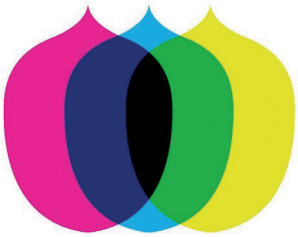

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Issue XXV

Living ~~with~~ Crisis

Edited by Dr Lars Cornelissen

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Living with Crisis

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EDITORIAL

Dr Lars Cornelissen

ISRF Academic Editor

If there is one thing anybody will readily agree with today it is that we are living through a time not just of crisis but of crises. Ours is an era of multiple, overlapping, mutually reinforcing, extended and extensive, deeply felt crises. In public discourse, the term crisis abounds, usually accompanied by an adjective or noun qualifying what type of crisis is being discussed: climate, housing, financial, energy, military, cost-of-living, public health, legitimacy, oil. Crisis upon crisis, wherever one looks.

This theme of overlapping crises emerged clearly from the work that was presented by ISRF Fellows at the Foundation's most recent Fellows Congress, which was held in Manchester in November 2021. The question of crisis, then, features in much ISRF-funded research, which is perhaps unsurprising given the Foundation's stated interest not only in real-world issues but also critique—a word that shares a root with crisis.

Developing this emergent theme, the present issue of the ISRF Bulletin comes out of a wish to understand what it means for (and to) people, communities, or even entire populations to live through a time of crisis. How are today's crises experienced? How do historical crises continue to echo into the present? How have people and institutions sought to adapt themselves to past crises? And can we find modes of resilience, structures of solidarity, and even slivers of hope in such past responses?

This Bulletin owes its title, *Living ~~with~~ Crisis*, to an idea put forward in Sarah Marie Hall's contribution, entitled 'The Social Life of Crisis.' There, Hall observes that crises are not passive structures that are lived by people but can—and should—be seen as having their own lives, their own biographies, in the sense that a crisis has its own trajectory or arc, intersects with and relates to other crises and social processes,

and extends throughout space and time, changing and morphing as it travels. Taking its cue from her thought-provoking observation, this Bulletin asks not just how our time of crisis shape people's lives but also what life it, in turn, may be said to have.

The pieces this Bulletin brings together all speak to this overarching question. Hall herself uses the idea of the life-course of crisis to frame her own research on the lives and afterlives of austerity, drawing on critically informed oral history methods to explore the way austerity in Britain has marked and shaped individual lives, and how the social crisis it has generated relates to the many other crises that confront us.

The theme of overlapping crises also looms large over Lauren Martin's contribution, which reports on a detailed, critical geographical study of a particular immigration detention facility in rural Texas. Reflecting on this facility's location, its changing legal and institutional structure, the composition of its workforce, its many intersections with the dynamics of racial capitalism and the penal state, and what she calls its incomplete financialisation, Martin paints a compelling picture of the way it has had to adapt to one crisis after another, even as it itself depends upon—and, in turn, exacerbates—these crises.

In her piece, 'Experiments in Collective Care,' Eleanor Jupp departs from the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic to study the practices of communal solidarity, mutual aid, and care that tend to wax and wane whenever a social crisis rears its head. She connects the practices that emerged over the course of the pandemic to pre-existing infrastructures, networks, and habits, some of which prove highly inspiring while others turn out to be in dire need of change. Either way, these pre-existing practices of care indicate that if crises tend to overlap and cascade, so too do the forms of mutual aid and communal solidarity that never fail to accompany them.

Communal practices and solidarities are also at the heart of Lisa Taylor's contribution to this Bulletin, which looks at the way one particular community in a former industrial town in the north of England has dealt with, and lived through, the process of deindustrialisation. Insofar as this process may be understood as a crisis, it is one that, strictly speaking, resides in the past. Yet as Taylor shows, past crises can have

complex afterlives, structuring the present, intersecting with it, looming over it. Taylor's work seeks to find means of negotiating these afterlives, using art workshops and exhibitions to breathe new life into the town's industrial past.

This issue is concluded by Despoina Livieratou, the ISRF's newest team member. Introducing herself and her academic interests, she sets out where her research plans are pointing her and what the future may have in store.

BREAKING OUT

Professor Christopher Newfield

(With pictures by Anna Leader)

I started my job as the ISRF's 2nd Director of Research in the fourth month of the pandemic, and I worked for several months from 5500 miles west of London before finally being able to move. This happened just before 2020's lockdown number two, which was followed by others in what blended together to produce an online work life lasting a year and a half. The ISRF sees its Fellows as an invisible college. That was literally my experience of them, with the exception of periodic Zoom meetings—until November 2021's one-day Manchester Congress, where a cohort presented its work in person in what had been a cavernous engine room for pumping city water before being adopted by the People's History Museum.

So much of what we are told about the world is false, and yet relentlessly insisted upon. ISRF Fellows' research is a local antidote. Their work analyses people's frontline experiences of social structures as they are actually lived, and finds problems and responses in places that the media and conventional scholarship overlook. They are educated in a range of disciplines and usually bring several together in doing their research. The results are often original and always illuminating.

We had no master plan for the structure of the day, and so combined several speakers into one of five sessions with discussion time for each group. At the end of the day, I made up titles for the presentations of each group that sought to unearth a common theme. Lauren Martin and Adam Leaver went first, Lauren discussing her work on migration industries and their economies of exclusion, Adam summarising his on the vulnerabilities that Collateralised Debt Obligations introduce into the current global financial system. Mike Makin-Waite talked about

his recent book, *On Burnley Road*, which analyses his efforts as a long-time council staff member to prevent the racist right from dividing and conquering town politics—and national politics from there. Ilay Ors discussed her research on migration across the Aegean, combining its historical normalcy with current framings of disruption and crisis. All four stressed the power of institutions to divide and classify people or things with little accountability; each stressed negative outcomes of political decisions that deploy mostly unseen financial practices. I gave this session the title, "Fabricating Boundaries, Increasing Inequalities."

In Session Two, Alice Baderin described her work to develop a theory of "anticipatory injustice," an inquiry into the burdensome "strategies that vulnerable individuals characteristically employ to ward off risk." Manjeet Ramgotra discussed her history of the creation of the Indian state as turning in part on a novel postcolonial conception of republicanism. Veysi Dag summarised his work on the way Kurdish diasporic communities in Europe are developing modes of "refugee governance from below." Given the overlapping emphasis on the forceful struggles of vulnerable, colonised, or refugee communities to remake realities so that they support more than threaten them, I suggested that we might call this set of presentations, "Agencies of the Oppressed."

During Session Three, nine new Fellows introduced themselves, and we then heard from Elisa Vecchione, whose research focuses on restoring the role of mathematical modelling in policy research, and from Oane Visser, whose work in agrarian studies led him to conclude that data activism is being led by farmers, as with the "fair repair" movement in the United States. Elisa and Oane study the way that practitioners continuously tinker with the knowledge systems that are handed down to them for the purpose, to use Oane's term, of a kind of "code cracking" that we shouldn't associate only with urban hackers and open source theorists since it is happening across the countryside as well. I linked them through the phrase, "Interpretation Over Modelling," or perhaps instead, "Tinkering Over Modelling."

Aoife Daly started Session Four by describing her work on practitioners who attempt to expand the scope of children's competence beyond standard legal definitions, including those undergirding the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Robin Smith explained her ethnographic evidence of the desire of local businesspeople in Istria, Croatia, to keep economic transactions embedded in social relations

and practices rather than having their ground rules captured by central government and the foreign banks that came to work with them. Craig Jones described his mixed-methods approach to discovering what happens to people injured under conditions of war as they move along evacuation and refugee pathways from, for example, Syria to Turkey or Lebanon. Natalya Naqvi discussed her work on the conditions under which countries in the global South could renationalise their economies to get more control over the development process. I couldn't quite decide between two titles for challenges ranging from military violence to unaccountable foreign investment—"Competence from Below," or "Facing Overwhelming Threats." The latter can't happen without the former—that much the Fellows made clear.

Our final session paired Sandya Hewamanne and Jonathan Saha talking about their complementary analyses of colonial and post-colonial economies. Jonathan reviewed his work on Britain's practice of "imperial accumulation" in colonial and independent Myanmar. Sandya described her studies of Sri Lankan women who, having been pulled into labour on the global production line, form organisations that appear to be developing into grassroots economic justice movements that address the problems created by global capitalism

that the women know firsthand. Heard together, Sandya and Jonathan are analysing how the global economy was made from above and how it is being unmade from below. My suggested title was "Unwinding Colonial Capitalism."

The Foundation's goal is to support each scholar's autonomy, where autonomy allows the possibility of new thinking. The research we heard at the Congress suggests that the plan is working. "New" thinking means, among other things, locating features and forces underwriting the world that are intellectually rather than socially required. For example, a common response to the obstacles society poses for philosophically rigorous definitions of justice is to split the difference between justice as defined by research and justice as pragmatically limited by incumbent interests, and offer the compromise as what's more likely to be heard. In contrast, ISRF has been lucky enough to fund researchers who look past compromise towards more fundamental, more complete, more imaginative, more radical, more effective, and more grounded prospects that emerge from actual conditions. Autonomy allows the scholar to make the fully rigorous demand, rather than adapt to the currently plausible.

Following out their remarkable research, the Manchester Congress featured ISRF Fellows seeing past reality's concoction of the only apparently true. It was a gratifying experience.

