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Temporality  
*Implications of the demands of a society*

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**Master Thesis**

Temporality

*Implications of the demands of a society*

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## **Abstract**

This anthropological study based on fieldwork in California USA, addresses what the implications are of a notion of temporality on a society. How unstable structures provide options and threats for the many; but request adaptability and self-reliance of all.

An ethnography on where work meets poverty and where temporary phases of homelessness provide an unstable structure in which a society becomes a construct which is based on situationalist choices and temporary ethics. This against a background of postmodernist relativism makes people highly perceptible to the structuring qualities of their direct surroundings. Such direct surroundings are the present consumerist structures which have come to be ever more important. But these direct surroundings also see a diminishing role of the influence of family-structures, and an increase in the individualization of remedies when people cannot cope with what is asked of them to do in terms of labor. As institutionalized individualization eradicates social cohesion, individuals are less and less bound together through family structure and tradition and are more and more asked to work on a basis of reciprocal individualization.

In empirics it is seen that there are people who flourish in these highly unstable societal structures but it is also seen that there is a large group that does not know what or who to trust. Especially when a highly individualized focus is present when planning on survival in the current economic climate, it becomes more difficult if the trust in your individual strength is minimized through a notion of failure which is easily supplied by the same current economic climate. On the other side there is a group of people which is highly adaptable and benefits from the different options and chances that the ever accelerating occurrence of situations bring. These multifarious personas seem to bend their personal identity, opinions and ethics to fit the occasion and make the most of now without looking forward or backward too much. At the same time a part of this group is highly reflexive and deliberately chooses to stop participating in the 'normal' society and live of the excesses of waste and kindness which a modern society generates. These people who live off the grid mostly have the same reliance on adaptability as the ones who (economically speaking) flourish in a society; but tend to value other necessities than monetary stability or status. This anthropological thesis gives empirical nuance to sociological theories on this theme which are conceptualized by for instance Zygmunt Bauman and Ulrich Beck.

Findings in empirics contribute to the debate on institutions and the combination of the different (f)actors reifying the situation of low-wage work and homelessness. This includes factors as social networks and informal support, the diminishing of the middle class, the social relevance of labor in terms of identity and meaning, the current state of shifting economies and businesses and the diminishing of low skilled work as a basis of a developed economy.

Methodologically speaking this thesis tries to be true to openness of data. This is done by being dialogical in theory and by being reflexive on its own methods. An open-source ethnography that grasps post-crisis attitudes and constructs an interaction between empirics and theory. What is created is a piece of theoretical 'work' which argues for constant embedding in empirics.



## **Acknowledgements on important people**

One of my closest friends introduced me to anthropology, and inspired me to choose for this master course. What he does not know until reading this, is that he even inspired me to choose a subject for this thesis. A story he told me after one of his travels was about Gustav, a man who lived next to a waterfall somewhere in Spain. A man who lost his house, job, stability and made the best of life as it was at that moment by living in a tent in this surreal surrounding of rural Spain. This story set off the whole idea of my further research.

In many acknowledgements the same kind of helping people are often recognized by authors, it is no different here, but I want to recognize that the individuals mentioned definitely helped this thesis to have become what it is now. And they have made me to who I am today. I would like to thank everyone in the field for reflecting on, thinking with and sharing their wisdoms and experiences with me. Thanks to my tutor Diederick, who challenges intellectually and makes graduating a truly personal experience which gives the freedom to become a self-reliant and critical researcher. Gratitude to friends, fellow students and family for support, reflection and trust in every single way. And most of all respect to Femke for her patience, wit and companionship.

## **Introduction on temporality**

The story of Gustav made me wonder, how does this phenomena of work, work? What does job stability mean? What perception is there of 'normal' society when you have been pushed to (or chosen to) live off the grid? All kinds of questions arose at the same time which also involved powers greater than direct human perception, like: is mobility a response of the workforce to meet the demands of the industry and at the same time maintain important (in social and economic terms) communal networks? What does this mean for personal development in social and economic terms? But also what are the effects of low-wage work and how does this influence the modes of survival in the global economy? This not only in terms of economic survival but as well seen as biological security, when for instance housing cannot be guaranteed and thus protection from wind, weather and exploitation cannot be taken for granted.

All these questions in the end led me to the United States, after seeing several news items dealing on the subject of the appearance of tent-cities, places where the economically homeless transferred to when they lost their housing. This in the land of opportunities, the land of plenty, the land of the free. In the end it turned out that these temporal cities ceased to exist years or months before I visited California. But the structure of temporality is more present than ever. With these temporal communities gone, the transfer to cope with temporality on a more individual level makes it in a way even easier for people to try and adapt to the ever changing structure. But in another way makes it harder to cope with, as more of the social surroundings become unknown or unstable.

Just as the land, its people have many names and many different stories to tell. It occurred to me that the Aristotelian wisdom; that it is true that in one sense all things have the same causes "by analogy" but seen from up close every individual substance has its own individual causes (Bambrough 1963: 25). Thus to conclude without trying to generalize, this thesis defines what these "same causes" are, which influence the lives of people, but also tries to stay close to the "individual causes" which show in a more narrative form how reality is composed and lived by individuals.

My time in the United States is in retrospective divided in different phases. It started off with living on the streets of urban Los Angeles, doing short informal questionnaires, experiencing day-to-day struggles when you live on the streets, finding my way in the city and looking for research possibilities. The second phase consisted of living and participating

in a rehabilitation program in a Christian shelter where spiritual and practical care is given to those who require that. In this time most of the research participants were found. The third phase was a phase in which hyper-mobility of residence was explored and the phenomena of living in vehicles without permanent address was experienced and researched through interviews and participant observation. In this final phase more theoretical themes were explored and in depth life histories were written down. These phases do have some overlap but in general these are the most important phases to distinguish.

So theoretically speaking, what exactly is it all about? The research (r)evolves around low wage work, Bauman's (2011) notion of collateral damage and the different modes of survival in liquid modernity. This touches on subjects as migration, mobility, the push and pull power of the economy, the permanent search for labor and the effects of these forces on human development. This research is an evolutionary process, a contested piece of theory which only evolves and is able to be called theory because of constant interaction with empirics. It follows forms of ethnography as discussed in recent ethnographic debates by Denzin when he writes: 'Constantly working against the sting of memory, the new writer uses personal troubles and lived biography as the starting place for critical ethnography. Therefore, a performance-based, storytelling, listening, and hearing framework is preferred. Truth is fragile – a coproduction and an interactional experience lodged in the moment that connects the reader-as-audience-member and cop performer to a performance text. Truth is moral criticism – an ethical judgment that moves beyond the objective proclamations of positivism's scientific observer' (1997:268).

The pages to come are an outcome of a process which has been interactional; it combines views, opinions and lived experience of a diverse group of people who are all finding ways to cope with life itself. In this piece of work there will be no recognizable line of advance. It will form an argument; but as a social science I believe that anthropology as a discipline does not need the modernist assumption of progress as its backbone. Instead of that it tries to keep in sight the aim of unifying knowledge of a certain aspect of society in which the provided holistic view on the subject may for some be seen as a form of progress.

The plan consisted of interviewing temporary homeless people, which in itself consisted out of trying to look serious and keep trying to ask the right questions without influencing the participant too much, jot down every 10<sup>th</sup> word in my notebook while inwardly smiling (or crying). Mix these notes with current anthropological theory, stir and

wait for my master title to be delivered.

Well, as things sometimes do, this first plan partly failed miserably. Information out of interviews was shallow. But through adapting to the situation and by taking another approach I, just as the group I researched found ways to cope with what was asked of me. This resulted in a more participatory approach which I give the neologism of immersiviewing. If you, the reader, are an anthropologist, you could regard this form of in depth interviewing as an outcome of participant observation. The immersiview term is just created by me as a writer to try and take credits for a newly introduced term which in social science seems to be a stubborn trend.

The United States as a location for this research is chosen because of the virtual absence of the welfare state, the economic bust and boom processes, and the partial reliance of national identity on entrepreneurship and individual freedom which makes mobility an interesting subject in this country. More specifically the chosen location is Los Angeles. Where an exact population is not chosen but a diverse group with heterogeneous characteristics is followed and lived with, whom I will call the new homeless; people who recently became homeless due to not be able to pay for housing. How it came to this point has, as you will read further on, different causes. A defining characteristic for this group is that most of them belonged to the middle class in terms of income and education but due to unforeseen circumstances have become victims of the diminishing of the middle class.

The data collected is of different sources and is rich in detail and difference. A collage of stories; but also an insight into the structure in which these stories are told has become important data. This ranges from life histories of people afflicted with the theme in this research, to relevant structures provided by state, institutions, market and other actors. In this the research data is not per se molded to become a theoretical whole, but will be a congruent thematic collage from which some theoretic conclusions can be drawn and theoretic structures can be distilled. Point of departure will be Geertz *Interpretative Anthropology* (1973) which does not lay the most importance on structures; but on interpretation.

## **Introducing theory, explaining contemporary power structures**

*'it has never been as hard as this to find a job, everywhere you have to hand in these personal resumes, before I just photocopied and dropped them everywhere'*  
(Interview with Johnny 28-2-2013).

Individualization of remedies is seen as the only way out when people cannot cope with what is asked of them to do in terms of labor. As institutionalized individualization eradicates social cohesion, individuals are less and less bound together through family structure and tradition, and are more and more asked to work on a basis of reciprocal individualization. This reciprocal individualization is a situation in which people have to stand up for themselves and have to shape an identity which is no more given, but seen as a task to fulfill.

To cut a long story short: In modern society you are no longer born as an aristocrat but you have to become a self-made aristocrat and continually live up to it. Beck (2001) and Bauman (2011) both grasp these societal tendencies at the end of the twentieth century. They both recognize that power structures contain systemic contradictions and that solutions to these contradictions have to be found individually by members who are more and more unable to avoid in participating in these socially produced contradictions. In the example of Johnny it becomes clear that people find ways of coping with what is asked of them in the ways that are most convenient for them. But if situations change and people are asked more of than what they are used to, it becomes clear that individuality becomes a fate decided to be more important for a man as Johnny as he personally wants to. Instead of individuality used as a practical capacity for self-determined development, it becomes something that has to be lived up to in order to make any chance in society. In this I find it important to recognize that these contradictions mostly are socially reified on a relatively small scale and thus are not merely a product of grand scale processes, but it could be seen as a possible outcome of these grander processes. Beck's notion of the lottery society, a society in which the outcome of deeds is unsure and the chances of success are mostly determined by the ability to try and join in on as much of the chances that occur, seems very applicable to the situation of many I interviewed. As Tsing (In Inda & Rosaldo 2008:75) puts it, 'market models assume a level playing field of exchange that erases the inequalities of property and the processes of labor exploitation. Market models appear to be inclusive, but

they privilege social actors who, because of their economic resources are able to participate in markets'. Most of the individuals I describe here are not in the privileged positions to easily participate in the market any longer.

