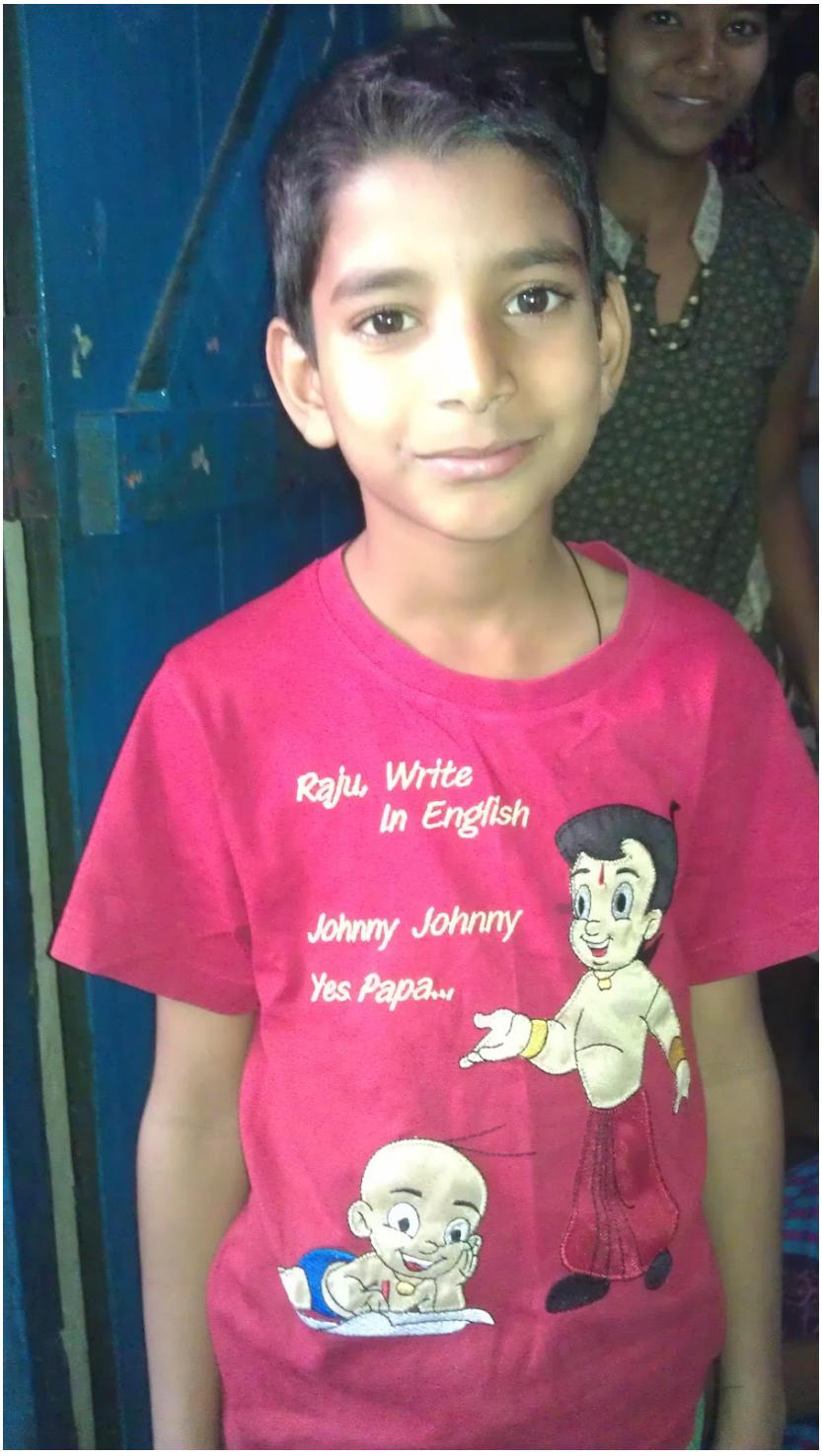
Teachers of the Lost Ark

The opportunities of a neocolonial primary school in Delhi



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The photo overleaf is of a boy whose name I unfortunately do not know; I met him while 'recruiting' pupils for the Ark Lajpat Nagar school in Delhi 2016. For me, the words on his T-shirt and the smile on his face capture some of the emotional and epistemological complexity of the 'development' of formal education, and the simultaneous opportunities and erasures that come with the proliferation of English as a lingua franca.

My opportunity to write this thesis is a result of the adoption of English as the international language of science and academia; if Utrecht University taught this Master's programme in Dutch, I would not have been able to participate. But what is lost in this homogenisation, what emotional subtleties of communication must my non-native English *studiegenoten* forsake?

Do we say, *koi baat nai*, as they do in Hindi?
Or perhaps: *waar gaat het heen met de wereld!*

CONTENTS

This piece of writing is dedicated to Karthik, Chetan, Kasak, Ayushi, Nisha, Sameer, Payal, Vaishnavi, Azaan, Eklavya, Pragya, Bipin, Suraj, Ishant, Aleena, Alisha, Shubhanshu, Sakshi, Priya, Prateek, Gaurav, Jiya, Umar, Ranjana, Payal, Shavan, Aditya, Priyadarshini, Vijaylaxmi, Gautam, Ishita, Anmol, Monika, Sanju, Rajat, Jyoti, Vijender, Shakti, Teena, Shiva, Ritika, Vikram, Gunja, Manav, Nikhil, Suraj, Baljeet, Arjun, Perasu and all the other children who helped me become at Ark Lajpat Nagar in the spring of 2016.

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It's Tuesday afternoon and I'm covered in children. 8-year-old Aisha is draped around my neck, 5-year-old Ankita cuddles up to my knee, and their thirty-something mother sits next to me outside her one-room brick house in a slum community of south Delhi. Mariam, Aisha's class-teacher, sits across from us on the other side of the two-metre-wide dirt path that leads up to other homes in the community. Teenagers and other children hover nearby, women pass with jerry cans of drinking/cleaning/cooking water. I ask, 'How do you feel about your children going to the Ark school?' Mariam translates. Sanu answers, 'I love the school. The kids love it. The education is good. The kids speak better English. If I was young, I'd want to study in the school.' I glance down at my next three questions, *What do you like about the school? What do you dislike about the school? Why is it important for you that your children go to school?* I notice question five, and ask, 'What are your hopes for your children after getting this school education?' Sanu replies, 'I hope my children can become someone recognised in society, that they can follow their interests - maybe by being a pedicurist, or a doctor. I hope with this school education my kids can get any job they want.' I smile and linger at my final question, *How do you feel about me coming to interview you?* I bottle it and nod to Mariam that we leave.

A few minutes later we're crossed-legged on the floor of 7-year-old Palam's two-by-two meter squared home, and his mother, Nabya, is answering much the same. 'I like everything in the school,' she explains casually, 'The academics, the habits it instils. Everyone at the school is cordial and treats us well ... I hope the kids become something good, that they read well, study well and that the school leads them to be in good positions in the future.' Again, I stumble on my last question, *How do you feel about me coming to interview you?* I smile at Nabya, bring my hands together and offer a few *namastes,* and begin to rise - but before I can, Mariam takes the lead, 'What about how she feels about you coming to interview her?' I smirk in embarrassment, then dive in, 'Yes, thank you for speaking to us, and I was wondering, how do you feel about me coming to interview you here?' Nabya smiles and nods, 'I'm happy that you have come to speak to me.' As I rise to leave the kids begin shouting at me in Hindi, warning me of something; I'm about to be decapitated by an especially low ceiling fan, which I now realise was only put on for me.

Gita, the mother of Jahan - Palam and Aisha's classmate - has similar positive, practical things to say about the school. She is happy that the school is safe, that the teachers don't hit the children (which happens frequently in the other local government-run primary school), and that the kids might be able to go to a good college. In the eyes of the parents, the Ark school is clearly a benefit to their community and the future economic prospects of their children. Yet somehow, there was a disparity between the 'kids-in-a-race-against-time' narrative present at Ark, and the happy-go-lucky style of praise for the institution that these three mothers shared.

A different atmosphere fills the one-room home of 7-year-old Vishal. We sit on the floor, still surrounded by children, and look up at his parents sitting on the room's one bed; Vishal's older brother feeds slices of tomato to three white rats crashing around a tiny cage. Laxman and his wife are solemn but friendly. 'School is good', they say, 'but Vishal doesn't like going. He doesn't listen when we tell him to get up in the morning.' The father continues to insist to Mariam that we sit on the bed, and Mariam continues to decline. Laxman continues, 'With this school education, Vishal can take our family name forward, the school name forward. He won't have to do what his parents do.' I ask him how he feels about me coming to speak with him. 'It is very good for you to come and ask me questions. There is no other school where teachers come home to meet parents.' Vishal's parents seem committed to a discussion, so I press further. 'What are the challenges you face by sending Vishal to this school?' The father replies, 'It is hard to drop-off and collect Vishal from school. We want a transport system to

be provided by the school. It feels unsafe to send him with other kids.' I glance around the room. Unsafe with other kids? Which kids? Aisha, Tara and Palam? The ones who currently play with his son on the floor of his home? As I'm thinking of way to ask this, Laxman reads my mind, 'There is a big difference between these other children and my own. We have to make our kids learn - we are from a different caste. Other parents don't care if their kids study.' I look to Mariam to see if this surprises her, but again, Laxman continues without a prompt, 'These children', he says, pointing to Vishal's classmates, 'never used to come into my house. Thanks to the Ark school, they no longer use bad language, and have learnt the difference between right and wrong.'

