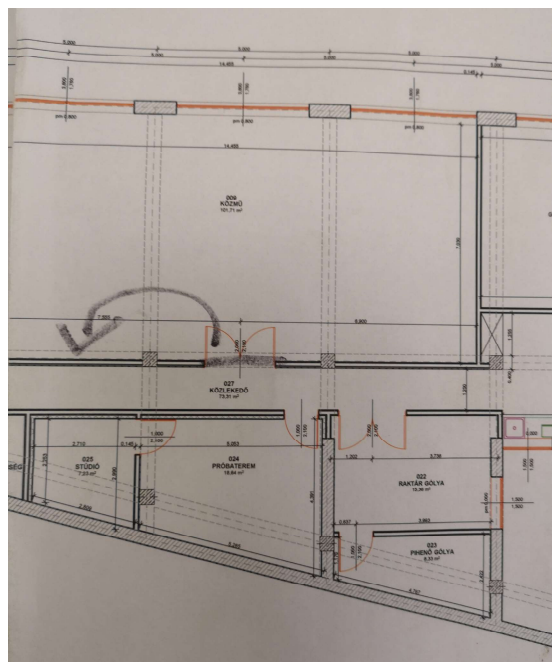
5. Bennett 2010: 35

6. Serres 1982: 224–
225; see also
Goodwin 2017:
185

7. Adapting
Wittgenstein
1958; a ‘misuse’
akin to Law &
Lynch 1988: 299

8. Garfinkel 2002:
203

9. Laurier & Lorimer
2012: 208



because you can see, lying near their worksite, that it's 'theirs'.¹⁰ Or you ask Csámpás which can of paint to open, or ask Karl, "Hey, what're all these for?", patting a nearby roll of thick, black material. "That's the bitumen", Karl answers, while grabbing a steaming moka pot off the burner where he'd left it before letting me in, "We'll start putting on the roof today. Coffee?". Rolls of bitumen loiter throughout the room and out in the hallway—I had a sense we'd be doing something with them.

10. Garfinkel 2002:

182

Karl sits down at his computer, open to a large excel sheet full of details about supplies, budget, timelines, numbers of volunteers, lease agreements. He walks me through his system while we wait for the others: columns shaded green for projects-in-progress, text in red for unresolved questions, symbols marking tasks as 'urgent', 'postponed', 'probably will be postponed', 'maybe won't happen' and a few are even 'complete'. I quickly lose track of his system as he flicks between tabs. "See", he says, "we're not just sitting in here staying cozy while you're working out there". Maybe he'd received some sarcastic comments on his last survey around the worksite, before returning to the *bázis* and updating a column: *brick walls, running late, shade column yellow*. Karl and the *brigádvezetők* use the spreadsheets and timelines to keep an eye on the project 'overall',¹¹ but, as Karl points out, their use takes work: upkeep, reflection, adjustment, discussion. The spreadsheet does not allow the *brigádvezetők* "to hold their projects firmly in hand, to impose their will" on the objects, people and plans of the renovation just so,¹² but rather serves as a resource with which to examine the project 'at-hand', to assemble here-and-now relevant objects, questions and tasks, and to share them with others. "So", Karl turns from the screen, "we'll have to put all

11. Law 2004: 105-106

12. Latour 1994: 42

of our energy into the roof, because we really want that sealed before it snows. Macsuga and the trainer are nearly here, so we can get started just as soon as the other volunteers arrive”.
Urgent, change text colour red, note: need more volunteers.

At a glance, the spreadsheet may give an impression of our renovation “project [as] a promise in the future” calculated

13. Kunst 2015: 167



from deadlines and labour-hours.¹³ However, *in use* all the plans, notes and calculations of the brigádvezetők are ongoingly subject to revision as, “in the course of working” on the project, they are made ‘good enough’ time and again, for the moment, now that *that’s*

14. Garfinkel 2002:
202-203 on
the “et cetera
clause”

happened—where *that* is an interactive and in situ observation of ‘what we’re up against’ here-and-now.¹⁴ The brigádvezetők learn how to modify the instructions by visiting the worksite and learning where we’re all at.

15. Latour 1987

They transform the bázis in a similar way: as the renovation project’s HQ, it’s a site of coordination and accumulation of objects, updates and people,¹⁵ but the practical observations and concerns brought in from elsewhere on the worksite lead to modulations and ad hoc renovations in the bázis itself to make *it* good enough for the work to be done. Its architecture is eventful and full of action, and its transformations throughout the project resemble a “filmic montage” viewed day-by-day, shift-by-shift: a “rambling collection of events”, goings-on, plans and unfinished projects composed interactively by people, objects and materials in and as the work on the renovation.¹⁶

16. Tschumi 1996: 121,



157; Hartoonian

2010: 30

The brigádvezetők change it as they see fit, and they see its ‘fit’ together¹⁷ in terms of forecast snow, bitumen deliveries, training sessions, volunteer complaints, spreadsheets, space-heaters and any other ‘material organizational things’ they find the project coming up against.¹⁸ Rather than deterministically defining the renovation’s future,¹⁹ the bázis and its shifting inventory proffer “sociomaterial resources” for the “practical and normative accomplishment” of the project:²⁰ tools to work on our shared project with and, in so doing, to develop a situated ‘working definition’²¹ of how one’s work fits into it. The bázis is not just important because it’s where we store the tools: it plays a large part in how the gólyások and other volunteers coordinate, how they work out *how* to work together ‘as well as possible’²² as this, a shared project.

Chatter in the hallway lets us know that Macsuga’s arrived. He throws the bázis door open a few moments later with a loud greeting, followed by a few volunteers and the instructor who’ll be teaching us how to lay bitumen today. Karl

17. Recalling

Goodwin 1994

18. Garfinkel 2002:

202

19. Björgvinsson et

al. 2012: 108

elaborate on

Tschumi

20. Hindmarsh &

Llewellyn 2018:

431-432

21. Wilkie & Michael

2017: 93

22. Puig de la

Bellacasa 2017

and Macsuga describe the situation to the instructor as we head up to the roof: the size of the roof, teams of volunteers, two gas canisters, winter, the ladder's the only way up, Karl's building a winch to haul up the bitumen. Once up top, our small group shuffles around the frosty rooftop, surveying the piles of old and new debris cleared aside for the bitumen. Next week a truck will come to remove it—until then, we'll work around. The instructor walks to the edge of the roof and peers at the clamorous traffic two stories down, "You'll need safety lines when you're working here: you have to get right up to the edge or water will get under". Macsuga and Karl assure him they have the safety equipment in the *bázis*, and they crouch down together to examine the old bitumen to understand how the finished thing should look.

We walk on until we reach the tools, and it's the instructor's turn to show us around. "This is the *melegítő*, the *warmer*", and he points out the important parts while telling us what each does: here's the knob to release gas, here you adjust the size of the flame, the trigger here lights the flame, "who's got a lighter?". He holds one to the hissing *melegítő*, and it ignites. He turns the second knob, but the flame doesn't adjust, "No worries: if this one's not working, you can just use the first knob on the canister". He turns it, and the flame flares up.

Next, he shows us how to handle the bitumen: how to overlap the pieces and how to watch the film for marbling—the sign it's ready to stick. "It's best to work in pairs, one person unrolling and one person firing—you'll find a rhythm as you go, just takes practice", he explains, "so, who wants to give it a go?". There's a pause. "And that thing's not going to explode?",

Macsuga asks with a grin. The instructor laughs and reassures us; if anything, it's the cold weather to watch out for since the gas can get sluggish. He and Macsuga practice patching on the old bitumen, cutting an X over pockets of trapped water, then boiling it out through a metal tube before melting it together with a small chunk of the new material. "It's easiest if you get it right the first time, but you can always go back and fix it", the instructor counsels, switching off the gas, then gestures widely at the large roof, "after this you'll be experts—and it pays well!"

With that, the tutorial ends. Macsuga and the other volunteers take a closer look at the melegítő, while Karl and I walk the instructor back toward the ladder, asking questions about particularly odd areas of the roof, places where old pipes, wiring, and corners might get in the way. They pause at a raised bit covered with a sheet of stiff plastic, and the instructor explains how to seal bitumen around the base. "What's under there anyway?", he asks. They heave the plastic off and peer through a large square hole into the room below. "If you don't



need it for anything”, the instructor begins, then pencils a rough diagram on a nearby wall showing us how to plug it: stopper, cement, rubble, bitumen seal.

23. Goodwin 1994:
626-627

Throughout his visit, the instructor shows our team how to see bitumen as a professional would,²³ to learn to “see relevant events” in the rolls of bitumen, the components of the melegítő and the elements of a roof as a “locus for [the] embodied practice” of sealing the roof, rather than as an “object of contemplation”. At the same time, however, and in the course of his tutorial, the instructor learns from Karl and Macsuga—and the inventory of specific tools, resources and troubles they observe together—to see the relevant events of this just-here, just-now job. He learns how to help us on our particular project by using this-knob-doesn’t-work-but-that’s-fine tools, offering you-might-find-yourselves-working-in-the-snow advice and by fielding what-about-this-weird-bit-of-the-roof questions. On the climb up to the roof, chat about volunteers, donations, budget constraints and winter weather helps the instructor get a sense of the task’s ‘perspicuous setting’ as part of Gólya’s particular project—an understanding of this “local gang’s work affairs, the organizational *thing* that they are up against [...] what their affairs consist of as locally produced, locally occasioned” fixing-this-roof as work-on-this-project.²⁴

24. Garfinkel 2002:
182

Together, the instructor, the brigádvezetők and even the largely quiet volunteers—who worry, laugh, signal in their own way how things strike them—calibrate a sense of ‘good enough’ work on, for and as their project by composing a context of relevant concerns and resources. Thus, in learning to see and think with ‘the marbled underside of heated bitumen’ and ‘no money to buy new tools’, the group develops a working

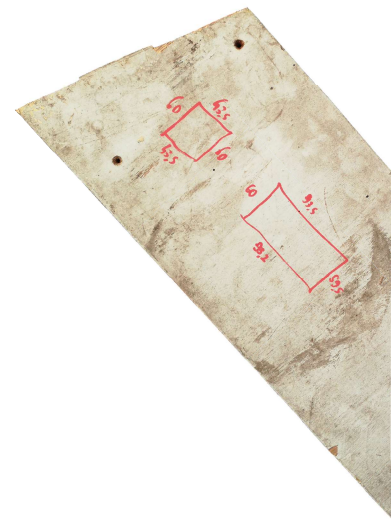
grammar of analysis, “to assign/recognise the sense of things *and to organise further activities* [...] for the sake of achieving ends, realising projects [...] inextricable from questions about the relevance and effectiveness of it to the things [we] want to do”.²⁵ The instructor does not give the team a rigid system to replicate. Rather, the tutorial is an occasion for the group members to co-operatively²⁶ equip themselves with matters, terms and contingencies to work with in the future while sealing *this* roof in *this* weather with *these* tools in such a way as to be good enough for *this* project.

We continue learning how to lay the bitumen ‘well enough’ as we work over the coming weeks: short on volunteers, Macsuga develops his own 1-person technique; working after dusk, we rely on the soft, sticky feel of the melted bitumen rather than the marbled bottom; working in the rain, we ‘boil out’ pools of accumulated water before sticking it down. “Szarjuk le”, Füle tells me, standing up from one particularly tarry, messy patch at the roof’s edge, “fuck it. We can fix it later. It’s lunchtime”. It’s good enough for now.

We assess the ‘good enough’ character of a particular job by co-operatively discerning, invoking and working with available ‘organizational things’²⁷ in and as the material circumstances of each next roll of bitumen *as part of Gólya’s renovation project*. Rather than honing a particularly ‘professional’ vision, our roofing team develops and contests ways of seeing, understanding and evaluating events “that are answerable to the distinctive interests of [*this*] particular social group”,²⁸ that is, to the other *gólyások* and volunteers working on the project. Our roofing teams develop a make-ends-meet, amateur ‘DIY vision’, a sense of acceptable-sloppiness-because-it-was-raining,

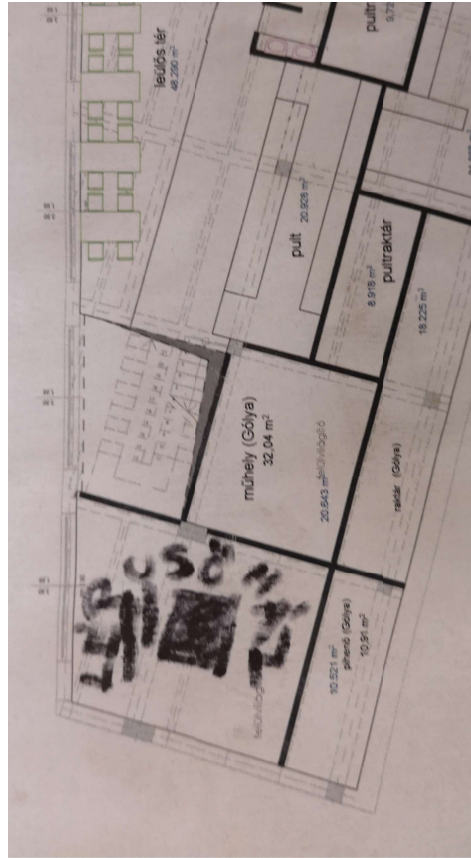
25. Sharrock & Anderson 1979: 21

26. Goodwin 2017



27. Garfinkel 2002: 217

28. Goodwin 1994: 606



not-bad-for-a-first-try, and perhaps most of all ah-fuck-it-we-can-always-fix-it-later. The brigádvezetők might find reason for complaint in the extra work of ‘fixing it later’—Csámpás astounded, as with incidents of bad glettelés, that people won’t be a *bit* more professional. However, the observable-reportable availability of ‘fixing it later’ usefully enables sloppy bitumen to serve as a

29. Fürst 2019: 68

“temporary, ‘good enough’ solution”²⁹ within the work of the project since-snow-is-coming-and-there’s-other-work-to-be-done, and up to just that time when gólyások, tenants, visitors or some other members of Gólya’s “relevant community” determine otherwise.³⁰ With deadlines looming and volunteers available, being able to see what’s ‘good enough’ for the project is perhaps more important than seeing—or doing—a ‘professional job’.

30. Goodwin 1994:

628

Rather than seeing such an ‘amateur’ approach as inherently inferior to a ‘professional’ one, then, the practice of ‘fixing it later’ provides grounds for seeing a difference between DIY vision and professional vision in terms of their differential accountability. The gólyások and volunteers do not answer to a conventional commercial client’s expectation of professional-quality ‘deliverables’. They answer to one another and to the other members of their wider community—future tenants

with lease agreements, neighbours contacted about possible neighbourhood projects—within an ongoing project of building and maintaining the sociomaterial space of Gólya ‘as well as possible’ in and as a situated “messy world of concerns”.³¹ This, then, is part of what the broad socio-political commitments of the gólyások to build, own and operate their community centre collectively comes to “look like as a course of work in [the] accountable details”³² of their shared project: their ongoing accountability to one another and their work, during *and after* the renovation itself.

31. Puig de la
Bellacasa 2017:
33

32. Garfinkel 2002:
282

The local sense of mutual accountability that the group develops in their work thus allows for evaluations, revisions and alterations to be made as matters of practical concern throughout and for the project. Bitumen, the tools and inventory of the bázis, blueprints, plans and their ongoing modifications are all situated resources for observing what’s going on, how it’s going and, thereby, working to maintain, correct, repair or otherwise improve their collective situation.

A week after our roofing tutorial when I arrive for my next shift, I notice a new new-blueprint lying on the table in the bázis. The hole that Karl discovered on the roof is marked in, surrounded by spiralling letters: staircase. Later I hear some of the brigádvezetők talking about a leendő tetőterász, a *rooftop-terrace-to-be* that had become possible-this-way with the discovery of the hole, its revision on the blueprint and discussions over it among the team. There was a new here-and-now sense of what might be good enough—or even better—for Gólya.





“Csocsó szünet!”, Dányi proclaims bounding over to the Deviszont foosball table, then turns imploringly to Gerle, “*Foosball break!* Can’t we play one round?”. Gerle continues clearing the table, gathering the condiments to return to the fridge. A few of the other srácok help her shuttle dirty plates and leftovers to the kitchen. “No, there’s not enough time”, Gerle replies apologetically, “we have to get started on the activities we’ve planned”. “Hm, what about csocsó instead?”, Dányi schemes, giving the blue goalkeeper a quick, goading spin, but Gerle just ignores him.

Lunch got started at Deviszont late—as usual—and, judging by the time, it’s looking like we planned a few too many activities for this week’s open session—as usual. Over the past few months, the organisers and srácok have worked out a rough routine for Deviszont’s open sessions, but we still have to adjust our plans as we go along. One session, button-making takes a lot longer than expected, so the organisers confer quickly and decide to cancel the final group discussion. Another time, it’s sunny out, so we have no choice but to follow the srácok outside. Today, the srácok have a lot of energy—and they’re desperate to play some csocsó. “We’ll be fast! Please!”,

Dányi dogs Gerle as she walks to the kitchen. She sighs and looks at the clock, “Fine, but it has to be short. You can play first ‘til 5 points”.

It’s a compromise: a usual game of csocsó in Deviszont goes until 10 points, determined by the 10 plastic beads stationed at each end of the table. Not that things stop there: most games end with cries of “Visszavágó! *Rematch!*”, and a quick slide of the beads back to 0-0. Csocsó has a way of never stopping, we’ve come to learn. ‘Short matches’ are Gerle’s latest strategy for getting a handle on the srácok’s endless rounds of csocsó. It makes the matches faster and makes it easier to prevent a visszavágó, since the break’s only a *short* one. Dányi celebrates his small victory and sets off to gather teams, “Leila, you’re on my side”.

“Nice idea”, Pál tells Gerle as she heads into the kitchen, “it takes ages for them to score anyway”. She nods, “yeah, it might still be a while!”. They talk through the remaining activities for the day. “Shawn!”, Dányi shouts from the csocsó table, “jösz csocsózni? *Up for some csocsó?* There’s room for one more!”. I join the srácok gathered around the table while Gerle and Pál decide whether to adjust our schedule for the rest of the session. I’m on Sanyi’s team.