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF CRISIS

Dr Sarah Marie Hall
ISRF Political Economy Research Fellow 2019–20

This essay is about the social life of crisis—as *lived* and as *having its own life*—and how these are connected. Using a contemporary form of economic and social crisis, that of post-2008 austerity in the UK, I argue that crises are a time and space of socially relational change. Crises are relational because they shape various interpersonal experiences, and because they are always experienced in relation to other times and contexts, whether these are remembered or imagined. In what follows I firstly draw on ideas across feminist, social and cultural theory, to think about the social lives of austerity. In the second half of the piece, I reflect on empirical material in the form of personal life stories, before reaching some modest conclusions.

The Life of Austerity

After what has felt like a very long twelve years and counting, austerity in the UK remains a contentious issue to academics, activists and practitioners alike. This shapes the work we do as more than simply a backdrop, since it can also impact how our work is funded and supported, the people and groups we work with, and our own families and friends. This ongoing relevance, the continued social life of austerity, has also been highlighted by the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Over a decade of austerity in the UK, characterised by job precarity, cuts to welfare entitlement, disinvestment in health, care and other types of social infrastructure,[1] laid the ground for the

1. See Sarah Marie Hall, 'Social Reproduction as Social Infrastructure', *Soundings* 76, no. 1 (2020): 82–94 and Ruth Pearson, R. (2019) 'A feminist analysis of neoliberalism and austerity policies in the UK', *Soundings* 71 (2019): 28–39.

devastating impacts of the global pandemic on those already socially and economically marginalised.[2]

The continued life and legacies of austerity, as they impact upon everyday routines, relationships, and responsibilities, is one of the ways in which we can understand austerity as relational. Austerity is characterised by its compounding effects as felt in everyday life—austerity policies and impacts are layered and simultaneous. People are hit on multiple fronts, whether at the same time or at different times.[3] Austerity is also a prolonged and violent condition; it strikes in the most intimate ways, on relationships, identities, embodied experiences, mental and physical health, as well as meshing with systemic violence via discrimination, exclusion and gaslighting.[4] At the same time, austerity is temporally and relationally varied; it can ebb and flow into everyday lives, and it can feel unending.[5] Austerity measures in the UK, after all, have not been reversed, nor are key areas of the public sector being invested in at necessary levels.[6]

In this sense, austerity is not only lived as a crisis; it is a form of crisis *with its own life*. As with any life-course, including those of people, ideas and things, it is 'encountered over and through time as well as space'.[7] Austerity has a social life, it has a biography, which is threaded

2. Emma Dowling, 'Caring in Times of a Global Pandemic: Introduction', *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 46, no. 4 (2021): 7–30.
3. See Sarah Marie Hall, 'A Very Personal Crisis: Family Fragilities and Everyday Conjunctures within Lived Experiences of Austerity', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 44, no. 3 (2019): 479–492 and Esther Hitchen, 'Living and feeling the austere', *New Formations* 87 (2016): 102–118.
4. Vickie Cooper and David Whyte (eds.), *The Violence of Austerity* (London 2017: Pluto Press).
5. Ruth Raynor, 'Intervention—Changing the question from "the end of austerity?" to "what ends in austerity?"', *Antipode Online*, 19 November 2018, available at: https://antipodefoundation.org/2018/11/19/what-ends-in-austerity/ (accessed 19th December 2018).
6. Pearson, 'A feminist analysis of neoliberalism and austerity policies in the UK'.
7. Sarah Marie Hall, (2019) 'Relational biographies in times of austerity: family, home and care', in: E. Jupp, S. Bowlby, J. Franklin, and S.M. Hall (eds.), *The New Politics of Home: Housing, Gender and Care in Times of Crisis* (Bristol 2019: Policy Press): 63–85, 65.

together with happenings and doings across other social times and spaces, such as prosperity, post-industrialisation, democratic change, neoliberalism and, of course, other crises and austerities. One of the ways to think about this threaded-togetherness, or the relational social lives of austerity, is as a biography.

Biographies of Austerity

The biographies of austerity in the UK require much more attention than the confines of this essay will allow, but it is the idea of austerity as having a biography, a social life, that I wish to press. In the decades preceding the 2008 Global Financial Crisis and the introduction of austerity cuts in 2010, the welfare state had been steadily dismantled. There had been a significant lack of investment across many parts of the UK, in places that are now often uncritically termed 'left-behind communities', largely in Northern England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Further cuts seemed to take this approach to its inevitable end: the removal of an expectation of state support in everyday economic life.

Indeed, state withdrawal from the everyday lives of citizens is the essence of neoliberalism. This retrenchment is achieved through policies that are at once about responsibilising citizens for their own socio-economic conditions, whilst simultaneously being intimately present in almost all parts of everyday life. In recent years, austerity has become the mechanism by which these values become realised, through hostile immigration processes, pressurised health care services, punitive welfare policies, inadequate care structures, and so on. So much of this retrenchment relies on intimate details being readily revealed to the state. In previous work, I have referred to how an economic crisis is inevitably also a personal crisis, in that it 'shape[s] personal lives, biographies, and futures'.[8]

Like austerity policies in their creation, formulation and inauguration, the impacts of austerity can also overlap and coincide. Using the example of young people, this might include moving back home

8. Hall, 'A Very Personal Crisis', 2.

with parents or into precarious housing, struggling to find work or having to travel away from friends and family to secure employment, and alternative possibilities for intimate and family relations and compositions.[9] In my own empirical research, which I touch on later, I have looked at how austerity shapes reproductive futures, as related to welfare retrenchment, indebtedness and care responsibilities, including whether or not people decide to have children.[10] These overlapping impacts are also shaped or compounded by simultaneous divestments in state-sponsored public services, including mental health provision, social care and childcare, and increased responsibilisation of families for young people's accommodation and wellbeing.[11]

It is through such intimate effects that the social life of crisis, such as austerity, is made visible. This is knotted together with the idea of crises having their own social lives—they have a life-course, a biography, a livingness. To borrow from the language of feminist materialism, austerity can be understood to have a vitality, a liveliness, a life unto itself. It is active and present, purposeful and powerful. It is enlivened by its constant maintenance, by the infrastructures that support and usurp its existence, and it is defined as much by what it is as what it is not. There are a few austerity measures that were temporary and have been curtailed, and many others that remain. Austerity mutates and mobilises across places, societies and times,[12] and is understood only according to social, spatial and temporal contexts.

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9. See e.g. Mark Davis and Laura Cartwright, '"Deferred lives": money, debt and the financialised futures of young temporary workers', in M. Featherstone (ed.), *The Sociology of Debt* (Bristol 2019: Policy Press): 91–118; Sander van Lanen, 'Imagining a future in the austerity city: Anticipated futures and the formation of neoliberal subjectivities of youth in Ireland', *EPA: Economy and Space* 51, no. 8 (2021): 2033–2049; and Eleanor Wilkinson, 'Never after? Queer temporalities and the politics of non-reproduction', *Gender, Place & Culture* 27, no. 5 (2020): 660–676.

10. Sarah Marie Hall, 'Reproduction, the life-course and vital conjunctures in austerity, UK', *Medical Anthropology* (2021), DOI: 10.1080/01459740.2021.1951261.

11. See Jupp et al. (eds.), *The New Politics of Home: Housing, Gender and Care in Times of Crisis*.

12. Leah Bassel and Akwugo Emejulu, *Minority women and austerity: Survival and resistance in France and Britain* (Bristol 2017: Policy Press).

It is here that the notion of 'relational biographies' is helpful, as a way to think through the social life of austerity. This notion has largely been adopted within sociological literatures to describe how biographies are fundamentally relational. As Heaphy et al. argue, relational biographies are 'formed, rehearsed and reshaped in the interactions with (real and imagined) others over time'.[13] Rather than life-courses being discussed as individualised transitions or trajectories, this emerging body of work argues that they are in fact intertwined within times, spaces and relationships, including the life-courses of other people, and with other crises.[14]

Developing this idea, austerity also has a relational biography. It is *formed, rehearsed and reshaped*, to echo the words above, in how it lives in and through people, families and generations. Moreover, it lives in relation to other policies that have been developed at the same time, and indeed at different times, as well as alternative socio-economic regimes that are remembered and imagined. Below I describe how I have started to research the social life of crisis, by developing an innovative methodological technique.

Researching Relationally: Oral Histories and Futures

Oral Histories and Futures were developed as part of an ISRF-funded project exploring if and how austerity in the UK has shaped people's decisions to have any or more children. They involve the recording of people's experiences and opinions about their pasts, present and futures and, as the title suggests, involve innovating with traditional Oral History methods. Oral History as a method involves researching, documenting and preserving the unique life stories of often marginalised groups. I was interested in developing the method to also include present-day happenings and future ideals.[15] And rather than

13. Brian Heaphy, Carol Smart and Anna Einarsdottir, *Same Sex Marriages: New Generations, New Relationships* (Basingstoke 2013: Palgrave MacMillan), 61.

14. Hall, 'Relational biographies in times of austerity'.

15. Sarah Marie Hall and Amy Barron, 'Oral Histories and Futures How to Guide', in A. Barron, A.L. Browne, U. Ehgartner, S.M. Hall, L. Pottinger and L. Ritson (eds.), *Methods for Change: Impactful Social Science Methodologies for 21st Century Problems* (Manchester 2021: ASPECT and University of Manches-

drawing on older people's narratives on events in hindsight, I focused on the experiences of those aged 18-45 who were experiencing the impacts of austerity in their everyday lives.