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Caveat

I am a heterosexual middle-class white British man writing about a primary school in Delhi, India. I spent three months in this school working as a volunteer teacher and conducting ethnographic fieldwork. This caveat is a feeble attempt to recognise the centralisation, prioritization and reification of the white-male subjective perspective to which the creation of this text contributes. It is to note my confinement within Spivak's dilemma of poststructuralist subjectivity: that any attempt to diminish the prominence of my white-male subjectivity through acknowledgement of its existence is in fact an action that serves to, 'conserve the subject of the West, or the West as Subject' (1988: 285). By attempting to cast myself as but one voice, albeit white-male, in a sea of voices; or by suggesting that each culture has its own rationality (as Obeyesekere (1992) accuses Sahlins of doing), I am in fact reaffirming the white-male Subject as the authoritative voice on culture, I am denying the Other(s) both their chance to take part in a universalist rationalist discourse, and their right to demand an identity-based politics. In my paper, I have attempted to let the voices of my colleagues/subjects/friends speak out between and through my own writing - this is my limited response to the above postcolonial critiques. My only other defence is that as an engaged anthropologist, actively working towards how those in this Ark school can provide meaningful learning to the children they serve, I hope my paper reveals all the love and care through which it was written.

Monday February 29th. 8.25am

Facts. What facts do I need to collect? I have a fear I will leave the field with the belief that I didn't push myself enough. Yet, in school, I feel the draw of the children and prioritise teachers over Ark officials like Catherine. The heart is of course what I should follow, but if the heart leads to rhythm and comfort at expense of understanding, then I'm not doing my job. And … what is my real job? Don't the kids teach me much more than mining the beliefs + desires of adults who believe themselves to be good? (As dangerous as people who believe themselves to be white?)

AIMS

What opportunities can a new UK-designed primary school offer the children and teachers of Delhi, despite its neocolonial overtones?

This is the broad and driving question of this paper, and in order to explore it, I posit a number of sub-questions which my paper will approach more directly:

- *What are the historical, political and sociological conditions that allowed this school project to appear in Delhi 2015?*
- *What is the pedagogy and educational philosophy of Ark, the charity who founded this school project? How does it work in Delhi?*
- *How do the teachers feel about enacting the rubric of this school project? Do they think it is what is best for the children?*
- *How can Ark and the teachers in India work together to build a suitable school for the underprivileged children of Delhi?*

The first sub-question will be approached in my introduction, in which I set the scene for my ethnographic fieldsite. The second two questions weave through the portraits that make up my ethnography, and the final question will be examined in the conclusion to this paper.

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INTRODUCTION

> *Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or modifying the appropriateness of discourses with the knowledge and power they bring with them.*
>
> Michel Foucault (1989: 46)

Schools, Neoliberalism, and UK Academies

Every nation in what we can tremulously call the West operates a national education system with which it is compulsory for children to adhere to and attend. The predominant social institution through which this education is administered is, of course, the school. The concept of the school as a political process used, explicitly or implicitly, to shape the minds of a new generation of citizens has a wild genealogy which is beyond the scope of this paper to examine. In order to introduce my ethnographic field site, I will instead offer a brief overview of how, despite the proliferation of critiques in the 1970-80s against the standardising and restrictive nature of government-provided school, the consequent devolution of control enacted by Western states failed to alter the homogenising and hegemonic discourse at their very core.

In 1970, Louis Althusser published his theory of Ideological State Apparatuses, his interpretation of Marx's writings through which he located the Educational State Apparatus - state-administered national schooling - as the way in which the government, i.e the powerful, ensure that the proletariat, 'learn the "rules" of good behaviour … which actually means rules of respect for the socio-technical division of labour and ultimately the rules of the order established by class domination' (1970:5). Althusser argued that not only do children learn the 'know-how' - the reading, writing and arithmetic - needed to efficiently and cowedly perform tasks in the factories and workspaces that would shape their adults lives, but they learn in 'forms which ensure *subjection to the ruling ideology'* (1970:6). Althusser's

structuralist attack on state-provided school soon became canonised, and was adopted as a touchstone for school reformists both in France and further afield.

The problem, as Rancière explored, was that despite Althusser's explicit reference to the subjugating 'forms' through which students learn, he didn't in fact believe that schools should change *how* they teach, only *what* they teach. In her introduction to Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Kristin Ross quotes Althusser directly, '"The function of teaching is to transmit a determinate knowledge to subjects who do not possess this knowledge. The teaching situation thus rests on the absolute condition of an inequality between a knowledge and a nonknowledge"' (Ross 1991: xvi). For Rancière, says Ross, this view held explicit implications for Althusser's authority as Marxist activist-scholar, and as figurehead for the school reforms that proliferated in France in 1970-80s. If Althusser imagines the scholar as a 'lone theorist' who through an act of 'muscular theoretical heroism' can save the ignorant from their 'ideological enslavement', then what chance do the proletariat have of joining the revolution short of becoming one of these 'possessors' of knowledge themselves? (Ross 1991: xvii). What Rancière recognises here is the reaffirmation of inequality that is imposed simply by organising a learning space in which one 'knower' attempts to impart knowledge to a person, or collection of people, who are considered ignorant.[1]

Althusser's Marxist critique of the state was mirrored by Ernest Gellner's more functionalist theory of how and why nations administered a centrally-programmed school education system (1983), offering an argument that in some ways justified the continuation of such schooling. The two men offered a similar history of mass education in Europe, both appearing on the same coin of functionalism-structuralism, but stamped on politically obverse sides. Neither examined the pedagogical details of how education was administered.

Such an examination of the processes that schools use to 'educate' their pupils was made evident by Michel Foucault. He revealed that schools are a means by which the state can - as shown in the lead quote - maintain and modify 'the appropriateness of discourses' through which citizens can, or cannot, negotiate their freedom (Foucault 1989; 1985). Foucault recognised the violence of state-imposed normalisation as performed through schooling, but it was perhaps his critique of the state per se, and not the process of normalisation, that most easily travelled into theories of school reform, as I will show below.

[1] This is of course a very similar to argument to Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1996)

Foucault's critique of homogenising school systems is reflected in the work of radical pedagogue Ivan Illich, who wrote, 'We cannot begin a reform of education unless we first understand that neither individual learning nor social equality can be enhanced by the ritual of schooling' (1971:43). Illich sought to divest the state's power over standardised schooling because he believed that, 'we cannot go beyond the consumer society unless we first understand that obligatory public schools inevitably reproduce such a society, no matter what is taught in them' (43). Illich is clear: it is not important *what* schools teach, but the fact that they try to teach at all.

It is ironic, then, that in a 2013 interview, Professor of Education Policy at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, James Tooley, quoted Ivan Illich as an influence on his work (Wilby 2013). Tooley works with private school networks in Ghana, India and the UK to provide free or low-cost schooling to underprivileged citizens in lieu of government-run schooling. Unlike Illich, he believes schools provide an important social function, yet Tooley claims to have been inspired by Illich when he hopes for the state to, 'move aside from education'. Tooley told the Guardian newspaper, 'school chains with names such as EasyLearn or Virgin Opportunity could, to parents, carry similar guarantees of quality and reliability as those of Sainsbury's or Boots' (2013). This vision for schools in the UK is an arresting example of how calls to disband the nation-state monopoly over school provisioning has led to the development of new school systems that are even deeper engraved with the free-market principles of neoliberal capitalism. Illich's emancipatory desire to release children from schools so they can, 'transform each moment of their living into one of learning, sharing and caring' (1970: 7), has been subverted by school reformers like Tooley who believe schools as we know them are still an efficacious way to combat social inequality. In order to understand this subversion, we must look to the political, social, and epistemological conditions of its generation.

In the 1980s, the UK Thatcher and US Reagan administrations shifted their fiscal policies from those based on Keynesian economics to the monetarism promoted by Milton Friedman and his Chicago School neo-classical economics. The event has been noted as, 'a revolutionary turning-point in the world's social and economic history' (Harvey 2005:1), and has 'contributed to the construction of a neoliberal subjectivity', via a 'belief in the capacity of economics to explain all forms of human behaviour' (Davies 2015: 5). Economically, the move encouraged a deregulated global market in which capital could flow freely, but moreover, the event drew neo-classical principles out of the traditional economic domain

and applied them to '"social" phenomena such as education, crime and the family' (2015: 5). From a material angle, this economico-political event can be seen as a reaction of fading Western superpowers to the crisis of declining productivity growth and profitability. From an epistemological perspective, it is a symptom of living under an ideology of positivism, empiricism and scientism that stretches back to the birth of European science (Raven: publication forthcoming). 'Positivist empiricism', according to Gayatri Spivak, '[is the] justifying foundation of advanced capitalist neocolonialism' (1988: 69), it is the epistemological bedrock through which Western modernity continues to dominate and colonise human perception and interaction, and that which allows free-market capitalism to slip out of the arena of economics and influence how we value all forms of human exchange. It is this action - this deterritorialisation of the principles of free-market capitalism and their reterritorialisation of other social events - to which I refer when I mention 'neoliberalism' throughout my text.