Sanyi pings the small white ball through the slot, and the red-and-blue figures inside whirl and clatter back-and-forth. A few of the other srácok gather to watch while they chat and finish off the snacks. The csocsó table draws people in, newcomers and regulars alike, and it gives them a chance to get to know one another. Most of the srácok first came to Deviszont with one or two friends, but csocsó requires four—getting a game going requires talking, sometimes pleading with

the others. Suddenly, Dányi spins one rod of players hard. The ball thwacks the back of our goal before either Sanyi or I can react. “See, I like playing with you, Shawn! You mess up!”, Dányi gloats gleefully. Csocsó’s been a great way for me to get to know the srácok, too—if at cost to my pride.

The csocsó table has become one of the most important elements of Deviszont’s open sessions, even if the deviszontosok hadn’t quite intended it that way. “We thought it would help attract new students when we first opened”, Kamilla explains to me when I ask about the table, “When we go flyering, for example, we can invite them to join us for a game of csocsó”. While it may be hard to describe—much less convince someone to *visit*—a community space like Deviszont “where you can join in all sorts of projects”, everyone knows what a game of csocsó is. Csocsó was meant to be one resource the deviszontosok could use to make sense of Deviszont to others,³³ to communicate what ‘joining in’ might look like: what it would ask of them. The deviszontosok even station the csocsó table right inside the front door so that passers-by might catch a glimpse of our group playing and chatting—and might poke their head in to learn more. Csocsó, as the sort of thing we do at Deviszont, can make Deviszont *recognisably* fun³⁴ and make ‘joining in’ a good idea. When Deviszont’s doors finally opened, csocsó proved a hit. Each week before the opening circle, when Dányi arrives, when the organisers are setting up for an activity—whenever possible, really—a gaggle of srácok descends on the table.

The trouble is that csocsó is perhaps *too* fun. The table may be a good way to encourage students to visit, but it’s also a persistent temptation away from the discussions, DIY projects, and other activities the deviszontosok organise

33. Goodwin 2017: 11

34. Sacks 1995 (Vol. 2): 242

for the open sessions—most of which don't involve a game of csocsó. The deviszontosok's purpose for buying the csocsó table was instrumental, as a resource to “make particular kinds of action [...] possible”, like ‘playing csocsó together’, ‘inviting new students’, ‘getting to know the srácok’, and ‘joining in’ a shared community space.³⁵ The srácok, however, prove adept at finding additional possibilities beyond, and often alternative to, ‘joining in’ Deviszont in the particular way envisioned by the organisers—alternatives such as ‘just one (more) round’, ‘csocsó instead’ and ‘visszavágó!’. Playing csocsó thus happens in many ways, fitting in at times harmoniously, at times rambunctiously³⁶ among Deviszont's wider ecology of projects, plans and other activities.

35. Goodwin 2017:

319

36. Savransky 2019:

14



Week-by-week, game-after-game, csocsó comes to be a trouble—to matter in a different *manner*³⁷ in the live sessions than it had in the deviszontosok’s planning meetings. It becomes clear, to everyone at Deviszont “in and through the details of their conduct” playing csocsó ‘again?’, ‘still?’ and ‘for-ever’, that the srácok orient to the table differently than the organisers: they’re working on different things at the csocsó table, finding different, perhaps incompatible ways Deviszont can be a fun and good place to hang out.³⁸ Through discussions during the organisers’ planning meetings, importunate pleas from the srácok, and compromises struck by both, the group sets about finding a compatibility, that is, a way that playing csocsó could work in and as Deviszont-as-a-kind-of-space where critical pedagogy and conversations about social issues can occur in addition to and alongside csocsó, a place where visitors can join *many* projects.

The ‘csocsó szünet’ develops as an important resource to this end: the *break* offers a common grammar³⁹ for negotiating the rules of the game⁴⁰ of csocsó—and Deviszont—together. A break is something the srácok can clamour for, and something the organisers can schedule in. It can offer an opportunity for the deviszontosok to convene and reassess the day’s going plans. For the srácok uninterested in csocsó, the break is an occasion to run to the store; chat with one of the organisers; mess around on Deviszont’s drum set. The csocsó table’s popularity far exceeds the expectations of Deviszont’s organisers: it has worked upon the dynamic and shape of their weekly open sessions by sparking new kinds of interactions. This has provided new opportunities as well as challenges for Deviszont’s volunteers to pursue their goals of making a space

37. Savransky 2016:
online

38. Hindmarsh &
Llewellyn 2018:
417

39. Barnett 2017:
263-264

40. Wittgenstein
1958: §31; §88

that is shared, supportive and empowering for their entire közösség, the *community* that forms there.

The csocsó szünet becomes an expected part of any weekly plan, and *usefully* so: “that’s a long time for them to focus; let’s put in a csocsó szünet after the presentations”, Kamilla suggests during one planning meeting. The ‘break’ is not a mandate thought up and imposed by Deviszont’s organisers, but rather a collaboratively-if-discordantly created and *worked with*—planned in, pleaded for, ‘in 15 minutes’-ed—resource that any member can put to use to try to shape Deviszont’s open sessions to their liking. Treating csocsó as a *break* is one way the deviszontosok and srácok manage its ‘good fit’ with the space’s other projects and activities: how they develop a public understanding of what csocsó is for, what can be done with it, what *it’s* up against and hence whether and how it’s working for them.

The csocsó table becomes a site where the members of Deviszont must—but as a publicly visible ‘worksite problem’ that “can be seen and recognized by others”⁴¹ also *can*—work out just what kind of work they’re getting up to together, just “what has to be done, where, and when” to build the kind of social and political community they want.⁴² After all, “If it was going to be entertainment from beginning to end, we would have been doing different work entirely”.⁴³ We work out, gradually and ongoingly, ‘rules of the csocsó game-as-a-part-of-Deviszont’, its “rules of relevance”, its “rules of effective action”, its “grammar” in Deviszont as “the environment of events of play”.⁴⁴ In searching for ‘rules of the game’ for *our* csocsó table, the deviszontosok and srácok are able to develop a situated “community of living” with a shareable, discussable, negotiable ecology of concerns,

41. Rawls 2008: 709

42. Button 2012: 675

43. Garfinkel 2002:
181

44. Garfinkel 2019:
154-155

relevant activities and values that extend beyond the physical space of the csocsó table itself⁴⁵. Shared and shareable ‘rules of the game’ like the csocsó szünet are resources with which the deviszontosok and srácok can make csocsó work in and as Deviszont—to function as a shared practical resource in getting Deviszont’s work done together.⁴⁶

45. Puig de la Bellacasa 2017: 151

46. Rawls 2008: 710

Our csocsó table comes together as we play it together, getting a sense of the rules we need to make it work week-by-week. “Emeljük föl!”, Dányi yells when the ball catches in one of the corners, “Let’s lift it!”. The eccentricities of the second-hand csocsó table are cause for more rules: small dents and rough patches stop the ball just out of reach, but missing screws and a broken latch make it easy to tilt to get the ball rolling again. “Hey, move your things”, Sanyi tells the other srácok who’ve gathered to watch. Once they clear their drinks and phones off the ends of the table, Sanyi and I tilt our side, and the ball rolls—straight into our own goal. Sanyi protests, but Leila’s quick to reassure him, “No, no! That doesn’t count”.

We start another round, and Sanyi does a hard spin that sends the ball cracking into the glass top and then back toward our own goal. Dányi objects, “we said no spinning ‘round like that, you dip!”. He drives another goal home, then gloats, “You’re terrible! You gay—”.

“Hey!”, Pál interjects from nearby, “let’s not talk like that”. “Is it a problem if someone’s gay?”, Gerle adds. “No-o”, Dányi mumbles without looking up from the game. He tones his insults back, though they never stop completely. Dányi and the other srácok’s csocsó shit-talk is a cause for concern among the organisers. “There’s no getting away from it”, Gerle says when we talk about the matter during one of the planning meetings,



“csocsó’s competitive. It creates that kind of behaviour. It’s just part of it”. The others agree and point out that many of the srácok already know each other from school: insulting each other is, whether we like it or not, part of their friendship. Rather than trying to force them to stop, the organisers develop a policy to counteract it—to speak up when things are getting too personal, to call attention to insults that are homophobic or racist, to use such insults as occasion for conversation about those social issues, but also to join teams strategically so they can stick up for the quieter srácok. “It’s not a perfect solution”, Gerle concludes, “but at least we can get them to think about what they’re saying”.

The organisers and the srácok come up with ways to play csocsó ‘well’ in Deviszont by dealing with troubles that arise in the course of our games. Tactics like ‘lifting up’, ‘no fair’, and ‘dis-counting goals’ make play with our worn and eccentric table possible by evaluating and coordinating gameplay. They identify, express and redress game-relevant problems, building a piecemeal and public grammar⁴⁷ of ‘fair play’ as they go. The organisers’ concerns about and objections to the srácok’s shit-talk, through their own tactics such as ‘speaking up’ and ‘calling out’, are likewise made part of this grammar of practical, that is, relevant-to-the-playing-of-this-Deviszont-game-of-csocsó concerns. The deviszontosok and srácok show each other how to play *Deviszont’s* csocsó by assembling and modifying a public understanding of various activities as tactics, moves and mistakes that constitute the game-in-and-as-Deviszont’s practical circumstances. Even those who aren’t playing csocsó can play a part in the game of Deviszont’s csocsó. By moving their drinks, by defending a player against shit-talk, or, indeed,

47. Barnett 2017: 248

by gathering around and taking interest in the game of csocsó in the first place, they create, share in and work on Deviszont's csocsó through "a hands-on, ongoing process of recreation of 'as well as possible' relations"⁴⁸ within the game's play as part of this community space.

48. Puig de la

Bellacasa 2017: 6

There is thus an important point to be made about the organisers' efforts to put the csocsó table to pedagogical use to address the srácok's more offensive shit-talk: it happens as part of and about the game of Deviszont's csocsó. Larger political and moral problems are discussed as they're made relevant in the game's play as situated negotiations of the "terms of engagement" of this community and the "(ever-contested) question of our being-together"⁴⁹ in more-or-less enjoyable ways. The organisers do not expect that the srácok will adopt their own political attitudes or convictions wholesale—indeed, they recognise that the srácok's shit-talk is also a dynamic of their friend-group, something they have little influence over. Csocsó, like other activities in Deviszont, occasions political discussion in and as part of its members' effort to make something work—this game of csocsó, this community space—together. Even though the different individuals and groups may value Deviszont and Deviszont's csocsó for different reasons, interests or projects, their negotiating, judging, improvising, rule-making, -breaking, and -bending ongoingly "invent" a shared space⁵⁰ where political and moral debates can happen—by way of csocsó.

49. Massey 2005: 142

50. Massey 2005: 162

Csocsó is a 'break' from the activities organised by the deviszontosok around social and political issues—discussions about musical subcultures and stigma, healthy cooking and cost-effective meal-planning—but it has nonetheless emerged

as a crucial and well-loved way that Deviszont—its community and its politics—gets done. An open session in Deviszont without a game of csocsó would be exceptional—something might be wrong; the group might be in a different space. Working out how to play csocsó is different from the kinds of “everyday politicized practices” presumed to constitute the majority of social action in alternative cultural and political spaces, practices that share political messages, enact political ideals or envision “socio-cultural ‘alternatives’, often and most effectively through visitors’ own co-participation in and performance of shared practices”.⁵¹ The deviszontosok and the srácok’s co-participation in a game of csocsó doesn’t take place as a rehearsal of an alternative political system, but as their game of csocsó—a game that they work on together, and which has its own, perhaps subtler politics. Learning to play csocsó well together was not intended to be a method for building an alternative political system, but it has become a method for creating a new community a game at a time, finding ways to be together and learn from one another—and perhaps to take those lessons elsewhere as experiences, practices, and rules to work with.

51. Yates 2015b: 254,
emphasis added

“You know, the table was our first big purchase”, Kamilla tells me when I ask her where they found it after one session, “with grant money from the Open Society Foundation”, she suddenly rolls her eyes and interrupts herself, “I know, I know: Soros pénz, *Soros money*”. With the Fidesz government’s increasingly vitriolic denunciations of the OSF and its founder George Soros—along with anyone bearing the slightest affiliation with them⁵²—an OSF grant-funded csocsó table could be cause for a different sort of trouble. The biographical

52. See discussion in
Plenta 2020: 2

details⁵³ of Deviszont’s csocsó table could be a resource for seeing the game in-and-as Deviszont in another way: as a ‘Soros’ kind of place. Its social history—recorded publicly in funding documentation—offers a means for assembling an alternative ‘context’ for the “recognition of action”⁵⁴ in Deviszont, one in which inviting others to ‘join in’ becomes seeably and condemnably “outside of [the] legitimate moral order” asserted by Hungary’s present government.⁵⁵

53. Appadurai 1986

54. Smith 2021: 183

55. Rawls et al.

2020: 19

This way of seeing the deviszontosok and their actions could be “*ascribed* to them” even if it’s “quite the reverse of what they *avow* of themselves”⁵⁶ in their day-to-day business at and about the csocsó table. In practice, Soros doesn’t come up much. However, Kamilla’s passing comment highlights the possibility, even the likelihood of “ironic accounts”⁵⁷ of their activities at the open sessions, ones built on details other than those made relevant by the deviszontosok in their work⁵⁸ and which thereby assemble an alternative context and “relevant moral order”⁵⁹ by which to judge them. Many of the government’s accounts—or accusations—of civil society organisations turn on treating ‘Soros’ as an ulterior motive, “something putatively more elementary”⁶⁰ than the organisations’ ordinary practices, explanations and self-descriptions, and which provides evidence with which “to specify the *real* reasons” and the so-called ‘*real* meaning’ of their activities.⁶¹ Such accounts may render the members’ own “sense of those practices [...] *unrecognisable*”,⁶² but that doesn’t mean that members are free to ignore them as a practical concern.

56. McHoul 2007:

465

57. Raffel 2013: 7-8

58. Hindmarsh &

Llewellyn 2018:

432

59. Smith 2021: 187

60. Mair & Sharrock

2021: 23

61. Lynch 2019: 151

62. Mair & Sharrock

2021: 23

Soros is a surprising aside—one that feels forced on the csocsó table, the csocsó szünet and the srácok’s shit-talk. “So I guess the csocsó is compromised”, Kamilla concludes with

63. Yates 2015b: 238

64. Barnett 2014: 157

65. Chatterton &
Pickerill 2010:
487

a shrug, “but the srácok love it”. This is perhaps the risk in looking for the “political meaning and ideology [that] underpin everyday practices in social movements”⁶³ and social centres at the expense of noticing “the ordinary ways in which the ongoing give and take of imperatives to justify, practices of evaluation, and expectations of accountability open up spaces for acting a little bit differently, here and there”.⁶⁴ While Deviszont’s game of csocsó can be seen as one of the “messy, everyday practices [that] define participation in political projects where participants attempt to build the future in the present”,⁶⁵ treating it as ‘participation in a political project’ leaves it seeably ‘devious Soros meddling’ as well. Both assertions make claims about the way Deviszont’s csocsó table fits into Deviszont and the way Deviszont fits into the world. Neither, however, offers much insight into how the players, their audience, the deviszontosok, the srácok find ways to get along, play and work together as a community with their own shared projects during, with and sometimes even *as* a good game of csocsó.



3.3

I turn one of the bags out onto a table in the Auróra Kioszk. Messy skeins of yarn dump onto the table amid the small piles of tins, knitting needles, plastic crochet hooks and other items I found on my way over. “Oh super,” Gisela nods with approval, though with a slight grimace, “mhm, all polyester, but anyway it was free!”. It’s a slow afternoon in Auróra, and everyone’s just sitting around. Naómi and Bencsó are taking a smoke-break out in the courtyard, while Toni sits in a sunny chair by the window behind the bar idly scrolling on her phone. Samu’s stretched out asleep on a couch. Pozsó’s in his usual spot, clacking loudly at his laptop, and a group of international students exchange gossip at a corner table.

By the look of it, our heap of yarn’s the day’s big excitement. I spied the bags on my way over to Auróra and immediately thought of Gisela. She’s recently taken up knitting chunky mittens and hats for friends and family: part of her project to quit smoking, she explains whenever anyone asks. It’s something she can occupy herself with between—and often enough during—her many meetings at Auróra. Like the other aurorások, Gisela’s involved in a number of ongoing projects in the space: the new community garden, fundraiser planning,

work with her artist collective Pneuma, and a new band among other things. In the meantime, when she can fit it in, she works on her knitting—and not smoking.

This yarn was sat atop a heap of odds-and-ends covering the pavement when



I found it: an early sign that *lomtalanítás*, *Junk-Clearing*, had started in the 8th District. Once a year, each of Budapest's *önkormányzatok*, its *local governments* allow residents to leave any quantity of waste and bulky items at the curb to be taken away free-of-charge. Some people take the occasion to clean out *that* drawer, closet or room. Others gut entire flats. It's a time when new projects get started and when the leftover pieces of old projects are tossed out. The result is a thrown-together landscape of broken refrigerators, hunks of concrete, sewing machines, kitchenware, bags of gravel, doors, paintings, yellowed spreadsheets from 1978, quilts, an enormous bird statue: *sok minden*, *lots of everything*.

Before the *önkormányzat's* people arrive, of course, many of us passing by have a rummage. There are professionals: teams that stake out good piles early in the morning, then spend the day stripping metals out of broken appliances and scouring for items to resell at flea markets. The rest of us are amateurs, just keeping an eye out for something we might fancy. Sometimes, people look for a specific thing: I see in a social media post that the *gólyások* are hunting for toilet bowls for the WC they'll soon be constructing. Others leave it to chance or browse as they

go, as was the case with my yarn discovery and the granny who approached me as I excavated it from the pile. She told me about the CD-player she found on a nearby square—broken, but she was thinking that maybe she’d have it fixed or just sell it on—then drifted toward another pile. Chats, arguments and bargains arise between gleaners as we collect and, in so doing, value⁶⁶ sometimes different, sometimes like things: our enacted grammars of ‘claimed piles’, ‘possible uses’ and ‘good finds’ coordinate between variable “orders of worth” and negotiate how they might fit together in and as *lomtalanítás* as a public event.⁶⁷

66. Cresswell 2012:
168

67. Barnett 2014:
156; Boltanski &
Thévenot 2006

Viewed as a sprawling, chance and tangled landscape, *lomtalanítás* takes the Surrealist flea-market quests for ‘objective chance’, “as beautiful as the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on an operating table” to a city-block scale.⁶⁸ For André Breton, objective chance was important particularly as a phenomenon “discovered *together* [...] a mutual experience that Breton describes as a sudden atmospheric condensation [...] achieved by an object mediating between humans”.⁶⁹ *Lomtalanítás* too could be seen to take on such a “congregational agency” through its weird entanglements: its public event coming together as “people, animals, artifacts, technologies, and elemental forces share powers and operate in dissonant conjunction with each other”⁷⁰ throughout the streets of Józsefváros. The jumbled street-side stuff hosts a “range of agents able to participate in the course of action” of *lomtalanítás*, testifying to “the agency of all sorts of objects”.⁷¹ Passers-by and pickers are *pulled*, as it were, to stop for a photo, point out to a friend, or stow in a bag all sorts of things by *compelling* objects, gatherings and “stuff that

68. Rauner Library
2014: online

69. O’Gorman 2013:
39

70. Bennett 2010:
34-35

71. Latour 2005: 52;
76

72. Bennett 2010: 4

73. Bennett 2010: 5

74. Latour 2013: 294;
Latour 2005

75. Engelmann &
McCormack
2018; Stewart
2011

76. Adey 2015

77. McCormack 2015:
101

command[s] attention in its own right, as existents in excess of their association with human meanings, habits, or projects”.⁷² *Lomtalanítás* can be seen that way—if observed-and-reported with the right ‘receptivity’, ‘anticipatory readiness’,⁷³ predilection ‘to follow’.⁷⁴ ‘modes of attunement’,⁷⁵ ‘affinity for’,⁷⁶ or ‘responsive sensitivity’⁷⁷ to its tangles and towers of things.