The Oral Histories and Futures I carried out involved encouraging participants to talk about personal biographies, expectations of having their own children, present circumstances and future imaginaries. I also incorporated a participatory component, asking participants to write a 'note to their future self', and to reflect on the activity and their responses to it. The method, as a sensitive and empowering approach, was developed specifically for this research because the topic—*not* having children in a time of austerity—is so personal, centred on biographies and experiences.

In 2020 I collected Oral Histories and Futures with twelve people living in the North East of England; a region that has seen significant changes under austerity and also has some of the lowest birth rates in the UK. Participants were aged between 18 and 45 (following wider literature on reproductive decision-making and fertility), and varied according to gender, race and ethnicity, age, faith, family composition, living arrangements and income.

In the reflective sections that follow I enliven the idea of the social life of crisis through the examples of two participants, Janine and Yusuf. Yusuf is 30 years old and is British Pakistani. He moved to the North East from Yorkshire two years ago, where he works as a mechanic and lives with his girlfriend of a year in a privately rented flat. He doesn't have children but talked a lot about the family futures he imagined for himself. Janine is 33 years old, is white British, and has been living in the North East for a couple of years now. She lives in a rented flat with her partner and his best friend, and she is currently unemployed and supported by Universal Credit. She wants children at some point in the future but talked a lot about the feasibility of this.

There are three points I wish to briefly highlight with the support of vignettes from Yusuf and Janine as ways of thinking through the social

ter): 50–57.

life of austerity: austerity as biography, lives in place, and future social lives.

Austerity as Biography

Having already established austerity as having its own biography, in this section I reveal how that biography is in turn lived through the biographies of people. Yusuf, for example, spoke about how the instabilities he currently faces around work are entwined as much with the socio-economic conditions of austerity as with his own life-course biography; it is part of who he is, is being and is becoming:

> What worries me, saying is, you know the financial stability? Like the job that I do at the present, there's no fixed hours, but it's all like, work-wise, based on you know, very ad hoc servicing [...]. Like, there's no job security or stability... there's not enough trade anymore like there used to be years ago... And that's what worries me, like, if I was to have kids now... how would I get that much money where I'm able, you know, to do all of that? That's what I worry about, like it's impossible or not possible, what should I do?

For Yusuf, the impacts of austerity were mainly felt through a lack of work opportunities where he currently lives, the expense of everyday living, and the reduced value of his skills as a mechanic. He later talked about how one used to be able to 'rely on job security, where you knew your job is there for life'. This also reveals the need to think about the life of austerity within neoliberal regimes. Employment opportunities and place-based industries, as in many other parts of Northern England, had been hit hard by years of a lack of local investment, that culminate into multi-faceted forms of insecurity and uncertainty for Yusuf. This job insecurity is then linked to being able to afford to have children as an important part of his future biography. Janine also described changes under austerity, particularly to welfare and housing allowance, as part of her own biography; namely the logistic impossibilities of having a child. Where Yusuf talked about stability, Janine talked about feasibility. For her, this was a complex mix of her living situation and relationship (living in her partner's rented

house and with his best friend), and her income (relying solely on state benefits):

> We just haven't got to that point yet in our lives. Well, he's a bit older than me actually, so he probably is, but logistically it's not feasible at the moment anyway because of where we're living.

Here Janine talks about conflicting 'points' in her and her partner's lives, with a strong sense of how relational biographies need not always be harmonious. She describes being of the age when many people have children, in contrast to her older partner, but logistically, feasibly, not being able to do so. The reasons for this relate to their living situation and lack of financial security. Like Yusuf, here the life-course of austerity is mirrored by Janine's relational biographies in austerity.

Lives in Place

I now consider how austerity is situated in lives and in place. Yusuf talked a lot about how he moved away from his family and the town where he grew up. This was a place that, for him, was characterised by deprivation. These socio-economic conditions became further entrenched over years of austerity cuts to public services. Memories of place were knotted together with familial and intergenerational legacies, illustrating the value of thinking about biographies, place, and time relationally:

> My mother, my family house, like the deprivation and poverty I was brought up in. You know, my mother never worked. My dad did work, but my mum, she never worked, [...] I haven't taken that route, in terms of like, to go up and claim, or to ask for assistance and help. I just want to make enough money in my job, my trade, where I'm able to pay out what I need to pay out and live a good life with my girl. That's all I want at the end of the day.

Janine talked in a similar way about upbringing, place and family as having shaped her experiences in austerity, and the biography of austerity, but this played out somewhat differently to Yusuf. Janine's mum raised her as a single parent, with Janine's maternal grandmother

for support. She spoke about how this instilled in her the need to be financially independent, and she recalls this when describing her current situation. Her social life is relational to place, time and people, and helps to narrate the social life of austerity:

> I grew up on the South Coast with her [mum]... I was sort of quite eager to leave that, on my own—I'm quite independent, wanted to just be like sort of self-sufficient, adult, like independent sort of, make my own way in life really. Wanted to, you know, didn't want to be dependent on my mum. Like, prove that I could survive myself. So with that, I was eager to live just, yeah, live on my own I suppose as soon as I could. So I moved out 19, to then live with my partner at the time. And then we also relocated at that point, that was the first time I've been straight out of the area... for a new job I found at the time.

She later explained how this drive to be independent led her to overwork and burnout. Her mental health deteriorated, her relationships broke down and she lost her job. She described how she claims benefits as a last resort—'I had no choice; it was that or be on the street'.

What these contrasting examples of Yusuf and Janine help to illustrate is that austerity interjects differently into social lives that are situated in time and space, and develops its own social life as emplaced.

Future Social Lives

The third theme I want to discuss is prospective social lives of austerity; how austerity shapes future imaginaries. This is where the social life of austerity policies can be seen to outlast their implementation. Austerity cuts are not momentary, but bleed into many elements of everyday lives and futures.

For Yusuf, this combination of biographies in austerity culminates in a particular future vision:

> I don't want to go to the welfare, you know, the government to claim benefits to bring up a child. I want to work and provide for him so he can learn himself, in terms of how to make money and how to live a good life. Working money, working for it, there's more honour, there's more, [...] respect and more dignity with work and pride. [...] I have some good high aspirations and hopes that one day I will have a child, with my own money, and bring him up. He will learn one day, d'you know, to make money his way. And then when me and my wife, we get old, he'll look after us. That's all I want.

This extract is full of themes to explore—not all of which I can unpack here. In particular, Yusuf talks quite literally about having a child as his future biography, biologically and morally; imbuing society and another human being with his ethos on life, work and family that he developed while growing up as a young adult in austerity.

For Janine, the focus of future social lives was about her rebuilding her life. This was made especially difficult by the inaccessibility of the housing market, and the fact that benefits are increasingly insecure and do not provide enough to enable her to save:

> I'd love to be, obviously, like anyone really, on the property ladder. [...] Unfortunately that didn't really come off, because I got into debt and that was that. But now I've sort of got over that, sort of, hopefully can begin to start saving now. But later on in life than I wanted. [...] I almost lost the last three years of my life, which I really regret, through all the issues I've spent sorting out. So I've barely been out and had a social life in that time, lived in that time. So I now feel like having to make up for lost time.

The language Janine uses here provided the inspiration for this essay; where she talks of how she has barely 'had a social life' or 'lived' during a time of personal and economic crisis. While time may continue during crises, a sense of living may not. Biographies are not simply driven forwards; they contain much more complex temporalities. For Janine, the future is about recapturing what she calls 'lost time'. This is an apt reminder that the biography of austerity can be more than 'real'; it can live through people in their hopes and dreams for the future.

To Be Continued?

If social lives *of* austerity and social lives *in* austerity are so closely interrelated, where does that thinking take us? How can we avoid thinking teleologically about biographies, when the next logical place to take this thinking is the future? The obvious response would seem to be method. To develop ways to capture the nuances of biographies as temporal, social, spatial and, of course, relational. And for such techniques to allow for the biographies of economy and people to be simultaneously reckoned-with. The Oral Histories and Futures method was my attempt at doing just that and is a technique I am developing in my current research.

Furthermore, writing this essay in early 2022 has coincided with widespread concerns about a cost-of-living crisis in the UK; reflecting on this illustrates my argument. The cost-of-living crisis is not a new crisis. It is a crisis with a social life; the groundwork was laid progressively and systematically over twelve years of austerity cuts, a period over which inequality in the UK has widened to record levels. It is a crisis in social life, fundamentally shaping the things that people can do, afford and dream about. Rather than having a beginning or an end, it has a relational biography that has been *formed, rehearsed and reshaped*, and that will likely continue for many years to come.

THE INCOMPLETE FINANCIALISATION OF IMMIGRATION DETENTION IN THE UNITED STATES

Dr Lauren Martin

ISRF Political Economy Research Fellow 2020

In 2020, I spent some time staring at maps of the South Texas Family Residential Facility, a 2,400 bed family detention centre based in Dilley, Texas, that I have followed since it was proposed in 2014. This was naïve geography: noticing what was around the facility, general statistics on the county, moving around in street view. The landscape is peppered with regular white squares, evidence of the area's fracking industry boom and subsequent bust. This part of Texas sits on a less productive edge of the Eagle Ford Shale Play. RV and mobile home communities. Chemical plants and sewage treatment ponds. Crude oil trucking depots. Sand and gravel quarries. Portable toilet rental companies. A Texas state prison. And on the southwest edge of town, a family detention centre housed in modular buildings. Prior to detaining families, some of these buildings served as short-term rental housing for fracking industry workers, a so-called "man camp." In total, 19,000 people live in Frio County's 2,937 square kilometres. The county government has an annual budget of about 1.2 million US dollars. Unemployment is higher than average and educational attainment is lower: it is fairly typical for rural places, a fact that the Department of Homeland Security found attractive in its decision to locate the family detention centre there.[1] To many, it appears to be in the middle of nowhere, perhaps intentionally distant from legal and social services concentrated in bigger cities like San Antonio, Austin and Houston.