Couched in the tenets of neoliberalism, it is no surprise that visions of privatising schooling, like those of James Tooley above, fail to question the emotive practice through which we learn. Chained to positivist empiricism, neoliberals cannot imagine that learning is anything more than the acquisition of cerebral 'facts' and social capital that provide tools with which a child can improve her chances of competing in the global labour market. Foucault indeed attacked the state as a power that regulates discourses, but his concern was not so much with the state itself but with what the state can do. He hoped that by critiquing, 'institutions that appear to be both neutral and independent; violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that we can fight fear' (Foucault quoted in Ball 1990:9). In fact, critiques such as this have unearthed the violence of state-imposed normalisation only to clear space for another - equally, if not more - violent Educational Apparatus whose power is harder to locate than that of the nation-state. This is the neoliberal capitalist 'governmentality' - the process by which non-government organisations perform the responsibilities of the state - that Foucault was also quick to recognise (Foucault and Senellart 2008) as a new form of institution, with new ways of homogenising the human consciousness. The problem, it seems, was not the state but the manner of teaching and learning as directed by those who have a one-dimensional conception of knowledge rooted in positivist empiricism. Nevertheless, the proliferation of the 'neoliberal subjectivity' via Thatcher and Reagan's 'new right' was enough to gag the state from asking more humanist

questions over *how* children should be taught.[2] Instead, school reforms have been characterised by what looks like diversification, but what is in fact a continuing commitment to the bourgeois conceptions of knowledge and morality that allow capitalism to flow smoothly. The key point is this: the state has divested power and enacted school reforms that aim to help the underprivileged, without questioning the inherent inequality of the 'capitalist semiotic Universe' (Guattari 1989).

Over the past 15 years, the UK has begun to outsource its national education system to private contractors willing to manage state-funded schools. These schools are called academies. Under pressure to reform under-performing inner-city schools in the early 2000s, Tony Blair's Labour government piloted a project that allowed individuals with experience in the field of school education to take over specific 'failing' schools - that is, schools whose pupils were consistently under-performing in the national standardised examinations. The government allowed these academies to have more freedom over a) their finances b) the curriculum they taught, and c) their teachers' pay and conditions; freedoms not enjoyed by regular government-funded schools. Since this pilot, academies have proliferated exponentially; in 2010, there were 203 academies operating in the UK, and as of July 2016, the number has risen to 3,304 ("The Governor - Academies" 2016).

Critiquing the neoliberalisation of state-provided education, geographer Susan L. Robertson writes:

> All too silently, education has been rapidly commercialised, and is becoming big big business, protected by global regulations. There is increasing pressure on national governments (for example from the OECD and World Bank) to cut their losses and to stop attempting to transform archaic, bureaucratic and difficult education systems. … These developments are being promoted by the international agencies as the solution to a myriad of problems facing education policymakers … [and] are being protected by the legally institutionalised rights of capital (2007: 15).

The abdication of centralised control manifested in the UK's academy model is an example of how the ethos of neoliberalism has crept into the deployment of 'non-economic' state services in a Western nation-state. I am personally fearful of hegemonic neoliberalism's

[2] In fact, France enjoyed a brief period of 'holistic' education reform in 1981 under Minister for Education Alain Savary, but these reforms were revoked in 1984 in favour of Jean-Pierre Chevènement's 'republican elitism' (Ross in Rancière 1991:xii-xiii).

power to overcode human beings with a belief that 'competition' is the 'defining characteristic' of their social interaction, to speak with George Monbiot (2016). I side with Simon Springer in his emotio-academic tirade against the numerical empiricism of neoliberalism, "Fuck the ever-intensifying move towards metrics and the failure to appreciate that not everything that counts can be counted." (2016: 288). I mention this here because it feels insincere to bury the emotionality of such a topic when I must directly refer to neoliberalism for the purposes of my research. However, it is not the aim of this thesis to argue that the neoliberalisation of education is per se damaging and detrimental to the quality of education funded by the government and administered to its child citizens. As I will show later in my paper, I believe that humans have the power to create networks that subvert the homogenising laws of neoliberalism even as they work as subjects within institutions overcoded by its aesthetic. I have invoked a discussion of neoliberalism here in order to introduce the UK academy phenomenon, and I have traced the UK academy phenomenon because it is an event central to the analysis of my ethnographic fieldwork site. It is to this site which we now turn.

Friday March 4th. 2.55pm

Buzzing this morning making the book, printing the book, teaching, watching/living with kids as they learn ---> Energy full! / Feel good. Love how my new commitment to teaching makes my afternoons focussed. No more drifting on swings, got responsibility. Making speaking/listening lessons.

Primary school education in India: A history of neglect?

In 1947, India became an independent nation state. The question as to whether another form of governmental entity could challenge the European-born conception of nationhood hardly appeared, as Vassos Argyrou notes, 'despite his complete rejection of European modernity ... there was at least one thing that Gandhi could not reject - the idea of the nation.' (2005: 25). If the idea of nationhood is a European conception (Gellner 1983; Anderson 1991), then one might imagine that these new nations, such as India, would seek to implement the same political management tools as other nations. Whether named as State Apparatuses, as seen from Althusser's Marxist angle, or as unifying cultural homogenisation campaigns, as seen from Gellner's perspective, it could be thought that India would design and administer a nationwide program for educating the populace in a way that would ensure the taming/training of the people needed for the state to maintain popular democracy. In fact, what occurred, according to Jawaharlal Nehru, was an Indian state decision to focus on 'heavy engineering and machine making industry, scientific research institutes, and electric power' (Argyrou 2005: 30), rather than educational policy. 'Between 1951 and 1955, public expenditure on education was less than 1 percent of the total GDP of India', write Sripati and Thiruvengadam, a statistic that leads them to conclude that, 'in the years immediately after independence, central governments in India do not appear to have focused on education as a national priority' (2004: 151). Instead, the state committed to a modernisation of the material, that is, it planned to develop institutions and industries that would improve material living standards, but avoided attempts to redirect the spiritual, that is, to change the mindsets and values of the Indian people through, for example, the control of the media, or the implementation of a centrally-programmed school system. 'The material,' explains Partha Chatterjee, 'is the domain of "outside", of economy and of statecraft, of science and technology ... the spiritual is an "inner" domain bearing the "essential" marks of cultural identity' (1993: 6). Chatterjee goes on to argue that the new Indian government's immersion in this split between the 'inner' and the 'outside' exemplified the birth of a nationhood not modelled on possibilities imagined by the West. This nationhood had a specific malleability that allowed the government to 'manage' their citizens without a centrally-administered educational program.

In 2002, the Indian government amended Article 45 of the original 1950 Constitution of India, transforming their pledge to the Indian people to provide ‘free and compulsory

education to children in the age group of 6 to 14 years' into a 'Fundamental Right' (Jain 2002).[3] Through the 2009 Right to Education Act (RTE), the government legally obligated itself to provide this primary education to children, and simultaneously published the exact specifications that schools must meet in order to ensure they the education they provide is equal to the new government standards. The government backed up their 2002 commitment by doubling their funding for primary education; they spent twice as much on education in the five year period 2002-2007, than in the preceding five years, 1997-2002 (Ayyar: 2010).

Primary education in contemporary India: Tracing a frontier …

> *The search for overlaps, alliances, collaborations and complicities is one of the most important phenomena we can study*.
>
> Anna Tsing (2000: 333)

The aim of this final section of my introduction is to show how the provision of primary education in contemporary India is, to speak with Tsing, a 'frontier': not a 'place or even a process but an imaginative project capable of molding both places and processes' (2005: 32). According to Tsing, frontiers are characterised by, 'friction: the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference' (2005: 4), and I aim show how it is this 'friction' that led to the appearance of the school at the centre of my ethnographic fieldsite.

In 1980-90s, India experienced a proliferation of so-called 'low-fee' private schools offering basic academic education to children and parents in underprivileged communities. Sociologist Prachi Srivastava defines low-fee private schools[4] as those which are, 'entirely

[3] It is interesting to note that this amendment occurred less than two years after the UN released its eight Millennium development goals (to be achieved worldwide by 2015), number two of which was for the world 'to achieve universal primary education' (UN 2000).

[4] Srivastava later lamented his decision to coin the term, 'low-fee' private schools, saying it fails to account for the fact that 'low' is a subjective description, and that the fees can indeed be financially significant for the economic underprivileged who pay them. https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/aug/12/low-fee-private-

self-financing through tuition fees; and charge a monthly tuition fee not exceeding about one day's earnings of a daily wage labourer' (2008: 453). These schools appeared in places where the government had failed to provide a nearby and accessible state-funded school, and/or where entrepreneurs, both profit-minded and altruistic, believed the quality of schools to be low enough to constitute demand for new education facilities.

Until the application of the 2009 Right to Education Act, low-fee private schools were unrestricted in their choice of what they chose to teach, and how they chose to teach it. As independent enterprises aiming to attract custom, many offered curriculums similar to that of government schools, knowing that their pupils might seek to pass government-standardised tests and perhaps even gain entrance to a government-funded university. After 2009, low-fee private schools were only legally allowed to operate if they met the specific material and pedagogical requirements outlined in the Right to Education Act. In fact, it has been the lack of material requirements, 'infrastructure and facilities' (mainly toilets and places to store food), that caused the government to close over 3000 low-fee private schools across India in 2014 ("Data On School Closures Due To RTE Act (As Of May 2016) | National Independent Schools Alliance" 2016). In February 2016, I attended a protest in Delhi organised by the National Independent Schools Alliance (NISA), the organisation who published the above statistics. The rally was filled with indignant school principals and teachers whose schools, they claimed, were soon to close due to the 'norms laid down under the Right to Education Act' (2016).