78. Garfinkel 2002:
217

Of course, plenty of people do not see it this way. They walk past with apparent indifference, disgust or disdain for the ‘alluring’ objects scattered along the curb—and for the people picking through them. Even for the gleaners, the ‘right’ disposition toward *lomtalanítás*’ objects is more refined than giving attention to a generic ‘agency’ of things. Their ‘right’ disposition is so refined “in and over the in-courseness of the stream of [their] work”⁷⁸ as the browsers and pickers, specialists and amateurs of *lomtalanítás*. Grab-that, look-there, och-too-slow and nice-find encounters with things arise ‘ecologically’, amid ongoing practices, “processes and negotiations [...] under which certain things can be rendered possible, effective and reproducible as objects endowed with particular kinds of value,

meaning, and power”.⁷⁹ The rummagers of *lomtalanítás* “are susceptible to the charms of things — some things and not others”,⁸⁰ and they come to be so only in likewise attending to—besides the things themselves—the rummaging and evaluation practices of others, “negotiating a here-and-now [...] a negotiation which must take place within and between both human and nonhuman”.⁸¹

79. Domínguez

Rubio 2016: 64

80. Cresswell 2012:

168

81. Massey 2005: 140

Ascribing a ‘congregational agency’ to the stuff of *lomtalanítás*, though possible, offers little perspective on the *work* by which “just in any actual case [...] the congregationally witnessable coherence of the most ordinary things in the world [is] made”—the work of valuing, sorting and salvaging practices.⁸² It hence has little to say about the ‘mutual experience’ of the public event of *lomtalanítás* for those people engaged in the actual “lived congregational work” of watching for, following and responding to things in just here, just now ‘right’ ways.⁸³

82. Garfinkel 2002:

139

83. Garfinkel 2002:

247

To see that all things ‘act’ is useful for academic “ontology-building” projects.⁸⁴ Theories of all-the-things-of-the-world ‘in excess’ of human projects theorise “‘the plenum’ [...] the plenitude; the plenty of it; the more than you or anyone can say or hope to say; the endless chaotic circumstantiality of lived, living, lebend, uhr, um, etcetera, and etcetera”,⁸⁵ but they fail to ask, “*who has had what need of a plenum?* [...] For what? To do what *with it?*”.⁸⁶ By prioritising ‘the excess’ at the expense of human projects, such accounts fail to consider how particular “sociomaterial resources” become relevant to and come to *do work* in those projects.⁸⁷ They miss how the ‘doing’⁸⁸ of a project “proceeds through a series of findings [...] a continuous dialogue between the [project maker] and the objects [they find]” that requires “listening to the situation”⁸⁹

84. See Joronen &

Häkli 2017

85. Garfinkel 2002:

136-137

86. Garfinkel 1991: 13

87. Hindmarsh &

Llewellyn 2018:

432

88. Button 2012: 677

89. Manzini 2019: 38;
50-51

and therefore *situated*, practical understandings of what that situation is, what it requires or what it could benefit from.⁹⁰

90. McHugh 2019:
47; Lynch 2019:
193; Garfinkel &
Sacks 1970: 343



91. Bennett 2010: 5

92. Rawls 2006: 35;
or 'transactively'
for Pragmatists,
see Barnett &
Bridge 2013:
1029-1030

93. Hindmarsh &
Llewellyn 2018:
417

94. Manzini 2019: 49

95. Massey 2005:
141-142

This is not to say that the 'doings' of things can or should be reduced to the "contexts in which (human) subjects see them",⁹¹ but rather to insist that (even) those human perceptions, contexts and projects come together ecologically, interactively,⁹² and "in the very course of their affairs [... displaying the] matters to which they are attentive".⁹³ From this perspective, a project offers an ordinary, partial⁹⁴ and put-to-use plenum which, in its use, conveys a sense of what we're *working with* while making sense of what we're *working on* here-and-now.⁹⁵ Bags of yarn catch my eye as I make my way toward Auróra as a thing that I—and knowing of Gisela's projects, that she—could do something *with*. Digging through the pile on our table, we find it's polyester-but-at-least-it's-free: we find a way to make it work.

A woman walks into the Kioszk while Gisela and I divvy up the different colours of yarn. She looks around the room, but doesn't find whoever she's looking for: she heads for the

bar. “Szia!”, she calls to Toni, who hops up from the chair by the window, “My family’s clearing out a flat next door, and we thought we’d see if Auróra could use anything before we take it to the curb”. “Oh, for sure! Let me just get Naómi”, Toni answers before darting outside.

Naómi is Auróra’s Programme Coordinator and, with the help of a small team of employees and a shifting roster of volunteers, she manages most of the day-to-day logistics and planning for Auróra’s concerts, events and other projects. When I ask her about her job during an interview, she laughs, “These days what am I doing? Well!”. She works through a long list: video calls with workers from other Hungarian community spaces for the new Szabad Terek network that Auróra’s leading; organising sound equipment; coordinating events with students and civilek; searching for someone to rent out the Nagyszerem; planning-meetings for the new community garden. “And it would be nice if not so many emails came in!”, she laughs bleakly about the numerous troubles that crop up day-to-day, “Or like if the toilet breaks down again, it would be great if someone else could take care of it”. Naómi has to figure out how to deal with whatever comes up—be that an email, a police raid, a burst pipe, an interview request, a birthday party, “It’s not really up to me what I’ll get up to each day”. Today, it seems, she’ll be getting up to *lomtalanítás*.

She and the woman walk back into the Kioszk. Naómi takes a last drink of her *fröcs* before returning it to the bar, then comes over to Gisela and me, “Can you come with us next door to look for things Auróra could use?”. We’re both happy to help—and to see more *lomtalanítás* oddities. Bencső joins us as we head out through the courtyard. He and Naómi discuss



what sorts of things the bar could use. “Look for things for the kitchen”, Naómi directs us, “bowls, knives, plates, anything that looks useful”.

Boxes crowd the flat’s narrow entryway; assorted piles of mugs, utensils, jars of homemade preserves and kitsch statuettes crowd the kitchen counter, the living room floor, the furniture. “It was my mother’s place”, the woman explains, “but she passed away last year, so we’re going to sell it—and we don’t know what to do with all of the stuff. It’d be a shame to send it to a flea market if someone here could use it, and we’ve always been supporters of Auróra, so we thought we’d offer”. We thank her, chat a bit, and start looking around.

We work out what Auróra can use together. Family members working in the flat point out boxes that they’re keeping—ones we can’t use—and others they think might be useful. Naómi and Bencsó talk over the kitchenware: ceramic bowl is a ‘yes’, rolling pin is a ‘no’. Gisela and I bring things that ‘look useful’ to us for them to consider: tablecloths, vases, packs of serviettes. As the person who deals with troubles others can’t solve in Auróra, however, Naómi is perhaps best situated to interpret how and how well the new items might work within the ‘configurations’ of other tools, people, projects and frequent troubles of Auróra.⁹⁶ Precisely how any object will be used—how it can be useful—will only develop “within activity [...] progressively revealed and constituted as the specific things they are for the particular actors using them”.⁹⁷

96. Goodwin 2017:
322

97. Goodwin 2017:
266

98. Manzini 2019: 54,
emphasis added

will be used—how it can be useful—will only develop “within activity [...] progressively revealed and constituted as the specific things they are for the particular actors using them”.⁹⁷ Nonetheless, Naómi still develops and operationalises a sense for “*potentially* usable items” for Auróra by “listening to the situation attentively [...] listening to things and to people”⁹⁸ in a particular way: as the practical business of keeping Auróra



working. Auróra's useful things, then, are a 'material method' for sorting, valuing, "making and describing [a] material coherence of things" in *lomtalanítás* as Auróra's 'shop-floor problem', that is, in constituting and congregating our activities as Auróra's work, its "*certain* labors".⁹⁹ Potentially useful things make it possible for the neighbours to invite us over; possible for Naómi to ask for help; and possible for all of us to look through things in and as the work of keeping Auróra running.

99. Garfinkel 2002:

111

Some of the things we find Naómi piles into a large ceramic bowl, while others, as she puts it, "there's no room for". In saying there's 'not room' for something like a rolling pin, Naómi is not saying that it can't conceivably fit within Auróra's kitchen, just that there's already a *lot* of other stuff on the shelves. 'Room' offers a practical grammar for evaluating and expressing not just the 'usefulness' of an item, but also a sense of the comparative cost, risk, contingency or *work* involved in making that object 'useful' for Auróra. A rolling pin might 'just get in the way' if it doesn't help with any of the troubles Auróra faces day-to-day—and if no one's looking to start a new baking project. We find many things that look potentially useful; with

100. Law & Singleton
2013: 490–491

criteria like ‘room’ we develop methods for learning if they’re *Auróra’s* useful objects. Although *lomtalanítás* appears at first glance to be the perfect illustration of the idea that “[e]verything is entangled with everything else”, our group develops *situated* practices, criteria and grounds for treating particular objects as useful, as a “something that acts. Makes a difference. Is therefore detectable”, reportable, and even usable.¹⁰⁰ As a practical matter and (only) in the course of our work, we look for and find ways to make things work together.

We schlep our trove back to *Auróra* and pile it on a table in the courtyard. “Here, take these,” *Naómi* says to me, pointing out a stack of small bowls, “and replace the ashtrays on the tables—they’re filthy!”. *Gisela* helps *Bencsó* carry bowls full of utensils and crockery behind the bar to be washed, while *Naómi* looks through the pile, working out what to do with the remaining stuff. “What are all these objects?”, *Samu* asks with a yawn, ambling out of the *Kioszk*. “Ehh, it’s not certain they’re staying, I don’t think”, *Naómi* replies over her shoulder. *Samu* goes over to the table for a closer look, “You gathered a bunch of stuff you want to throw out?”. “No”, *Naómi* explains, “we gathered a bunch of stuff that we still want to keep”. “Ah! So this is where the things that you *don’t* want to throw out wound up”. “No”, *Naómi* explains, “we brought these from the neighbour’s”. *Samu’s* surprised—and still a bit groggy, “the neighbour’s”? “Yes!”. *Samu* picks up a painted vase and looks it over, then leans in conspiratorially, “so we can use these to show how much the neighbours love us, eh?”. “No-o, I don’t think so”, *Naómi* smirks—she doesn’t have *that* use for them.

As *Samu’s* initial confusion and eventual scheming makes clear, the pile of things could be used to get up to a variety of

projects. They could, for instance, work as resources to tell a story about convivial neighbours, donations and Auróra-as-a-valued-part-of-the-local-community—a corrective, perhaps, to the many stories manufactured by the local government with their own trove of put-to-use objects—legal missives, solicited



complaints, footage of a police raid—to depict Auróra as a den of deviants. Through his back-and-forth with Naómi about ‘what these objects are’, Samu forms an understanding of the objects “as things in a certain situation”,¹⁰¹ as socially relevant objects that fit in and as part of Auróra in particular ways. He comes upon the objects’ possible uses by consulting Naómi to assemble a relevant context and thereby the “warrantedly adequate grounds of further inference and action”¹⁰² with those objects.

101. Appadurai 1986

102. Garfinkel 2002:

142

Samu looks for ways Auróra can use the objects since ‘it’s not certain they’re staying’, and he finds this use “*distributed*

103. Ahmed 2019: 7 between persons and things”;¹⁰³ in relations between Auróra, neighbours, and the local government. However, Samu’s body language and tone of voice also makes light of his idea: to use the objects in this way would likely be *useless*—unlikely to change any minds at the local government. Samu uses the objects to make an ironic suggestion, to observably ignore relevant and known-to-any-aurórasok aspects of Auróra’s situation—like the politicised and obdurate nature of their conflict with the local government—in order to ‘happily arrive’¹⁰⁴ at this suggestion.
104. See Raffel 2013: 11 on irony In doing so—whether ‘just joking’ or ‘really’ suggesting they do so—Samu invites in the local government, noise complaints and their fraught political situation as other relevant details for understanding these objects. The *lomtalanítás* objects come to work in making Auróra’s social and political situation “that which it recognisably is”¹⁰⁵ in the way things are done with them.
105. Button et al. 2015: 89 Besides working as nice ashtrays, the objects become a way for the *aurórasok* to recognise their good relationships with the community here-and-now, as well as the ironic absences in the local government’s stories about them. Although Naómi may not have ‘*that* use’ for the objects, in finding other uses for them within Auróra—as ashtrays, as prettier drinking glasses, as décor for a shelf—she works out ways to resolve and anticipate some of Auróra’s day-to-day troubles—broken glasses, limited budgets, looking shabby. In so doing, she also finds ways for Auróra to work as a certain kind of community space—one that functions with the support of neighbours, with help from regulars ‘sitting around’ in the Kioszk, with things rummaged out of *lomtalanítás*—and that’s good enough for now.



3.4

Auróra’s ‘Surviving Illiberal Democracies’ event is proving popular: the crowd spills out of the Nagyerem and down the hallway toward the Kioszk. I find a spot to sit in the far end of the hallway, then spot Kat sitting nearby. “Hey”, she waves, “can’t hear much from here unfortunately”. We chat a bit, and she asks how my research is going. I tell her about some of the projects I’ve been helping out with at Deviszont, the renovation at Gólya, the plans for Auróra’s community garden. “You know”, she says, “I think you’d be interested in Közkincs”. The Közkincs könyvtár, as she explains, is a feminist library installed in a flat in a large, beautiful apartment building near Astoria in downtown Budapest. As it turns out, Kat’s the volunteer coordinator. She invites me to join one of their Sunday volunteer sessions—a great way to learn about the space while helping out.

I visit a week later. Tracing my finger up and down the list of residents at the buzzer, it takes me several tries before I spot the library among the surnames. Kat’s voice crackles through the speaker, “Oh hey! Great you could make it. Come on up!”. The door’s propped open upstairs, and two cats laze in front of it in the sunshine. “He-ey”, Kat calls out warmly from the far end of the hall when I poke my head in, “we’re in here. Barbara,

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the library's director is in a meeting with a student, so I'll show you around. Today we're going to be sorting books!". As it turns out, sorting books is a major project for the Közkincs könyvtár: this is the first of many Sundays I spend moving, labelling and discussing with other volunteers just how Közkincs's books should be sorted.

Közkincs has a lot of books. Kat shows me through rooms lined with IKEA shelves up to the ceiling—each packed full. In the main room, a few volunteers are looking through more books piled on a long table, and the contents of the cardboard boxes sitting in a corner seem obvious. "We're organising the main collection into sections so that visitors can actually find what they're looking for", Kat smiles, "but it's a work in progress". We walk over to the table, and she points out a sticky note on one of the piles, "Today we're working on 'Marriage & Relationships'". The whole room is dotted with sticky notes and laminated labels denoting different categories: 'Critical Analysis', 'Relationship Abuse', 'Colonialism and Post-Colonialism', 'Western Philosophy', 'Not Philosophy'. Each week, the volunteers work through the collection shelf-by-shelf, checking that each book is in a fitting category—and finding or creating a new one for it if not. Kat then catalogues the adjustments in an intricate spreadsheet for the space's volunteer librarians to consult when visitors need assistance.

However, as various volunteers come and go, as new books arrive, as new sub-categories are proposed, each book's right place is liable to change. The sticky notes littering the shelves express a flexible, provisional and shifting logic used by the volunteers to maintain and improve the library's collection. These categories are malleable and workable. Rather than an

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overarching ‘structure’ to be administered to the books, they are resources that the volunteers use and, indeed, rely upon in “the work of accounting [for] and making accountable”¹⁰⁶ an organised shelf or a misplaced book. A visitor might encounter these categories as the more-or-less fixed—if occasionally fallen, torn or illegible—details of the library’s organisation. For the members of the volunteer team, however, the sticky-note categories are useful as a resource and method for working together on the problem of KözkinCs’s disorderly collection precisely because they are stickable, replaceable, scratch-out-and-re-writable. Volunteers use the sticky notes to organise the books and, in doing so, to participate in and *accountably* organise their activities as the collective project to take care of and improve the library.¹⁰⁷ Volunteers work out “how to care”

106. Pollner 2012: 25

107. Garfinkel 1967:

for the library together as a community by posting, evaluating and revising sticky-note categories week-by-week as a shared and adaptable grammar of “political and ethical imagination” about how to re-make the space “as well as possible”.¹⁰⁸

108. Puig de la

Bellacasa 2017:

6-7; 19

“What I think”, my friend Liza tells me several weeks later as we head home following her first time volunteering at Közkincs, “is that it’s not so important which category you choose. Whether a Magda Szabó novel should go in ‘Hungarian Literature’ or ‘Women Writers’, I mean, who the hell would know?”. Many of the library’s categories used different logics—place, nationality, genre, era—or seemed to overlap. “I mean, it was a great time—don’t get me wrong—a gorgeous little place, lovely people, and I got to practice English. Barbara even cooked us soup”, Liza pauses to light a cigarette, “I just don’t think the books’ categories matter”.