### **Individualization as an outcome of temporality?**

*Lenny (mid 30's from New York City), a roommate in my hostel, unexpectedly shares his experience with living in places temporarily trying to look for work. He lives in the hostel now looking for a job, saying these are hard times. Lenny did not elaborate on why he was here, tried to dodge questions so I wasn't able to get exactly clear why he moved to Los Angeles "For the better" is all that was said. Lenny is constantly on the phone and on the internet, dropping of résumés and filling out application forms, but without success. Trying to "settle his life and move forward"*  
(Field Notes 15-2-2013).

Anthony Giddens sets up a broad range of references regarding to how temporality influences societies in *Modernity and Self Identity* (1991). Here Giddens theorizes that the more modernist approach of things outlined and planned for you by tradition, class or nature seems to be diminishing as postmodernism opens up spaces for decision and choice. The questions posed due to this postmodernist setting are ones such as how much should be done of what at which point? Giddens calls this "life politics". The issues accompanied by these *life politics* set out new outlines for morality in social life and tend to be hugely important as human intervention comes to replace destiny.

The amount of human intervention that is feasible for most people who come from having next to nothing in terms of economic or educational capital is not that big, and the notion that this influence on personal success is small can have dramatic consequences on someone's motivation. Lenny's example is a small introduction for things to come. An example which shows that life politics for most of us consists of trying to settle your life and move forward. The notion of failure arises when the wanted settling of your life is not achieved. The inability to get out of unwanted temporal situations on your own gives loss of self-confidence and with that an even harder position to get out of.

When on a bigger scale it is seen that there is a diminishing size of the middle-class,

and that advanced economies to a large extent still provide economic insecurity, even when people are employed in low-wage jobs (Sassen in Munger 2002:73-74). Combine this with the high cost of living in economic centers it becomes apparent that the growing inequality in profit-making capacity of different classes of workers is putting stress on a large group of individuals who have a low-income. To exemplify this situation we go for a walk with Ron.

### **An insightful rendezvous with Ron: Hitting the back streets and forgetting the future**

*'While walking the backstreets, Ron and I have an informal and unstructured interview, which ends up in drinking. Ron had a normal job, but with a relatively low income he is one of many Americans who are often referred to as the working poor. Ron took advanced pay day cheques to keep up with his lifestyle when his rent rose a bit. This got out of hand and now he is seriously in debt. Because of that he can only work under the table jobs [undeclared work]. Ron says not to have any addiction problems but is easily seduced by alcohol and cigarettes and as this being an interview situation I offered him to pay for the cigarettes and alcohol. Ron had quite a clear view on things, from his own situation to bigger societal problems. Afterwards he asked me to lend him some money so that the next time we would meet he could pay me back. It affected my mood, partly feeling offended; partly speaking to a philanthropist side of me which said it would be more than normal in an utilitarian sense to maximize each other's luck. But it did make me see that people really are in survival mode, all good to be nice and become friends, but when there is something you need than that may be more important at that moment. This is Maslow's pyramid at work. Where I thought of building a more lasting relationship in which support overtime could be provided, Ron had more important things on his mind and could greatly use my economic support with that. We drank some more from our brown bags on the back-streets'*

(Field Notes 20-4-2013).

This continual trying to cope with the situations thrown at you is not only experienced by Ron, these makeshift survival strategies seem to be everyday truth for everyone in American society at a certain phase in their existence. There is no longer is a fixed place among a social class. Everything goes adrift in this shifting world; the only one to really be counting on, and account for, is yourself.



## **Makeshift** on situationism

*'Every piece of bread, or drop of clean water, it has been brought to me by someone, somehow. And most of the times the only way to repay, is pay for it. It becomes even more clear with sleeping, I can use someone's hostel if I pay otherwise I cannot. Sounds logical, but the strange bit, I can't sleep on the streets either, that's illegal. You can but with the feeling of being caught in the back of the head constantly. This is a kind of panopticum which forces to consume sleeping places. And I am not the only one off-course who is obliged to do so. If you in some kind of way cannot live up to the expectations you are quickly forced into illegality'*

(Diary 24-2-2013).



### **Institutionalized individualism: self-reliance as a basis.**

The loss of housing at the beginning of the economic crisis at the end of the 90's gave a short reappearance in the USA of tent cities. These cities are a relatively affordable temporary housing option. They generally require less economic support from local governments than do homeless shelters and other forms of subsidized housing, and are certainly more affordable to the needy than hotels or apartments. They also show the trend of a more self-reliant and self-supportive way of coping when falling through the mazes in the societal safety net. Interestingly most of these encampments are evicted in the last couple of years, that at least is what I found in this research, as most of the leads that came up regarding to tent cities ended up with nothing. Loftus Farren explains from an institutional side why this form of temporal housing is diminishing: 'Despite the benefits that can be associated with tent cities, local communities and government officials have frequently responded to the increasing prevalence and visibility of encampments with distaste and threats of eviction. Specifically, many local governments have expanded the use of traditional policies that criminalize homelessness, or have turned to health and safety codes to oppose local encampments. These government responses often undervalue the benefits offered by informal housing' (2011:1037). In this article Loftus Farren pleads for the point that tent cities do fill a gap which occurs in current governmental response to homelessness. The ongoing aftermath of the economic crisis, coupled with housing shortages in certain areas and the inadequate reach of services for the homeless, emphasizes the urgency of considering tent cities in a holistic and analytical manner, and embracing tent cities as a temporary informal housing solution for the homeless.

Interesting for the discussion is that places like tent cities appear as part of a strategy of people to economically survive in the United States and that they appear out of an individual or group-individual generated plan. They are an outcome of insufficient social services, a decline of affordable housing and a growing number of working poor who have no form of savings, personal safety net or societal safety net to rely on. As Michael P. Smith explains in reference to his study of a tent city in Portland, Oregon there is a difference between these self-organized housing projects and reliance on institutionalized shelters, '[w]hat squatters gain from the self-organization of encampments and why encampments are 'chosen' as opposed to shelters are questions that speak to the desire for community, autonomy, and privacy' (1995: 41-43). What is experienced is that the shelter system

provides care for the needy but that these needy are the ones who are not able any more to work and live in a community and are not used to autonomous living and caring for themselves. Self-reliance seems to be an important factor for people to refer to when speaking about dignity and pride. 'Homeless encampments may offer only an interim solution (...) for the recently homeless who are working to get back on their feet. However, even as a temporary solution, tent cities represent a valuable effort on the part of homeless individuals to do what local governments have not: address homelessness in a way that is endorsed and advocated by many who suffer from it' (Loftus Farren 2011). So the so called squatters seem to take pride in organizing and maintaining their community and even up unto a certain point identify themselves with their temporal constructed village. On the other side of things there are the people that are not self-reliant anymore; I tended to meet most of those non self-reliant groups in the first weeks of fieldwork.

*'What really makes me wonder in a city like L.A. is that in the land of the free, how do you manage to be free if there is no more free land in the cities, everything is fenced in, private property or state owned and controlled, there is absolutely no place for the homeless except on pavements and under bridges, which are not the nicest, safest or quietest places around. But compared to the shelters many people do find these "illegal" places nicer to stay at than to subject themselves to the rules and regulations of shelters. When talking to the Button Maker on the bus, he said: "the missions and the shelters are the last places on earth where you would like to be, then you are really doomed" '*

(Field notes 25-2-2013).

As the Button Maker puts it there is a sense of total failure when you turn to institutions like homeless shelters, the perception of not being able to care for yourself is equated by being doomed. I found a lot of people explaining their situation with terms as doomful or hellish. Not being able to be self-supportive is one of the main concerns of people interviewed.



A last option for economic self-reliance through the collecting of refund from empty cans.

“Welcome to hell”

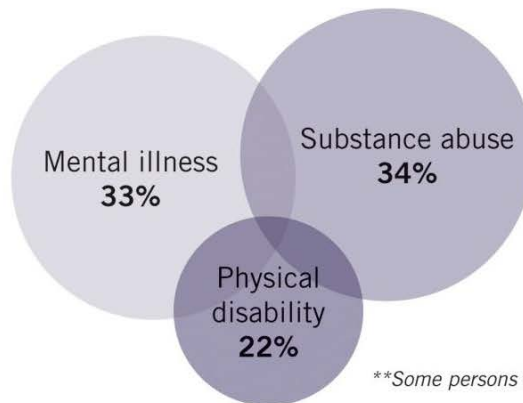
*‘While walking up to San Pedro street [the district with all the bigger homeless shelters in Los Angeles also referred to as ‘skid row’] I was welcomed with a “welcome to hell” by an elderly lady at a crossing, and in some kind of way it was, the street was literally crowded with homeless. Fully loaded shopping carts, tents on the pavement, people clearly affected by years of heavy drug use. This sight made me not too sure to volunteer at the Weingart center which is located here as this is not exactly the group to work with. These are permanent homeless, people who are drug addicts, have mental problems or are otherwise clearly out of the working population’ (Diary 28-2-2013).*

After this experience the focus of the research had become narrower, finding a place where people coped through self-reliance and would still be able to participate in bigger society was needed. But as sources told me this would be a tough challenge as many suffer from physical disabilities, mental illness and substance abuse which all could contribute to being less able to be self-reliant (see chart).



## Disabilities\*\*

Many homeless persons in Los Angeles County suffer from physical disabilities, mental illness and substance abuse. In particular, the homeless mental illness rate is higher than the national average.



*\*\*Some persons are experiencing multiple disabling factors.*

According to this chart published by LAHSA in the Los Angeles homeless count (2011) you could conclude that at maximum 89% of the homeless is struggling with one of these themes which make job participation more difficult (but certainly not impossible). But as some persons are experiencing multiple disabling factors it also could be as low as 34%.

According to LAHSA, a person is considered homeless only when he/she resides in one of the places described below at the time of the count.

*'An unsheltered homeless person resides in:*

- *A place not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings, or on the street.*

*A sheltered homeless person resides in:*

- *An emergency shelter.*
- *Transitional housing for homeless persons who originally came from the streets or emergency shelters'.*

The sheltered homeless group that is missing out in these figures is the group that for instance lives unwillingly with family or friends. The unsheltered group that misses out is for instance the one that resides outside on private residences such as certain churches which provide space for tent cities. The fiction of the census is all around when reading counts like this. So it did not demotivate to go on and search for groups that through institutionalized or through self-supportive structures tries to go back to work.