As the state attempted to dismantle what Srivastava called the 'shadow institutional framework' (2008) of low-fee private schools across India, it also sought new collaborations and initiatives to help it achieve its new educational promise. In 2009, the government issued a Memorandum of Understanding to a new teacher-training movement, Teach For India (TFI), to allow TFI's 'fellows' to teach in government-run schools. Teach For India was initiated under a similar vision to other 'Teach For' movements, such as Teach for America, and Teach First in the UK: it sought to inspire graduates and ex-professionals to focus their forthcoming careers in the education sector by showing them what teaching in a government school was really like. The growth of the Teach For India network, from 87 fellows in the first cohort to 1110 fellows as of July 2016, shows the willingness of the Indian government to accept outside influence into their provision of national primary education.

schools-poverty-development-economist. However, as this is the original academic label, I will continue to use it for this paper.

In the same year, 2009, a UK-based NGO called Ark began operating in India. Ark worked with underprivileged communities to help them access the 25% of seats that high-fee private schools must reserve for those who cannot afford them, another directive embedded in the RTE Act. Ark also began to work with regional governments, such that of Madhya Pradesh, to help them use school data to more effectively measure 'quality assurance'. Most recently, in 2015, Ark partnered with the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) to inaugurate the first government-administered primary school in India to be run entirely by an outside organisation. This is the school in which I conducted my ethnographic fieldwork. This school is an event that was generated through friction ...

Friction is both generative and destructive, like wild fire, it can give life, clear spaces for new life to flourish, or utterly devastate an entire community. 'As a metaphorical image,' writes Tsing, 'friction reminds us that heterogeneous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power' (2005: 5). In the frontier, in the 'imaginative project' of primary education in India, the Ark school appears - a new event drawn in by the magnetism of goodwill and the 'globalisation of a neoliberal utopia' (Robertson 2001:1). In a residential neighbourhood of south Delhi, a derelict school building gets impregnated by a deterritorialised Education Apparatus that has been incubating in the underprivileged areas of UK cities. Under the banner of 'education for all', the UK academy movement dances with the neonationalist dreams of a unified India, and the SDMC Ark Lajpat Nagar school is born from the friction.

Wednesday 2nd March. 5.35pm

I am learning so much, or so I tell myself. Questionnaires. Will I do any formal interviews? I should at least try. Rahul said he was taking Newcastle students to the community tomorrow. I shall go, but I will get no private time. I felt lonely today when Mariam and Dianshi didn't invite me with them. I crave attention, even if I don't want to do the thing I'm invited to. I like to be invited. Don't we all?

Five Portraits

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Nalini

Nalini is a warm, energetic, intelligent woman in her early fifties; she is the head teacher of Ark Lajpat Nagar. Her enthusiasm at my arrival puts me immediately at ease, and I have a sense that I will be welcomed by the children and teachers, and that I'll quickly become a natural part of daily school life. I enjoy meeting new people and working in different cultures and spaces, but it is Nalini's beaming smile and genuine interest in showing me the school that assures me I have made the right decision to come here.

She tells me how Ark recruited the first intake of children in the school, 'We literally banged a drum around local poorer communities to bring them the good news of the Ark school.' With her brisk confidence and glistening eyes, I could imagine Nalini actually banging the drum herself.

And she is so open with me. She tells me all about how her daughter didn't get high enough grades to get into a good university in Delhi, so they almost bankrupted the family paying for her to go study at Warwick in the UK.

The next day Nalini reveals her investment in the academics of the school, 'I can't wait to mark these tests', she says with flourish, as she scurries off to her office to see if these mock-tests are appropriate for the children here.

A day later, and Nalini complains of the incompetency of government school inspectors, 'They spend half an hour checking the attendance register, then say, "Maybe you should use a

ruler", or, "How about red pen for holidays and blue for term time?"' Nalini tells me how she worked in high-fee private schools in Delhi until 2009, then became disillusioned when the schools fought court battles to avoid having to admit economically underprivileged children.

Nalini is committed to spreading the word about Ark. She regularly accepts visitors to the school, and always takes time to offer them tea and show them teaching in action. This morning she's giving a presentation to head teachers of local low-fee private schools and government schools. She's informing them how Ark functions, and encouraging them to adopt some Ark practices. One visitor asks, 'What makes your teachers so intrinsically motivated?' Nalini replies, 'It's a happy place and we have a rigorous selection process'. Another asks how she as Head Teacher spends most of her working time. 'Nothing is too small or unimportant for me to look at,' replies Nalini, 'I like to spend most of my time in the classroom'.

Two weeks in and I'm feeling confident to begin some teaching, Nalini thinks I'm ready too. We decide that I'd be most helpful designing and executing some English speaking and listening classes for the older kids in Mariam and Dianshi's classes. When we all sit down to share my ideas, Nalini is rightly protective. She carefully assures the two teachers of how wonderful their English teaching is, and explains that she wants to make use of my native English to benefit the children.

It's Thursday, and Nalini has made a deal with herself. The government is supposed to let her know whether tomorrow will be school holiday or not, but she thinks it’s preposterous. She thinks there's too many school holidays in India. The deal is that if the government inform her of the decision after 6pm today, she will open the school tomorrow regardless. She says that it’s impossible to let all the parents know in such a short time, and that anyway these kids need as much time in the classroom as possible, and that considering their living conditions, school is the safest place for them to be.

Nalini is disappointed. Unlike Friday, today was indeed a school holiday for many children in Delhi, but not in our school, and due to the confusion, only about half the children arrived this morning. Nalini feels the teachers failed to seize the day, and that with half the kids present, they could have applied double the focus on each. 'This time for these kids is never coming back', spurts Nalini with feeling, and goes on to mention that she will be checking lesson plans more rigorously.

Nalini shows me photos of other primary schools in India, in these schools there are no desks or chairs, only floor mats. Nalini explains that the main reason we have desks in this school is that it gets too cold in winter in Delhi for kids to be on the floor. Later, I perform a funny march as I lead two boys to the toilet. Nalini thanks me for showing them how to walk properly and not drag their feet, I smile to myself and think: I was simply trying to entertain them.

The new school year starts in April and Ark is recruiting in some different local communities. Nalini is excited, 'We may have an Afghani child in the school!', she exclaims.

It's mid-morning, and Nalini is hosting another set of guests from a local educational NGO. Nalini says that she just invited Manju Ma'am, the teacher from the downstairs government school up for a meeting, but Manju Ma'am declined, saying she had to teach. Nalini, for once sarcastic and cynical, cries, 'Oh, so she's decided to teach today!'

It's the day after a long argument between Nalini and Dianshi concerning how the classrooms should be set up for the upcoming new school year. I ask Nalini, 'How are you feeling? There was a lot going on yesterday'. She deflects the question by saying she's fine and then telling a long story about how it was more stressful when they were setting up the whole school last summer. Nalini continues to speak at length about the school, saying that these children's mothers go to work at 6am and their fathers are drunk. 'They have no one to tell them what to do', she says, 'They ripped off their shirts and shoes when they first came to school because they're used to wearing singlets, little shorts and sandals'.

Nalini and I begin a deep exchange in the staff room and she suggests we move it in to her office. We speak at length about her arguments with Dianshi, and most of our conversation time is spent by Nalini telling 'her side of the story'. Nalini says she has given Dianshi so many opportunities to take responsibility and ownership of projects at the school. She asked Dianshi to create an Environmental Sciences curriculum, she allowed her to teach the older kids in the separate downstairs school, and eventually gave her a class of her own to teach. Nalini says she's wasted her energy on Dianshi. Amidst this, a different moment of connection occurs. Nalini tells me of her own current family problems, and she expresses her emotions through tears and laugher. I immediately feel with her, and for her, and begin sharing my own experiences on this subject. This lasts about five minutes before Nalini

apologises for going off track, saying that a teacher's emotional life should be left at the school gates, and not be expressed in school as its not fair to the children. I intuitively disagree, but stay silent.

We're leaving school and Nalini repeats the offer she's been suggesting to Dianshi all day: come stay at my house with my family for the next few weeks. Dianshi has just moved from a nearby shared apartment to her uncle and aunt's house, but it now takes her an hour and half to get to school. Nalini lives fifteen minutes away by car.

It's my last two weeks of research, and Nalini is telling the staff that a film crew will be coming to make a promotional video for the school. She wants to give everyone time for them to make their classrooms beautiful. It must look like an Ark classroom. Tables must have children's names on them, and there should be phonics cards on the wall.

Nalini and I sit in her office and chat. She explains why she likes working for Ark. She says she doesn't like how people in Indian NGOs pat themselves on the back for simply getting up in the morning and getting to the office. Nalini is not interested in charity. She wants to work for what is fair. The children she teaches deserve a decent education as much as any other child in India. Ark pays her to do a job.

Nalini often mentions her mother, and the schools she set up in Calcutta. She speaks of how her mother would rise at 4am to teach kids for two hours, come home, make breakfast for the family, and then go do a full paid-day's work in an office, before coming home again and planning lessons for the next morning. 'It was only when I first went to a slum community - where my mother's students lived - that I realised how much a school can be a safe space for kids. How much they transform in school, how clean and proud the children can become.'

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Ark

Ark is a registered UK charity founded in 2002 by a group of London-based hedge fund financiers to improve the life chances of children. Since its inception Ark has worked both in the UK and internationally. The charity is best known for its Ark Schools subsidiary, a program that runs a network of 34 academy schools across the UK, making it the country's second largest multi-academy schools chain. Ark Schools is specifically dedicated to providing (what they deem as) quality education to underprivileged children. Their mission is to, 'make sure that every pupil can go to university or into the career of their choice' ('Ark' 2016).

Ark began operations in India in 2009; marking a shift of focus in its international operations from healthcare to education. In June 2015, Ark partnered with the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) to open their first school outside of the UK. The school's operations are funded by Ark, while the local government, the SDMC, provided the school building, and paid for part of its renovation. The school opened with four operational classrooms, one office/staff room and a courtyard playground. All staff and teachers were recruited and hired by Ark, without collaboration with the SDMC.