I’d had similar thoughts while trying to work out whether Paxman’s *Empire* should stay under ‘British Politics’ or move to ‘Colonialism’ earlier that day. The whole experience reminded me of Jorge Luis Borges’ infamous ‘Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge’. The Emporium is a playful and self-contradictory taxonomy categorising all animals under 15 mercurial labels like ‘stray dogs’, ‘innumerable ones’, ‘those that tremble as if they were mad’, and ‘those included in this classification’. Michel Foucault cites the list as an inspiration for his book *The Order of Things* and its ‘archaeological’ mode of inquiry into “the rules of formation” used to organise and shape scientific knowledge.¹⁰⁹ Foucault’s interest in the circumstances and practices by which an expression “comes to be counted as true” in a particular context has much in common with

109. Foucault 1966:

x-xii

110. Laurier & Philo

ethnomethodological attention to local social orders.¹¹⁰ They

offer markedly different assessments of order itself, however.

2004: 428

For Foucault, “even the simplest form of order” must be established on a “system of elements” which defines the ways in which “resemblances and differences can be shown, the types of variation by which those segments can be affected, [...] the threshold above which there is a difference and below which there is a similitude”¹¹¹ He argues that “Order is [...] that which is given in things as their inner law, the hidden network that determines the way [things] confront one another”, such that “fundamental codes of a culture [...] establish for every [person], from the very first, the empirical orders with which [they] will be dealing and within which [they] will be at home”¹¹²

111. Foucault 1966: xxi

112. Foucault 1966:

xxii

In stark contrast, ethnomethodologists insist that there is “order at all points”¹¹³—order neither hidden from, nor determinative of people. This social order is “*achieved* in the actions and interactions of societal members, and that achievement involves active *work*: it is *worked on* and *worked out* by those concerned wherever it is done, and whomsoever is involved [...] an ongoingly *worked at* matter”¹¹⁴ From an ethnomethodological perspective, order is more partial, more perspectival and more *workable* than Foucault’s account: it depicts the public and ongoing development “of culture and language *in* interaction”¹¹⁵ rather than the reverse. Taken ethnomethodologically, social order becomes an ordinary resource for action,¹¹⁶ a means to invoke rules and norms, but also to query and resist them, to “account for the worth of [an] action”¹¹⁷ to imagine better alternatives¹¹⁸ and to describe the work involved in pursuing them.

113. Sacks 1995 (Vol. 1): 484

114. Button 2012: 677

115. Schegloff 1992:

xlvi

116. Goodwin 2017:

263-264

117. Bonner 2016: 217

118. McHugh 2019:

46-47

Borges’ incongruous taxonomy is a hilarious absurdity for Foucault because the ‘place’ where such a list could possibly

- be used is inconceivable, “the common ground on which such meetings are possible has itself been destroyed [...] Absurdity destroys the *and* of the enumeration by making impossible the *in* where the things enumerated would be divided up”.¹¹⁹
119. Foucault 1966: xviii An ethnomethodologist is likely to laugh at Borges’ list as well, but not for want of a ‘*tabula*’, “a foundation and justification for their words, their classifications, their systems of exchange”.¹²⁰
120. Ibid. xxvi The source of ethnomethodological amusement is not so much the missing ‘place’ as the missing ‘workplace’:¹²¹ unanswered questions about how people would use this list, to what ends, at what cost—in short, in and as what work? For *someone*, or so Borges would have us believe, this taxonomy provided a source of “apt metaphors” and “valid comparisons”, ones that would help “to see, in the sense of appreciate, unapparent—unobvious—similarities”;¹²² but the life in which those particular categories apparently came to be useful, fitting or apt is missing. Taken as a static “system of rules [...] that determine in advance of any actual instances of speaking and acting what people within that form of life can meaningfully do or say”, the Emporium’s list of categories may be critiqued for its absurd overlaps and self-contradictions.¹²³ However, this is only accomplished by disregarding and trivialising the dynamic, ongoing “shared practices” and “way of life” through which (supposedly) some community generated meaning and action, a dynamic “conceptual rationalism” by *using* the list.¹²⁴ Treating the list as a ‘closed’ and foreign discourse allows the clever critic to laugh from the ‘outside’, but it provides little purchase for working with or *working on* categories: how to change them to make them better, more useful or more just.¹²⁵
121. Garfinkel 2002: 101
122. Raffel 2013: 8-9
123. Zerilli 2016: 271
124. Zerilli 2016: 271-272
125. McHugh 2019: 47-48
- In Közkincs, we found ourselves working with a similarly

incongruous ‘system of categories’, but their variable validity or absurdity develop as matters of concern within the practical work of making that system fit to purpose. On one occasion, for instance, Barbara asks me and two other volunteers to re-organise the children’s section: many of her students had young children, and it would be useful to have the more interesting and entertaining books where they could reach them. She recommends that we put anything ‘too adult’, ‘too boring’ or ‘outdated’ on the highest, unreachable shelves. As our team flips through and compares the books, though, we also develop criteria for new categories: we find new ‘kinds’ of books by seeing *with* the details, possibilities and activities Barbara oriented us to,¹²⁶ but also in seeing *with* the books-to-be-sorted the ways her categories failed us “in the course of [our] action”.¹²⁷ Holding up an old textbook, one of the other volunteers points out that it is ‘outdated’, but ‘potentially interesting’, and she’s not sure that we should tell kids that science is ‘boring’ in the same way—she holds up *Windows 95 for Dummies*—as an antiquated user manual. We create a ‘science’ section midway up the shelves and grab a box for anything too-boring-and-outdated-to-keep.

We discover new categories while we work and as “reflexively constituted *resource[s]*”¹²⁸ for our work: ‘activity books’ that can be drawn in, ‘chapter books’, ‘picture books’, ‘for teens’, ‘for toddlers’, ‘why-does-Barbara-have-this’, ‘Hungarian language’. Some we write up sticky notes for—a resource for future volunteers, since there’s no way we’ll get through this all today. Others we mention in passing, while debating whether *The Hoboken Chicken Emergency* belongs on a lower shelf for ‘nice pictures’ or a higher one for ‘lots of words’. Another stumps

126. Goodwin 1994:

626

127. Garfinkel 2002:

205

128. Smith 2021: 184

us: a textless picture book for young children telling the story of a Syrian refugee with several illustrations of her family’s displacement—our team discusses whether the drawings are ‘too graphic’ or ‘for young children’. We ask Barbara if some of the parents might worry about the content. “Hm maybe a higher shelf then, but I trust you”, she recommends. We go with shelf three, a ‘within reach’, ‘apart from the other picture books’ decision nestled in near the ‘story books’.



Our team develops categorisations as piecemeal practical resources for and as the work of remaking Közkins to better suit its young visitors, their language-studying parents, and the projects they might want to get up to during their visits. The final categories may be imprecise and ambiguous, but they work as tools for organising, both physically and *socially*,¹²⁹ the space to enable children to use these books.¹³⁰ Yet the chatted-over, shared, animating concern of our work is *not* about how to organise the books so that children can use them *at all*, but rather how to organise the books so that children can use

129. Goodwin 2017: 306

130. Fürst 2019: 62-63

them ‘happily’¹³¹ alongside and within the other activities of the library—such as their parents’ language lessons. By inviting the volunteers to help with this process, Barbara brings them into the Közkincs könyvtár’s “everyday work of living as well as possible”¹³² thus making space for their contributions in the ongoing moral process of working on and working out what their community “needs and should value”¹³³—what their shared ‘better’ library should involve.

Taken out of context, Közkincs’s sticky-note categories would resemble an equally baffling—if a bit less eccentric—taxonomic system as Borges’ Emporium. Doing so, however, would make the library’s sticky notes out to be a complete, closed and deterministic ‘system’ rather than viewing it within and as part of the ongoing practices of labelling, chatting, rearranging, browsing, photographing and I’ll-read-this-one-next commenting that go into the categories’ ad hoc creation, evaluation and repair. Foucault or even a library visitor might view Közkincs’s categories as a ‘formal-analytical’¹³⁴ representation of the library’s ‘organizational system’, but neither of them are *working on* the library and so do not view the sticky notes as part of “the actual interactional accomplishment of *the work*”¹³⁵ of making the Közkincs könyvtár ‘as well as possible’.¹³⁶ This perspective misses not only the ways that any given category is determined to be good-enough-for-now, but also the kinds of things Liza mentions—nice people, conversation, food, language practice—when explaining what she liked about volunteering at the library. In fact, Liza acknowledges that the categorisation of the books is potentially, but ultimately *not* a problem for her precisely because of *the way it happens* through and alongside other, enjoyable activities.

131. In a ‘felicitous’ or ‘consonant’ way, per Austin 1962; Wittgenstein 1958: §240-242

132. Puig de la Bellacasa 2017: 206

133. Raffel 2013: 10; McHugh 2019: 47

134. Lynch 2015: 607

135. Button et al. 2015: 115-116

136. Puig de la Bellacasa 2017

Despite the sometimes-bewildering task of sorting the library's books, Liza is able to assemble a list of relevant, enjoyable things that make the experience of volunteering at KözkinCs enjoyable nonetheless. However, this 'nonetheless' speaks to the fact that the work of cataloguing the library's books is an essential element of being at, participating in and helping out the KözkinCs könyvtár. As groups of volunteers come and go, new opinions and interpretations are bound to revise the currently existing categorisations; this is because 'cataloguing the books' is presented to volunteers as an ongoing and open-ended problem—something they can work on together. The final categories that the books wind up in may not matter much to Liza, but taking part in the work to sort the books nonetheless becomes a way for her to enjoy a Sunday afternoon, to support the KözkinCs könyvtár and to even work on her personal project to practice speaking English. The sticky-note categories come to matter for the experience of volunteers not as a deterministic 'system of elements', but rather as practical elements volunteers work with to "make the distinctive forms of action that constituted the work of [their] community possible"¹³⁷

137. Goodwin 2017:

264

When Barbara and I finally get a chance to meet, she even seems to echo Liza's feelings. "The books are just the wallpaper", she tells me over coffee at her office's book-strewn desk, "This is a space for Feminists and LGBTQ+ groups who don't have a nice place to meet". Barbara first moved to Hungary from the UK in the 1980s and quickly got involved with local Feminist activism groups protesting the influx of pornographic images and advertising in public space that followed the country's transition to a market economy. "After the rendszerváltás,

women's bodies were everywhere, selling things", she recollects, describing the graphic billboards, magazine covers, souvenirs, calendars, "even down where children could see them". She and her companions set out to protest. "We made stickers calling for new laws to protect women's rights, then hid them in the magazines and over the photos", she laughs, then ironically notes, "and in the end it was the conservative government that finally did something about it. 'Moral degradation', they called it".

After this time, Barbara went to work in the US for over a decade, but ultimately wanted to come back to settle in Hungary. "I collected books", she laughs, looking over the crammed shelves looming over us, "they're not all particularly valuable, but some of them can be hard to find over here". On just one nearby shelf I can see Simone de Beauvoir, a Foxtrot anthology, an 'Abs of Steel' VHS, 'Class Struggle' the board game, a chemistry textbook and a collection of hand-bound journals from an Ayurvedic Yoga conference. It's a collection pieced together from garage sales, used-book stores and liquidated libraries—no wonder it could do for a bit of sorting.

"Kat and Tess have been organising the duplicate room", Barbara explains when I ask about the library's current projects, "and they've done so much work! They want to set up a membership system so we can loan out duplicate copies. On Sundays other volunteers come to help in the main collection—well, *you* know that!". There's a host of other activities that go on in the library, some of which Barbara lists and some of which I only learn about as I volunteer. Open browsing hours run Monday-Friday. Barbara makes soup on Sundays. The side-room is an LGBTQ+ rights group's office. Kat's organising a feminist

film night and tote-bag printing workshop. Student groups rent the space for meetings. “Last time a bunch of boys showed up in suits! They were so serious”, Barbara recalls mirthfully. And the library’s caretaker makes a project of rescuing pigeons and rehabilitating them in the WC. “The library’s my gift to the city”, Barbara says, “and I’m setting up a non-profit so it can continue working well after I’m gone”.

Fostering KözkinCs as a pleasant social and political space involves “mundane doings of maintenance and repair that *sustain everyday life*”¹³⁸ in the library—the activities, projects and joys that its visitors and supporters bring about, which include but far exceed browsing and reading books. From Liza’s reflections on her volunteering experience, it’s clear that even the project of re-organising the books is valued by the community. If bogging on its own, it nonetheless helps to occasion convivial conversation, good food, a relaxing environment. By maintaining and improving the collection of books together, the volunteers do not simply create an ‘as well as possible’ categorisation system, but also discover among themselves a like-minded, genial community in and as the KözkinCs könyvtár.

As Barbara puts it, the books are not her gift to the city, the space to gather, talk and think together as a Feminist community is. Both the books and the vision of a Feminist library are resources taken up, worked with and shaped by the volunteers and communities piecing KözkinCs together. In the course of sharing and working on these projects,¹³⁹ the volunteers discover the ways that *these* books and *this* library can and—for *this* community—*should* be used. Their conclusions do not derive from a generic imaginary of ‘how to do things with books’¹⁴⁰—to gain knowledge, to decorate walls,

138. Puig de la Bellacasa 2017: 170, emphasis added

139. Garfinkel 2002: 203

140. Cf. Austin 1962



Even cat naps
can become an
important part
of making this
library — what makes
Közkinés Közkinés.

to construct an improvised side-table. Instead, the Közkinés könyvtár's community discovers what their library's 'as well as possible' involves¹⁴¹ by learning how to work with sticky notes and books, soups, cats, film nights and, of course, each other.

141. Puig de la

Bellacasa 2017: 6



3.5

Things are getting cramped at Gólya’s renovation now that the interior walls are nearing the ceiling—and now that the planned move-in date for Gólya’s future tenants is drawing near. A host of volunteers and gólyások are crammed in among the tools and clutter of the bázis for an update at this morning’s eligazítás. Füle runs through the many activities left to do—finish tiling in the children’s toilets for the future nursery; install showers in the locker rooms by the future gym; sound-proof the future radio studio; lay the cement in the shared office; vacuum *everything*—and how little time we have to do them. In two weeks’ time, he tells us, we’d have “the last hurrah”, a final sprint to get everything ready for the new tenants. They needed their office space to work—and the gólyások needed the rent money to fund the second stage of the building’s renovation: fixing up Gólya’s own office, café, and bar.

“There’s no way we’ll finish everything, so we just need to get things *good enough*”, Füle stresses, the other brigádvezetők nodding in agreement beside him, “good enough for them to move in, and then we can polish things up afterwards”. We break and go to our various worksites. The brigádvezetők do their best to coordinate the activities so there’s room for us to



work around each other, and the rest of us do our best to make it work on site by stepping aside, squeezing through, sharing tools and making space: by seeing the other projects as part of the work to get the renovation done “on time”¹⁴²

142. Garfinkel 2002:

202

Today I’m with the bricklayers, so I head over to ask Erzsi where I should work. The gólyások have hired Erzsi—a friend, former colleague and, fortuitously, professionally trained mason—to lead the construction of the interior walls and to teach a small group of long-term volunteers how to lay bricks. A few months back, Erzsi and her small collective of builders showed us the basics: how to mix mortar, how to space the pointing, how to split bricks. “You’ll work in pairs, so one person can prep the mortar while the other places the bricks”, Erzsi shouted to us over the roar of the cement mixer, pinching out a bit of mortar, “eh, just a little too wet, but it’ll work”. She tosses it back in the machine. “You’ll get a feel for it as you go”.

Keeping the rows level, however, was priority number one, “a small mistake down here and you’ll have the whole thing falling down on you by the time you’re up there”. Although

much of the renovation relies on volunteers' 'amateur' DIY sense of what's good enough, some tasks involve a greater degree of risk: the consequences of a bad wall are greater than bad glettelés, for instance. Other specialist tasks, like installing the electricity or fitting windows, remain strictly the responsibilities of the brigádvezetők for that very reason. Erzsi's pointers in the training sessions and throughout the following months of work aimed to teach us the 'rules' of bricklaying, but also worked to orient us to the importance of the different steps she taught us. Warnings, admonitions, suggestions and compliments helped calibrate how to use the different rules—they became ways to make the "worthiness"¹⁴³ of certain practices public, to distinguish between 'saving time' and 'cutting corners'.

143. Raffel 2013: 5

To keep the rows level, for instance, Erzsi instructs us to take three readings with a level after each laid brick—once horizontally, once vertically, and once diagonally flush with the wall—and to adjust as we go. A brick laid too high merits a few



more taps with the mason's hammer; a brick sitting low might be worth some extra mortar on the next row; a row sticking too far forward warrants the next row laid further back to compensate. "But these bricks are repurposed from the walls they're demolishing downstairs", Erzsi explains, holding up one cracked, plaster-covered shard of brick, "so these walls are never going to *really* be straight. I mean, the floor's not even level! Just do the best you can, adjust as you go and don't stress too much—they're not load bearing!". The practice of 'taking three readings with a level' becomes a way for us to see the "distinctive interests" of professional bricklayers¹⁴⁴ in our walls—but also the distinct local concerns of building Gólya's walls with Gólya's bricks—ragged, recycled, and crucially *free* as they are—to Gólya's budget and timeline. We don't aim to be perfect—the renovation project would never get done on time, if at all—just good enough.

144. Goodwin 1994:

606

Uneven floors, rough bricks, deadlines and tight budgets feed into a workable grammar of justification for the slight discrepancies and irregularities we encounter while building



Gólya’s brick walls: Erzsi references them to help the volunteers learn to see “good enough” bricks, to see when and under what conditions rough bricks are “sufficiently coherent for their involvement to be effective [...] for the situation to unfold correctly”;¹⁴⁵ for the wall to be finished on time, for the wall to not fall down on guests, for the wall to *work* as Gólya needs—for the bricks to be coordinated¹⁴⁶ with the needs and concerns of the rest of the project. The volunteers, however, must be able to see a “good enough” brick for each next brick as a practical concern, “for each another next first time”, in order to continue their work—and Gólya’s—by learning how to concert their activities, senses and standards with those of Erzsi and the brigádvezetők.¹⁴⁷ The technique ‘taking three readings with a level’, although it may rarely return the “precise” result of an air bubble floating at the level’s centre, nevertheless works as a “locally organised practice” for observably and accountably accomplishing a “good enough” brick for the gólyások insofar as they can learn from their measurements what to do next—one tap on top, two on the side, some extra mortar for the next row, or to move on: it’s good enough.¹⁴⁸ By teaching us these techniques, Erzsi does not just teach us strict *rules* of the craft of bricklaying, but rather attunes our senses of “enough”¹⁴⁹ to *workable* criteria that occasion particular circumstances that justify the feeling that we do in fact *know how to go on*¹⁵⁰. Laying a “good enough” brick, then, should thus not be misconstrued as a ‘defective’ or ‘inferior’ or “less accomplished”¹⁵¹ counterpart to the “good” bricklaying of professionals:¹⁵² it is, rather, a locally, ongoingly and jointly negotiated *practical* sense of how to go on doing Gólya’s work. And laying a “good enough” brick is thus not always a straightforward task.