## **Coping through situationism**

*“Work doesn’t seem to be a problem, steady and good work seems to be”*

(Interview with Lenny 20-3-2013).

Most people I worked with in this research are interviewed at the time I was in a christian rehabilitation center. The people here have shown a rather processual view on reality, which means that they are fully aware that a chance that arises today should be taken and that it does not per se mean that the same chance will occur ever again. ‘To support his processual view of reality, Radcliffe-Brown appealed to the celebrated image of the Greek Philosopher Heraclitus, of a world where all is in motion and nothing fixed, and in which it is no more possible to regain a passing moment than it is to step twice into the same waters of a flowing river’ (In Ingold 2011:234). Most interviewed people told that this was taken for granted as a fact of life. There is no consideration about why these surroundings are permanently unstable. It is taken for granted and most of the times put to use when found useful; or avoided when found damaging to someone’s situation. To define the reaction to these unstable surroundings I coin the term situationism. This is a term lend from psychology which defines that the way in which most people react and behave cannot be predicted on internal rationale, but rather by external, situational factors which lead to a situation specific reaction. It does not diminish persons to reactionary subjects, but it gives attention to the influence of a situation on the decision making of a person. More often than not this does give advantages on a short term basis. But it tends to diminish social relations or strip down social relations to a point where there is a sense of recognition and friendship left but no sense of mutual destiny and thus a stimulus to help each other out. For Homo-Sapiens as a species which hugely relies on their group for survival this could be a worrisome process. When I talked with Paul this lack of trust in each other showed. ‘Paul (24) lived on the streets for 4 years due to drug usage. He referred to the lyrics of the People Are Strange by the Doors as typical for the situation to be in when being homeless and how you are treated as a homeless person. Paul referred to the desperation that invoked criminality and the lack of trust in other people when you are on the streets. “It even comes to the point that in places where they help you out you don’t trust people because you just don’t believe that they care for you”. It results in a general distrust in supportive moves of others.

## **The ends *can* justify the means**

The situationist choices make an unstable ground to start from, but as long as the American Dream keeps the goal clear at consuming and buying status it seems to be that you can relatively easy predict choices people make by looking at the economic advantage that each of the options bring.

This practice of justifying means is exemplified by a day of working with Dan. During raking and piling up piles of branches he tells me that two years ago, both he and his wife have been laid off at work. He started drinking heavily and ended up in the shelter. Dan (55 years old, highly educated and was working in aerospace before) had a lot of difficulties finding a new job, he would settle with retail instead of something he has learned for. He stopped paying for health insurance and is now busy trying to refinance his house, but wants to settle his drinking problem first. Missing structure, a goal or a reason to live up to certain standards tends to get Dan into bad habits and eventually into trouble, addiction, and (temporary) homelessness. To get out of this situation he is in now, his family sent him to a rehabilitation center where to get off alcohol and find structure in his life again after losing structure when he lost his job. For Dan it worked well when he was in the structure of earning his money and getting recognition for the work that he did. Achterhuis (2011) defines this as a philosophy of labor which underlines the worth of the labor. What is seen in empirics, for instance in Dan's case, is that unemployment makes people passive, dependent and in the end even physically sick which is often a result of demotivation. Work in this case can be seen as one of the only socially accepted medicines which keeps the mind out of places darker then everyday work. In a way it still is about the ability to work for your own expenses of living and finding a goal in being responsible, get recognized by colleagues, the rest of society and for the craftsmanship that you master. At the moment it is constructed in the way that only employment gives you this fulfillment, sense of accomplishment and eventually payment which assures you that you are doing a 'good job'. The feeling of recognition and fulfillment are mostly achieved through paid work as this is the only option to earn an income which guarantees survival. It is next to impossible to work as a volunteer and still be able to lead a comfortable modern life. There has been a lot of discussion about basic income<sup>1</sup> as a solution to the implication that now arises that there is not enough work

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<sup>1</sup>Götz Werner elaborates on the subject of basic income and the meaning of work in this video: [Unconditional basic income \(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X78gLPYxLL8\)](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X78gLPYxLL8)

to provide everyone with a job. This situation seems to be getting more severe as technology takes over and automation of processes and tasks comes into reality.

What was seen by the story of Dan is that this process of the diminishing quantity of the workforce means losing meaning in someone's life. This can devastate your position in a society as negative self-images can lead someone to situations in which they will spiral down quickly and recover slowly. If the ends of working would not be working *an sich* then the means of not working could come out less devastating than they do now.

### **Makeshift Conclusions**

The presented analysis in this chapter is more of a structural kind than an in-depth resemblance of individual cases, but I do not want to underestimate the individual qualities that each research participant possesses. As many of the people demonstrate, a sense of self-efficacy or agency is instrumentally used in developing opportunities and are strategically set up to achieve goals in life, be it temporal or not. Taking advantage of the opportunities provided through personal networks but also opportunities arisen outside of networks are seen. Agency comes into play as people take risks, but the amount of risk that can be taken differs from person to person depending on the amount of social, educational or developmental capital. This possession of immaterial qualities can make all the difference when trying to achieve new goals. The lack of material goods or the temporary loss of them seems not to be the biggest obstacle, but are just seen as an inconvenience which has to remain hidden to be able to participate in society. Jack (36, worked as a mechanic) for instance told me that he lived in a car for 3 months, he didn't tell colleagues about it, and used restrooms to stay presentable and clean. "It were just hard economic times, like an in-between phase I had to go through". This talking about "in-between phases" when referring to the bad times, the continual desire for better times and the make-belief used to define yourself and your social position are empirical reference points on which this whole thesis leans and on which the thesis continues in the next chapter.





## **Make-belief** on relativism and its consequences

The way that opinion and meaning is used in relativist ways to define temporal realities is a strong tool for survival. In this chapter there is a situation sketch of the new life institute which shows how group dynamics work and what the influence of making believe is in a group of people. This defining of real has the power to implement common beliefs. What is real for a person depends on interpretation. But any interpretation of what is real will influence the present situation. The last part of this chapter reflects on how adapting to the surrounding consumerist structure gives an advantage for survival, but that believing in another outcome could be more fruitful than adapting to the current economic climate.

## **The new life institute**

*'06:00am on a clear day in February, dawn sets in and slowly reveals the surrounding of what seems to be an ever expanding desert. The temporal period of twilight introduces the sunrise. And in this time of twilight when expectations are high but the world is still in half-sleep and a tone darker than during daytime it comes to me that this is the period where most of the men that surround me are at in their life. And this is not only where they are at but this twilight-phase also is where a whole society seems to wander in.*

*I am in a Christian shelter, a "new life institute", a place where the homeless, the reckless and the ones out of luck turn to when there is nowhere else to go. But it is not a desperate or hopeless place. People are aware that this is a phase. Something to sleepwalk through to get to more important phases which lie in the future. In a Christian religious sense your whole life is such a waiting space for better times. Salvation will come but in this life security of things cannot be given. The afterlife will set you free.*

*A childish voice speaks, rules, regulations. Not what you would expect, "mark your places" military terms in godly spaces. Security and stability is tried to be given. Men are "here" or "present" but most of them unwilling, or psychologically absent. But here they can rest, they for whom society thinks there is no use except than to wait for better times. When a society continually asks self-sufficiency then it is not that strange that at a point in life you will be unable to provide stability for yourself. If you continually have to provide for yourself there is a chance that helping others is not the first priority. And thus social networks could disintegrate and deplete. But here stability is given, the day is schematically ordered and your movements are monitored, controlled and adjusted when thought necessary. And so in the group there is worked on providing a more tightly knitted social structure than there generally is in the "outside" world.*

*The number of group members fluctuates around 70 and especially in winter there is more interest in such a safe haven. Californian climate makes it pretty easy to live without shelter during 8 months of the year. And the Christian thought of acceptance of everyone anytime makes it easy to walk in and out. Using resources as you wish makes this place an interesting option without too many strings attached.*

*There is a great variety of reasons why people are here. Addiction is one of them, conviction in general as well as in a juridical sense, rejection by something or someone and for some dedication or devoutness.*

*The temperatures on the ranch quickly rise from close to freezing in the morning to too hot to work in the sun. Boredom occasionally occurs and Harold tries to keep that away by occupying himself with reading his new dinosaur book instead of raking leaves or chopping wood. He gets caught reading and probably dinosaur books and Christianity are not the best of combinations because as a sanction he gets sent away from the 'new life institute'. Harold convinces the whole group that he gets sent away for doing nothing worse than avoiding work. But as two weeks later he returns the story gets a different plot. Under the cover of reading a dinosaur book Harold gathered materials to make his own tattoo gun and for this he found some stuff lying around on the compound. So when assembling this tool he gets caught and eventually sent away for "finding" the materials. There are no lies in this whole situation, just strategic usage of fragments of truth to mobilize and influence situations.*

*In the progress of the day moments of spirituality occur but also the shifting and usage of identity gives is continually seen, from devout Christian to ex-convict. From drug addicted to womanizing. When the situation asks for it most of the people can join in the conversation on one of the aspects of their personality or history. These situationalist choices and temporary ethics provide a way of continually adapting, which is vital for group cohesion when such temporal group formations are present. During bible study the group connects verses in the bible to real-life situations, they discuss personal problems openly and discuss about the meaning of the script in public. There seems to be trust in other persons but there also is an air of performance and living up to the good Christian image. The bible is used for the people here as a guidance in life, as most of the times in life they tended to miss that guidance.*

*This new life institute can operate from the donations of bigger society and in a way provides basic income in the form of free accommodation to its inhabitants. It searches for fulfillment in spiritual development instead of trying to fulfill*

*consumerist dreams. It replaces day to day boredom with structure and devotion and a sense of accomplishment from everyday tasks. Not saying that this should replace free choice off-course but there are aspects which give this place stability, tranquility and rest which are vital for reflection.*