1. See US Department of Homeland Security, Supplemental Environmental Assessment for Housing of Family Units at the South Texas Family Residential Center, Dilley, Texas (2014). On file with author.

Research on immigration detention has problematised this apparent remoteness, however. Assuming this remoteness or "middle of nowhere"-ness of Central Texas detention centres understands their geographies from the perspective of urban density and agglomerations of expertise, from the position of an implicitly urban, educated, cosmopolitan reader. In their book *Boats, Borders and Bases*, Jenna Loyd and Alison Mountz problematise assumptions about detention centre location in the US, asking "can remoteness be produced?" Linking policing, interdiction, various forms of confinement, movement between facilities, and deportation, "states produce remoteness through the development of a transnational infrastructure to contain and disperse migrants in and through spaces of formal confinement and blocked migration routes in increasingly fortified and patrolled boundary spaces".[2] Military bases, former prisons and jails, hotels and elderly care homes have provided "material grounds" for radical expansions of state power to confine mobile people. As Loyd and Mountz note, however, this repurposed material infrastructure is rarely analysed in research on immigration detention. So, rather than presume that distance from an urban centre defined the spatiality of the South Texas Family Residential Centre, I decided to "follow" the thing, to ask what it was before, what surrounded it, how it had become available for repurposing—and what it may become when family detention is abolished.

Financialising Detention

Firstly, where does funding for these kinds of capital expansions come from? In 2012 and 2013, as a response to the difficulties created by the global financial crisis, the US' largest private prison corporations moved from C-corp structures to Real Estate Investment Trusts, or REITs. This was a common strategy for firms owning property at the time. REITs are corporate entities that buy up properties and seek investment on the basis of the long-term stability and growth of rents on those properties. REITs pay no corporate tax in the United States, provided that they pay out 90% of their taxable earnings to investors.

2. Jenna M. Loyd and Alison Mountz, *Boats, Borders, and Bases: Race, the Cold War, and the Rise of Migration Detention in the United States* (Berkeley, CA: 2018 University of California Press), 17.

For investors, REITs are attractive because they promise consistent returns (depending on the properties that compose them). As a result, REIT conversion became a popular way for firms to access capital after the financial crisis, when credit for capital-intensive expansions became more expensive. The Corrections Corporation of America and GEO Group, the two largest private prison companies, both converted to REITs at this time; both recently reverted to C-corporations, which have corporate tax liabilities.

During their REIT conversion, they shifted their marketing and contracting strategies to differentiate property and services; in other words, they segmented carceral spaces from security services, allowing government agencies to contract either one or both. This also is a common strategy for care-based REITs like care homes, university housing and hospitals.[3] Private prison firms also moved aggressively into other government real estate, like office buildings, and transitional services that offer alternatives to detention, like ankle bracelet monitoring and post-incarceration transitional residences. This shift accompanied a renaming and rebranding for the Corrections Corporation of America as CoreCivic. The two largest companies, GEO Group and CoreCivic, poured resources into their ESG (environment, social and governance) reports, hoping to tap into the premium stock valuations that these efforts promised.

In shareholder conference calls and investor webinars, CoreCivic compared its company to hospitals, hotels, and care homes, other unique asset classes specifically focussed on living but also caring, mostly living away from a private residence. Framing themselves in a care service provision role, these comparisons conceal the violence of incarceration, of prison work and of immigration policy. Abstracting these conditions through generic categories of "unique assets" and "essential government services," their marketing seeks to commensurate the suspension of individual autonomy with medical

3. Amy Horton, "Financialization and non-disposable women: Real estate, debt and labour in UK care homes," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 54, no. 1 (2022), DOI: 10.1177/0308518X19862580; Martine August, "Securitising Seniors Housing: The Financialisation of Real Estate and Social Reproduction in Retirement and Long-Term Care Homes," *Antipode* early view (2021), DOI: 10.1111/anti.12795.

or residential care work. It must be said that these abstractions are not wholly successful nor accepted by investors: both companies remain frustrated by what they see as a chronic under-valuation of their stock.[4] Socially responsible investing groups refuse to invest in prison companies and high street banks have committed to commit no new funding, or to withdraw funding completely, from private prison companies.

Racialised Property Values

Where do the land, empty prisons and empty apartments come from? What kinds of infrastructure makes family detention, in particular, possible?

Prior to opening the South Texas facility, the T. Don Hutto Family Residential Facility in Taylor, Texas, was the largest family detention facility. Holding families from 2006 to 2009, when families were released and women took their place, the facility was empty in 2005. The land on which the Hutto facility was built was sold to (what was then still) the CCA by the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church came into the property as a donation from a community group, who managed the land as a recreational space for Mexican-Americans. They came into that land during the Jim Crow era, when seasonal agricultural Mexican and Mexican-American workers needed somewhere to sleep beside Taylor proper. They were allowed to park and sleep in Hidalgo Park which was, unsurprisingly, on the industrial side of the railroad tracks. At that time, the colour line organised who could be where, who could own what and, also, what it became worth. And temporary labour migration was particularly important to agricultural production, especially cotton. The profitability of the T. Don Hutto medium security prison built in 1995 was predicated on this racialised devaluation of land. That it later became a detention centre for asylum-seeking families and, later still, women shows the

4. CoreCivic. Q2 2021 Earnings Call Transcript, available at: https://www.fool.com/earnings/call-transcripts/2021/08/10/corecivic-inc-cxw-q2-2021-earnings-call-transcript/ (accessed 25 February, 2021). GEO Group. Q3 2021 Earnings Call Transcript, available at: https://www.fool.com/earnings/call-transcripts/2021/11/05/the-geo-group-geo-q3-2021-earnings-call-transcript/.

counter-intuitive relations of dependence these economies have on mobile people. But it got me thinking about how infrastructure like empty land in small-town Texas becomes available for prison-building and the role that racialisation and labour mobility play in making particular places and properties available for enclosure in this way.

The South Texas Family Residential Facility was built by repurposing and expanding short-term rental housing for fracking industry workers in Texas' highly productive Eagle Ford Shale region. In its impact assessment, the Department of Homeland Security noted a few things that link economic value to remoteness. First, while Dilley is quite remote relative to nearby cities, it is well-placed in relation to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (or ICE) deportation flights from San Antonio and in relation to the US Customs and Border Protection's (or CBP) temporary holding facilities in the borderlands. The assessment also mentions high unemployment and low educational attainment as attractive indicators of a willing workforce. Dilley and nearby facilities in Karnes County may be distanced from the resources that allow detained people to exercise their limited rights while in detention, but they have been re-embedded in other networks of what William Walters calls "deportation infrastructure".[5] Thus, this family detention centre repurposed partially developed residential real estate built to house temporary, mobile labour, as the precursor to a family detention centre.

Valuing Detention's Remoteness

How do we make sense of the political and economic geographies of these kinds of rural detention centres? The friction of distance and the indeterminacy of time are two of the defining features of the US immigration detention system, we might even say for detention in general. Distance as slow violence requires, however, circuitry, connection, and infrastructure to entrench and sediment slow violence

5. William Walters, "The microphysics of deportation: A critical reading of return flight monitoring reports," in: M. Hoesch and L. Laube (eds.), *Proceedings of the 2018 ZiF Workshop 'Studying Migration Policies at the Interface between Empirical Research and Normative Analysis'*, ULB Muenster (miami.uni-muenster.de): 161–185.

in other everyday lives. Texas' carceral economies of migration control depend not only on apparent remoteness, but on proximity to specific infrastructures, circuits of value, legal and financial geographies.

Specifically, detention centres in Texas are often near or adjoining other prisons and jails, pulling on an increasingly experienced carceral workforce with few other options. Prisons overlay natural gas fracking and oil pipelines built by temporary, mobile labour and relatively underpopulated rural areas. Meanwhile, Texas' location in the federal court system means that lawsuits and appeals are heard by conservative judges who consistently uphold the federal government's right to exclude noncitizens, the limitation of their constitutional rights and narrow readings of asylum law. And so, rather than being defined by remoteness, Texas' detention centres have multiple geographies: they are embedded in agglomeration economies of incarceration, extractive landscapes dependent on mobile labour and federal court jurisdiction.

To make sense of this, I draw on recent critical economic geographers interrogating the construction of new asset classes. While diverse empirically, this thread of research signals an important methodological and theoretical shift, drawing on the specificity of Science Technology and Society studies (or STS) and the normative critique of inequality in political economy. What is common across this diverse work is a methodological focus that questions, rather than presumes, how and whether markets are formed, how they are maintained, how things circulate, and which forms of expertise undergird them. As Fields notes, STS approaches can err on the side of description, eliciting a fascination with mechanisms, calculative devices and systems.[6] Where she draws on Marxist political economy to critique inequalities produced by the marketisation of housing, I engage with recent literature on abolition geographies, especially Ruth Gilmore, Megan Ybarra and Nik Heynen.[7]

6. Desiree Fields, "Constructing a New Asset Class: Property-led Financial Accumulation after the Crisis," *Economic Geography* 94, no. 2 (2018): 118–140, DOI: 10.1080/00130095.2017.1397492.

7. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "Abolition Geography and the Problem of Innocence," in: G.T. Johnson and A. Lubin (eds.), *Futures of Black Radicalism* (London 2017: Verso): 225–24; Megan Ybarra M, (2021) "Site Fight! Toward the Abolition of Immigrant Detention on Tacoma's Tar Pits (and Everywhere Else)," *Antipode* 53, no. 1 (2021): 36–55, DOI: 10.1111/anti.12610; Nik Heynen, "'A plantation can be a commons': Re-Earthing Sapelo Island through Abolition

To argue that "freedom is a place," Gilmore invokes a radical world-making project to not just re-envision but embody, emplace and reproduce socio-material relations.[8] If freedom is a place, what/where are detention and imprisonment? For Gilmore, carceral spaces annihilate the mutuality of socio-spatial relations required for any imagination of freedom. Place and *land* are essential to abolitionist world-making projects in the US: keeping, tilling, living the land in ways that allow the production of new Black lifeworlds on their own terms.[9] To analyse the implications of corporate ownership of immigrant detention centres, I draw on Brenna Bhandar's concept of "racial regimes of ownership," which reworks and extends work on racial capitalism by Stuart Hall's work on the articulation of different social formations, Cheryl Harris' understanding of whiteness as property, and Cedric Robinson's concept of racial regimes. For Bhandar, "racial regimes of ownership" are "juridical formations" that have "retained their disciplinary power in organizing territory and producing racial subjects through a hierarchy of value constituted across domains of culture, science, economy and philosophy".[10] As a racial regime of ownership, carceral real estate investment both territorialises and distributes investment in particular migrant futures, or to be more precise, anti-immigrant futures. Combining an abolitionist critique with a focus on valuation practices allows us to identify more precisely which relationships need to be reworked to produce a future without mass detention and incarceration.

From this perspective, we can read private prison firms' claims about their "value proposition" against their own grain. Their business model is plagued by fundamental contradictions: "consumers" (i.e. incarcerated or detained people) do not pay for the "service" of being incarcerated; the government agencies paying for them are not responsible for daily management or quality control; and the majority of tax payers hope to never make use of these services. Where hotels or university residence halls may suffer for poor quality in a more open market,

Ecology," *Antipode* 53, no. 1 (2021): 95–114, DOI: 10.1111/anti.12631.

8. Gilmore, "Abolition Geography and the Problem of Innocence."

9. Heynen, "'A plantation can be a commons.'"

10. Brenna Bhandar, *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Ownership* (Durham, NC 2018: Duke University Press), 2.

No Trespassing Sign, T. Don Hutto Women's Detention Facility, Taylor, Texas, 8 June, 2010. Photo by author.

there is no identifiable market for carceral space or services. Various state agencies are the only buyers and they do not exactly compete with each other for facilities. There is little meaningful competition for contracts; two companies dominate and the other private companies operate more locally. In fact, CoreCivic actively engages in market-making activities, courting local governments for contracts and new facilities. Prior to the rapid expansion of immigration beginning in 2005, private prison companies were closing facilities, as incarceration rates stabilised at a staggering 2 million people.

More importantly, privatised beds comprise only 23% of total prison and detention beds in the United States.[11] The greatest competition for CoreCivic and GEO Group is, in fact, other government agencies seeking federal money in exchange for their own empty beds. California's legislature and the Federal Bureau of Prisons (through executive branch policy-making) have moved to de-privatise their bedspace, further shrinking the potential for new contracts. Exposed to highly polarised shifts in federal, state and local policy-making, carceral real estate markets are incredibly fragile, in fact.

In April 2021, grassroots organisations, such as Communities Not Prisons and activist investors like Candide, LLC pressured Barclays Plc and KeyBanc Capital Markets to withdraw from a municipal bond sale by CoreCivic, which would have funded the construction of two new prisons in the state of Alabama.[12] The prisons would have provided Alabama with 7000 beds and the two prisons were to be built by CoreCivic and leased to the state. Alabama sought to build the new facilities in order to modernise its prison infrastructure, which is such poor condition that it was ruled inhumane in a recent court ruling. However, the American Sustainable Business Council and Social Venture Circle, investor organisations devoted to socially responsible investment standards, refunded Barclays' membership fees, citing

11. Prison Policy Initiative, "Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2020," March 24, 2020, available at: https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2020.html (accessed 25 February, 2022).
12. Morgan Simon, "Toxic Alabama Private Prison Deal Falling Apart With Barclays Exit," Forbes April 21, 2021, available at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/morgansimon/2021/04/21/toxic-alabama-private-prison-deal-falling-apart-with-barclays-exit/?sh=92406fc52f07 (accessed 25 February, 2022).

its involvement in the prison bond sale as a violation of its terms. This followed commitments in 2019 from major main street banks—Barclays, Bank of America, Wells Fargo, JPMorgan Chase, SunTrust, Fifth Third Bank, BNP Paribas, PNC, and Regions Bank—not to provide new funding for prison-building projects. Barclays had argued that it merely underwrote, rather than funded, the bond sale, but activists pointed out that they facilitated funding that would otherwise be unavailable. In short, for-profit prisons have come to carry significant reputational risks, even for big financial institutions.

In its role as underwriter, Barclays had also facilitated the sale through Public Finance Authority. Once it pulled out of the deal, PFA's role ended as well, effectively ending the bond sale and CoreCivic's funding strategy. Alabama and CoreCivic have said they will pursue other avenues but the state of Alabama ultimately terminated its contract with CoreCivic effective 6 August, 2021.[13] The Alabama State Legislature then held an emergency session and approved House Bill 4, which authorised the state to use $400 million in federal Coronavirus assistance and $154 million from the state's General Fund, in addition to authorising Alabama Corrections Institution Finance Authority to organise a bond sale to finance $785 million for two prisons. As of February 2022, the state is considering bids from banks to underwrite this bond sale, itself an unusual move.[14]

To sum up, grassroots organising and investor activism intervened in the financial mechanisms that enable private prison construction. These events demonstrate that grassroots organisers and investors have produced reputational risk around private prisons, to the extent that they can leverage that risk against major financial institutions. So we see here a blurring of public and private sectors, but in a wholly different configuration.

Alongside a close analysis of private corrections' difficulties, this aborted bond sale runs counter to narratives in academic literature,

13. CoreCivic. Q2 2021 Earnings Call Transcript.

14. Mike Cason, "Alabama seeks assurances that underwriters won't back out of financing new prisons," AL.com 23 December, 2021, available at: https://www.al.com/news/2021/12/alabama-seeks-assurances-that-underwriters-wont-back-out-of-financing-new-prisons.html (accessed 25 February, 2022).

which paints a picture of an ever expanding, corrupt, ideologically motivated and well-financed private corrections and security industry. Reading their financial strategies against the grain shows instead a couple of firms facing ongoing challenges accessing sustainable investment and infrastructure financing flows, that is barred from premium socially responsible investing portfolios. As August et al. argue, these struggles over prison finance show how the interface between public and private finance has become an important site of contestation for social justice movements, but one not usually captured by analyses of privatisation or outsourcing.[15] These stocks *have been made*, in effect, abject, stigmatised and increasingly a difficult sell. Analysing privatised immigrant detention as a "racial regime of ownership," carceral real estate is a contingent, contextually specific coming together of real estate and immigration law, policing, and racialised, criminalised immigration policies. It is, as all property ownership regimes, a site of struggle over who has the right to be where, to make place and the future of those rights. As future-oriented financial instruments, carceral asset classes value particular kinds of futures. Rather than reading their expansion as an expression of anti-immigrant power, their retraction indicates counter-movements and the politicisation of finance itself as a regime of power through which imagined futures are territorialised.

15. Martine August, Dan Cohen, Martin Danyluk, Amanda Kass, CS Ponder, and Emily Rosenman, "Reimagining geographies of public finance," *Progress in Human Geography* OnlineFirst (6 December, 2021), DOI: 10.1177/03091325211054963.

EXPERIMENTS IN COLLECTIVE CARE

Community Action in the Shadows of Crises

Dr Eleanor Jupp
ISRF Political Economy Research Fellow 2021–22

Whilst approaching the notion of 'recovery', it is clear that the Covid-19 pandemic is not over, and may indeed not be over in the foreseeable horizon. This in itself poses challenges for analysis; the two years of the pandemic have a blurry and intangible quality, and, as time goes on, experiences of crisis become mixed up with other aspects of lives, and indeed other crises, whether they be personal or global.[1] What we can say is that there have been different phases of pandemic, in terms of different sets of conditions and material threats, atmospheres and practices (unequally distributed across many different axes of inequality), but also different phases of meaning-making and analysis.[2]

During the first six months of the pandemic, one theme of much analysis was around the rise of local community action of different kinds, taking place in the context of widespread 'lockdowns' and widespread (although again differentiated) vulnerability to the new

1. See Sophie Bowlby & Eleanor Jupp, 'Home, inequalities and care: perspectives from within a pandemic', *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 21, no. 3 (2021): 423–432.
2. Simon Bailey, Michelle Bastian, Rebecca Coleman, Emily Grabham, Dawn Lyon & Dean Pierides, 'A day at a time: a research agenda to grasp the everyday experience of time in the Covid-19 pandemic', *Discover Society*, 15 September 2020, available at https://archive.discoversociety.org/2020/09/15/a-day-at-a-time-a-research-agenda-to-grasp-the-everyday-experience-of-time-in-the-covid-19-pandemic/.