145. Boltanski &

Thévenot 2006:

41

146. Barnett 2014:

155-156;

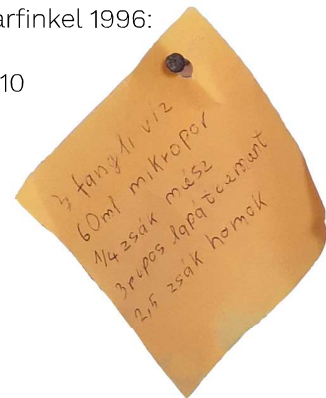
Boltanski &

Thévenot 2006:

37

147. Garfinkel 1996:

9-10



148. Lynch 1991: 105

149. Savransky 2019

150. Wittgenstein

1958: §154-155;

Cavell 1999: 104-

106

151. Cf. Merrifield

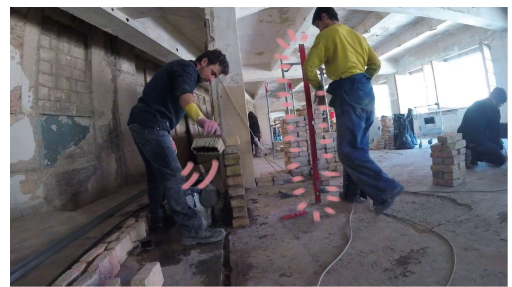
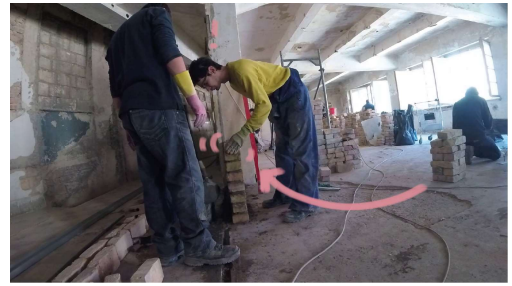
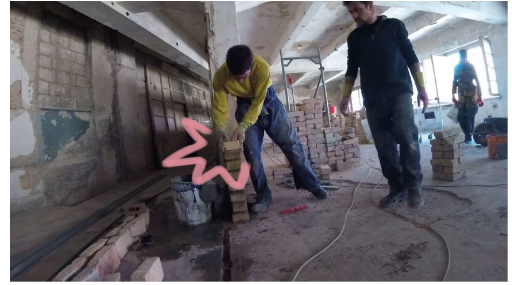
2015: 754

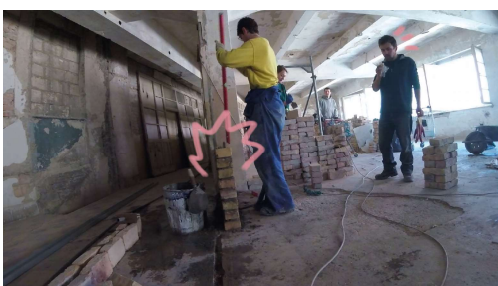
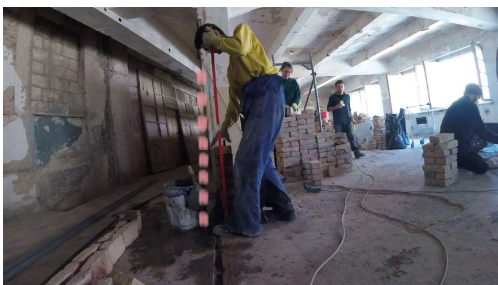
152. Lynch 1991: 93-

97; drawing on
Sacks 1970: 16-17

Dezső and Gabó are working on a wall close to me, one Erzsi's keen to have finished soon so she can begin installing the doorjamb. The bricks at the end of the wall—abutting the future door—require a different degree of precision than others since they'll help to align the frame. “Don't want your door crooked, or it'll hang open like the *bázis!*”, Erzsi remarks with a nod at the ramshackle door propped shut in the corner: “good enough” for the temporary *bázis*, but a headache for the *gólyások's* future—hopefully long-term—office.

Dezső and Gabó take the instructions seriously. The space in this row requires a 3/4 brick to keep the gaps between bricks alternating—or perhaps more of a 3/5: while Gabó gets started on the next row, Dezső hunts for a suitable partial brick among the piles, but the





one he settles on proves too long. He pares it down with a mason's hammer with several strikes, then comes back—too long again. Once more, he places it in position, then turns to Gabó—who shakes his head. Too short. Dezső searches for another brick, tests it out, confers with Gabó, and once again finds this brick won't work: Gabó turns it and points along a rough edge, “preferably not this one”. Dezső goes through four more bricks before Gabó finally joins him in the search. They compare promising bricks to the waiting space, measure it against their hands, scrape it clean with their hammers, trace a line for splitting, chip at the end for several minutes and then, finally, set it in place. Gabó nods; Dezső splashes water on the surface, places the mortar and lays the brick. Gabó tinkers with the brick several minutes longer—

while Dezső pulls out a sandwich for a hard-earned break—tapping, measuring and eyeing the brick from each side. He takes his readings with the level, then steps back. It takes two of our most experienced bricklayers 17 minutes to lay this brick, but, in the end, it’s “good enough”—and that’s what counts. Dezső goes to get their next brick.

Dezső and Gabó’s bricklaying—sorting through half, three-quarter and full bricks—recalls Ludwig Wittgenstein’s famous description of a “primitive language” between a bricklayer and an assistant building with blocks, pillars, slabs and beams. Wittgenstein’s bricklayers are intended as a foundational

illustration of his concepts of ‘language games’ and ‘forms of life’: they demonstrate how learning a language involves “not explaining, but training [...] to perform *these* actions, to use *these* words as they do so, and to react in *this* way to the words of others”¹⁵³ The scene is allegorical, “more than the manual manipulation of assembling some bricks



together”, since “[t]he labor of building a brick wall, obeying the commands, and using the material tools is no atomical action [sic] of collecting some “bricks and mortar” [...] it represents the building of a new structural activity—a linguistic-and-cultural life-form”¹⁵⁴ Wittgenstein’s bricklayers build a way of doing things—much as Dezső and Gabó do in their work to

153. Wittgenstein

1958: §2-8

154. Gorrée 2017: 360

find, refine and lay Gólya's "good enough" just-here, just-in-this-space, with-enough-time-for-a-quick-bite-of-sandwich, smooth-enough-to-prop-a-door-frame brick.

However, the prolonged and laboured process of getting that "good enough" brick is grounds enough to consider their work something other than "primitive", and it rubs against the image of an expert 'training' an assistant in the ways of a new language game. Wittgenstein's bricklayers manage their form of life because the assistant comes to "be able to go on (alone). But correctly; that is, that the other do what I would do, make what I make of it".¹⁵⁵ Dezső and Gabó, in contrast, learn how to go on *together*—they work out through comparisons and objections which brick will be "good enough" for their purposes, one which will allow them to go on in their shared project. Dezső and Gabó are engaged in *precisely* "the manual manipulation of assembling some bricks together", but in working with Gólya's tight timeframe and rough-cut bricks, in working out how to do this well, they do more than make a 'form of life' between the two of them: they jointly and reflexively work out how to make Gólya good enough. Neither do they learn the techniques for finding a "good enough" brick directly from Erzsi: they do much more than just 'take three readings with a level', but taking part in that convention keeps their shared project with the other gólyások in view, "to see what we do, to learn our position in what we take to be necessities, to see in what service they are necessary".¹⁵⁶ Erzsi, Dezső, Gabó and the rest of our bricklaying

155. Cavell 1999: 112

156. Cavell 1999: 120

find ways to make their political project work, it's not so different from the other ways they've set about finding "good enough" projects to pursue elsewhere in their lives.

For Erzsi, for instance, bricks can build much more than a brick wall. When we meet for an interview at her flat—a small, brightly decorated studio covered in shelves of books, plants and jars of dried herbs—she tells me about her project to start a bricklayers' union. "Well, first I fixed up my entire flat—and I fell in love with it—then in Gólya, we started to specialise. Füle got interested in electricity, Karl in plumbing, and the concrete somehow became my thing. I got to know a bunch of builders and bricklayers asking for advice on these projects, and I saw how—how exploited they were, so then I had this plan: to build a bricklayers' union", she explains when I ask how she got started working in construction. "My plan had never been to work as a bricklayer, but to get the skills I need to be a genuine leader for this union. I can't do that as some outsider know-it-all shit", she grins, "and I'll get trouble for being a woman—so I have to master the trade for myself". Erzsi bustles around her kitchen while she talks—cleaning dishes, tidying shelves, brewing tea, "So I slapped concrete on *everything* at Gólya! Fixed the façade, that sort of stuff—you want some tea?". I accept gratefully, and she pours two cups of lemongrass tea, "I gathered this myself when I was traveling in South America last year, after I stopped working at Gólya".

Much like her chance career as a bricklayer, Erzsi hadn't intended to work at Gólya either. "I trained as a cook, and that's how I joined initially. The idea for a kitchen wouldn't have crossed their minds, but there's a law that requires you to sell food if you're selling alcohol close to a school", she recalls,

“They suggested I work as a sub-contractor, and I was like ‘No fucking way!’. You don’t make money off food at a bar. Then they suggested I join their *szövetkezet*, the *collective*—and I said ‘You can forget *that* even faster!’”. Erzsi was involved in activism and Green politics at the time, but felt like she wouldn’t fit in with the *gólyások*, “there were way more Commies than Greens, for one thing!”. In the end, though, they found a way to make it work, “eventually, you know, we agreed to work together: I asked them to just pay me an hourly wage, and that’s how the kitchen came to be. I got appliances, I made the menu, everything”. As she tells it, Gólya’s kitchen was Erzsi’s personal project—but she also recounts the many “reforms” she instigated elsewhere in Gólya once “running the kitchen got boring”: she got the bar to go through local, ‘green’ suppliers, set up recycling, worked as the concert organiser, scheduled new community events.

“And when they saw I was getting into the project more and more, Füle came and sat down by me”, she puts on a deep, raspy voice, “‘Hey Erzsike, don’t you want to join the collective in the end?’ Fine! I’m not blind. And just like that, I joined everything”. Eventually, though, she got tired of her work at Gólya and left to pursue different projects, including starting a small collective of builders—the group the *gólyások* eventually hired to build the walls in the renovation. “So that’s how it came together. I’ll do that for now”, she takes a sip from her tea, “and the union project will just have to wait a year while I finish my certification!”.

Erzsi keeps busy. I race to note down all the projects, plans, networks, collectives and collaborations she’s been a part of—not to mention ones in the works—but there’s far too many to summarise, and they have a habit of running into each other.



Although she was reluctant to join Gólya's collective because of their different political commitments at first, she found ways to make her interests and political commitments work within and as part of their project through her many reforms in the kitchen and beyond. This work led her to get involved in construction, which became a resource for starting new projects—and, eventually, for helping out with—and transforming—Gólya's shared project in new ways. Erzsí's stories describe a series of possibilities, opportunities and new ideas assembled along the way by working with other people and with things—a kitchen, a bar, bricks. Erzsí finds uses for these things, but also finds ways to work on them: making Gólya's bar 'green', supporting the renovation, reimagining Hungary's construction industry.

Erzsí's work doesn't proceed according to a pre-set plan. Instead, she makes plans while she works: she finds ways to make Gólya's bricks work for building a wall—but also for building a union, a Green politics and other projects besides. The work of Erzsí and Gólya's bricklayers—and, though it barely needs saying, *any* bricklayer—exceeds a “primitive” assembly of bricks and mortar. Piecing together a wall is far from their “*whole language*” since the “purpose and functioning of their words”, actions and good enough bricks piece together shared and shareable social and political projects.¹⁵⁷ Bricks are not straightforward “explanations” about what Gólya's bricklayers are up to, but rather “a reflexively constituted *resource* [...] for the local organisation of knowledge in the situated viewing of a scene and the elements thereof”:¹⁵⁸ ways to show and share what they're working with and what they're working on, to imagine *workable* ways the world might be made “otherwise” here-and-now.¹⁵⁹

157. Wittgenstein
1958: §7

158. Smith 2021: 184

159. McHugh 2019;



Garfinkel 1967:

97

Bricks are a favourite metaphor of philosophers, usually as “simple” building blocks with a straightforward use: consider the widely referenced, pithy-if-pat line by Brian Massumi about the work of Deleuze & Guattari: “A concept is a brick. It can be used to build the courthouse of reason. Or it can be thrown through the window [... opening] disparate circumstances in a shattering blow”¹⁶⁰ Massumi uses the concept of bricks to tell a familiar story of structures and deconstructions, of stultifying philosophical systems and the rupture of radical alternatives—but he misses the actual *work* of working with brick. In so doing, he fails to consider the *many* ways that bricks actually come to work in the world and in our lives. Erzsi puts her bricks to work contingently and reflexively as resources to “make order and meaning”¹⁶¹ for political projects and better possible worlds. Likewise, training with Erzsi in Gólya’s renovation doesn’t involve simply learning how to assemble “bricks and mortar”, but also how to see and contribute to shareable political projects.

160. Massumi 1987:

xii

161. Rawls 2019: 18-

20



Erzsi doesn't build a 'courthouse of reason' with her bricks: she builds *many* reasons, crafting possibilities for ethical living and political action here-and-now by finding ways to work with them with other people.



3.6

It's a warm day. Deviszont's windows are open, and music's blaring out into the street. A granny shuffles past outside, arms full of shopping, but slows to a stop as she takes in the scene. Luksi and Márkus are trading riffs on guitars in a corner of the room. Leila and Szilvi are tinkering with a triangle nearby, looking for a way to hold it without muffling the sound. Diána's claimed the drum set—a recent donation to the space—and thunders her way from the high-hat, to the snare, to the toms and back, while Bacsó watches enviously, occasionally giving a cymbal a whack with his hand. Just inside the window, the TV's blasting The Ramones' 'I Wanna Be Sedated' while Sanyi rattles along on a guitar-shaped gaming controller and Botond and Kamilla watch from the couch. If any of the neighbours still hadn't realised the kispesti vigadó's long-vacant restaurant was under new management, they'd know now. It's the final day of our "Music Month" project, and Deviszont's jamming.

The deviszontosok wanted Music Month to be a fun and engaging way for the organisers and srácok of Deviszont's growing community to get to know each other better. All month, we've been swapping song recommendations in our opening circles; giving presentations about musical counter-culture; making

162. Massey 2005:
142, 93



DIY instruments; and organising bring-your-own-instrument jam sessions. Things were going well: we'd learnt about Luksi's punk band and Botond's passion for Finnish metal, for instance, and our conversations about genres created opportunities to talk with the srácok about topics the organisers considered valuable, like identity, stereotypes and counter-culture. The activities worked well as spaces for Deviszont's community to learn about how "to get on together"¹⁶²—to learn about and respond to one another's hobbies, values and perspectives. The social media advertisement for the project put it poetically: "From beats, music; from words, lyrics", and—the goal was—from people, a community. Even someone peeking in through the window could see how well the deviszontosok were grooving together now—though they'd likely overlook much of the work going on to make it happen.

Diána aims another blast at the crash cymbal—and Pál winces, hunkered in front of his laptop in the far corner. He presses his headphones tighter against his ears, "You know, if they had *any* sense of rhythm, this would go a lot quicker". Peti and I laugh. "I'm going to hide those drums in the kitchen before the next session", he grumbles, then presses play again. Last open session, Pál and Gerle helped the srácok write and record rap songs about their neighbourhood with the plan to combine them into a single Deviszont Rap. Now Pál sat facing six separate tracks with six different, highly 'creative' tempos, struggling to make them work together.

"And this one's so mumbled I can't understand a word!", he plays with the amplification settings. "I thought it sounded fine how you had it earlier", Peti remarks encouragingly. "Completely uneven speeds!", Pál mutters to himself with a

grimace, “incredible”. In our planning meeting this week, all the organisers—even Pál—had agreed that the rap song had been a success: the srácok had come up with their own ideas, listened to each other and contributed to a shared project. Pál may have found the song’s ‘musical’ quality lacking, but his laments gave voice to something more particular: the work involved in making the separate tracks sound good together—to make the project shared. Even though Deviszont’s jamming now, it takes a lot of work to keep things playing smoothly: Szilvi borrowing a triangle from a friend to share with the srácok; Kamilla reminding Botond and Sanyi to take turns at their game; Gerle buying and eating a can of Pringles so the srácok could make DIY rainsticks—a great sacrifice for the cause, she assured us with a grin. The organisers make plans, gather materials, coordinate activities and learn new skills to make the open sessions—and the Music Month project—work *well*, even if it often takes more work on our parts than we’d been hoping.

Peti and I turn back to the jamming deviszontosok to let Pál work in peace. We head to the couch to join Kamilla and Botond—but I stop short when I spot Bacsó playing a game on his phone alone at a table, apparently having given up trying to interrupt Diána’s ongoing drum-solo. I grab a seat beside him and fiddle with one of the Pringle-rainsticks, “How’s it going, Bacsó?”. He shrugs. “Do you want to help me make another instrument?”, I ask. “Like what?”, he replies unenthusiastically. I begin to explain my idea, but quickly realise I’m lacking the adequate xylophone vocabulary in Hungarian, “I’ll show you”. I grab a number of glasses from the kitchen, “can you fill this pitcher with water?”. Once the cups are filled, I plonk out a short melody with a spoon. Bacsó takes a short turn, but then



passes the spoon back. “Here! Join in”, I pass him a plastic mixing bowl turned upside down, “you do the beat”. He thumps a rhythm on the bottom of the bowl and I do my best to follow along—gradually, we get something going. Gerle pokes her head through the doorway, “Wha-at? Who’s playing in here? That’s cool!”. She takes a short video on her phone and sends it to the other deviszontosok, “Sounds good!”.