The Ark school is located in the Lajpat Nagar neighbourhood of south Delhi, a relatively wealthy residential area in which most parents can afford to send their children to high-fee private schools. It is housed in a larger ex-school complex which also hosts other government subsidiary offices. Along the corridor from the Ark classrooms sits an SDMC medical dispensary office. The office organises large-scale government health initiatives, such as a national deworming program in schools. Downstairs from the Ark classrooms, another government school operates. This school, consisting of two classrooms and an office, is the remnants of the government primary school that once filled the building. It currently serves pupils ranging from age nine to fourteen.

At of the start of my ethnographic fieldwork, in February 2016, Ark Lajpat Nagar consisted of two Kindergarten classrooms for children aged 4 -5, and two Class One classrooms for children aged 5 - 6, each class containing between 25 - 30 pupils. The school plans to grow year by year, eventually incorporating the 'downstairs' school to offer the full government primary school age range, Kindergarten to Class 5.

*

The Ark school is in its infancy, it is a fragile experimental project conducted amongst much mistrust between two Educational Apparatuses: the government and the 'governmentality' of Ark. Nalini is at the helm of this geopolitical event, and she must play up to two masters and continue to gain both of their approvals. She must show the government that her school is still a government school: registers must be done to stringent bureaucratic standards (red pen for holidays and blue for term time), and pupils must pass government tests which are designed to examine children normally taught with a rote learning approach (note her excitement to find applicable tests for her kids). And while government officials wait in the wings for her to slip up (as she imagines they eternally do), she must show the central Ark team, both in the UK and India, that the school looks and feels like an Ark school (before the fundraising film the classrooms must be, 'beautiful ... and look like an Ark classroom'). Just like any other subject born under capitalism, the Ark school must learn to sell itself if it wants to survive (note how many visitors Nalini hosts at the school). Ark Lajpat Nagar must act as a standard bearer; it is Ark's first fully-fledged school out of the UK. If funders see this school working well, if the model can be shifted from the UK without too many bumps and bruises, Ark can work towards its aim to open, '20 high-performing schools in India by 2020' ("International Programmes | Ark" 2016).

Tuesday March 1st. 11.21am

! Just did car shop w/ Rahim + Talal - Yes/ so happy to see them use English when they need it + get to play w/ cars after happily because they used English to get them … !

Dianshi

Dianshi: *I have no comment on how the school operates.*
Me: *Yes you do, you talk about it all the time.*
Dianshi: *I have no comment. It means I've lost hope.*

On my second day in the school, Dianshi told me what she wants: 'I want to get a government job in education policy' she said, 'but I am too young, I'm only 23.' I ask what policies she would like to change. 'Better training for teachers and more testing for kids. The testing will help teachers recognise that the quiet kids in class aren't necessarily slow, but instead have a different way of learning.'

*

Dianshi is teaching her kids origami. She's loves it; they love it. She likes organised creativity, and the children respond to her confidence. The lesson is artistic, but methodical; structured, but independent - just like Dianshi herself.

*

It's Monday morning and I sit in Dianshi's class for the daily Maths Meeting. With her fingers softly spinning the hands of the toy clock, Dianshi chimes, 'Tick-tock, tick-tock, what's the time this morning?' It is difficult to feel the words behind the boredom they're coated in. A few kids spout out the answer, and Dianshi moves on to the weather.

*

Nalini gave Dianshi, Mariam and I a copy of the Jolly Phonics 2 teaching textbook to read over the weekend and prepare for next week. Dianshi put her copy down on a table in

Mariam's class and started for the door. Mariam said that if she doesn't want to take it home, she can at least leave it in her own classroom.

*

It's about 3am on a rooftop in Delhi. We've been drinking rum and dancing to Punjabi music in the apartment below, and now we're here, being covered in a light warm rain. Dianshi is speaking of the discomfort she feels working at the Ark school. She is a Teach for India (TFI) fellow, and she feels that this school doesn't really need her. For her first six months at Ark, Dianshi was a co-teacher, and missed having a class of her own. In Ahmedabad, where she did the first year of her two-year teaching fellowship, she had built up a strong bond with her kids. She wanted to stay with them for her second year, as all TFI fellows are bound to. The rain falls in our rum as we sit on the wet concrete wall; me caught between playing the rapacious anthropologist and being a genuine friend, her the drunk confessor looking for connection and release. Dianshi tells me why she left Ahmedabad: her and her boyfriend split, she was too far from her family home, Delhi was the best compromise. She tells of wanting to have a bigger impact, and how her Program Manager at TFI hasn't listened to her complaints about her experience at the Ark school. She questioned: Why would Ark employ a TFI fellow when they could get any good teacher to work there? What led Ark to reach out to TFI to provide teachers? I learn later that it was TFI who asked Ark for help, that TFI 'had a problem' because one of their fellows wanted to transfer to Delhi but there was no school in which to place her. But this was later. For now, I suck up all this 'material' like a bee drinks nectar, wondering if I'm listening to this girl because she's becoming a friend, or because I've come to India specifically in order to listen to people like her.

*

The kids are on holiday this week and so it’s been a week of planning. It's nearing 4pm and everyone's mulling about the office, prepping for home time. A new teacher visited the school today, Mahir, a TFI fellow; he'll be joining the school for the next six weeks. Dianshi, Mariam and I took him out for lunch and tried hard not to influence his opinion of the school with our current disillusion. It had been a tough morning. Mariam and Dianshi had been fighting for the right to design their own classrooms, free from the Maths Meeting boards and 'behaviour tracker' that they believe constrict their ability to teach with passion. Nalini and Jeevan, diplomatic but firm, told them the use of these teaching tools is nonnegotiable.

Mahir is caught in the crossfire. Full of enthusiasm for the challenges of the new school; unaware of the restrictions he might face when he wants to implement alternative lesson plans. For Dianshi it was like looking in a mirror. All her original eagerness to make a difference in the Ark school was now beaming out of Mahir. She could only imagine that he would face the same disappointment as she did.

So here in the office, at the end of the day, Dianshi questions Nalini on the situation: Why have TFI chosen to put Mahir in our school? Nalini calmly explains that TFI needed a home for Mahir before the summer break, and she was only too happy to oblige. Dianshi continues, 'but he could have so much more impact in another school, we don't need him.' Nalini responds, 'Has something happened today with Mahir, do you not like him?' Mariam, Jeevan and I stand awkwardly huddled amongst the two protagonists, and everyone in the room is listening to the exchange. Jeevan steps in to broker a deal, 'I see what you mean, Dianshi, but this is TFI's choice, not ours.' Nalini nods along to this, and adds, 'We want to keep a good working relationship with TFI.' 'I understand,' says Dianshi, 'but it seems wrong when there are so many kids in Delhi who could benefit from a teacher like Mahir.' Jeevan again plays peacemaker, 'If you want to speak to Farida at TFI, please go ahead, but we've accepted their offer now and we're happy to have Mahir.' Perhaps Dianshi feels victorious because she responds with a curt, compliant, 'Yes OK I will', and leaves the office.

*

'Being in the school just makes me feel bad. The ceilings feel low. I can't relax there. I can't be myself.' We sit in a cafe drinking lemonade and hiding from the Delhi heat. This is the lowest I've seen Dianshi in the last two months, and I'm not sure if it’s because she's now at her lowest, or we're now close enough that she feels comfortable expressing herself honestly with me. My own research question burns in my heart: 'If this is how teachers feel working in schools, how can they provide a nurturing atmosphere in which children can learn?' But it's not the time to discuss this with Dianshi, so instead I ask, 'What do you feel you've learnt by working at this school, despite the bad times?' The conversation continues with Dianshi explaining how it’s been insightful to see the contrast between the freedom she had in Ahmedabad and the restrictions she feels here, but also demoralising as she feels she's lost confidence in decision making. I quickly remind her how fondly she speaks of Ahmedabad, how much she loves talking about the lessons she designed there, and how she built the space with the kids collaboratively. She tells me how her family told her that it is 'not normal'

to leave a corporate job in marketing for an NGO, especially not for an Economics graduate such as their daughter. Teaching is not a respected profession in India, she says. Dianshi's contract with Ark ends in about a month's time, and she doesn't yet have a new job lined up.

*

For the last two weeks of school Dianshi has had no co-teacher. Lisha quit and got a job elsewhere, and Ark decided to wait till after the summer holidays to replace her. I subbed in for a few days, but then Katy, Mariam's co-teacher, got sick and I began helping Mariam. I told Dianshi that I can move between the two classes to help, but she said she prefers teaching on her own. I stepped into her class today and the children were diligent, happy, bright and engaged. With casual grace, Dianshi sat with her legs crossed, quietly assessing worksheets that her children brought her. The kids waited their turn with patience, and Dianshi was ready with more complex worksheets for those who finished early. I looked around the room and asked if I could help. She glanced back softly, and said no, all was well. I turned to leave, slightly disappointed that I was redundant, but simultaneously pleased that despite pedagogical conflicts and emotional lows, Dianshi was completing her time at the school with debonair confidence and professional efficiency.