airborne virus circulating. There had been a collapse in many of the normal infrastructures of governance and everyday life. These new forms of local action included the collectively organised provision of food and medication to those in need (often called 'mutual aid'),[3] the collective production of masks and protective equipment, but also more informal and spontaneous acts of neighbourly solidarity and care, from public art, to music, singing and dance, supporting those suffering the social and emotional impacts of isolation and lockdown. Such action was clearly unevenly distributed across localities, and there is some evidence that those involved in mutual aid in particular were predominantly female and middle class.[4] However, these acts were given different and further meanings through their circulation on social and conventional media, and through academic and popular analysis.[5] Not only did such practices provide an alternative 'story' of the pandemic, but the kindness, solidarity and resourcefulness on display also provided tantalising glimpses of solutions and futures in the face of other, even more intractable crises. As Rebecca Solnit argues, 'Ordinary life before the pandemic was already a catastrophe of desperation and exclusion for too many human beings, an environmental and climate catastrophe, an obscenity of inequality'.[6] Faced with this, she observes that 'the generosity and solidarity in action in the present moment offers a foreshadowing of what is possible—and necessary'.[7] Do such small-scale experiments in collective provisioning, care and sharing

3. See Dean Spade, *Mutual aid: Building solidarity during this crisis (and the next)* (London 2020: Verso).
4. Emma O'Dwyer, 'Mutual aid groups have the potential to increase intergroup solidarity', LSE Blog, 23 June 2020, available at https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/covid19-mutual-aid-solidarity/.
5. See, e.g., Anastasia Kavada, 'Creating a hyperlocal infrastructure of care: COVID-19 Mutual Aid Groups', OpenDemocracy, 12 June 2020, available at https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/openmovements/creating-hyperlocal-infrastructure-care-covid-19-mutual-aid-groups/ and Rachel Shabi, 'Stronger communities are emerging out of the wreckage of the pandemic', *The Guardian*, 8 September 2021, available at https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/sep/08/pandemic-mutual-aid-politics-food-banks-welfare-state.
6. Rebecca Solnit, 'The impossible has already happened', *The Guardian*, 7 April 2020, available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/07/what-coronavirus-can-teach-us-about-hope-rebecca-solnit.
7. Rebecca Solnit, 'The way we get through this is together', *The Guardian*, 14 May 2020, available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/14/mutual-aid-coronavirus-pandemic-rebecca-solnit.

Photo by author.

point the way to different kinds of economic and political futures, that are more equitable, sustainable and caring?

During 2020, I tracked the development and aftermath of mutual aid initiatives in two areas of South-East England, case studies that are further discussed in my recently published book, *Care, Crisis and Activism*.[8] My current ISRF-funded research on gifting and sharing within communities has also involved reflecting with community projects in three regions of the UK on their shifting roles during different phases of the pandemic. These projects include clothing and 'baby bank' initiatives to support families in need, various initiatives around food sharing, and projects to provide community aid to refugees.

8. Eleanor Jupp, *Care, Crisis and Activism: The Politics of Everyday Life* (Bristol 2022: Policy Press).

It is clear that following the particular period of the first lockdown, much of this first wave of local mutual aid and other initiatives stopped. Some of those who had taken part initially had been freed up by the 'furlough' schemes from regular paid work, an exceptional disruption to normal lives. The lifting of some restrictions plus the arrival of vaccines has meant that patterns of work, education, care and provisioning, all of which were so severely disrupted at the start, have resumed, albeit under new and often unstable arrangements. Despite the pandemic and its social and economic impacts being far from over, as already pointed out, its impacts have become more dissipated and there are less visible crises of collective life to galvanise such action. That said, there is no doubt that this earlier phase of local action has produced impacts and continues to shape other forms of action. Mutual aid and other initiatives have to some extent morphed into different kinds of local schemes, often trying to tackle more long-term issues such as generalised food insecurity, but these too have become more hidden and fragmented. Again, such new infrastructures of community support are unevenly distributed, as my current research shows, depending as they do on local resources and particular social geographies rather than state-led programmes.

So, what can now be concluded about the meaning and longer-term significance of these practices? It is clear that there were connections to already-existing forms of mutual and community support, shaped by conditions and dynamics which pre-existed the pandemic and will undeniably persist into the future. As such, the early phases of the pandemic 'turbo-charged' forms of local collective action but did not necessarily re-invent them. One of these existing dynamics is austerity, in terms of the retreat of the state from many aspects of collective provisioning, support and care at a local level.[9] Austerity had already fuelled the rise of local action and provisioning around material needs for food, clothing and furniture. It has also led to the creation of new spaces to provide collective support, such as through the rise of 'community pantries' and 'social kitchens', which provide food but also social connection. The projects I am currently studying predate the pandemic and include food provisioning at various scales, initiatives to enable the gifting of household resources, goods and furniture,

9. Sarah Marie Hall, *Everyday life in austerity: Family, friends and intimate relations* (Cham 2019: Palgrave Macmillan).

especially to families in need, and the mutual exchange of time and skills across households.

Such practices also coincide with conditions of environmental crisis and experimentation around local provisioning of food, growing, and the collective sharing of resources to reduce waste and over-consumption. Within such initiatives we therefore see a coming together of social justice or welfare orientated actions with environmental and ecological action. Such a coming together also enables new crossovers between mechanisms and discourses of more traditional 'activism' with practices of local provisioning and collective care. For example, actions around providing food for those in need might be taken quickly, via horizontal networks of local actors, operating outside the formal structures and procedures that have often characterised local welfare organisations. Ticktin discusses an example of collective 'community fridges' in New York City that enable new forms of food sharing during the pandemic and beyond. Drawing as they do on anarchist ideologies, she also argues that such actions suggest a new integration of 'care work (or 'social reproduction') and political organising' that can contribute to a project of a 'feminist commons'.[10]

At the centre of these intersecting rationalities and actions are often digital networks that enable fast connections and actions to intervene within localities. Again, such a use of the digital is not new but has been accelerated by the conditions of the pandemic. Groups I studied often combined instant messaging tools, such as WhatsApp, with more public-facing platforms such as Facebook or Instagram. As well as an instrumental value in creating real time connections (for example linking someone in need of medical supplies with a neighbour able to deliver them), there are clearly also affective and emotional affordances from digital platforms.[11] The new subjectivities and identifications that arise from using digital platforms might also be thought of as enabling this coming together of care work and politics. Koch and Miles propose the notion of 'stranger intimacies' to analyse the interconnections

10. Miriam Ticktin, 'Building a Feminist Commons in the Time of COVID-19', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 47, no .1 (2021): 37–46, 42.

11. David Bissell, 'Affective platform urbanism: Changing habits of digital on-demand consumption', *Geoforum*, 115 (2020): 102–110.

enabled by platforms such as Airbnb and dating apps.[12] This notion can also be applied to welfare and care activism, whereby an intimate awareness of those experiencing need or injustice in a locality might generate new attachments and interventions. For example, local community 'hosting' or 'sponsorship' of refugees, organised both online and face to face, can generate intimate interactions and identifications across geopolitical inequalities.[13] This is therefore an affective and emotional realm of activism, that in itself expresses wider yearnings for more public and collective spheres of care beyond the self and the home. Digital networks are therefore interwoven with quite complex interpersonal and emotional interactions.

So how far might intimate spheres of care-based activism generate wider political and economic change? On the one hand, there has been talk of utopian, sometimes anarchist visions earlier mentioned, such as the shaping of a new 'commons' outside of structures of state and market. On the other hand, other commentators have been at pains to stress that small-scale and uneven solidarity, provisioning and care work often feels like a 'sticking plaster' and insufficient in itself to affect wider change.[14] In a range of ways, such forms of care take place in the 'shadows' of state care.[15] This lends a complexity to the politics of the sticking plaster, as the very existence of such projects and interventions supports the economic and political status quo—indeed a turn to community provisioning may be actively embraced by neoliberal visions of the state.[16] So this might seem to be 'meantime'

12. Regan Koch & Sam Miles, 'Inviting the stranger in: Intimacy, digital technology and new geographies of encounter', *Progress in Human Geography*, 45, no. 6 (2021): 1379–1401.
13. Kolar Aparna & Joris Schapendonk, 'Shifting itineraries of asylum hospitality: Towards a process geographical approach of guest-host relations' *Geoforum*, 116 (2020): 226–234.
14. Paul Cloke, John May & Andrew Williams, 'The geographies of food banks in the meantime', *Progress in Human Geography*, 41, no. 6 (2017): 703–726.
15. Emma R. Power & Miriam J. Williams, 'Cities of care: A platform for urban geographical care research', *Geography Compass*, 14, no. 1 (2020), e12474.
16. See Shabi, 'Stronger communities are emerging out of the wreckage of the pandemic'.

activism, waiting for wider economic and political change that would erase the need for it.[17]

However, whilst fragile and fragmented, such a perspective perhaps understates the value of community practices, whilst the perspective of a new 'commons' perhaps overstates their autonomy and agency. In a related analysis of the 'sharing economy' (broadly around environmental concerns), Santala and McGuirk argue that analysis has tended to *either* see such initiatives as reinforcing the economic status quo of the 'smart' neoliberal city *or* as politically disruptive and sitting outside existing political and economic structures.[18] Instead, they propose paying more detailed attention to community sharing and provisioning as it is actually enacted, which they see consisting of 'adaptive performances' that connect to state and market structures and do therefore have the power to alter them. Turning to examples that I have been researching, such as a community food growing project in a deprived coastal town, I can see that the project connects to the local council and governance, as well as to wider economies of food production and consumption. As well as existing 'in the shadows' of these wider structures, we might also see such projects as potentially inhabiting, moving into occupying or reshaping, political and economic structures. Honig makes a similar argument about the need to occupy and reshape what she terms 'public things'—public infrastructures of state and the economy—despite their exclusionary and violent histories.[19] She differentiates this vision of occupation from the notion of a 'commons' which sits outside current state and market arrangements. Instead we need to trace the mechanisms via which experimental community action is already beginning to reshape local political and economic structures, and is beginning, at least in some places and times, to make a post-covid future in the here-and-now.