*The good thing is that in California you have the choice on how to live your life, out on the streets, with family , in the house of God, in communities, in cars or, with a certain lifestyle, in jail. There are many people here on parole, having been in prison for up to 30 years. There are impressive life stories told and I am surprised of the ease with which they are told. This place does not erase the situationist choices and it does not give a trouble-free community. But it does give a sense of community, even when knowing that the outside world is still the same. Even when you are in here it does make that you cannot completely forget about the 'normal' structure. It occurred to me that during the time in this new life institute there was more time for people to develop certain aspects of themselves, more interest of people in each other and more time to help each other out and for instance work on this research project with each other. Of course people are willing to help and participate in the bigger society but the tranquility offered by not having to run to earn some money makes it a less stressful occasion to ask a bit of someone's time. Interesting is that this whole project is privately funded so in some weird kind of way capitalism combined with Christian brotherly care works in California to supply the needy with what they want. But most is outside of the institutionalized shelter system and there is no guidance by professional healthcare. Here religion helps in the struggling with problematic real-life situations in which the people here are. It in a way provides in the need of guidance. What I found most interesting is that there is a lot of bragging about phases of dependency on other things, jail, drugs, women etc. but not about the normal times which involved jobs, a house and stability. This is talked about in a whole other setting of what is thought to be good for you, but not on what gives you appearance or status in this masculine society. It is a constant shift between different expectations which are present in society'*

*(Field notes 18-3-2013).*

## Believing

*'The real is as imagined as the imaginary'* (Geertz 1980: 136)

This short impression of the situation at the new life institute was chosen to show that there is a lot to be won by groups, organizations or individuals if you can make others believe a story. In this I follow the sociological theory known as Thomas Theorem which is best defined in this sentence: *'If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences'* (Thomas & Thomas 1928:572). This defining of real has the power to implement common beliefs. What is real for a person depends on interpretation. But any interpretation of what is real will influence the present situation. I found this occurring lively at the incident with the dinosaur book. As people quickly came to judge on what is right or wrong given the occurred situation. What also is an interesting example is that in the shelter Angel asked me if Darwinism was ever proven and backed up with archeological proof. For me Darwinism is defined as real theory. But by naming it theory also subject to the possibility of change. But as an answer to the question if there was archeological proof for Darwinism, I said there is, but there also is claimed to be archeological proof of theological events. More important to me than the answer to the question is why the question was asked and what was tried to achieve by asking it.

The situation of Rory is quite striking when referring to making people believe your imagination. Rory told that he went into a psychosis when he had spent a week on different kinds of drugs at the Burning Man festival. He had always been bi-polar but the drug-cocktail started off his first real psychosis. Next to telling this experience, he claimed that he was discovered as a stand-up-comedian by a big American broadcasting company. As Rory has talent in beat-boxing, doing funny sketches and re-enacting it could well be that this is true. What just struck me was that for Rory just believing this story gave him a sense of accomplishment and dignity. I do see parallels here with the situation which is going on at the macro level. The sheer desire of accomplishing the American Dream gives people hope and makes people want to believe in themselves. At least it gives a goal which is non-temporal and requires a lifetime to achieve or is never achieved at all.

## **Believe in another outcome or adaptability through evolution?**

Adapting to your environment for survival is a common scientific view on which evolution is based and which is easily adopted to explain other phenomena in for instance the social sciences. From a humanist point of view the effect of evolution on humankind should diminish in modern times as humankind should care more and more for all of humanity. We could then see humankind as a collective group which cares for all of its members. But as the humanist view is not the base of capitalism, a whole other form of redistribution of caring comes into existence. In a consumerist system where care can be bought and sold, care therefore is not fully available for all members of society. As David Harvey argues, time and space currently get their structure through the way we organize the social practices (e.g. labor) around commodity production (1990:201-308). If a person is not able to participate in this producing and is not in the possession of capital, it becomes an issue for his or her survival. Therefore the way to survive in a consumerist structure is to participate in the capitalist structure. Not only does this hinder people to participate in other forms of social organization, it also builds an unstable structure where time has become a commodity. This contributes to the instability in spatial and temporal principles around which social life can be constructed. Bluntly said, if you work 50 hours a week, it becomes harder to give attention and personal care outside of your working time to relatives and friends. What happens when someone falls out of the structure of working and caring for them is that there is no safety net to fall into, I found this painfully visible in the story of Antonio:

*The car dealership does good business and Antonio as senior salesman lives up to the expectations of the sales targets that are set for him. After his last sale of the day he finds a customer arguing with the secretary. Antonio intervenes when the customer starts to physically threaten the secretary and in this consternation hits the customer. Things kind of spiraled down from there. Antonio gets sued, goes to jail for his deed, he loses his job, his wife breaks up with him, and after all this he starts drinking... 'it went pretty quick from all to nothing' (field notes 18-04-2013).*

It gives an indication of the importance of work in a social sense, when a person cannot live up to the expectations of his or her spouse it can quickly put stress upon a relationship. A

relationship in this situation is not only about romantic love but also an instrument for survival which is sometimes necessary to use.

The main point here is that adapting to the surrounding consumerist structure does give an advantage for survival. Being able to adapt and willing to give up informal structures to participate in paid work gives a head start in coping in postmodern consumerist time. Bauman named the phenomena which drives people to individualization *the individualization of remedies*. With the individualization of remedies he defines this personal accountability for coping with your situation as a result of the lack of morality in consumerism (2011:94-104). I found this theory to be true up unto a certain point. Because what is often forgotten is that the surplus that is created by this consumer culture often is used as donations to the group of people who needs it most. This often works through institutionalized channels which gives an advantage of scale in providing aid but which again loses part of the personal gesture in the act. When working in the shelter I found that the state of California gives tax incentives to not let food go to waste, which gives a huge stimulus to growers, supermarkets and wholesalers to try and find other use for their surplus. What is interesting is that the surplus that is created often is a surplus of commodities, not a surplus of personal attention. Where Bauman in the first three chapters of *collateral damage* misses the point is that society as collection of individuals does care about the welfare of its fellow-citizens. Where Bauman is right is that the institutionalized social-safety-nets which are provided through the neoliberal state and government often do not provide enough care. This is where I believe that there is another outcome which shows that self-organized groups of individuals do see that there is a need for help and that there actually is a response of these groups of individuals. Seen in action in initiatives from churches and charity organizations.





### **More speculation on capitalist structures**

*'The system is not working for me, too much stress on getting a house, getting a job'*  
(Interview with Dean, 15-03-2013).

In this chapter there is an introduction on how capitalist structures emerged and contributed to the current social climate in society. Some concepts from sociology and anthropology are explored and put to use to form a blueprint of the current situation and to put the empirics in perspective to the academic debate. The concept of the free market and the amount of freedom in the market is analyzed for which the concept of globalization is used as an insight in the discrepancies between perceived and imagined scales of thought and action. The chapter ends with an insight into the concept of the lottery society and argues that parts of this theory is found in empirics. This theory of randomness of reward and punishment in combination with the shifting familial relationships and the disintegration of professional networks, gives an impression of the current situation regarding work, family and the influence of temporality.



## **Innovation in society**

Innovation is not purely an economic concept, although since industrialization there seems to be the thought that innovation and economics are closely intertwined. But hold on, doesn't social change influence economic activities and economic behavior? I would argue it does, 'people are finally motivated for social reasons to start something new in their economic activities or, on the contrary, to maintain their customary way of life' (Breemer, van der Pas, Tieleman 1991:163). But in western civilization the idea of the economy has come to overshadow these social motives. Partly a legitimized view because of a more individualized take on this matter where societal status partly depends on economic (material) prosperity. But material goods only serve social assets, so surely this should not diminish social status as a main factor of influencing economic activities. When Dean for instance says in an interview: *'the system is not working for me, too much stress on getting a house, getting a job'* (Interview with Dean, 15-03-2013). It will not mean that without a job and without a house he will be socially excluded. For Dean it could well mean that he is not motivated by his surroundings to strive for stability and materialism. It could even be that in the current situation it is more likely that when he has a house and a stable job that he would be socially excluded by the group which now accepts him for being in the same situation as they are. How these shifts contribute to the instability of the social is nicely formulated by David Harvey: *'Part of the insecurity which bedevils capitalism as a social formation arises out of this instability in the spatial and temporal principles around which social life might be organized'* (1990:239). This instability and temporality which are an integral part of capitalism lead to implications when the social formations lean on them. That the desires of most of the people are formed by consumerist capitalism becomes problematic when the middle-class diminishes, and thus the options to achieve these desires diminish at the same speed.

## The 'free' market

*'In name of the market and its benefits, firms, governments and international agencies have imposed massive changes on people's lives' (Carrier 1997: VII-XIV).*

Through influencing labor distribution and thus labor opportunities in a certain geographical location. Freedom in this sense to spatially move through what could be called the ever expanding construct of the western market model, and take opportunities where they occur, is acquired by a certain type of firms and not per se by individual laborers. 'Every time finance finds a new site of engagement, we think that the world is getting more global. In this act of conjuring, *global* becomes the process of finding new sites' (Tsing 2005:73-74). Freedom in this sense could also be the freedom of exploitation. For instance globalization conjured with finding new sites here refers to the possible exploitation of worldly resources as labor, minerals or products in a 'new' site. This 'new' site refers to places where there is little regulation yet or an abundance of the required resources. The free market principle proves a powerful image in western thought. This because it contains important liberal values as entrepreneurship, self-reliance, and supposed equality. With neo-liberalism the balance seems to privilege individualism above all and with this a kind of anarchistic-capitalism. Here I do not want to open the debate on what should be the degree of state regulation on economics but I solely want to focus on the implications for laborers of such an existence of anarchic-capitalist structures. In the free market there is a conception of free choice for laborers as well as for companies. But in this the company as an entity does not rely on emotional social structures to give value to life, this opposed to the laborers. So here friction arises as the choice of companies depend more on pure economical reasoning and that of the laborers on a combination of social ties, environment, economical reason and family well-being. Tsing asks for recognition of such kind of frictions as she says *'[C]ontingent articulation can help us describe the effectiveness, and the fragility of emergent capitalist – and globalist – forms. In this shifting heterogeneity there are new sources of hope, and, of course, new nightmares'* (2005:77). These 'hopes' and 'nightmares' in a variety of ways are to be distinguished in the situation which is occurring to the new homeless in the United States at the moment.

On the more institutional side of things the essays collected by Frank Munger in *Laboring Below the Line* (2002) provide an insight in the situation of low wage workers in the United States. It recognizes the inequality of economic opportunity and has a rich multi-sited ethnographic content which proved extremely useful to further conceptualize and contextualize this research on a broader plane. Findings in empirics contribute to the debate on institutions and the combination of the different factors reifying the situation of low-wage work and homelessness. This includes factors as social networks and informal support, the diminishing of the middle class, the social relevance of labor in terms of identity and meaning, the current state of shifting economies and businesses and the diminishing of low skilled work as a basis of a developed economy.