Our tempo’s wild and the glasses off-pitch but Bacsó and I make a song that “sounds good” by watching and responding to one another—by playing together. Making good music together in Deviszont comes to turn more on these kinds of mutual attunements than technical musical prowess: an ability to “pick up”¹⁶³ how other deviszontosok are feeling and a readiness to work out things to do together. The musical instruments and talents the organisers bring to the open sessions—Márkus’ talent at guitar, Pál’s skill with audio mixing software, my background as a percussionist—become important sociomaterial resources¹⁶⁴ for the Music Month project not so much as means for making well-tuned sounds, but for—in doing so—discovering ways to work, make and play together with the srácok. The organisers put them to work in making Deviszont’s community by piecing together observable and joinable projects: their material objects and workable skills become resources for doing Deviszont *together* and, hence, for doing Deviszont *well*.

Thus, a guitar, a drum set, a gaming system, a Pringles can filled with beans, and an upturned mixing bowl work as a “scenic” bricolage of instruments used to accomplish Deviszont well when issues—irregular tempos or a lonely srác—arise, and not a “recipe” for how to make Deviszont, “rules, which,

163. Wilson 2017:
465; Ahmed
2014: 17-18

164. Hindmarsh &
Llewellyn 2018:
431-432

when followed, [would] allow us to generate a ‘world’ of a given kind”:¹⁶⁵ They do not represent a common stock of resources “shared” or valued by all of the deviszontosok in the same way, but are rather put to work situationally to discover possibilities for *taking part* in a shared activity and in Deviszont, for finding “a place both for being in common and being oneself”:¹⁶⁶ We put these things to work to *find* Deviszont’s supportive and welcoming community, learning the task “we are up against”¹⁶⁷ in making that community with the srácok not just possible, but *good*.

Putting the instruments to work in this ad hoc and interactive way thus makes it possible for us to negotiate and evaluate “questions of the good life” lived together in and as Deviszont¹⁶⁸—that is, ‘making together’ and ‘playing together’ become auspices for being *this* community together “as well as possible”:¹⁶⁹ As the many different activities throughout Deviszont’s open session show, being a community by ‘doing things together’ does not involve everyone doing ‘the same thing’ in ‘the same way’. Rather, it is a process of achieving common grounds for agreement between those differences: the organisers work to make sure each of the srácok are doing things with someone. The artful uses of instruments and skills to make that agreement possible is far from a “tacit will to cooperate so that something”—just anything—“hangs together [...] a desire to protect (local) social arrangements [...] horror of a social vacuum”:¹⁷⁰ It is the practical process of finding just what *kind* of local social order the deviszontosok are willing to work for. ‘Doing things together’ provides a grammar for including others and for seeing other who aren’t included: this allows me to accountably see the-trouble-of-Bacsó-sitting-alone-

165. Lynch 1994:

277-278;

commenting on

Goffman 1974: 5

166. McHugh 2005:

140

167. Garfinkel 2002:

180

168. Barnett 2017:

244-250

169. Puig de la

Bellacasa 2017;

McHugh 2019

170. Boltanski 2011:

54

171. Garfinkel 2002: 139 *at-the-table*¹⁷¹ *and work* to find a way through that trouble. It likewise allows Bacsó to, by sitting alone, reveal—perhaps even unintentionally—that he is not ‘happily’ taking part in Deviszont’s jam session.¹⁷² Similarly, Pál’s work to merge the srácok’s various tracks such that they ‘sound good together’ puts musical sonority into service of achieving the srácok’s own ‘making together’ a witnessable possibility: grounds for Deviszont’s community.
172. Ordinarily and ordinarily ‘felicitous’, following Austin 1962

Making music together, as the organisers see it, can both empower the srácok and open up questions about what kinds of things they want to make. Although the organisers do a lot of ‘background’ work—between open sessions or hunched over a laptop in the corner—to make this community a possibility, its success is contingent on the ways this work comes to be shared publicly in and as Deviszont’s public projects. The deviszontosok do not gather in just any way, but rather conduct their open sessions together: learning from one another what can work and what cannot, what works well and what doesn’t, and just what kind of work it will take to do so. Rather than taking the instruments or activities as essentially “causal” to the community space’s success, the organisers and srácok—by learning ways to use them together—negotiate the “ethical collision”¹⁷³ of their interests, feelings and values, developing styles of being together well: techniques, principles and “preferential” senses by which their community “comes to be meaningful” in various ways for each of them.¹⁷⁴ Rather than a ‘background’ and concealed labour keeping up appearances, the organisers’ conducting work is the public and local work of making Deviszont’s community possible: skilful actions that keep Deviszont’s ‘we’ in sight for all of its members. It becomes

173. Blum 2016: 215

174. McHugh 1968: 18

a way for the organisers and srácok to find out what kind of community they want to be for themselves as a community—what it takes for us to find a ‘we’ we want to be.¹⁷⁵

175. Bjelić 2017: 12,
elaborating on
Sacks 1995

“Hey! Csocsó, anyone?”, Sanyi thrusts his head into the kitchen. Peti and I set aside our makeshift instruments and join the rest of the devizontosok in the main room for the break before our closing circle. Most of the organisers are tidying up the DIY materials, though Sanyi manages to recruit Márkus to his team for csocsó, “just a short one, we’re finishing up soon!”. I take a seat with some of the other srácok near the TV and pack away the game system.



I hear the front door swing open and a call of greetings from the csocsó table. “It’s great that you came by”, I hear Márkus say to the newcomer, “We’re almost done for the day, but we’re here every Thursday. Come next week for sure!”. “Is that pizza?”, Sanyi exclaims, “Home-made? He brought pizza! What a bad-ass!”. I poke my head up to see the new srác—but I’m taken aback when I recognise him. I see Gerle and Kamilla



exchange quick grimaces then retreat to the kitchen to confer. The newcomer leaning on the csocsó table, chatting with Márkus and sharing pizza with the srácok is none other than the “enlightened srác” who, just last week, Kamilla had asked not to come back to Deviszont. Márkus hadn’t been there and had no way of recognising him; now he was encouraging him to come back as often as he liked, “You live just next door? Perfect!”.

The enlightened srác hadn’t caused problems at the previous sessions, although he had spent a great deal of time endorsing his meditation and yoga routines to others—thus earning his nickname from the organisers since none of us had caught his name. At our last planning meeting, Gerle recounted one of their conversations with an eye-roll, “you have everything you need to improve yourself inside you!”, before pointing out that his ideas didn’t chime very well with Deviszont’s commitments to critical pedagogy, social critique and community organising. This wasn’t really the issue for the organisers, though: the real problem was his age. While telling us stories from his years spent working in the US and the UK, the enlightened srác happened to mention that he was 26—older than all of the srácok and even one of the organisers. The other srácok also had various personal beliefs that clashed with the organisers’ own, but working through these differences was part of the point of Deviszont. The problem with the enlightened srác was that, as it turned out, he wasn’t a “srác” at all: he wasn’t the ‘young student from a local trade school’ the organisers had opened Deviszont for and wanted to make a community space with.

The organisers agreed that Kamilla would talk to him—a

conversation that seemed to have gone well enough, “I just explained what kind of space Deviszont is, that it’s for students and that sort of thing”, until he showed up again this week. Although Kamilla thought she’d managed to explain why Deviszont wasn’t the space for him, the enlightened srác made their difference of opinions—and judgements¹⁷⁶—clear by coming back anyway.

176. Wittgenstein

1958: §242

“Why is he back?”, I hear Gerle hiss to Kamilla as we arrange the chairs for the closing circle. The organisers don’t do anything to make the enlightened srác depart—they leave him to chat with Márkus, still blissfully ignorant of the minor scandal unfolding around him. Gerle calls the closing circle to a start, and we take turns sharing our favourite moments in the evening. “Luksi’s guitar was super sweet”, Sanyi extols through a mouthful of pizza, “and my man here brought this delicious pizza. Your turn!”. The enlightened srác goes next, “I’m glad you liked the pizza, and it was good seeing everyone before I leave next week. I’m going abroad to work so I wanted to say goodbye.” It gives some answer to the organisers’ questions at least: the enlightened srác has come-back-despite-Kamilla’s-request-in-order-to-say-goodbye. I sense a small sigh of relief from Gerle beside me, so *he’s leaving after all*. The explanations of the enlightened srác in the closing circle clarify that there *has* been an understanding of sorts. He shares the grounds for this visit, “getting the shared world in view”¹⁷⁷ among their different senses of how Deviszont should be, and who—and under what terms¹⁷⁸—it should be for.

177. Zerilli 2016: 237

178. Massey 2005:

142

Tensions arise around the encounter with the enlightened srác, but not as a simplistic, zero-sum conflict between “two or more bodies [who] desire to occupy the same space at the

179. Cf. Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2018: 17; Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2020, following Mouffe 2005 same time”¹⁷⁹ Rather, they develop around the enlightened srác’s style of participation in the space, and its incommensurability with the organisers’ own understandings of how Deviszont can and should be made “as well as possible”¹⁸⁰—a grammar of contingency through which Deviszont can be done ‘well’—but also ‘worse’. Far from an ‘illusion’ of “*common sense* supposedly deposited in some way in the interiority of each actor taken individually [...] a ‘set of generally shared self-evident truths’ serving as a basis for agreements”¹⁸¹ common *grounds* are *established* by the deviszontosok “to settle judgments publicly” about how Deviszont should work “by declaring what the points are at issue in various judgments”¹⁸² Principles of making together; ideals of listening to one another in open circles; and conventions of gathering on Thursday afternoons are not the *bases* for identifying and responding to challenging or “uncertain”¹⁸³ situations like the arrival of the enlightened srác, but rather the shared meanings and practices at stake in the question of whether to make space for him within their community. They furnish the encounter with the circumstances within which the deviszontosok’s “choices come to be considered at all [...] during the backward-forward-sideways course of interaction”¹⁸⁴ But the ways that Deviszont comes to matter for the enlightened srác are also part of the negotiation of agreement too: through pizza, biographical stories and a last farewell, he offers his own contributions to the way Deviszont comes together—how it becomes shared.
180. Puig de la Bellacasa 2017
181. Cf. Boltanski 2011: 54
182. Cavell 1999: 30–31
183. Boltanski 2011: 55; Boltanski & Thévenot 2006
184. McHugh 1968: 18; 129; Raffel 2013: 1

The decisions, explanations and activities involved in excluding the enlightened srác, much as those undertaken to *include* srácok like Bacsó, can be recognised—and hinge on members’ recognition of them—as communicative actions

that “speak” for their community:¹⁸⁵ they work out what kind of space Deviszont is and what sorts of things go on there. Rather than sharing an ‘agreement’ each individually, they are matters of finding one’s own place,¹⁸⁶ one’s own voice, and one’s own work¹⁸⁷ as *part* of that shared space. This “agreement in judgments (not in opinion but in form of life) [...] is creative”:¹⁸⁸ it is productive of the meaning of their shared community, negotiated through planning meetings and worried glances, with musical instruments and pizza as its members do the work of making Deviszont into a space that works for *them together*. They find the ‘we’ their shared space can work for, but also the “relational groundedness”¹⁸⁹ of Deviszont’s work in its wider community as well. By coming to recognise how the participation of the enlightened srác changes what ‘playing together’ could mean for Deviszont—shifting it from an empowering place for local students to a place for just anyone who walks in—the organisers take up “an active politics of place”: they negotiate their own community’s geographies of responsibility—for whom and by what terms they’re accountable—and, in doing so, learn the meaning and value of their work as a “political project”:¹⁹⁰

Seeing Deviszont’s community space as an experiment—and its community as a search for agreement—is particularly important because many of the srácok themselves do not fit ‘easily’ into Deviszont’s target demographic: some are close to graduating; others are enrolled but don’t really attend school; and others have repeated years several times, making them nearly as old as some of the organisers. Working out how—on what grounds—the enlightened srác is to be excluded from Deviszont is related to and constituent of the process by which the organisers work out *whether and how* to include

185. Cavell 1999: 22

186. McHugh 1968:

135

187. Cavell 1999: 27

188. Zerilli 2016: 228

189. Massey 2004: 10

190. Massey 2004:

7, 17

the other srácok—their own terms and styles of participation as part of Deviszont, and practices and reasons for their eventual exit from that community. The ongoing, always open-ended effort to make Deviszont a welcoming and empowering space for the srácok turns on discovering and constructing shareable practices, values, commitments and judgements between organisers and srácok—including an understanding of withdrawal from that community.¹⁹¹ It involves recognising *ways to participate well* in making the community your own, but also letting it grow for others—and it's a tension aging srácok, busy organisers and departing ethnographers each confront in their own way as they look for a balance between the many different projects and communities in their lives.

191. Cavell 1999: 27–

28





3.7

Auróra's cellar is packed wall-to-wall with a cheering crowd, clapping along with a drag queen singing on stage. Actually, the crowd trails up the stairs and fills the courtyard and the Kioszk too. Even the nagyterem's been converted into table-space for the evening's guests, and Naómi's made the unusual call to shut the front doors: we're already at capacity. Tonight's party is the third annual "Radical Love Queer Party" organised by students from the Central European University's Gender Studies Departments. It's one of Auróra's biggest parties every year, but this is the biggest crowd I've seen yet. It's not clear whether there'll be another one, though—and that might be part of the reason for the crowd: in the past year, the Hungarian government adopted a law that will force the CEU to close its Budapest campus and another revoking accreditation for all gender studies programmes in the country.¹⁹² No one's sure what the coming year will look like, but it's certain to be quite a bit different for both the aurórasok and the CEU students—many of whom will be moving to Vienna. For now, though, everyone's here to party.

I half-dance, half-scooch my way through the bouncing crowd to find my friends—no doubt stuck in the snaking queue to the bar. As I pass the foot of the stairs, I spot Samu's face

192. See Foer 2019, for example

poking around the corner. “We need to move this crowd back now or the stairs will be completely blocked”, I hear him holler into his phone. He slips through



the crowd toward a table covered in glitter and face paint, waves at the two women working the table, then gestures toward the backroom behind them, “We need to make some more room!”. Naómi squeezes through the doorway and joins him. They have to lean close and shout in each other’s ears to hear over the music, but they manage to find a space for the



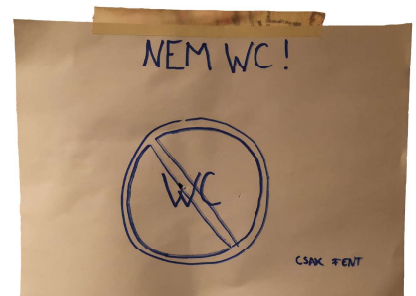
table further away from the stairs—and the glitter queue, the bar queue and the dancefloor queue begin to disentangle. We head upstairs together, and they take seats at a long table of aurórasok, staff and friends. They’re up and down throughout the night—clearing glasses, resolving tech problems for the performers downstairs, shifting the crowd and working to keep everything running smoothly—but they still find

time to enjoy themselves with their friends too.

I make my way to the Kioszk, but the narrow hallway is blocked by a small group crowded around the door to Auróra’s handicap toilet, which tonight has a paper sign taped onto it: “This toilet has been liberated from the gender binary”. The event organisers spent the entire day preparing the space

for the party—hanging glitzy foil streamers from the ceiling, setting up stations for the night’s performers and artists, posting reminders to “be safe!” when leaving the party, and marking gender-neutral toilets—preparing the space as best as possible for their party-to-be. Now, however, there was trouble in the bathroom, “Hey! Hey! Are you okay?! Hey!”. I stop to ask if something’s wrong, and the group explain that one of their friends is locked inside—with the only key. “I think he passed out”, one guy says with a laugh and a grimace. I head back to the courtyard and tell Naómi what’s happened. “Shit. Let’s try the ventilation window”, she suggests. We peek in; it’s not a pretty sight. The guy passed out, but not before getting sick—everywhere except the toilet, from the looks of things. “Oh, undorító, that’s *disgusting*”, Naómi cringes, “Hey! Hey! Your friends are looking for you! Open the door!”. Eventually—“Hey! *Get up!*”—he stirs and shambles to the door. Naómi and I head back around and retrieve the key from his friends. “Time to get you home”, they tease their friend as they make for a quick exit. Naómi stares grimly at the scene inside the toilet, “This—is a problem for tomorrow”. She locks the door closed, then heads back to her friends and much-needed fröcs. The party dances, chatters, clamours on—but not without some help here-and-there to keep it going.

Both the event organisers and the aurórasok take steps to make sure the party goes as well as possible¹⁹³—or at least “good enough”. Their work involves noticing people having problems—like the guy locked in the toilet—but also the possibility of problems—like the crowded stairwell—then coming up with solutions or, at very least, *workarounds*. Material interventions such as the decorations, notices and careful arrangement



193. Puig de la

Bellacasa 2017



of tables work to create an enjoyable, safe and inclusive environment, but only with this kind of periodic maintenance and repair to *keep* them working throughout the night. Naómi and the other aurórásk do not always straightforwardly ‘fix’ something—after all, the toilet is tomorrow’s problem, and broken glasses get chucked in the bin—but they are not trying to repair ‘inert broken things’, but rather things ‘in their lives’¹⁹⁴

194. Bovet & Strebelt
2019: 111

Seeing such interventions as repair work means recognising them as “practice[s] of *mending order*”, a kind of “people-repair” that “goes hand-in-hand with the repair of things”¹⁹⁵ The aurórásk and event organisers are repairing the party—negotiating ways for this gathering to be a good one, for people to get on together *well*. Fixing the toilet for the worried group of friends and for the party can be, for instance, a matter of simply locking the door so that it doesn’t cause problems for the rest of the night’s events. It’s a risk, since someone may come looking for a handicap or a gender-neutral toilet, but *for now* it solves the problem—and the aurórásk are on hand to resolve any other problems that may arise. That Naómi’s fix is only contingently “good enough”—indeed, could be subject to critique by other aurórásk, especially those on shift tomorrow

195. Sormani et
al. 2019: 12;
referencing
Henke 2000: 56

morning—reflects the relational and situated status of both ‘trouble’ and ‘repair’.¹⁹⁶ What comes to count as “good enough” and how people accomplish it says something about the kind of thing they are working on. It brings a “worksite”¹⁹⁷ into view, but also the different better and worse way its members might make it “otherwise”.¹⁹⁸ The aurórasok get up to projects throughout the night as problems arise, and their ongoing, reflexive and collaborative recognitions of situations *as problems* shows how they try to make Auróra a welcoming, enjoyable, shareable space for their guests and for themselves.