17. Cloke et al., 'The geographies of food banks in the meantime'.
18. Inka Santala & Pauline McGuirk, 'Communal sharing within and beyond digital platforms: Prefiguring interdependent sharing cities', *Digital Geography and Society*, 3 (2020): 100026.
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THE HEALING POWER OF ART

Strategies for Mending a Cleaved Ex-Industrial Community

Dr Lisa Taylor
ISRF Mid-Career Fellow 2021

'Recovery', 'healing', and 'convalescence' have been words on our lips across the pandemic over the past two years. In medicine recovery tends to be assumed, often post-diagnostically relegated to the patient to be independently managed after the crisis of illness. Indeed, so strong is the assumption that bodies self-heal, 'recovery' is barely covered by the curriculum in medical training.[1] Shift our thinking to the trauma of closure, job losses, demolition and the impact on communities in Britain's ex-industrial regions and any focus on recovery and attendant resources have also been scant or non-existent.[2] But if coronavirus has left a legacy, it is that healing needs our focus as an active process that requires nourishment and bespoke guidance, if the lingering malcontents of inequality, failing and inadequate infrastructure, and broken or cleaved communities in Britain's old industrial regions are to be tackled.

Coronavirus certainly packed a punch at older industrial Britain. Comprised of former coalfields, main regional cities (containing

1. Gavin Francis, '"We Need to Respect the Process of Healing": A GP on the Overlooked Art of Recovery', *The Guardian*, accessed at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/04/we-need-to-respect-the-process-of-healing-a-gp-on-the-overlooked-art-of-recovery.
2. For an account of the difficulties for miners expected to quickly transition to service industries after coal, see Valerie Walkerdine and Luis Jimenez, *Gender, Work and Community after De-Industrialization: A Psychosocial Approach to Affect* (Basingstoke 2012: Palgrave Macmillan).

pockets of older industry), and older industrial towns, these regions amount to around a third of the UK populace. The combination of Ageing—20% of the population of these groups are over 65 compared to 12% in London—and pre-existing health issues—8% of the old industrial towns and 9% from former coalfields are disability benefit claimants—meant that deaths from Coronavirus were 30% higher than the national average. Its regions felt the shockwaves of economic downturn as unemployment and in-work benefits expanded even while large numbers were furloughed.[3] But actually, as our economy has been reopened, what is striking is the *lack of change*. The gains in slow, unspectacular growth between 2012-19 which came after the 2008 crisis were halted. The economy in these regions only went back to pre-Covid levels. Even more significantly, as Beatty and Fothergill argue, older industrial Britain was already mired by economic and social difficulties long before the thunderbolt of the pandemic.[4] This makes these regions prime candidates for the UK government's commitment to the Levelling Up agenda. Support for manufacturing and infrastructure and financial investment in land development, to be devolved to local councils and authorities, have been pledged.

Take Firths Carpets Limited, once a company located in Bailliff Bridge in Calderdale, West Yorkshire. A producer of high-quality woven carpets since 1867, the company held global reach and exported widely across the British Empire. In the twentieth century Firths survived the 'hungry' 1930s with an employ of 3,000 workers, its mills covered a landmass which well surpassed the village boundaries, and it managed to become one of the big six leading carpet manufacturers in the UK. It exported to 'every carpet consuming country', shipping to 40 export markets beyond the mid-1960s.[5] But prosperity was not to last. Britain's de-industrialisation was the swiftest and most systematic in the global north. While in the late 1950s 40% of the UK workforce worked in manufacturing, today that figure is less than 10%.[6] Local press archives

3. Christine Beatty and Steve Fothergill, *Beyond the Pandemic: Older Industrial Britain in the Wake of the Crisis* (Sheffield 2021: The Centre for Regional, Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University).
4. Ibid.
5. See C. E. C. Tattersall and S. Reid, *A History of British Carpets* (Leigh-on-Sea 1966: F.Lewis), 101.
6. Christopher Lawson, 'Nothing Left but Smoke and Mirrors: Deindustrialisation and the Remaking of British Communities, 1957-1992', unpublished

Figure 1 (image by Lisa Taylor).

describe dwindling sales and falling workforce numbers. In 1968, Firths was bought out by the Readicut International Group, then taken into receivership by the large US concern Interface in 2000. When the company closed in 2002, it passed through a process of dereliction and demolition culminating in the loss of the large iconic Clifton mill at the central crossroads.

A visitor to the village today will encounter the large tract of undeveloped land at the heart of Bailliff Bridge in place of Clifton Mill (see Figure 1). Arguably, long-left demolished sites are not merely symptoms of de-industrialisation, they actively produce it.[7] But if told the details of the transformation from a thriving, prestigious, and noisy manufacturing centre to a place characterised by a bricolage of derelict land, dilapidated buildings, and mundane sounds of residential

PhD thesis (2020), UC Berkeley Electronic Theses and Dissertations.

7. Aaron Andrews, 'Dereliction, Decay and the Problem of De-industrialization in Britain, c. 1968-1977', *Urban History*, 47, no. 2 (2019): 1-21.

living where traffic passes through, that same visitor would surely react with sheer incredulity. I grew up in Bailliff Bridge and when I returned to begin my ethnographic research there in 2016 and toured the village with ageing ex-Firths workers and village residents (their average age was 73) to harvest in situ memories of place, they told of their emotional trauma of demolition and the effects of radical spatial change through the erasure of the village's architectural past. Place attachment is especially important for older people because it helps secure belonging. But more enduringly, they were vociferous about what they saw as the almost complete decline of a community. What ex-workers experienced in the village were newcomers they didn't know, people who had moved into the pale-brick residential new homes, which had been gradually built over the once-mills of Firths. Ex-workers felt unseen and unacknowledged by newcomers who, in their perception, lacked an understanding of either the history or the particular sense of place that they felt and understood. Their memories of working life and their enjoyment of the social activities Firths provided as a paternalistic employer were swathed in what seemed like 'nostalgia.' But what struck me is that none of them wanted to go back in time; nor did they need to go back 'home.' They were already at home, but in a home they barely recognised because it had transformed beyond recognition. Taken together, what they were suffering was closer to what environmental philosopher and activist Glenn Albrecht calls 'solastalgia', or homesickness at home. Explained elsewhere as 'imposed place transition', his environmental research shows it produces mental and physical forms of distress which can be profoundly deleterious to health.[8] Often it is unrecognised and untreated. To return to my starting point: it is a melancholic illness that our medical, psychological, and governmental institutions assume will self-heal without any resources or guidance.

The case of Bailliff Bridge is by no means an isolated phenomenon. Sociologically, Bailliff Bridge is a classic example of a 'dormitory' village. In fact, 11.6 million people in old industrial Britain live in 'dormitory' towns and villages. Dormitory towns are categorised as places where men and women live, so they can work elsewhere. Many such towns and villages are located in the 'hinterlands' of main regional cities and a

8. Glenn Albrecht, 'The Age of Solastalgia', *The Conversation*, August 7, 2012, accessed at: https://theconversation.com/the-age-of-solastalgia-8337.

significant proportion of the population live in this regional geography of the UK. Out-commuting has been growing—from 860,000 in 2010 to 970,000 in 2016.[9] Bailliff Bridge is predominantly white and affluent, but because of the lack of local jobs most people of working age are travelling to work somewhere else.

Like many old industrial towns, it has a higher than average older population: 35.2% of pensioners live alone in the area, in contrast to 12.6% in the Calderdale Metropolitan District and those drawing incapacity benefits is 0.4% higher than the national average.[10] In contrast, a steady influx of new people occupying the new houses over the once-mills is a dominant feature of the area: 228 new houses were built between 2001 and 2011, a significant number given that the village radius is less than one kilometre from the centre. While the swelling population is expanded by newcomers, they are likely to occupy a number of different 'layers' of community—as workers 'elsewhere', as members of leisure groups outside the village, or as parents at the local school. But what became clear in my research in 2019 is that ageing ex-workers and residents are not finding opportunities to meet, socialise, or cohere with newcomers. What emerged was a picture of a broken and divided community, facing different directions and living different lives. While ex-workers bemoaned the experience of encountering warm bodies in a physical village, sites and spaces where they could meet and engage with others were sorely lacking.