### **Globalization(s)**

*Where global economy and global politics both have undergone a 'deep and broad transformation' there is also still a gap 'This gap - between a globally standardized and synchronized economic system on the one hand, and weak transnational political instruments on the other- can probably be described as the main contradiction, or source of conflict, in a globalized era' (Eriksen 2007:67).* In one of those gaps between this globalized and densely time-space compressed economic system on the one hand; there seems to be less powerful political structures on the other hand due to market influenced neoliberal structure. Also a minimum of state interference in the United States situation made this gap more visible in empirics. Another gap that is present is between this imagined global scale and the perceived local scale. Most people interviewed are aware of bigger global processes which intervene in, or structure their day-to-day life. But tend to only find themselves able to influence the directly perceived local scale.

## Collateral Damage and the Lottery Society

*'I crossed the street and got a jaywalking ticket'. Other priorities made Jake (in his forties, construction worker) forget to pay his jaywalking fine. "Because of this I ended up in jail for a weekend, which seemed like an ok solution at the time. But a riot broke out during the weekend and I ended up in the middle of it. The prison guards seriously molested me when I was on the ground. I lost all of my upper front teeth, and had problems with my back afterwards. It took me a year to get some money to redo my teeth and the back injury made it difficult to stay in a job'.*

(Field notes 20-3-2013)

The unforeseen outcome of such situations and the total devastation it often brings to lives of people gives an example of a lottery society which works both ways. You can lose due to random events which is more likely because the "lottery ticket" to lose is mostly free to obtain (e.g. a jaywalking ticket). And you can win some when you have the capacity to invest in a "lottery ticket" which is more likely to provide you with options (e.g. education) but then still the investment cannot be returned or even come out negative if other factors are unstable. In these situations there does not seem to be a system which plans to influence people negatively, which is partly advocated by Bauman's (2011:1-10) theory of "collateral damage"; but the randomness of the system can make the outcome for a certain individual extremely unlucky and could even end up in exclusion from the consumerist structure. Not only the economic effect of these situations can be devastating but even more so the effect on the level of stress on the psyche of people participating in such a system can influence an individual's ability and will to survive.

Questions are asked in the social sciences by for instance Beck (1992), like is there a randomness of rewards and punishments? As literarily suggested in the short story *The Lottery* by Shirley Jackson. So do people still see connection between their deeds and non-deeds and their respective outcomes? This appearance of the lottery society is empirically seen and it is apparent that people experience individual responsibility in this. And it is the case that as Ulrich Beck (1992) argued that individuals are to fix problems which are created by the current neoliberalist climate in the society. But on the other side of the spectrum it is interesting to see what role social networks play in solving such problems. Not only direct

family can make a difference, but helping institutions, individuals or other non-related groups do help out people on a daily basis. More insight into these implications is given with an interpretative view of the current social situation. This does not always provide clear or uniform answers to the questions posed but its value comes from giving rich, complex, non-stereotypical portraits of individuals. It is seen as a project to reveal the ambiguities of lived experience and expose the potential threats and opportunities to the so called middle class.

The unequal distribution of chances but also boredom of monotone work, causes people to flee into drugs or alcohol. What was often found, is that it is not always the case that there is a total randomness of events, but that the structure in which people grow up gives more or less protection from letting the situation spiral out of control.

### *Spiralling out of control (1)*

*'At the age of 10 Brad and his family lost his little sister when the little girl locked herself in an old refrigerator and could not get out of it anymore. Brad's family started to spiral out of control since that moment, Brad's dad started drinking and with that started to 'touch' [hit] his wife. As the only other man in the family Brad had to stand up for his mom and other sister and rebelled fiercely against his dad. As most American families living in a more rural area guns were ever present in and around the ranch where they lived and at 15 years old Brad threatened his dad with one of those guns. During this time the situation occurred that Brad was holding a loaded gun and putted it in his father's mouth, his dad, drunk, said 'come on shoot me son, you just have to pull the trigger, it can't get any worse than this'. Brad kicked the old man and left him lying on the ground threatening his dad to keep his hands of Brad's mother. At 23 years old Brad lives together with his wife and kid in Southern California. After a night of drinking Brad decides to take 'a pill' [drugs] to replenish his energy. Next thing he knows is that he is in an argument with his wife. In the argue he again turns to a weapon and threatens his wife. But the influence of drugs and alcohol make Brad lose his temper and he shoots his wife in the chest. In shock Brad calls an ambulance and the police but his wife does not make it to the hospital. Brad gets convicted to a life sentence in prison'*

(Life history composed out of an interview with Brad in 03-2013).

## Family and the disintegration of networks

*'I think people are more aware of the new realities than the institutions are. But at the same time, if you look at the findings of empirical research, family is still extremely valued in a very classical sense. (...) Ask yourself what actually is a family nowadays? What does it mean? Of course there are your children, my children, our children. But even parenthood, the core of family life, is beginning to disintegrate under conditions of divorce. Families can be constellations of very different relationships' (Beck 1991: 203/204).*

These very different relationships Beck mentions is found in empirics as well, what is mostly seen is that not only the bigger processes in society become unstable but that also family life becomes a constellation of temporary relations which are more easily destabilized. Relationships become instruments for achieving and gaining in personal wealth. And such instruments can be disposable.

### *Spiralling out of control (2)*

*'Brad's story is 26 years old. He now is a huge almost fifty years old, fully tattooed man who is fit and strong. His appearance is impressive but also the way he looks at people in total relaxation and without any hesitation in his calm voice makes him a leading figure. Not only physical ascendancy makes him a leading figure also his intelligent and insightful observations give him respect from the other men in the rehabilitation center. Brad tells me his life story during lunch time. In the same calmness and with the same confidence he presents himself, he tells me about how every year he fasts for a week in memory of his wife'*

(Life history composed out of interviews with Brad in 03-2013).

You still see that in a classical sense family is respected. But that the falling apart of family structures becomes apparent in a story such as Brad's. That this influences future job opportunity due to the disintegration of a professional network is eminent. Furthermore the stigmatization of ex-convict status in the labor market does not help when trying to adapt back into normal society. So not only does your personal network disintegrate, the more institutionalized network of companies will hesitate to hire once you are branded a criminal.

### *Spiralling out of control (3)*

*'After prison a lot of ex-convicts have to spend 6 months in a rehabilitation center to get used to society again. With 4 months to go, Brad laughs about it and says that 4 months is nothing 'I've spent more than that on the toilet in prison'. He now is busy making plans for after this period, having your freedom partially back after 27 years will be a shock but also something to look out to. That the freedom is partial is because the ex-life prisoners are on parole after their release so they still have to report to a parole officer the first years after their release and are not allowed to travel further then a certain amount of miles from their hometown. Being an ex-convict gives stigma but also is reality for a big part of young men in the United States. Especially when there is not a lot of work to apply for your status as an ex-convict makes going back to work a frustrating task with a lot of rejections of your résumé'*

(Life history composed out of interviews with Brad in 03-2013).

This ex-convict story shows how trust is essential in networks of people. Trust which for instance is given by networks of people such as families. What is interesting in this is that the institutionalized trust is broken down by branding people as criminals. This branding seems to be difficult to overcome by more non-informal networks of trust such as relation through friendship or family.

What is often said by research-participants is that they think that the criminalization in America is partly a system to provide the economy with a large detention system which provides income and work for a big group of people. And at the same time give state and government an "army of workers" who provide in the need of low-paid manufacturing work, with for instance the manufacturing of license plates for the California state in Folsom prison. These are the individual laborers that are not capable of mobility and flexibility and thus are easily exploited or, from another point of view, are paying back society for their deeds and the cost of their detention. On the other part of the spectrum we find the hyper-mobile, the people who flourish in the current climate through using mobility as their main asset. Who these people are will be explored in the next chapter.



### **Mobility matters** making the most of situationism

*'The multitude takes hold of time and constructs new temporalities, which we can recognize by focusing on the transformations of labor. Understanding this construction of new temporalities will help us see how the multitude has the potential to make its action coherent as a real political tendency'* (Hard and Negri 2000: 401).

The notion that capitalist modes of production and the process of globalization are emerging in different empirical fields is explored in this chapter. It is reckoned that this on the one hand gives easier access to mobility; but on the other hand can also be seen as a force which drives people to mobility as a mode of survival. An important factor is how mobility can be seen as an organizing principle in its function as a survival strategy. In this chapter examples will be given of the people who seem to benefit from their increased mobility and how this relates to temporality as the new organization of spatial scales. That temporality is one of the outcomes of neoliberalist rule is the starting point of this chapter.



## People embracing neoliberalism

Against a background of neoliberalist rule this research explores themes around the feeling of the research participants to be in control over their individual status and fate in terms of personal development. For this Ong's concept of neoliberalism as exception is used, this recognizes that neoliberalism as an exception is influencing governing reason and is individualizing responsibility of citizens. Governance and citizenship are both contested through the shifting use of exceptions made by neoliberalism. The malleability of citizenship rights, claims and duties is influenced by the market, knowledge and NGO-interventions. A force field where the consequences of actions or claims cannot be guaranteed. And through which a unified concept of citizenship is difficult to imagine other than through the vision of the possession or non-possession of capital; a Marxist vision shared by Hard and Negri (2000) in what they call the 'empire' structure. Ong comes to the conclusion that *'things that used to be fused together – identity, entitlement, territoriality, and nationality – are being taken apart and realigned in innovative relationships and spaces by neoliberal technologies and sovereign exceptions'* (Ong 2006: 27). The consequences of these realignments and the contestation over resources, life-politics and entitlements are shown.

Neoliberalism as a subject of interest is a lively topic on its own in recent anthropology discourse. Ong adds some refreshing views on how to (re)conceptualize neoliberalism. Since the concepts and ideologies of different neoliberalist perspectives have come to be different subjects altogether and the boundaries of the concepts are often contested. Ong conceptualizes neoliberalism as: *'[A] new mode of political optimization, - neoliberalism with a small n- is reconfiguring relationships between governing and the governed, power and knowledge, and sovereignty and territoriality. Neoliberalism is often discussed as an economic doctrine with a negative relation to state power, a market ideology that seeks to limit the scope and activity of governing. But neoliberalism can also be conceptualized as a new relationship between government and knowledge through which governing activities are recast as nonpolitical and non-ideological problems that need technical solutions'* (Ong 2006: 3). In this conception of neoliberalism the power granted to governments to deploy a malleable technology of governing, has as a side effect that particular types of individuals and populations are included while others are excluded. Interesting parallels can be seen here with the term Collateral Damage which is coined by

Zygmunt Bauman (2011) or with Wimmers (2002) notion of (in Ong's case regionalist instead of nationalist) nationalist exclusion. These in- and exclusionary practices on grounds of the ability to work, but more important the ownership of monetary capital are important theoretical starting points on the experience of social security by the temporary homeless.