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Dianshi was not prepared for life at Ark Lajpat Nagar. She flourished at her school in Ahmedabad because there she acted like the TFI fellow she was encouraged to be: she took risks, invented new lessons, and practiced new ways of teaching. Dianshi embraced the thrill, vulnerability, autonomy, opportunity, and stress that a TFI teacher faces. As an independent, confident, self-organising and practical thinker, she built a classroom - both physically by helping her kids paint the walls, and spiritually by investing her soul into her children. By being placed in the Ark school, she entered a space that offered less freedom, but more support; less creativity, but more resources. As we see above, she embraces the lessons she loves, and plods through the lessons she hates. As we see from Nalini’s portrait, she rejects or takes for granted the other opportunities the school offers her (teaching older kids; making a new Environmental Sciences curriculum). Nalini and Dianshi cannot forge a collaborative exchange.

This mutual disappointment could be avoided if TFI chose to no longer place fellows in the Ark school. But this a frontier, and only Ark's first year as a school. The possibilities for developing primary education are vast, and business-inflected development buzzwords like 'scale up', 'roll out' and 'return on investment' fill the mouths of Ark, TFI and the government alike. Both TFI and Ark are ambitious outfits, keen to widen their influence until, as they both proclaim, 'all children in India attain an excellent education' ("Home | Teachforindia" 2016).

At frontiers, friction ensues. TFI approach Ark, asking it for a spin on the dance floor. In order to tango, Ark must embrace the arms of TFI; and what begins as a promising dance ends as a tearful wrestle. Dianshi, TFI's metonymic arm, refuses to follow her lead and her disobedient weight cause the dancing pair to tumble. Ark feels affronted and rueful of the arm, but patiently accepts another dance, hoping this time TFI will ensure its arms are little more subordinate. Friction, this time, hurt a little, but next time, it could sprout the shoots that grow into the trees from which bridges can be built. Ark accept Mahir, another awkward body who wanted to change schools halfway through a year, and take TFI out onto the floor for another spin. But as I will show later, it might prove difficult to achieve generative friction at this organisation-to-organisation, inter-subjective level, without some more micro-social changes.

But the most important question, to which both TFI and Ark would readily agree, is what impact did Dianshi's presence have on the learning of the children? This again is a matter of perspective. Here is the conversation that led Dianshi to challenge Nalini's acceptance of the new TFI fellow, Mahir:

Nalini: Don't jiggle with the floor plan. You as teacher know best. The children might just want to lie down. Don't waste time letting them learn how to learn, what they need is to learn.

Dianshi: It will help them! We should show them how to work out the best places where to sit.

Nalini: I see your point, Dianshi. But is this best for the children? Time is limited for our kids, we need to be the caring adults in their lives. Otherwise we do the same disservice as government schools are doing. These kids don't have the support of kids who go to private school. For young children, the prospect of a

blank classroom is too scary. Some things need to be set by the teacher. They need to be told where to sit. Let them decide the rules, not the structure, not the furniture.

Dianshi: I want to create a physical space with the kids. I want to design the space with the kids. Like we're building our own house together.

Nalini: Ok, but is the arrangement you made for last year optimal for learning?

Dianshi: It worked. But maybe there's something better. I want the kids to think of something better. I want to give them the opportunity.

Nalini: At the start of last year, Mariam showed them how important the tables were by removing them. Then the kids realised how useful the tables were for learning. My worry is that you'll waste two days of not learning.

Dianshi: Ok, but they will be learning! They might not realise that they are learning, but they are.

Nalini: A six-year ol-

Dianshi: Let me make my own mistakes

Nalini: I can't let you make mistakes at the cost of the children

This conversation highlights a central question that cuts through the operation of any school: how to balance long-term learning goals over immediate concerns for the children's development of testable, subject-specific knowledge? Nalini will not allow her teachers to use the children as a space to experiment with creative lesson plans and alternative teaching techniques unless she can see a relatively immediate appropriation of knowledge in the children. It is not that Nalini thinks experimenting with the classroom involves no learning benefits for the children, but that these benefits are inferior to the more measurable and 'traditional' types of knowledge that the children will soon be tested on via government imposed examinations. In order to keep the school project alive, Nalini must prove its worth via the government's parameters. This is a serious concern; Nalini explicitly told me that the school is seen by the SDMC as an experiment, an experiment that they are all too keen to see fail in order to confirm the hardships of running a ‘successful’ state-funded primary school.

Interestingly, this conflict plays out in the glaring absence of the children themselves; they are away on holiday. It is in fact their absence that amplifies their importance; the empty classroom is a stage ready to be set for a theatre of dreams, but as suits the dramatic analogy, the director and her actress can't see eye to eye. The return of the children the following

week, like the admittance of the audience on opening night, forces the theatre-makers to reach a compromise: the room is left unchanged, but Dianshi is allowed to work without a co-teacher. Free from surveillance, she drops the 'tick-tock' Maths Meetings and teaches more origami. Both director and actress know the play will soon close, and they will not be working on projects together in future.

Saturday 9th April. 9.30am

And I think of how my energy on Mariam perhaps makes Dianshi feel rejected. Or other teachers. Like how Mariam said that Yarima kept checking with her if I'd be offended if she teased me. This is my fault. I've been undemocratic with my time. Like Nalini told me: stop making a clique. And she's right. That's vulnerability for you. I took the easy route and forged links with Dianshi and Mariam because I could relate to them, because they spoke smooth English. This is weak anthropology.

Mariam

> *... it is as though, independent of the evolution carrying them toward adulthood, there were room in the child for other becomings, 'other contemporaneous possibilities' that are not regressions but creative involutions bearing witness to '*an inhumanity immediately experienced in the body as such*,' unnatural nuptials, 'outside the programmed body.'*
>
> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987: 273[5])

Today was my favourite day at school. I was late because my brother wouldn't put his shoes on, but when I came into class Mariam Ma'am smiled at me and told me to join the others on the mat. It is my second week in Class Two and we don't have places we have to sit yet. Rich Sir was there standing by the pin board where yesterday we'd made little paper pockets to go under our photographs. Ravi and Gaurav were pushing each other and Mariam Ma'am moved her hand around under her chin and told them to be 'kind', but I didn't know what that meant at that point. I thought she would move them down to the red sad face on the smiley-face tracker like Dianshi Ma'am sometimes does, but she didn't. When everyone was quiet, Rich Sir began taking small pictures out of the paper pockets and saying our names. Rich Sir doesn't speak Hindi so I didn't understand at first but then he said 'Salman, Water' and I knew I had to get up and find my table and my new sitting place. I was on the Water table. Mariam Ma'am explained that each table had the name of a thing called an 'element', she said we were all 'Planeteers' now and that we had to look after our environment and the planet. I didn't really understand but then we watched a cartoon on the projector called Captain Planet and I saw that water and fire and wind are really powerful, but I didn't really get what 'earth' does.

Mariam Ma'am then asked us to draw pictures of what our element makes us feel. I don't really know what 'water' makes me feel so I drew big waves and lots of fish. Then it was Maths class. Mariam Ma'am told us that as Planeteers we needed to help all the other kids

[5] The quotes within this quote come from Scherer and Hocquenghem's *The Gay Science*

look after the planet too. She said we needed to make new rubbish bins for all the classrooms, so we could all learn to throw things away properly. We had to count all the chairs around the table, and then the number of tables to work out how many kids there were in each class. Then we got to make bins for the tables in our own class with cardboard and scissors and colours. Rich Sir helped us cut the cardboard because it was really tough. A new boy came to our table and took our scissors and I told Mariam Ma'am but she told me to speak to the boy, not to her. She said to ask him for it back, and to ask him what made him snatch it. She said we must sort out the problem between ourselves. I didn't want to so I asked Rich Sir for more scissors and he got me some new ones.

Mariam Ma'am then said it was time for Dance Corner, and anyone who wants to can dance for 5 minutes. Rich Sir put on music that I liked so I danced in Dance Corner and other kids just rested. After this Mariam Ma'am told us all to sit on the mat and Rich Sir stood by the blackboard. Rich Sir drew a line and Mariam Ma'am told us to stand by the line and if we were shorter than the line then she gave us a toffee. I was taller than the line. I sat in a circle with the kids who didn't have toffees and the other kids with toffees sat in another circle. Mariam Ma'am asked us how we felt and we said we were sad. Mariam Ma'am asked the kids with toffees how they felt but they didn't really talk to her, they just ate toffees and ignored her. She asked the kids with toffees how they thought we felt, the kids without toffees, but they didn't really answer. When she asked us how we thought the kids with toffees felt, we said they felt happy. Mariam Ma'am then asked if we thought it was fair that the taller kids didn't get toffee, and we said no. She asked the kids with toffee if it was unfair but they again didn't really answer. Then it was play time.

When we got back from playtime there were more toffees by Mariam Ma'am's laptop. I didn't take one, but actually some kids did. Mariam Ma'am then came in and counted the toffees and found that some were missing. She asked everyone to be honest because she knew there were two missing. No one said anything, but she kept asking, and eventually Vihaan said he took one. Mariam Ma'am kissed him on the head and hugged him and said 'Thank you for being honest'. She said maybe she miscounted and only one was missing so we all moved to the mat to do English lesson. But then Samesh started crying, and wouldn't move from his chair. Rich Sir went to help and Harini told him that Samesh had taken a toffee but didn't own up. Rich Sir is bad in Hindi so he didn't understand until Mariam Ma'am came over and learned the truth. She then kissed Samesh and said she was proud that he had been honest, and then Samesh was smiling.