The promised £96bn budget for infrastructure regeneration as part of the North-South Levelling Up programme should address economic issues with the potential to help community cohesion through the social skills required by new employment, training, and skills development.[11] But can these incentives provide opportunities to do the more filigree work required to broker meaningful connections

9. Christine Beatty and Steve Fothergill, *The Contemporary Labour Market in Britain's Older Industrial Towns* (Sheffield 2017: Centre for Regional, Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University).
10. Clifton and Bailliff Bridge MSOA profile, Local Government Report, accessed at: https://dataworks.calderdale.gov.uk/dataset/calderdale-msoa-demographic-profiles.
11. BBC News online, 'Levelling Up: North-South Divide Widening, Think Tank Says', *BBC News*, 17 January 2022, accessed at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-60027330.

in specific micro settings such as the Bailliff Bridge community? I argue that a more bespoke model is needed for community healing to work effectively across inter-generational boundaries. This is especially germane given the rapid technological shift these groups have lived through, where one half of the community makes relationships through physical encounter, while younger members often connect digitally via social media. It requires a model where conduits of mutual respect are set up across the ex-worker / newcomer divide, so that knowledge of the village's industrial past, pride in industrial labour, and respect for place as it was are exchanged on equal terms with the newcomer's lived experience of the space. To work effectively, it requires convivial spaces where opportunities for people to meet, converse and exchange ideas around the theme of place can be created.

The work that artist Catherine Bertola and I did with the Bailliff Bridge community in the summer of 2021 was based on my earlier ethnography. Workers took me on 'walk and talk' tours around the village and often came equipped with photographs that depicted them at work, sometimes alone or grouped together at their machinery. Catherine became fascinated by the images of worker hands in these photographs as they handled the feel and weight of carpet; while my research found that ex-workers' interactions with their photographs in my interviews with them compelled them to recall deeply embodied rhythms and movements, such that workers—decades after closure—felt they could still fire up the looms or arrange bobbins to the rhythm of fellow workers. Drawing on both the visual motifs of work and the muscle memories of carpet-making, we devised a series of community workshops designed to bring together ex-workers and newcomers. Weavers and menders would be asked to re-enact hand gestures from their carpet-making routines, to share and pass on the knowledge of how they used their hands in the factory. Drawing on the history of hand gestures, from the sign language of the deaf to Indian Kathak dance, we drew on this idea as a way to capture powerful meaning and emotion. In this way, we drew on the affective history of the rhythms and movements of working together in synchronicity in carpet manufacture. Like learning a dance, the gestures would be passed on to the newcomer like a piece of choreography. Along the journey, a conversation about the factory and history of place would open up.

The thick smog of Coronavirus pervaded Calderdale, as it did over much of the UK, just as our project to suture a broken community using art workshops was set to roll out. I already had access to a wide group of Firths ex-workers, but reaching the newcomers posed a challenge. We settled at last on leafletting the hundreds of new homes that had been progressively built over the 'tufted' weaving sheds, the dye house, and the works canteen. Placing older people first on the government roll-out of the vaccine in the Spring of 2021 likely enabled Firth's workers to feel more confident about coming forward. Workers outnumbered newcomers. But by July 2021, we had two workshops in place.

Patiently, and with nodding reassurance that she was watching and listening intently, Catherine led the workshop discussion. It didn't take long before the workers gesticulated as they spoke—an obvious entry point to ask more specifically about the hand-gestures of carpet-making. The second workshop was a photoshoot. Here ex-workers

Figure 2 (image by Lisa Taylor).

mingled further with newcomers and an atmosphere of friendly exchange took hold as hands gesticulated while the vocabulary of carpet-making was recalled. Newcomers keen to learn about the industrial heritage of Bailliff Bridge listened and were guided through descriptions of the use of yarn, machinery, and sometimes tools and through these mutual exchanges, conversations deepened. For sure, Firths ex-workers felt valued as their lost skills and knowledge were being re-awakened and placed front and centre in photographs. In this way an atmosphere of mutual respect was built. In Figure 2 a weaver shows a recent newcomer to the village the act of tying a weaver's knot, an essential skill that ties two ends of the yarn together. The weaver's knot held particular significance because it became symbolic of tying two ends of the community together.

It is here that I want to go back to where I began to borrow from ideas about healing in medicine. GP Gavin Francis argues that healing is as an active process which requires guidance. It must pay respect to the process of healing using time and energy to build a programme of rehabilitation which includes a measured and slow pace, carried by movement and rhythm. Guidance in recovery should, where possible, 'work in concert with natural processes.'[12] In this way, doctors, he suggests, should be conceived more like gardeners, for the stitch used to join the tissue is not in itself the healing mechanism but 'simply a trellis to guide the body in its own work of healing.' While it was beyond the scope of artist's workshops to cohere an entire community, the use of improvised movement and rhythm did provide the trellis to bring the vibrancy of ageing once-Firths workers into respectful social engagement with people previously thought of as disinterested strangers. And so together both halves of the community attended the 'Intertwining Threads' exhibition of photographs displayed in Clifton House, one of the few remaining Firths buildings. Once home to the auratic wood-panelled offices of the directors of Firths Carpets Limited, the exhibition gave admission to the labouring hands of men and women to a space they had rarely—if ever—occupied, to make visible and commemorate lost labour of carpet-making in Bailliff Bridge.

12. Francis, '"We Need to Respect the Process of Healing"'.

INTRODUCING DESPOINA

The ISRF's Latest Team Member

Despoina Livieratou
ISRF Academic and Administrative Assistant

I am more than excited to be writing my very first piece for the ISRF Bulletin. My name is Despoina Livieratou and I am a new entry in the London office as the Foundation's Academic and Administrative Assistant. I joined the team on the 1st of November 2021 and now I believe that it was one of the best decisions I've ever made. Throughout my life, I've always had a passion for humanities, and this was the main reason I decided to study Classics at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. I joined the philosophy faculty in 2014 and graduated in 2019, having gained not only very in-depth knowledge of some of the main treatises in ancient history (e.g. Plato's *Symposium* or Aristotle's *Politics*) but also important analytical "weapons", such as the capacity to formulate impartial and coherent arguments, critical evaluation skills as well as the ability to interpret resources and analyse a philosophical issue. But most vitally, these studies qualified me with the capability to research, collate and analyse materials, including written documentation.

This initial experience with academic study gave me an appetite for more and so I decided to do a master's degree, but this time not so much related to or driven by the classical perspective. I aspired to broaden my research interests and possibly discover what else I could study. I sought to 'escape' in some way from the field of classical studies, mainly because of my desire to deal with more tangible scientific fields that touch on real problems of modern society. In 2020, I was offered a place on University College London's one-year History and Philosophy of Science MSc programme. This programme provided me with broad training in the history of science, the philosophy of science, and the point at which these two intersect. The programme's historical range was broad, from antiquity to the present, while its philosophical coverage spanned the philosophy of mind as well as

the fields of metaphysics and ethics. I personally specialised in the philosophy of mind branch, and the way the body's relation to the mind has been conceptualised, from antiquity to the present day.

My Master's thesis was on the three-part structure of the soul that Plato first indicated and that was then picked up by Aristotle in his treatise *De Anima*. According to Plato, humans consist of two substances, the body and the soul. The body is perishable, while the soul is eternal; therefore, the soul is the essence of the human. The main question posed in my dissertation was whether Aristotle should be considered as the very first person to have ever studied and identified the soul and its substances and, therefore, whether he might usefully be understood as the first scientific psychologist. This research brought me closer to my academic interests and gave me the opportunity to study new branches of philosophy, such as the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of psychology, as crucial bodies of knowledge for our understanding of the correlation and interaction between the body and the soul. This research also familiarised me with and further stimulated my interest in the essence and importance of the soul as an entity. Apart from that, since this master was research based, it gave me the impetus to actively participate in, and discover my own passion for, scholarly research.

This brings me back to the present. My role at the ISRF offers me the chance to cultivate and further discover a wide range of research topics that speak to real-world problems. That is the principal reason why I enjoy working and being an active (yet 'infant') researcher for the Foundation, which serves the social research spectrum at its best. Already in my first few months at the ISRF I have had the pleasure of participating in Mike Makin-Waite's book launch for *On Burnley Road*, which took place in Burnley—as indicated from the title of the book—and I also attended the Foundation's first in-person Fellows congress in Manchester. Both those events provided me with a strong boost to realise the Foundation's vision of promoting interdisciplinary and critically engaged research in the social sciences. They brought me into contact with researchers from various international institutions, introducing me to different ISRF Fellows' projects and making me realise how many very topical social issues remain to be explored or have never been touched at all. This is something that really fascinates

me: exploring under-researched topics and issues that seem able to offer solutions to or explanations for important social matters. Hence, I am looking forward to being exposed to many as yet undeveloped social research projects, which reflect (and reflect on) the real problems of our world.

I've always been interested in discovering how things work, and that's something that both my undergraduate and masters studies stirred in me. They made me realise the excitement of engaging in science, specifically the kind that seeks to interpret the world. I had the chance to do some original research on my Masters, which inspired me to take up the challenge of doing a PhD. While I just finished a masterclass in Ethics of AI, at the London School of Economics (LSE), my passion lies in social psychology and, in particular, René Girard's triangulate theory of mimetic desire. Within this theoretical field, I would like to further study the violence that might arise from such a process of triangulation. More specifically, I would like to focus on Girard's psychoanalytic insights as they might be applied to questions of communal violence. Indeed, while many Philosophers of the 18th century believed that the social contract is the means by which communal violence is brought to an end, by contrast Girard contended that the articulation of a social contract tends to require more violence. For him, the point at which this violence tends to threaten a whole community is where a particular psychosocial mechanism arises: the former enemies come together in defining a common, shared enemy, as a result of which someone (either an individual or a group) is identified and constructed as a scapegoat. It is this phenomenon that I would like to study.

I feel that I have got a lot to offer this under-researched area, which is very helpful in interpreting many aspects of today's world. My sense is that a PhD project structured around this problem may open up new lines of inquiry and develop many fruitful research opportunities in future.

This issue features:
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