The flexibility and mobility which is asked by a neoliberal system is also empowering for a number of people which I talked to in the field. A group which can cope with temporality and even thrives in it. This is a group of people which is highly adaptable and benefits from the different options and chances that the ever accelerating occurrence of situations bring. These multifarious personas seem to bend their personal identity, opinions and ethics to fit the occasion and make the most of now without looking forward or backward too much to slow them down. At the same time, part of this group is highly reflexive and deliberately chooses to stop participating in the 'normal' society and live of the excesses of waste and kindness which a modern society generates. These people who live off the grid mostly have the same reliance on adaptability as the ones who (economically speaking) flourish in a society; but tend to value other necessities than monetary stability or status.

These people acknowledge that this neoliberalist system provides enough to live from but also takes so much time and stress to participate in it, that it cannot provide attention, care and respect to those who cannot live up to its demands. To start off the empirical side of this chapter I give an example of Bill and his partner Mary who could not live up to the demands anymore but now find living in their camper-van a reasonable solution for coping with the situation they are in.

### **Parked**

*'The huge grey box-type building shadows over an even bigger parking lot. The asphalt of the parking lot is as grey as the building. If it was not for the southern Californian climate, things would depress you from the start. I am at a Walmart, a supermarket chain known for its one-stop shop principle. This means getting everything in any quantity you want in just one store. Food, non-food, toys, electronics, sporting goods, outdoor gear, beds or car equipment you name it and you can get it. What brings me here is not the array of goods to buy, but the kind gesture of Walmart to provide places for people to sleep in their cars legally at the Wal-Mart parking lots. At night the lights on the parking lots do not dim.*

*The constant twilight feel is something to get used to when you choose to stay at these improvised camping's for a night. But people here do not tend to stay for one night. Bill mumbles from under an open camper-van hood: "I used to have everything, cars, a house. But I got laid off at work and now I have to spend my time in this driving beauty". Bill's wife is with him and in the meantime she is making coffee in the back of the camper-van. Bill closes the hood and with a slight limp walks to the back of the van. "It was when I fell ill that everything went the wrong way, I used to do construction work but when my back did not function without pain anymore it became an enduring strain to work. My insurance company made a whole hassle out of it and did not pay a dime in the end. So now we live on the money my wife earns working irregular shifts at Walmart. We get 300 dollars of EBT [this is part of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) a kind of food-stamp programme]. Rent for an apartment is something we could just manage on our income, but getting together the money for a deposit and buying all the stuff we need is just too much right now. Why we ended up here also was about not adjusting our living standards, we thought we would get out of it, find a new job, get money from the insurance company. But in the end it all did not work out and now we are here"* (Composed out of Field notes, 20-4-2013). The situation that Bill and Mary are in is a rather typical one in California, due to the climate it is not an uncomfortable option to sleep in a camper-van. And there are quite some places where you can legally stay overnight. Such as Walmarts, churches or at safe parking projects.



Another example is Jake's situation. *'Jake, a Vietnam veteran in his late sixties, who sleeps in his Toyota Corolla and in the daytime visits a shelter for food, a shower and for social contact. Lives in his car, but owns some land. Says he does not trust the government or medication or anything bigger than the people he knows directly, except for god. Family is important for him. Jake started off as an athlete and did all different kinds of work, went to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, and after that ended up buying his own gas-station. Did that 20 years. He says to have a tight family, his kids live 40 miles away. He wants to buy some more land as an investment, but still lives in his car voluntarily. At this point I don't exactly know about the amount of truth in his information it could be his own spectacular accumulation project. there are some contradictions in what Jake says, appears to be and what he does'* (Field Notes 12-3-2013).

These contradictions are found pretty often in the research and it made me understand that people like Jake still get a sense of fulfillment and dignity out of their stories. If told as hoping for it to come true or that there is a core of truth in these stories is not for me to judge. But the joy in telling people stories (true or not) and amazing people with who you are and what you have done seems like such an important part of most of the peoples day-to-day lives that the act of telling is more important than what is told.

In a way I recognize in these stories the notions of Tsing's "multiple globals" (2000) and the contestations between Appadurai's "spheres" (1996) in which different outcomes of power contestation come into being. In this way there is not a totality but a multiplicity of in- and exclusionary forces. With this I would like to recognize that there are more options for actors to contest over in- and exclusionary practices. On the other hand, Ong (2006) primarily addresses the power that is contained in flexibility and mobility to the new world order of capitalism, and thus puts flexibility and mobility as an asset in the power structure which is called "Empire" by Hard and Negri (2000). Ong (2006) does not address this power of mobility and flexibility to for instance individual laborers and with this does not recognize the possible empowerment of the "Multitude" against "Empire". Something which seems reasonable when reading the story of Bill and Mary, but the stories of the more mobile, and less dependent may well give this empowerment to a part of the "multitude"



### **Hit the road! Autonomy and agency, choosing for increased mobility**

To conclude I want to partly erase this victimized stance of the workforce towards increased mobility. As argued in this thesis being a victim of greater forces should not always be the case. Increased mobility is not intrinsically positive or negative in relation to human development; its impact depends upon the circumstances in which it occurs, the constraints that surround it and—above all—the degree of choice that individuals can exercise over their own mobility’ (Newland 2009:1). So increased mobility can be a development of permanent (but flexible!) global relations that can prove to be beneficial to all of the parties concerned as a reinvented form of freedom to sojourn and take chances where they occur. The influence of capitalist modes of production and the occurrence of globalization in different fields give easier access to increased mobility; but can also be seen as a force which drives people to increased mobility as a mode of survival.

There is a group of mainly young people who deliberately choose for being mobile which they use as an asset in finding work they like. As for instance people who work in Canada half of the year and spend the other half surfing on the Californian coast. People who live permanently in their cars and live of donations in the form of food and clothing and work as they like. The list of alternative options which were encountered in the field were nearly endless but all came to the point that there are a lot of opportunities outside of the normal conception of work which are often less stressful and more playful but require flexibility and adaptation of the people involved.

A strong sense is present with research participants about temporal adjustment to certain situations, and appreciation of this situation is even mentioned when talking about increased mobility. As most increased mobility in the world takes place without restrictions of government policies. It can better be seen as a reflection of capabilities of people and the result of their choices. In my view this positive 'friction' and its outcomes could be the beginning of a positive insight into this subject.

In empirics it is seen that there are these people who flourish in these highly unstable societal structures but it is also seen that there is also a large group that does not know what or who to trust. Especially when a highly individualized focus is present when planning on survival in the current economic climate, it becomes even more difficult if the trust in your individual strength is minimized through a notion of failure which is easily supplied by the same current economic climate. On the other side there is a group of people which is highly adaptable and benefits from the different options and chances that the ever accelerating occurrences of situations bring. These multifarious personas who seem to cope by bending their personal identity, opinions and ethics to fit the occasion and make the most of now are able to cope by not looking forward or backward too much to slow them down. At the same time, part of this group is highly reflexive and deliberately chooses to stop participating in the "normal" society and live of the excesses of waste and kindness which a modern society generates. These people who live off the grid mostly have the same reliance on adaptability as the ones who (economically speaking) flourish in a society; but tend to value other necessities than monetary stability or status.





## **Methods on structuralism**

*'We may expect him in the desert only in that case he is near, because the deserts are multiplied although it seems that the ruling dimension which surrounds us is that of the expansion. The multitude in which the beastlike herd reigns and mediocrity elevated to theory rules...'*

(Hugo Claus 1983:538).

## **Research and Method**

To start off with the structure/agency debate I preferred the research to be sensitive to empirical input instead of being molded in advance through theory and the anthropology discipline. This is off course (im-)possible up unto a certain point. My experience as a person, but also as a scientific tool will all take their respective place in the construction of the ethnographic portrayal. With this I take the stance that politically loaded research is not per se bad research. Following Nyden et al (1997) that research can be political in two ways. It can be related to external political processes; the research can influence the public debate or policy makers. Second, the researcher and the research process know internal political

processes, for instance in the case of the relation between the people that are researched with and the researcher him/herself. So the power contestation has to be visible in the research and the possible position taken or ascribed to the researcher is best to be reflected on.

Methodologically speaking Jurris' (2008) stance on ethnography as a political entity is applied in this research. An engaged and sometimes enraged ethnographical stance as a form of method used by Nancy Scheper-Hughes (2004) is appealing but the research follows a more theoretical backed positional framework to keep theoretical relevance and not let the outcome of the research turn into a mere political persuasion.

### **Research and Method Implications**

*'Adopting a critical-theoretical orientation, scholars including Harvey, Bob Jessop, Neil Brenner, Jamie Peck and Nik Theodore have greatly enriched debates on the structure and politics of the contemporary US city, alerting us to the multi-scalar articulations of the neoliberal project, as well as to the many contradictions attendant to 'actually existing' neoliberalism. And yet, these studies have typically been pitched at high levels of abstraction, ill-suited to bringing their observations down to the street level, where the practical contradictions of navigating neoliberal terrain in everyday life are made manifest. Here then is the space for ethnographic investigation'*  
(Fairbanks and Lloyd 2011:5).

Avoiding this level of abstraction in ethnographic text is also seen as a problem in this thesis. The continual trying to define and place situations in theoretical embedded structure is done often and does not always let situations speak for themselves. On the other hand this research has filled in this unrevealed space of on the ground ethnographic investigation which deals with the practical everyday life contradictions which come up when people try to navigate neoliberal terrain. Perhaps more so than trying to add to the theoretical debate which is going on about the existing scales of neoliberalism(s) and the way that neoliberalism as a phenomena occurs.



## Defining a research group

In ethnography the sketching of abstract character groups seems to be occurring less; on the contrary the sketching of character traits while taking the social context into account is a method which is being used often. Through the stark visual component of these sketched character traits readers get presented a personified image of a multiplicity of personal traits such as personal qualities, career start and situation, practical survival skills and connections with institutions, aid, social structure and tension- and conflict areas concerning inter-personal and institutional framework (Wynn 2011). All these traits or areas together form the context in which the type of person is used to simultaneously characterize time and place in ethnography. Regarding this categorization Anderson conceptualizes *the fiction of census*. This concept tries to grasp the attempt of including as large a group as possible in a single definition, which at the same time reifies everyone's position in these imagined communities, it frames and makes tangible (2006:165-166).