On my way back out from the Kioszk, I run into Pisti. “You can’t smoke here”, I hear him explaining to two partygoers just outside the door, “you have to go out from under the canopy”. This spot used to be the favourite smoking spot for the aurórasok too—until a government inspection ruled the overhang counted as “indoors”. Pisti points to a small “no smoking” sign pinned to the wall—one I saw him hang a few weeks back. He takes a drink of his Unicum and gives me a wave. I stop for a quick chat, “I didn’t know you were working tonight!”. He shakes his head and gestures to his drink, “Just heading downstairs to catch the music”. Like the other aurórasok, Pisti seems like he’s

196. Jérôme & Pontille 2017: 16; Jérôme & Pontille 2015
197. Rawls 2008: 709
198. Bonner 2019: 278



always here—or just around the corner. And as with the other auróráások, it can be difficult to tell when he’s working and when he’s just come by to socialise: the two blend together.

We make our way down to the courtyard. He stops for a drink, watches a group throw open the door to the cellar, then steps over to close the door tight behind them. There’s sure to be noise complaints regardless, but the auróráások do their best to keep the foam-lined door closed—it counts for something, a few decibels at least. I hang out with Pisti for a while near the door, chatting and drinking and—now and again—stepping over to shut the door.

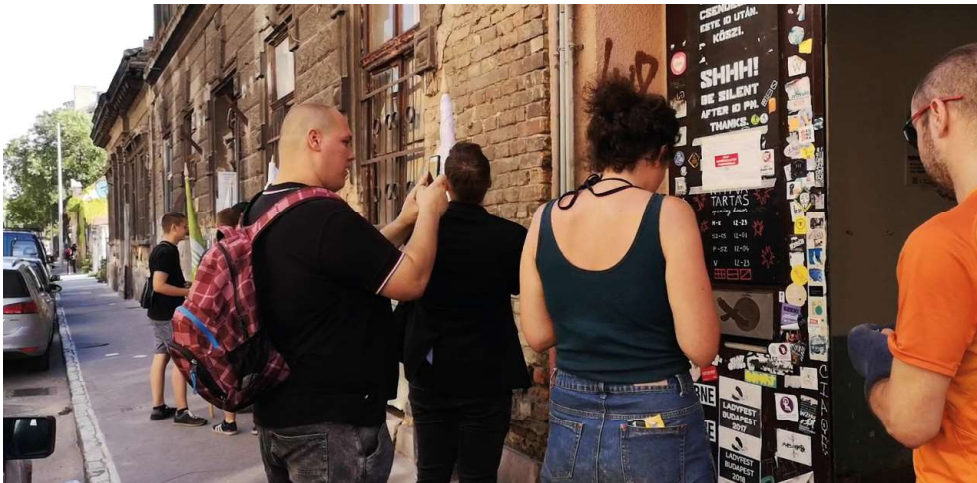
Pisti helps out when he sees a potential problem. It’s not as though the success of the party hinged on his minor interventions—in fact most partygoers would probably prefer if they could just smoke discreetly under the canopy—but his actions do affect how the party goes in publicly recognising problems and finding “good enough” solutions. He shares publicly what counts as a “good enough” way to inhabit the party for him, and what takes a bit more work. A visit from the police is always relatively likely, after all, but with the door to the cellar closed and no one smoking under the canopy there’s much less chance of a citation.

Pisti’s habit of helping out throughout the night reminds me of other, more ‘exciting’ times I’ve seen him support Auróra: when he led the dismantlement of a shed in the garden for an entire afternoon because the local government ordered Auróra to take it down, or when he, Naómi and I accidentally interrupted a ‘flash-mob’ organised by a far-right youth organisation outside Auróra’s front door: Pisti jumped in the middle and Naómi ripped down the homophobic sticker they





posted on the door. There had been concerns that far-right groups might try to disrupt things tonight—they make a routine of targeting Auróra during Pride—and the aurórasok keep an eye out for that kind of trouble too. The smaller and banal acts of repair I observe Pisti and the other aurórasok take throughout the night are easier to overlook than these kinds of ‘dramatic’, ‘major’ or ‘political’ incidents—but they play a similar role in keeping the space working well, to make it the kind of space they want it to be, to *share* publicly their senses of what the space requires to be “good enough”, and to enable their own politics of living well together.



I’m lost in thought—I’m not supposed to be working tonight either, after all!—until I suddenly hear Benji shout from the table of aurórasok, “but that’s not what Auróra should be!”. I look over in time to see him stand up from the table of aurórasok and storm inside. Naómi and Samu exchange looks, and the conversation dies off. I have a sinking feeling that *this* is a conversation I should have been there for, furiously scribbling fieldnotes about what the aurórasok think Auróra should and shouldn’t be. They don’t make Auróra work just so however it can: they share *publicly*—through planning meetings and fundraising campaigns, by organising certain kinds of events and

protesting certain kinds of policies, in social media posts and late-night debates—a sense of better and worse ways Auróra as a space and as a community might be made otherwise.

But after all, the aurórasok have other, subtler ways of making Auróra work well together besides the debates, protests and public events that look “political”:¹⁹⁹ Keeping a door closed, directing a crowd, ushering out smokers, cleaning—well, at least locking—a toilet are smaller, easily overlooked “working acts” that nonetheless “gear into” and change Auróra, find ways it could be better, and enable the aurórasok to “share this world and its objects with others [... to] have ends and means in common [... to] work with them”.²⁰⁰ These acts are part of what making, opening, running and sustaining a good community space “*come[s] to look like*”.²⁰¹ They’re scenes in which the aurórasok work on their community space as a shared and shareable project, where they work on the challenge of a better form of life lived together. Descriptions and debates about what Auróra should be, rather than hashing out “detailed blueprints” to be implemented, enact a “speculative sociology” of their own community, an “imagination of society and ourselves otherwise [...] multiple, provisional and reflexive accounts of how we might live” together.²⁰² The aurórasok have different opinions about how the space should be, different senses of what needs repaired (and how), as well as different feelings about the value and meaning of their community—but in sharing these with each other, they find space to work on Auróra here-and-there: they piece together their own work-in-progress geographies of community space. The aurórasok—staff, volunteers, regulars, and guests included—work to “keep open” Auróra’s better possible worlds by time and again opening

199. Per Mouffe
2005; 2007

200. Schütz 1962:
online

201. Garfinkel 2002:
202

202. Levitas 2013:
217-218

it to new possibilities and ways of being together: their “[w]orld-making projects emerge from [their] practical activities of making lives” together.²⁰³

203. Tsing 2015: 21-

22



Focusing on the everyday activities of community spaces, the things the communities of aurórásook, gólyások, deviszontosok and so many others get up to in making and sharing their “good enough” community spaces rather than “the political” in their work can, perhaps, get closer to the better possible worlds they’re working on—the alternatives, opposition and dissent expressed in their shared activities compared to the kind of world pursued by the Hungarian government. Yet, there is reason to pause before elevating—or reducing—their activities to this kind of political conflict. In a samizdat essay written in 1978, Czech playwright—and later president—Václav Havel wrote about his own experiences of “being a dissident” with wry humour:

*Regardless of their actual vocations, these people are talked about in the West more frequently in terms of their activities as committed citizens, or in terms of the critical, political aspects of their work. From personal experience, I know that there is an invisible line you cross—without even wanting to or becoming aware of it—beyond which they cease to treat you as a writer who happens to be a concerned citizen and begin talking of you as a “dissident” who almost incidentally (in his spare time, perhaps?) happens to write plays as well.*²⁰⁴

204. Havel 1978:

38–39

Rather than a “special profession [...] grumbling about the state of things”, Havel argues that dissidents are firstly “simply a physicist, a sociologist, a worker, a poet, individuals who are doing what they feel they must and, consequently, who find themselves in open conflict with the regime [...] they have not, in other words, consciously decided to be professional malcontents”.²⁰⁵ Such remonstrations have important implications for academic studies and theories of radical politics and alternative cultural spaces today. They broach the question of how the work done by *aurórasok*, *gólyások*, *deviszontosok* and so many others matters to them as their everyday “actual vocations”, their hobbies, their passions, rather than remaining content to “add up”—or reduce—all of their activities to something fundamentally political, radical or impressively alternative.

205. Havel 1978:

39; see Rév

1996: 152 for

a surprisingly

similar argument

about Hungarian

peasants under

communism

Raising such a question resonates with the ethnomethodological commitment to acknowledging member’s methods and practical theories of action,²⁰⁶ but it is also a way of “leaving a place for an actor who can enjoy what [they

206. Garfinkel 1967:

vii

207. Blum & McHugh

do]”.²⁰⁷ By taking seriously the *work* of the *aurórasok*, *gólyások*,

deviszontosok and other communities in Budapest, it's possible to see more than political conflict or debate: the experience of trying to make something in the world "good enough", to make space for a community to grow into the kind of "we" they want to be. In making the spaces they inhabit well, people undertake "to discover whom [they are] in community with" project-by-project by working on making and maintaining "a state of affairs [they] can speak for". If these shared, workable and work-in-progress forms of life amount to "dissent", it is not as a break from a "mainstream" or "hegemonic" society, not "an undoing of consent but a dispute about its content, a dispute within it over whether a present arrangement is faithful to it".²⁰⁸ Their work is a matter of making space for good possibilities of being together; their politics arise as they furnish answers, experiments and projects to the ongoing and open-ended question of how to live well together.²⁰⁹

1984: 117; see
discussion in
Raffel 2013: 10

208. Cavell 1999:
24-27

209. Massey 2005:
142

NOVEMBER

mit hoz a jövő?

AURORA & BANKÓ

10 STORY tripla kordonos pride

an Rachel **PETEPO**

kulturális miniszter lesz

EGYESÜLET
KFT

elfogy a víz
és mindenki vegyen

keret :) lejár a személyi hitel

Katka

Kormányváltás

MERT
AZ
NARANCS
SÁRGA



a CSAPBÓL
APEROL SPRITZ
FOG FOLTN!

Kriszta & Bence

(CSALÁDOM :)

mi lesz **2028**-ban? aszond meg! ↓ KRÉTA



mit ~~höz~~ a "jóvó"?

(What will the future bring?)



a reflection

Our small crew of postgrads and staff troop chattering into the Old Library, the last room left for our inventory of the Institute of Geography. There's been a lot of talk recently about how to make the space better for the students, staff and other visitors that spend time here. In one meeting, Dan suggested making an inventory to get a sense of where things are at now, to gather problems, resources, ideas—to piece together some projects to work on.

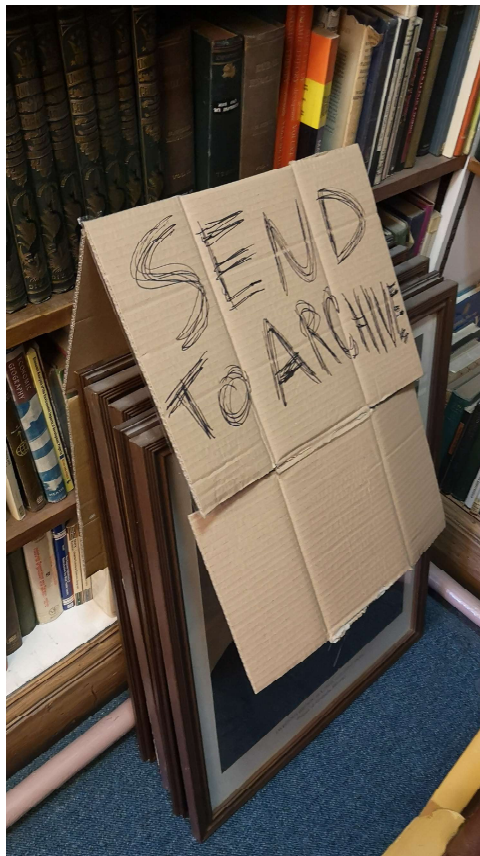
A few students working near the window look up as we enter—a slight grimace at the noise. “So people *are* using it”, Sam remarks. “It’s booked as a study space in the mornings”, I point to a hand-written ‘quiet please!’ sign on the door, “though students have complained about staff ‘stealing’ it for meetings”. “It’s one of the only rooms big enough”, Dan explains with a shrug. “These are the shelves I was telling you about”, I turn to the twin rows of wooden shelves filling one wall of the room, “the one’s I’m desperate to do something with. They’re listed—

or that’s the story anyway—so the university can’t take them out”. Sam steps closer and slides a large atlas off the shelf. “But they’ve still got books—oh wow, super colonial”, he shows us an ‘ethnographic’ illustration of an indigenous tribe,



“yikes”. Eric nods, “saved from a bin by postgrads, in fact”. He recounts the story: when the School’s last Geography Librarian retired, the university retired the library with them. Books deemed valuable were moved to the main collection; the rest were trashed—but then retrieved by postgrads reluctant to see heaps of books in a dumpster and rows of bookshelves stand empty. Now, the books are primarily—if dubiously—decoration.

“And speaking of odd decoration”, I join Tim and Dan beside one of the many portraits hanging on the wall—photos of past Department Chairs and the occasional additional portrait-keen prof. Recently, a project to decolonise the Institute of Geography had provoked a number of debates about these pictures: one



group proposed to take them down; another claimed that would be destroying history; another queried what would go up in their place; and others just tried to keep their heads low. I’d wound up, a bit cautiously, agreeing to chair the ‘Decolonising the Building’ meetings when the staff members who started the project found themselves short on time. We hadn’t made much progress with the

pictures either, though. My own experiment ended predictably: I took down the pictures and hid them in one of the bookshelves with a small cardboard sign ‘send to archive’. They were back up after a week. Tim and Dan discuss the photos, “there’s no

information about who they are—and maybe we should be hanging up information about research that’s happening in the department *now* instead”.

We turn as a door swings open nearby, and Ioanna walks in carrying a coffee pot full of water. She dumps it into a large potted plant and gives a wave. “Oh! You’re watering those too?”, I wave back. “Yeah, Emma asked me to take over since she’s moving”, she explains. “She asked me too!”, I say, following her out into the Common Room with the others. “And Hamish! Guess we need to coordinate”, Ioanna laughs as she tips the rest of the water into one of the many aloe vera plants thronging the window. The Common Room windows are lush with plants, ones Emma’s been tending to for a long time—at least since the Barra Office postgrads saved them from being thrown out when the room was renovated, perhaps longer. “Ben and I re-potted some of the overgrown ones last week”, I point out a few smaller pots tucked in a corner, “so if you know of any bare windowsills, feel free to move them!”. “You’re the ones who water them?”, a student on one of the couches pipes up, “They’re great. I’m in a different School, but I come here because it’s the nicest place I’ve found to sit on campus”.

We chat a while more before I re-join my group by the kitchenette. “Maybe we should make an exhibition with some of these, The Institute of Geography’s Colonial Histories or something?”, Sam suggests, flipping through another book while Tim, Dan and Eric talk over plans to create new ‘staff posters’ to hang in the hallways. The inventory winds down. We have a list of alcoves, curiosities, possibilities, concerns, possible problems, questions to follow up, dozens of emails to send to poor Craig, the building support officer, and a number

of new projects. But one last item catches my eye: a small wooden cabinet serving as an impromptu brochure holder in the centre of the room. I squat down, but find the door locked—and bearing a short marked-on message, “It says, ‘No stealing! –G’. Any idea what’s inside?”. “Could it be”, Eric lights up, “Gus’s Guzzle?”. Eric tells us how, in his first few years at the Institute of Geography, there was a small café run by Gus, a retired university worker. It was low-key and out-of-pocket—just something Gus did to keep busy and to make the space a bit nicer, “and this must be the tea he left behind when he retired”. Yet another project; you find so many here—past, planned, ongoing, handed-over—each making something of the Institute of Geography, of the spaces we share, of the communities that come together in and as the University of Edinburgh.

1. Per the Edinburgh
University School
of GeoSciences
webpage: [https://
www.ed.ac.uk/
geosciences](https://www.ed.ac.uk/geosciences)

Yet, the projects our group encounters find little space in the usual depictions of the university as a space of “world-changing”¹ education defined by learning, teaching and research, a workplace full of—albeit less publicly—emails, meetings, marking, moderating, reviewing, examining, writing (when one can), ethics boards, reports and of course plenty of *academic* projects. Our group’s inventory sketches out a different style of university ‘workplace’, where students, teachers, workers and other visitors do work to make their shared communities and spaces better—by leading engaging seminars and developing scientific breakthroughs, yes, but also by tending plants, making ‘Quiet!’ signs, creating staff posters, pulling books from bins, dreaming up exhibitions, debating stodgy portraits, taking stodgy portraits down, hanging stodgy portraits back up, or running a DIY café out of a cabinet in the Common Room.