I was tired by now and lunch and home time were coming soon but then we did English. Mariam Ma'am gave us all an English word and showed us an action and explained it in Hindi. My group's word was 'brave' and our action was crossing our arms over our chest and making fists. She told us in Hindi that we needed to make a story with our group, a play where someone was being 'brave'. We then needed to say the word 'brave' and use the action when that bit of the story happened. Rich Sir came to help by asking questions in English, but I was tired so didn't understand much. Then we made a story about a boy who is brave because he stops other kids from fighting. We acted it out for the class and everyone clapped and I was very happy. We were lucky because then it was lunchtime and two groups didn't get to show their play. I was tired and I think Mariam Ma'am was also tired because she was sitting on the floor by the food and Rich Sir was feeding her spoonfuls of *chole*. While we waited for our parents Mariam Ma'am gave us our 'element' drawings back to continue on, and I added some sharks and whales. Mariam Ma'am helped Isha to eat her lunch and Rich Sir sat with Chhaya on the floor with a book. Then my Dad came and we went home and it was the best day of school ever.

by Salman, aged 7

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The above is a fictionalised version of real events told through the voice of a child in Mariam's Class 2 class. All classroom activities are written as clearly as I noted and remembered them, although they did not necessarily all occur in a single day, as suggested above.

Pedagogy can be defined as, ‘The art, occupation, or practice of teaching. Also: the theory or principles of education; a method of teaching based on such a theory’ ("Pedagogy, N. : Oxford English Dictionary" 2016). To understand the various lines of pedagogical thought intersecting in the school, I will now sketch a brief analysis of the techniques Mariam uses in her lesson, exploring their alignment, or misalignment, with Ark's own prescribed pedagogics, and their manifestation in Ark Lajpat Nagar.

Mariam uses some techniques explicitly promoted by Ark, and replaces other Ark directives with her preferred educational method. Early in the day, Salman notices two other boys pushing. Ark would expect her to make a record of this 'bad behaviour' by lowering the boys on the smiley-face/sad-face behaviour tracker; if the boys reach the red-coloured sad-face at the bottom, they miss a portion of their outdoor play-time. Mariam ignores this method and instead reminds the boys to enact an English word they have been learning; they are told to be 'kind' both vocally and by Mariam rotating her hand beneath her chin, the action she has invented for 'kind'.

Mariam employs a personalised and relativised pedagogy of ethics. When the children in Salman's story admit to stealing toffees, they get praised for honesty instead of being punished for deceit. As Althusser notes, school is where we, 'learn the "rules" of good behaviour ... rules of morality, civic and professional conscience, which actually means ... rules of the order established by class domination' (1970:5). It is not that Mariam seeks to avoid a judgement on whether stealing is right or wrong, it is clear from the scenario that stealing is a serious matter and needs to be approached by the community it affects, but by reorienting the social disruption into an opportunity for the children to be brave and honest, she creates an environment that focuses on positive attributes rather than negative actions. Mariam does not seek to shame those who stole, but allows them space to feel the shame that can lead to honesty and subsequent joy. Samesh fails to be honest in the first instance, he lacks the courage to tell the truth publicly (perhaps for good reason, perhaps he has been punished for stealing beforehand), but eventually manages to tell his neighbour, Harini, of his so-called misdeed. When Mariam hears of the event, she praises Samesh no-more and no-less than the primary repentant, Vihaan. There is no final word from Mariam explaining, for example, that this was a one-off event, and that next time she won't be so lenient; or that, despite, her demonstration, stealing in the 'real world' is categorically wrong. Nevertheless, she facilitates an atmosphere of love and trust that allows children to explore their emotions and potential for selfish behaviour, without the need for discipline and punishment.

Paulo Freire believes that true learning is always dialogical; that to learn we must always be in dialogue, and never passive vessels waiting to receive 'knowledge'. At the core of his pedagogy is the process of 'problem-posing' education (1996: 65), an example of which we see Mariam facilitate in the lesson above. Not only does problem-posing education allow its participants to choose for themselves how to interpret a given life-scenario, it, 'affirms [humans] as beings in the process of *becoming*', and shows that there is, as Deleuze and

Guattari explore in the leading quote, ‘room in the child for other becomings, “other contemporaneous possibilities”’.

Mariam's classroom is an experimental space in which she tests new ways of learning and teaching. She is constantly learning from her children - ‘dialogically’, as Freire would have it - and is very critical of 'giving' the children the answer to what might seem like the most simple and neutral questions. She once asked a pupil how they were feeling, and the child replied (in Hindi) 'I feel like the birds in the sky.' Mariam told me of the joy and wonder she felt at this child's creative interpretation of the world and her feelings; she did not say 'happy' or 'sad' or some other response we might expect if we believe that children learn language systematically and functionally. Note, when Mariam teaches English in the scene above, she allows the children to shape the social space in which they identify with the vocabulary being learned. Salman and his group chose the playground, an intimate space they use each day, and a common schoolyard phenomenon, a fight, to represent and locate how they imagine the term 'brave'. This is an elaborate pedagogical tool that some at Ark believe is too complex to perform with 7-year-olds, or takes up too much lesson time on too few new English words. And it's true that such an experiment comes with risks; the day was so full that some children didn't get a chance to perform their skits and could only enact them (with hazy memory) on the morning of the following day.

Mariam also uses the classroom as an arena for sociological experiments. Her choice to hand out toffees based on the genetic condition of height both helps the children learn about discrimination and reveals to her how privilege can be invisible to those who have it. As part of the non-toffee group, Salman feels - and this was noted in class verbatim - that he is upset for not getting toffees. He feels the sting of discrimination and, Mariam hopes, takes a step towards developing his capacity for empathy. Mariam, and I as her co-teacher, are intrigued by the way the toffee group are less interested in exploring their emotions that relate to this experiment; they are satisfied with their toffees and have no interest in the reasons for their gain or for those in the non-toffee group.

Ark run a chain of primary schools in the UK in which they attempt to ensure that children are academically proficient enough to excel in secondary school, and subsequent school examinations. They operate a centralised training team who ensure teachers follow centrally-chosen programs to teach English, Phonics and Maths. Drawing on my experience working in the school, Ark adopt the pedagogical philosophy as extolled by Jean-Claude

Milner in *De l'ecole*: teachers should attempt to transmit the exact same knowledge to each and every student, rather than trying to shape and build the "whole person"(Milner 1984). Mariam's methods are clearly the opposite; she, in the words of Milner is 'educative' and not 'instructive', although certainly not negligent to her duty to teach academics, she spends a large part of class time facilitating scenarios in which children practice self-awareness and embodied ethical reasoning.

In order to feel motivated to continue to design and execute creative, interactive, emotionally-invested lessons such as we have seen, Mariam needs both the support of the school and the freedom to experiment and practice. This is a problem for Ark and for Nalini and Jeevan who are running its latest venture, who believe that these children 'don't have time' to be used in such experiments; that because these children come from the most underprivileged communities in the country, their academic learning must be prioritised at the cost of lessons on discrimination and honesty.[6] If these kids are to pass the stringent, factual, dry, 'academic' entrance examinations to Indian universities, they need more Gradgrindian structure than socio-emotional growth.

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[6] For a deeper analysis on how 'the poor' are cast as a politically expedient category for those in power, see Rancière's *The Philosopher and his Poor.*

Tuesday March 8th. 2.25pm

How do the didis feel here in the school, their kids (or other kids) learning this power language - English? One of the didis was just reading the Jolly Phonics 'Mud' book. Want to ask her about it but feel awkward + and my no Hindi
--- / Hmm. Awkward. Just tried to ask if she was reading 'Mud'
---> problem: I speak in mumbled English 'were you reading this one?' ---> I should say in over-pronounced English: Are you reading?
---> but I feel patronising doing that ---> but actually such a saying would at least give her a chance to answer.
---> But no one really chats to the didis. They are a sub-class. Like the guard. --- ok. I need to learn all their names. And 'how are you' in Hindi.
---> that will make me feel better, will it make them feel better? --- Is it presumptuous for me to teach (try to) teach them to read?
---> Why doesn't Ark offer this somehow? Do they want to learn to … ?

Katy

The first time I talked with Katy I knew we were on the same team:

'I feel fake when I have to be formal,' she said, 'I used to be known as the activities teacher, and so the kids saw me as the "fun" teacher. But in my "grow", I was told I had to be more strict and formal. But I think learning is more important than being formal and authority-like.'

Damn, I thought, she's saying exactly what I want to hear. She continued:

'Now, when I go to the playground and all the kids hang on to me and hug me I say, "Ok, here you can do anything you like - but not in the classroom"'.

A few days later, our connection developed:

'I learn so much from the children,' she told me excitedly, 'I am their teacher but really they are my teacher, so how can I be the one who says, "do this - do that - you're good - you're bad"?

I couldn't believe it, it was like Paulo Freire had given her a script, 'Dialogic learning! The teacher is the learner and the learner is the teacher!'.

'This is the hardest job in the world,' she told me, 'We're not building a machine, we're building a human being.'

So the teachers are *sensitive to being cogs in a machine, disappointed to be tasked with pumping out other cogs for a wider machine. Katy coloured in her background:*

'I wanted to be a doctor, because I got high grades in science. But my parents said no; they said a teacher was a good profession for a woman. Now I'm very happy that I'm a teacher.'

More anthropological meat: patriarchy is alive and well in at least one family in India. Slowly, Katy was becoming my true informant:

'Some of the teachers here aren't used to hanging out with guys', Katy told me as we were making tea, 'One of them, I won't tell you who, said, "Oh Rich is handsome, but why does he grow that beard?"'

This was brilliant. Not only do I get a compliment on my looks, I get the gossip on how the teachers speak about me behind my back.

A week later, I find out that Katy has a four-year-old son who lives 1000km away, with her parents-in-law in Bihar. Her parents-in-law say that Katy is too immature to look after him.