In this research there is constant reflection on the use of abstract character groups in the ethnographic accounts. This because of the shifting cultural, historical and social context which problematizes such a stereotypical use of group identification and with that distorts the typing of situational characters. On this subject Frank Munger has written about the impact of ethnography on the theme of low wage work, and how this influences public opinion and policy makers. This 'new ethnography' of which Munger speaks is part of what is the goal of the ethnography portrayed in this thesis.

*'Munger ponders the challenge to produce work that breaks down stereotypes of cultures of poverty and to recognize the values and aspirations of the working poor. Munger's interest in the 'new ethnography' of poverty and low-wage workers is expertly focused on the question of social policy impact: is the new ethnography successful in avoiding the tendency for detailed descriptions of poor people's struggles and living conditions to divert attention from the larger social, economic and political context? Does it identify problems and solutions as personal lifestyles and decisions? The long tradition in the United States of dividing the poor into categories of deserving and undeserving locates moral identity or character — the foundation of citizenship — at the centre of welfare reform. Munger argues that, in order to impact public policy, the primary goal of the new ethnography should be to delineate the identity of the poor in such a way that the general public can understand them as being no different from themselves' (Taras 2004:748).*

How Munger underlines this shows that it is important to type the characters as a situational construct of the social context. With this it also comes to mind that a complete objective representation of characters cannot be possible because a representation is always textually, visually or performatively articulated (Sunier 2009:16). Sunier refers to Clifford's *Writing Culture* (1986) when he writes: '*By stressing the allegorical character of ethnography, according to Clifford, the attention is drawn to the tale-telling character of the cultural representations and with that on the dimension of time that is connected to this*' (In Sunier 2009:16 own translation). In this ethnographic character typing, there is an area fraught with tensions, because in the tale-telling nature of ethnography the abstract typing of persons speaks for itself and gives a romanticized group typing; but with typing this one person with an abstract (group) term the pitfall of stereotyping is difficult to avoid. Nuance and sensibilisation look like a part of the solution, although they will influence the narrative form of writing and with it influence the readability of the ethnography. Despite this, I have tried to give a representation of the different persons with respect to the context and without reframing the persons or turn them into hybrid fictional characters. The only reason to create fictional or composed characters could be when the complete description of a person even with anonymizing data will still be traceable to the research participant and prove to be dangerous for the research participant in terms of privacy. If this creation of fictional characters occurs, it is noted.

### **Interpretative Anthropology**

Geertz is seen as one of the founding fathers of interpretative anthropology. In Interpretive anthropology the main importance lies at the group of research, how does this group conceptualize and experience the social world, what do they render important, and how researchers form ideas about this social reality. In *Ethnographic Memorabilia* Geertz gives the example of the importance of kinship structures which for the researched group is not much of an interest. It is for instance of much more importance what family and gender may possibly mean than to systematically research kinship structures and say 'this is the structure'. In the perspective of Geertz this is of little worth (In Panourgiá & Marcus 2008:17). This interpretative anthropology thus relies more on literary and philosophical movements than on the tradition of pure scientific methods (Ibid:18). Because it reflects from this position, it more easily admits that there are multiple interpretations of a

phenomena and that absolute truth thus is an illusion. Departing from the same notion of conceiving needs and conceptualizing lived experience of a researched group, but from a more utilitarian point of view, Slater recognizes that needs are sources which need to be tapped by making demands on a group defining term *'To say that I (or we – my social Group, my community, my class) need something is to make a claim on social resources, to claim an entitlement. Needs are both social and political in this respect too'* (Slater 1997:3). On the other hand the claim is not only directed at direct material needs but also on a form of symbolism which is connected to a group defining term and the accompanying identification and socialization.

From an interpretative approach it can be said that the characterization and living up to a characterization is as much a product of the situation as of the material and symbolic aspects of that situation. Interesting in this situation is that there is being looked at the place where the creation of text as a realistic description of phenomena's meets with the claim of these creations. This is what Denzin recognizes as the role of mediatization and power of the written text: *'Reality as it is known is mediated by symbolic representation, by narrative texts, and by cinematic and televisual structures that stand between the person and the so-called real world. In critically reading these texts, the new ethnographers radically subvert the realist agenda because the real world is no longer the referent for analysis. Ethnographies of group life are now directed to this world of televisual and cinematic narrativity and its place in the dreams, fantasies, and interactions of everyday people. Malinowski's definition of ethnography is no longer workable'* (Denzin 1997:XVI). Denzin here talks about the consciousness that in modern anthropology the social reality is also in fictionalized, digitalized or in some kind of way mediatized places. The so called real word is expanding to the imagined perception. That this makes Malinowski's definition of ethnography no longer workable seems to me to be because of the sheer impossible task to map social structures and the vast amount of interactions and influences which mediate social perception.

What remains is the notion of ethnography as method to describe observations, interactions and intersections of the ethnographer and the group he researches with.

## **Revising zombie categories**

There is a tendency in everyday situations and especially when using interpretative methods to use, as Ulrich Beck (In Slater and Ritzer: 2001: 262-263) calls them, 'zombie categories'. These categories are 'living dead' categories which govern our thinking but are not really able to capture the contemporary milieu. The difficult thing about avoiding this in research is that the emic usage of the categories and the perceived importance of the reified status of these categories for people is real. The main difficulty with this is what Ying Que (2012) defines as the issue of imagining alternatives, how do we think about categories which are outside the normal definitions of categories and are beyond the boundaries of our imagination? What I constantly try to do instead of reasoning in the 'zombie categories is to think about subject positions in three ways which are loosely based on a threefold division made by Tom Boelstorff (In Ina & Rosalda 2008:312): the historicity (1), this is partially people's life history and how they embed this part of history in their personal stories. Another important factor is spatial scale (2), on what scale are expressions used, and which categories are used at which time to relate and deploy meaning. And to conclude The structure (3) in which personalities are embedded, and thus in which terms they express themselves and relate to others. When for instance people referred to themselves as homeless, it occurred to me that this was often just the state of being accomodationally challenged; and not an expression of identification with a group of homeless people. Often terms like this are deployed and thus used practically as a way to influence others by providing an image which resembles a clearly defined state of being which can be quickly recognized by others.

## **The author on political, moral and societal views**

I do not feel like being a real activist anthropologist, I would like to shine a light on the situation and see if I can help out where I can, but I am not mother Theresa. I do think that there is a certain amount of self-control which would enable people to not get into situations as homelessness. I do recognize that there is such a thing as bad luck, difficulties during upbringing, lack of education or life changing unforeseeable situations, but I wonder why there is not more reliance on networks of people or other 'helping hands' which can act as social security. This might have something to do with self-respect, self-reliance and maybe shame to ask for help. I would like to think of my work more as academic, in depth, multi-

sited, well-grounded journalism. A collection of stories which is reflected upon with great care and thoroughly researched and backed up by empirics and literature. I do think a social security system which is aimed at preventing and not curing which should give great care to personal wellness and wellbeing is preferable. In this respect I am a progressive left wing researcher, but on the other side I would advocate for libertarianism in terms of Libertarian philosopher Roderick Long who defines libertarianism as *'any political position that advocates a radical redistribution of power from the coercive state to voluntary associations of free individuals', whether 'voluntary association' takes the form of the free market or of 'communal co-operatives'* (1998:304).

But I do know that I am too optimistic with regards to the responsibility taken by individuals to take action in situations like this. Especially co-ops are positive initiatives in my opinion but it is difficult to rhyme with the current forms of capitalism in which people first have to take care of themselves. This makes a difficult, disputed and a non-directly definable stance on how to solve these problems. In this I like to use the phrase, they who survive have priorities, not principles. This makes me rethink my moral values constantly and makes it very situation specific what or what not can be a just solution. I as well as the people I worked with for this research are a product of rapidly moving temporal structures and are trying to cope with these structures through relativism and situationism.



## **Methodology** on how to a(nthro)pologize

*'Let every man be his own methodologist; let every man be his own theorist; let theory and method again become part of the practice of craft' (Mills 1959:246)*

### **Points of Attention for Participant Observation**

In this research the guidelines which are provided on ethical research by the American Anthropological Association are used. *'Anthropological researchers, teachers and practitioners are members of many different communities, each with its own moral rules or codes of ethics. Anthropologists have moral obligations as members of other groups, such as the family, religion, and community, as well as the profession. They also have obligations to the scholarly discipline, to the wider society and culture, and to the human species, other species, and the environment. Furthermore, fieldworkers may develop close relationships with persons or animals with whom they work, generating an additional level of ethical considerations. In a field of such complex involvements and obligations, it is inevitable that misunderstandings, conflicts, and the need to make choices among apparently incompatible values will arise. Anthropologists are responsible for grappling with such difficulties and struggling to resolve them in ways compatible with the principles stated here'*

(AAA Ethics Code 2009). Informed consent is always tried to be given, but there were situations in which it was near impossible, unnecessary or strange to do so. As a guideline for myself I use the principle that when the research participant in question is giving more detailed information which is likely to be used in the research then the research position must be clear to him or her. Furthermore the only reason to create fictional or composed characters could be when the complete description of a person even with anonymizing data will still be traceable to the research participant and prove to be dangerous for the research participant in terms of privacy. If a fictional or composed character is created for this reason it will be elaborated upon in the reflection. In this way the research tries to give a genuine image of life-histories without blurring or mixing up different stories.

### **Method of Report, dubbing culture, writing ethnography with minimal distortion.**

Writing culture in postmodernism seems to be a case of a mirror which is reflecting other mirrors. But when these mirrors are seen as objective entities which reflect literally by bouncing back light, this metaphor goes astray in the case of the using it for ethnographic fieldwork. This is because the self-reflection which is present within human beings and through which reflections are bound to be distorted or misinterpreted. Blom Hanssen worries about this extra mirror which is the researcher himself and how this influences validity and reliability. Blom Hansen poses: *'the unavoidable conclusion has to be that us anthropologists should never think that we are exalted above the political and cultural battle which we portray by relying on quasi-scientific grounds (...) The current problem is not the objectification or unjust othering but more so the quality of the written text, or loyalty to someone's material and understanding of the local situation'* (In Sunier 2009:40 own translation from Dutch). In this described current problem lies the crux of the future of anthropology. To be loyal to someone's text and to represent this is a problematical issue when interpretation of the ethnographer and an abundance of information and field material are present. Possibilities for reducing this ethnographic distortion is to do auto-ethnography, or in the case of this research to try and make an open-source ethnography.