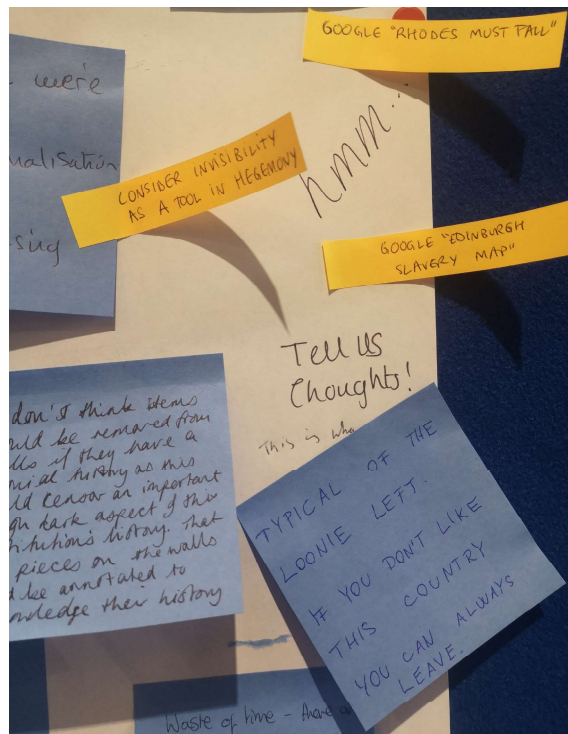
This isn't the work anyone's paid (or paying) to do, but these other, "minor"² academic projects play a part in negotiating "the (ever-contested) question of our being-together"³ in and as this university: they are ongoing and contingent techniques for making something better of this space and for learning what a shared and shareable "how to bring it about from a here-and-now" better Institute of Geography might look like.⁴

2. Katz 1996; 2017

3. Massey 2005: 142

4. Garfinkel 1967: 97

Such projects may seem incidental, negligible or like 'mere decoration', but they become spaces for negotiating and sharing experiences, values and ideas as people work on them together. Even a personal project like growing plants can pull in a host of others—and their work to coordinate and to care for the plants "as well as possible" is a



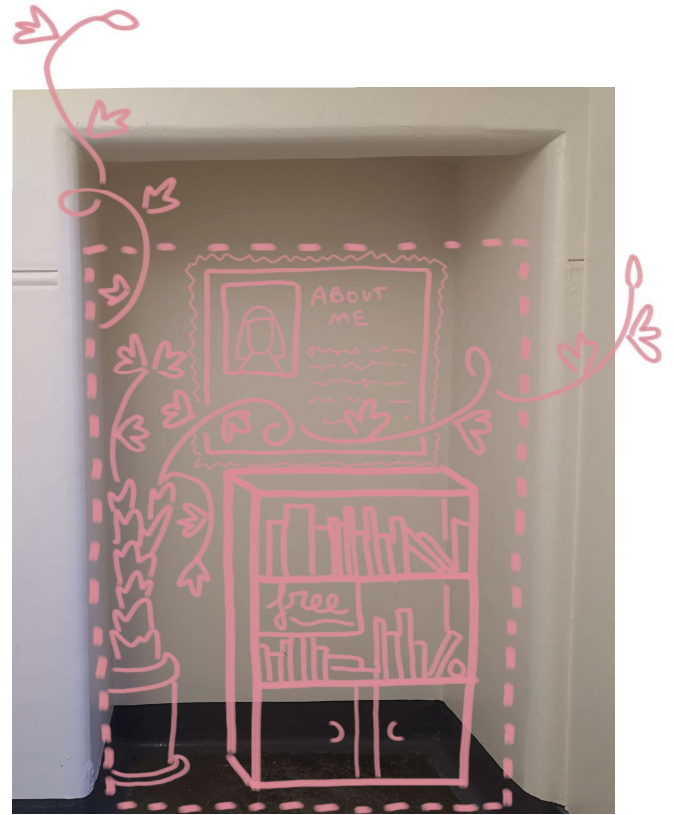
form of mutual "involvement in a world where the question of how to care needs to be posed"⁵. They pose that question together.

5. Puig de la

Bellacasa 2017: 6

At the same time, seemingly more ambitious projects like Decolonising the Building come to consist of many similarly mundane activities, like making a list, having a chat or complaining about portraits—but such activities *are* the practical work of finding situated possibilities, shareable grammars of justification, and reasonable, *workable* projects to change the world here-and-now. They are methods of reimagining and

remaking our shared forms of life, for learning together—from one another—how we might ‘fit’ together in and as the Institute of Geography. While making our inventory, we do not uncover static objects, natural facts or obvious solutions,



but rather encounter the ways people work in and on our shared building. The inventory becomes a *reflexive* space for assembling our own good project by *finding a place*⁶ in, among, with—by relating to⁷—the Institute of Geography’s other works in progress.

Geography has a well-known and unflagging history of debating, critiquing and reflecting on its disciplinary identity. Human geographers have been pressed to “prove their worth” in the face of external pressures like the rise of ‘big-data’ and budget cuts⁸, as well as critical reflections and interventions from within the discipline.⁹ This has involved calls to reconstruct and re-imagine geography “by asking political questions about “the project”. Who would participate in defining this project? What questions are being subordinated to others? Why? Which daily life experiences constitute the material for theory? [...] This is not only a debate about theory, but a political struggle over *whose* theories will have validity and significance in geography”¹⁰ Feminist and Queer Scholars have developed the critique of

6. Bonner 2010: 266

7. Savransky 2019

8. Cresswell 2014: 56; Cupples 2020

9. See for instance Domosh 1991

10. Christopherson 1991: 84

‘geography’s project’ with an interest in “reconstructing projects in radical geography to engage with the perspectives developed from positions of exclusion and marginalization within the discipline”¹¹ An ongoing, critical reflection on the discipline’s practices and methods, cultures and conventions, values and beliefs—“the doing of geography”¹²—has contributed to its perception as a pluralistic if discordant—“sprawling, ragged, gorgeous”¹³—discipline. Such reflections “consider the politics of relations between different forms of knowledge production, or what [Isabelle Stengers] calls ‘ecologies of practice’”¹⁴—the ways we do fieldwork, theory, writing and publishing together well—or at least well enough. Yet, among these reflections, it should also be a question of just which practices come to “count”—an argument informed by feminist critiques of undervalued and ‘invisible’ forms of labour¹⁵—as part of the ecologies of practices that make up geography, that produce geographical knowledge, that do work in and on our shared world.

11. Chouinard & Grant 1995: 159
12. Withers 2018: 503
13. Geoghagen et al. 2020
14. Barry 2015: 89
15. Puig de la Bellacasa 2017; Federici 2004; Ukeles 2018

In a related reflection on the value and purpose of ethnography and fieldwork, anthropologist Tim Ingold writes that, despite “widespread agreement, nowadays, that knowledge is not built from facts that are simply there [... but] grows and is grown in the forge of our relations with others”, practitioners’ work “of knowledge generation or co-production that they would call “ethnographic” appears to stop at the walls of the academy”¹⁶ For Ingold, this observation is intended as a challenge for those who use the term ‘ethnography’ to describe the knowledge that arises from “their collaborative engagements” in the field: why, then, is their collaborative work in the university not ‘ethnographic’? “I am not suggesting”,

16. Ingold 2014: 391

Ingold clarifies, “that we should become ethnographers of our students or of our academic colleagues. We are there to work *with* them, not to make studies *of* them”¹⁷

17. Ingold 2014: 391

Ingold’s objections offer a valuable defence of the “long-term and open-ended commitment, generous attentiveness, relational depth, and sensitivity to context” that characterises “proper” anthropological—and perhaps also *geographical*—inquiry, and he protests against the “protocols of positivist methodology” that stultify such engagement when they require researchers to specify in advance such things as “how many people we intend to talk to, for how long, and how they will be selected”¹⁸

18. Ingold 2014: 384

However, his vision of research maintains a problematic separation from the researcher and the researched, whom we are ‘to make studies *of*’ rather than ‘work *with*’. This distinction is, however, incommensurate with ethnomethodology’s observation that social scientific methods are, themselves, mundane actions within ordinary social order—they are part of “the local production and natural, reflexive accountability of the phenomena of order”¹⁹.

19. Garfinkel 1991: 10

Interviews, questionnaires, participant observation, fieldwork are all practical and *joint* accomplishments:²⁰ ‘studies *of*’ are created by working *with*, since there is “‘no time out’ in the accomplishment of social order, it is an ongoingly *worked at matter*”²¹

20. Strelbel 2014;

Garfinkel 1967: 97

21. Button 2012: 677

By opening this conclusion with a vignette taken from my own university, I play on Ingold’s challenge and against his warnings to draw attention to the other kinds of work going on in a university and as well the other kinds of *studies* that go on as we—students, staff, workers, visitors—take part in making and remaking our shared social worlds. Rather than trying to

make an ethnographic ‘study of’ my friends and colleagues, my last vignette is intended to unsettle Ingold’s juxtaposition—to highlight the experience of *learning from* that takes place in the university as we, the members of its communities, find ways to work together. In this thesis, I have examined the many projects that people get up to in making and shaping *good* spaces—how they work on and as tolerant, political, activist, feminist, critical or simply *good* communities. While this offers plenty of information about these groups and their work, I conclude by drawing parallels between the many projects I encountered and took part in during fieldwork with the many projects of the Institute of Geography to encourage a reconceptualization of the purpose and value of fieldwork: learning from and writing about other people need not lead primarily to knowledge *about* them. Our aim, instead, can be to learn to think with them—with their projects, theories and experiments—in our own work to make spaces of learning, acting, and working well.

There is a precedent for such an alternative conceptualisation of learning and research to be found in the pragmatist tradition: most famously, the Hull-House settlement of Chicago founded at the turn of the 19th century by Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr—activists and pragmatist scholars in their own right—has been lauded as an alternative form of engaged social science driven by “collaborative experimentation” with communities, rather than extractive “studies of” them.²² While their contemporaries and colleagues at the Chicago School of Sociology “viewed the city as a laboratory from which they could extract a science of urban growth and human behaviour [...] describable not in local details but with laws”, Addams and the settlement’s members worked with local residents as “co-

22. Gross 2009

23. Wills & Lake
2020: 26

24. Lake 2014;
Schneiderhan 2011:
613-614

25. Jackson 2001

26. Bridge 2020a:
356

equal partners in devising solutions to the problems presented by the exigencies of life in the industrial metropolis”.²³ In the field of social provision, the communities of Hull-House confronted complex and intractable social problems through deliberation and experimentation, collaboratively creating new “vocabularies of motive” based on their experiences and actions to piece together projects beyond prevailing grammars of economic “self-help”.²⁴ Meetings, classes and public readings, but also dance classes, sports, drama, musical performances, laundry and—it practically goes without saying—a coffeehouse served as “interspatialities”²⁵ and spaces of encounter where social and political differences were discovered, negotiated and worked upon.²⁶ Whilst Hull-House contributed to many social reforms and positive experiences for local residents, their everyday work was more often characterised by problems, challenges and surprises—and adaptations, experiments and trials in response. Writing about the Hull-House coffeehouse, Addams writes with good-humoured dismay that, despite “tr[ying] experiments with every known ‘soft drink’ [...] we never became a rival to the saloon”. She recounts the comment of one visitor that the café would be “a nice place to sit in all day if one could only have beer”, before reflecting:

But the coffee-house gradually performed a mission of its own and became something of a social center to the neighbourhood as well as a real convenience. Business men from the adjacent factories and school teachers from the nearest public schools, used it increasingly. The Hull-House students and club members supped together in little groups or held their reunions and social banquets, as, to a certain extent, did organizations from all parts of the town. The experience of the coffee-house taught us not

to hold to preconceived ideas of what the neighbourhood ought to have, but to keep ourselves in readiness to modify and adapt our undertakings as we discovered those things which the neighbourhood was ready to accept.²⁷

27. Addams 1912:
127-128, emphasis

The experience of the Hull-House coffeehouse does not tell a story about a place where problems are solved, but where questions are raised, evaluations offered, principles identified, conversations held—a problematic space where the challenge of how to get along together²⁸ becomes a situated, ongoing and *practical* issue. The ‘experience of the coffeehouse’ involves making a good space *with* others by learning what might count as ‘good’ along the way.

added

28. Massey 2005

Additionally, Addams and the communities of Hull-House learned how to make their space well not just by speaking and working with people from their own neighbourhoods, but also from visiting, reading about and learning from others’ experiments in making good spaces: earliest inspiration for Hull-House came from Addams’ visit to Toynbee Hall in London, for instance.²⁹ Later visits to other experimental communities like Arkansas’ Commonwealth colony and the estate of Leo Tolstoy in Russia were occasions for reflection on Hull-House’s own methods and struggles—despite considerable differences in the exact nature, context and aims of these institutions.³⁰

29. Schneiderhan
2011: 599

30. Addams 1912,
Ch. 12

Reflecting on the experiments and crews, the resources and projects of Hull-House, but also Auróra, Gólya, Deviszont, Közkincs, Müszi, the Downtown Café, Frisco, Eckermann, Sirály, the Szabad Egyetem and so many more experiments in creating good spaces together can also be a way of reflecting on how we make our own spaces well—the projects we get up to, the communities we form and the work we do to make

our university spaces otherwise. This is not because these spaces are all the “same” sort of thing—as though a university could only learn from something else called a university—but because there is a shared and shareable, *public* quality to the work of collective betterment that characterises each of their individual, unique “spirits”: the activity of making each of these spaces involves working out, here-and-now, time-and-again, what works well for their communities. What this should look like and how it should work are questions that invite discussion and debate far in excess to what can be squished into the conclusion of a thesis, but it invites a shift away from a tendency among reform-minded academics to theorise “the university” and its essential values³¹ toward giving more attention to the small, personal, side-, and experimental projects that we pursue as members of university communities to *work on* the university—and to learn what works along the way. Perhaps Ingold’s caution about writing ethnography about one’s colleagues is merited, if after all we already know about these and like projects through our work among them. But writing up the collective experimentation, learning, reasoning and curiosity of a few projects in the Institute of Geography should at least suffice to challenge the fatuity that “we do not know what people in universities *really do* [...] we tend to deal in folk theories of what we are doing”.³² We learn what we are doing and what to do through the practical and experimental projects we get up to in our work to live, make and think well with others—our own situated “practical sociologies” for the “ongoing accomplishment of the concerted activities of daily life” in and as the university.³³

31. See Thrift 2009b:
208-211

32. Thrift 2016: 15

33. Garfinkel 1967: vii

Perhaps more importantly for the empirical work of

this thesis, however, such an argument also invites a shift in the ways we understand and value fieldwork as a method of knowledge-production. Rather than approaching fieldwork as an extractivist procedure through which ethnographers and geographers loot “the field” for data, stories and facts about a place and its peoples in order to accumulate them in “centres of calculation”,³⁴ fieldwork more so describes the immense fortune and the immense challenge of taking part in the lives of others, working with them, and learning from them *well*. To some extent, this resonates with calls for a “phronetic” social science, in which scholars can offer practical wisdom and “reason capable of action” to the world.³⁵ However, the approach advocated here makes a crucial break from this school of thought in refusing the assumption that the social scientist is uniquely qualified to offer such practical wisdom and rejecting the notion of a single, ‘objective’ reason. By acknowledging the interactive *accomplishment* of plural rationalities of action, ethnographic and geographic fieldwork can help make the situated wisdom³⁶ of *others* shared and shareable in new contexts, among new collectives, and for new projects. It is in much this same vein that ethnographer Anna Tsing characterises her own ethnography as a “book that refuses to end”; drawing on Ursula Le Guin’s “carrier bag theory of fiction”, Tsing encourages an ethnography of storytelling that “might pick up diverse things of meaning and value and gather them together [...] In this kind of storytelling, stories should never end, but rather lead to further stories”.³⁷

By attending to the “jobs of work”³⁸ undertaken by collectives in Budapest to make their own spaces well, we need not simply learn about *their* spaces, but can also reflexively

34. Latour 1987: 211

35. Flyvbjerg 2012: 95; 2004

36. Bonner 2016: 218 offers a more reflexive sense of phronesis

37. Tsing 2015: 286; Le Guin 2019

38. Button 2012: 675

examine our own spaces, our own place in those spaces, and our own efforts to make them well. Sharing projects in this ethnography can also become a way of encouraging further projects. Sharing projects to make better community spaces may provide resources, inspiration and local grammars for making and remaking our own community spaces well. The *knowledge* produced in this ethnography may then be of a different nature to what Ingold has in mind: rather than learning solely or even primarily about these other projects, it aspires to be a resource for thinking with them in our own projects in our own institutions.

39. Cavell 1999: 122

For philosopher Stanley Cavell, “to know the meaning of a word, to have the concept titled by the word, is to be able to go on with it into new contexts—ones we accept as correct for it; and you can do this without knowing, so to speak, the formula which determines the fresh occurrence, i.e., without being able to articulate the criteria in terms of which it is applied”.³⁹ Knowledge and understanding, in Cavell’s example, have to do not with a particular list of criteria or facts, but with the practical ability to *operationalise* a term, an idea—or one might speculate also a story, a project—in new circumstances, in other contexts, among other people. Learning is not a record but a capacity to *know how to go on*, “our ability to properly locate the uses of words in recognizable interests, desires, purposes, forms of life, natural reactions, and so on”.⁴⁰ This involves the use of specific words, but also stories, ideas, theories, references—shared and shareable grammars of reasoning—to do work on our own projects. Thus, stories from elsewhere can contribute to the collective inventorying of resources, ideas and problems through which

40. Zerilli 2016: 24



we ascertain the “certain circumstances”⁴¹ for us to *go on* in and as our own university communities: a way of surveying the terrain, assembling new geographies of possibility here-and-now. In this way, this thesis—besides telling readers something about Hungary, activism and cafés—may also contribute to the practical knowledge of re-making our own university spaces to enable, support or simply query the “we”⁴² our communities of students, teachers, workers, neighbours, administrators and other visitors want to be—and the work we do to get there.

41. Wittgenstein

1958: 73

42. Hughes 2019

Rather than giving this thesis a *conclusion* then, I have made its ending a *reflection* in order to gesture toward these alternative, yet thoroughly mundane and practical ways of learning. After all, the projects of the many people and communities I worked with during my fieldwork are themselves ongoing, experimenting and changing. The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, for instance, radically changed the landscape of both activism and cafés in Budapest like much the rest of the world. Like other public establishments, Auróra was forced to close temporarily, but it found new ways of opening again

as members—without gardens of their own—gathered in the semi-private space of Auróra’s community garden. The gólyások finished building and opened to the public—but their renovation work has continued as new ideas for better seating, community-engagement projects and work as professional builders have emerged. Deviszont’s young community has continued to grow and to change; they experimented with online open-sessions and group-walks to stay open during the pandemic, and have been working on training sessions for srácok who might be interested in becoming organisers themselves in the near future. All of the spaces and communities that I’ve written about here—closed or open, remembered or planned, near or far—have *gone on* and will *keep on* changing as the members of their communities work on questions of how to live well together.



This thesis therefore does not offer a map of these spaces, no definitive history or categorisation of well-defined cultures or sub-cultures. Rather, it is an ethnography of practices, ideas, experiments, worries, decisions, debates, values, resources and *projects*—which communities use to make sense of and concert their activities to do work in and on their worlds. In this way, I have endeavoured to take up ethnomethodology’s program to study the everyday and ordinary “accountable work of producing and describing the social facts of immortal, ordinary society”⁴³ in the domains of politics, civil society and the humble café—or, as Garfinkel once put it while cornered in an elevator, I’ve taken up the task of “working out some very preposterous problems”.⁴⁴ Better yet, I’ve taken interest in—and taken seriously—the ways that others go about working out their own very preposterous problems. What better way

43. Garfinkel 2002: 5

66

44. Garfinkel 1996: 5

to describe the everyday doing of politics? I do hope that the reader will have learned something about Budapest, though this is not a thesis about Hungary. I hope they will have learned about cafés and critical pedagogy, bars and construction sites, protest camps and *lomtalanítás*, though it is not really a thesis about these things either. As this reflection has aimed to show, this thesis is about how we go on learning, debating, and deciding what to do *with others*. Rather than provide an answer to the research question identified in my introduction, “What should we do?”, I have examined the techniques, grammars and resources through which these communities formulate their own answers—and I have shared their stories and projects here so we can think with them as we formulate answers of our own.

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