## **Open source ethnography, the utopian goal of non-dubbing; or just stop apologizing?**

*'Constantly working against the sting of memory, the new writer uses personal troubles and lived biography as the starting place for critical ethnography. Therefore, a performance-based, storytelling, listening, and hearing framework is privileged. Truth is fragile – a coproduction and an interactional experience lodged in the moment that connects the reader-as-audience-member and cop performer to a performance text. Truth is moral criticism – an ethical judgment that moves beyond the objective proclamations of positivism's scientific observer'* (Denzin 1997:268).

The shift to more auto-ethnographical work seems to be a positive development when thinking of engagement of the ethnographer with the described phenomena's and cultures. But also with auto-ethnographical work it is just as important that the researcher is consciously aware and reflexive about his or her situation in the social context. No matter if this is his or her 'own' environment, or an environment where he or she is situated only for a short period of time. The conscience and the ability to reflect on personal coloring or distortion of the story will be desirable in both cases. A transition to critical anthropology is thus even more important. The symbolic interpretative anthropology is in this the most critical in questioning the authority of ethnography and at the same time confronts textual constructions of reality with their reality worth when interpretation is the main interest. If an activist voice is allowed in such a piece of writing is in my opinion a question which the ethnographer can fill in for him or herself whenever it is properly justified. As long as the construct of formed reality and the subjectivity of points of view is accounted for. Then it should be possible to combine conflicting points of view as a valuable contribution to the discourse. With these things in mind the ethnography can play an important role in clarifying social realities.

The fictional construction of these social realities is a point of critique which is often heard on ethnography but: 'These stories move people to action, and they rest on a distinction between fact and truth. Truth and facts are socially constructed, and people build stories around the meanings of facts. Ethnographers collect and tell these multiple versions of truth' (Denzin 1997:XV). So fictional construction in this seems to be not much more than giving an



appealing image of certain aspects of truth. The ethnographer as storyteller thus still is a relevant contemporary image, but to apply more complexity in these stories by being critical is a more than important part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century ethnography.

For this research I planned to create an open-source ethnography as a (by)product. In this idea people have to actively participate and construct a textual construction of their part of the ethnography, so that the eventual scientific anthropological product delivered by the research will rest upon intelligible sources. The role of the researcher will then be to compare and stress the ligatures that appear in the multitude of information that the fieldwork creates. Also a reflection from a scientific point of view will be one of the main tasks. This has been accomplished up unto a certain point. Some parts of text have been written by participants but in general it was really hard to motivate participants to write, reflect and read about their own situation. So in a way it still is an utopian goal to non-dub an ethnography. Especially this end product is something which is directed completely by its author, but on the other hand also has been starkly influenced and formed by the participants who contributed to it. For future research it would be my advice to start off digitally and create a platform on which participants could log in and change, publish and react on each other. For this project something like this was set up but in the end it was used just by me and two others so remained a small-scale and thus a not too supportive project. It would have been practical to have printed contact cards with an URL on it for people to go to and find out more about the subject and give them the possibility to reflect. In field-situations it now occurred to me that it is easy to ask people things but often it tends to go wrong by missing out on practical things as not having a pen or paper at hand or just the sheer lack of motivation to explain the project in total. But as Tim Ingold puts it, '[A]nthropology is an inquiry into the conditions and possibilities of human life in the world; it is not – as so many scholars in fields of literary criticism would have it – the study of how to write ethnography, or of the reflexive problematics of the shift from observation to description' (2011:242). With this the notice that the question of reflexivity, the doubts and dilemmas of the ethnographer are not the ultimate goal in anthropological work, it kind of deadens the work as it searches for legitimization, and becomes so critical that it is forgotten to throw a light upon the situations in the real world which are the actual inquiry of the

anthropologist. Making up life-histories is one of the ways to stay close to empirics and deliver a product which is open to lived experience in the world we inhabit.

### **Life-histories**

Another method of research has been to collect different life-histories of people in the field. A big advantage of this method is the contextualized and rich data. This provides a view which highlights the complexity of conceived realities and gives a layout of the different force fields to which the research participants are exposed. In the thesis as end product there are not too many complete life histories used, but examples are given which are insightful or commonly seen. What is a disadvantage of this is that the contextualization of examples is not complete, which in a way also is a next to impossible task because of the sheer amount of work this takes, but the incompleteness does help for giving a compacter and denser argument which is easier to detect within the text.

### **Reciprocity**

Greg worked as a truck driver but due to problems with his prostate he was unable to practice his profession any longer. Greg: 'Jelle, tell me what should I do to get out of here? I don't have no home, no car, no job, can't I go with you? Or what would you do? You are the homeless expert". It was a hard time for me in terms of reciprocity. I truly did not know the answer for him. I helped him out partly through looking for transitional housing, but as he has no indicated form of illness or addiction there are not too many places to go. During the research there have been multiple occasions in which direct help from me has been asked, often in the form of money. The interesting thing is that when asked for money my reaction could quite easily be a simple no; but when asked for a service, ideas, or direct help in the form of labor then it is much more appealing to do something for someone. It made me think about the distance that a monetary system creates, not only a distance between work and reward, but also a social distance. With this social distance I mean that with a monetary exchange you miss out on a big part of doing a favor for someone, you do not get to know that person any better and you do not get to express your personal affection with someone or something. For something which I think is especially true for most of us, is that doing something together bonds more than just completing a transaction in which there always is a hierarchical situation with a taker and a giver. Thinking about helping without the word

transaction and without giving or taking but just as an act is a challenge which is out of the ordinary for people who have to stand up for their individual possessions which is often required in a consumerist structure.

## Conclusions and reflections

### Conclusions

The implications of temporality on a society are multifarious, this is seen by the makeshift solutions that people come up with to cope with what is asked of them, this is explored in the *makeshift* chapter. Individualization of remedies is seen as the only way out when people cannot cope with what is asked of them to do in terms of labor. As institutionalized individualization eradicates social cohesion, individuals are less and less bound together through family structure and tradition, and are more and more asked to work on a basis of reciprocal individualization. This reciprocal individualization is a situation in which people have to stand up for themselves and have to shape an identity which is no more given, but seen as a task to fulfill.

In the *make-belief* chapter the way opinion and meaning is used in relativist ways to define temporal realities which have the power to implement common beliefs is recognized as a strong tool for survival. In this the thesis accepts and defends the theoretical stance which is advocated by Beck (1992,2002) that society has become a lottery and that the outcome of events is unpredictable; and rejects Bauman's (2011) notion of "collateral damage" as a term being focused too much on the institutional side. This institutional side is where the argument is acceptable but it does not recognize the non-institutional initiatives of groups of individuals which do care for the people who have been pushed to the edges of society. Furthermore the theory of randomness of reward of punishment in combination with the shifting of familial relationships and the disintegration of professional networks gives an impression of the current situation regarding work, family and the influence of temporality on life-politics.

This all in all defines how unstable structures provide options and threats for the many; but request adaptability and self-reliance of all. Which is achievable for some but out of reach for others. In empirics it is seen that there are people who flourish in these highly unstable societal structures but it is also seen that there is also a large group that does not know what or who to trust. Especially when a highly individualized focus is present when planning on survival in the current economic climate, it becomes even more difficult if the trust in your individual strength is minimized through a notion of failure which is easily supplied by the same current economic climate. On the other side there is a group of people

which is highly adaptable and benefits from the different options and chances that the ever accelerating occurrence of situations bring (see the 'mobility matters' chapter). That the ones who cannot achieve this themselves still get help from different sides is a positive note to end this thesis on and something which often goes unrecognized in social science which seem to thrive on the catastrophic image ascribed to the current situation.

To conclude I want to partly erase this victimized stance of the workforce towards increased mobility. As argued in this thesis being a victim of greater forces should not always be the case. Increased mobility is not intrinsically positive or negative in relation to human development, its impact depends upon the circumstances in which it occurs, the constraints that surround it and—above all—the degree of choice that individuals can exercise over their own mobility' (Newland 2009:1). So increased mobility can be a development of permanent (but flexible!) global relations that can prove to be beneficial to all of the parties concerned as a reinvented form of freedom to sojourn and take chances where they occur. The influence of capitalist modes of production and the occurrence of globalization in different fields give easier access to increased mobility; but can also be seen as a force which drives people to increased mobility as a mode of survival.

## Reflections

Reflecting on this whole process it comes to mind that there may be too much integration of different subjects. The holistic view praised by anthropology to me gives distortion in the clarity of the argument in this thesis. I sometimes wondered if there was going to be an argument left as the focus tends to be at the micro level which describes a lot of intertwining and overlapping force fields which constitute reality for the research participants, which is difficult to integrate in the bigger societal stories. But it does contribute to the nuance that can be added to these bigger sociological theories. There is some distortion in the continual searching for definitions of groups, and definitions of processes. The thesis does not always follow the asked model to form a congruent argument, instead of that it seems to wander through different connected subjects, what I find a more realistic approach to empirics than turning it into a rather rigid argumentative framework. As such this thesis is in a way a reflection of my academic growth, with traces of my own shortcomings and growth pains. What I had wanted to achieve more is to take the role as a researcher that compares and stresses the ligatures that appear in the multitude of information that the fieldwork creates. This for instance by staying close to one subject such as for instance social security and deepen out the debate around how this is constituted in contemporary USA, but I do not feel that this research (or any other qualitative research) could extrapolate to such a vast population where there are so much personal and local differences. Instead what is done is that there is a vastness of subjects explored which are related to temporality in current society and the stress is put on the ambiguousness of such situations in a society. The argument that temporality structures a lot of the daily lives of people is a valid one as I look at the different encounters in fieldwork where a lot of struggling is seen with people coping with temporal harsh situations. That on the other hand this temporal coping seems to become a structural feature of surviving could make the whole temporality argument invalid rather easily.

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### **Illustrations**

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2013 Signs Series: Mike \$10 (Front) used as back cover.

2013 Signs Series: Mike \$10 (Back) used as front cover.



An ethnography on where work meets poverty and where temporary phases of homelessness provide an unstable structure in which a society becomes a construct which is based on situationalist choices and temporary ethics.

This anthropological thesis based on fieldwork in California USA, addresses what the implications are of temporality on a society and how unstable structures provide options and threats for the many; but request adaptability and self-reliance of all.

An open-source ethnography that grasps post-crisis attitudes and constructs an interactional piece of theoretical 'work' which argues for constant embedding in empirics.

Methodologically speaking this thesis tries to be true to openness of data. This by being dialogical in theory and reflexive on its own methods.

Thesis for the anthropology master multiculturalism in comparative perspective

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