The next day in school I sat writing notes after the kids went home. Katy and a boy named Karthik sat together having staring contests, sharpening pencils, and singing songs.

I wrote a play for the children to perform to their parents on Parents Day. I asked Katy to be Assistant Director; I knew she had many responsibilities on show day, but I trusted her, and I knew she'd enjoy being involved.

Katy is a fully qualified primary school teacher, with a 4-year degree from Delhi University. Her desire was to work for an NGO who helps underprivileged children, and she took the job at the Ark school as it gave her a platform to do this. She was told when she joined that her exact role was unconfirmed, but soon found out that she would be a co-teacher, working alongside the main class teacher. She wanted to be a class teacher. As teachers left and new ones joined, her responsibilities changed; she taught more Hindi, and less music and dance. Another co-teacher was promoted to class teacher for a kindergarten class, but Katy wasn't.

'I want to be a kindergarten teacher here at Ark. I love the school. I want job satisfaction. I want to be there for the kids who need me. In private schools, I won't feel like that. Here at Ark, the kids need us. I feel happy that I do good.'

I ask her about structure and independence in the school environment:

'At the start, we need structure for kids - but not for the teachers. Structures are prisons for teachers. Dianshi and Mariam worked for Teach For India - they had so much independence. I only did my internships in government schools, where's there no freedom. But, if you get a permanent job in a government school then you are independent, you can do innovative learning and no one will stop you, but most teachers don't, even though they can.'

In late January 2016, a few weeks before I arrived for my fieldwork, the teachers had an appraisal. Katy was asked how she would like to continue at the school, and she said she'd like to be a class teacher. She was told her request would be considered. On March 1st she was told her contract at the school would end in May, before the six-week summer holidays and the new intake of children. Katy said that Nalini told her that she was 'not an Ark type', because she was too 'artistic' and 'lenient'. Ark, Nalini said, needed more disciplined teachers. Katy said that Nalini was very soft and friendly in this meeting, and told me that Nalini had directly helped her find a new job, which also involved working in education for underprivileged children.

Katy lives with her brother-in-law here in Delhi. Her husband lives with his parents and her son in Bihar. Katy wants to go to Bihar and collect her son and bring him back to Delhi. I was shocked. How can this happy and lively 24-year-old woman be so happy and lively when she is being denied access to her only son? I pushed her to fight for custody, to go and collect him, but I realised I know nothing about Indian law, or custom, and I feel wrong giving her advice.

A few weeks later Katy tells me more: her husband has accused her of cheating on him with his brother, and she now wants a divorce.

I feel helpless. We both spend our days in the same rooms, playing with the same kids, enjoying the same music. And then I struggle: I want to help her/I want to complete my research … I want to be her friend/I don't want to give false hope … I want to be there for her/I want to go back to Europe … I don't want to be the anthropologist anymore, a statement I can safely say while I sit behind my laptop and write this thesis.

Tuesday 26th April. 11.10am

Vihaan. That kid just wants to play. What can this school really do for him? Even during the Hindi story, the easiest thing for him to engage with, he just folds his handkerchief in numerous ways and tries to give it to me as a present.

> *Within contemporary culture, emotions may even be re-presented as a form of intelligence, as 'tools' that can be used by subjects in the project of life and career enhancement.*
>
> Sara Ahmed (2014:3)

What does it mean to be an engaged anthropologist? For me, in this instance, it meant assuming the role of the people I was trying to understand, recognising the contradiction of this action, and yet still offering an analysis of their situation can improve. My experience is perhaps similar to Vassos Argyrou's conundrum of the impossible anthropologist, the human who tries to see humanity by stepping outside culture, oblivious to the logical impossibility of such a procedure, of 'the paradoxical situation where to play the role of the object, the modernist subjectivity must first assume the role of the Subject' (Argyrou 2005: 157).

I came to the Ark school hoping to build connections with all of its different stakeholders; I ended up being one of the teachers, and becoming their friend. I spent my days with the children, but not speaking Hindi hindered my ability to get to know them. I spent a few afternoons with parents, but again, language blocked us, and the school was wary of letting a white person spend too much time in the slum communities, rightly fearing the neocolonial overtones. Meetings with the government seemed chimerical, and the one morning we did host a government inspector I offered to leave the school to help Nalini out of the awkward

task of having to explain my 'foreign' presence. But these are also just excuses that belie the deeper reason for my ethnographic imbalance: I truly loved being a teacher in the school, and prioritised this task over any other.

I woke at 6.30, showered, dressed, and hopped onto the street to haggle for an auto-rickshaw. I'd never been so happy with early starts or clockwork rhythms. Munching a breakfast banana, I'd wave in the children and prepare the class for the coming day. But my teaching life at the school was also an illusion, an unsustainable event. With little responsibility, I could leave the class anytime for a chat with Nalini on Indian politics, or take a quick run around with whichever kids were on break. Nevertheless, I planned lessons, gave lessons, explained maths, assessed reading, broke-up fights and praised the relief of 2'o clock home-time. I was a teacher and I was not a teacher; and this made me very happy.

My decision to perform the role of teacher in the school began as an ethnographically academic one and, through its manifestation, became emotionally-directed. I felt that I wanted to be there with the kids; I felt solidarity with teachers in their attempt to practice radical pedagogy despite institutional restrictions. This could be read as my weak-will, my bending to an emotional desire to connect with children and teachers, my failure to 'stay strong' and complete a more rounded ethnography. Or, to speak with Sara Ahmed, it could simply be an honest reaction to my surroundings that gets framed as 'weak' by a cultural tradition that sees 'emotions' as hierarchically lower, as less 'developed', than reason and rationality (Ahmed 2014:4). I do not seek to defend my choice here, only to note it and move on.

What is more important to examine is how my embodiment of the role of teacher was a 'congealment' resulting from a repetition of conflicting discourses (Butler 1993), how I - like Jeevan in the pages to come - was a locus point for the intersection of multiple identities and ideas. I was at once performing the role of primary school teacher, of foreign researcher, of radical pedagogue, of male curio; I desired to fit in, to stand back, to work out, and get on. The text above is just as much a self-portrait as a portrait of Katy. But at the risk of narcissism, I now present another of example of my congealed contradiction, a showcase of the fallibility, naivety, idealism and self-righteousness that arose in one specific moment of school life.

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During a staff meeting, Nalini told all the teachers to remind their children not to throw sweet wrappers down the toilet. I imagined the teachers would do this via a quick announcement, but Saudamini used her once-weekly Environmental Science lesson to transmit this point. My first impression was that this was opportunistic or lazy, that she was saving herself from inventing an entire lesson by pedantically focusing on one simple task. In fact, I over-estimated the children, under-estimated Saudamini, and contradicted myself. Saudamini recognised that her children would not change their behaviour after one momentary verbal instruction. She devoted the class to trying to show the difference between throwing wrappers down a toilet and into a bin. Reflecting on this, I asked myself: why don't I throw wrappers into the toilet? I came up with two conclusions. One, because I was taught not to by someone in my early years, and Two, because I have a vague understanding of how plumbing systems get blocked, and practical experience of unclogging sink drains. It is here that I approach my internal contradiction. I believe Saudamini is right to spend an entire lesson helping these kids understand the reasons for not throwing wrappers into the toilet. However, I learnt a different way, through authoritative instruction: thou shalt not throw wrappers in the toilet. I only shed my dependence on this authoritative instruction once I could conceptualise plumbing and had personally unclogged pipes, an experience which in turn helped me empathise with cleaning staff who have to unblock wrapper-filled toilets. My instinct when assessing Saudamini's lesson was to side with my desire for efficiency, I felt somehow that spending a whole lesson on this wrapper-conundrum was a waste of time. Yet, my theoretical, pedagogical head told me no, this is exactly how teachers should teach. Not through commands, but through exploration and the cultivation of understanding in the child. Regardless of arguments concerning a 6-year-old's ability to understand *why* she shouldn't throw a wrapper down a toilet, the *practice* of having exploratory conversations gets the child into the habit of analysing why certain rules must be followed, or why certain customs are beneficial to a cohesive society. Moreover, it seems like the lesson could be enhanced by getting the children to help pull out the offending wrappers from the blocked toilet, which, rather than serving as punishment, would help them understand how their actions can cause strain and distaste to another.

*

Beneath the contradictions displayed in this story lies the contradiction of its very existence. Although most of the above thoughts passed through my head in about thirty seconds, I

would not have had the chance to immediately write them down, and therefore later explore them, if I did not have the authority to step out of classrooms or meetings at any time on the pretext of 'research'. And yet it is exactly the generative possibilities of contradictions that I will approach in the next section. As I will go on to argue, contradictory identities reveal that subjects are in fact multiplicities, that subjects can become their own micro-sites of 'friction' in which new possibilities for (social) change can blossom.

Wednesday 6th April. 8.40am

Pissed off that no one speaks to each other in this school. Mariam came in in floods of tears again and she won't speak to Nalini. Nalini is the head teacher, she is the mother of the school. What is a school if not a family? Except no one seems to speak to their families here (or anywhere) too. Katy says she can't sleep, stressing over how to live her life - in need of a break. Dianshi also in life crisis but less extreme. Me, with no official capacity in the school (as Lisha's back today) can slack off into this doctor's room and write. Oh the fragility of people's lives and the effort they make to hide it. How much energy is wasted on hiding fragility? Now in the bathroom, mirror in here says SAINT-GOBAIN MIRROR and it makes me long for France or Europe or somewhere I know (or don't know yet that I don't know). Damn, stomach pains. Aimed to return to the doctor's room but some doctor beat me to it. Now in the office, getting some tea - and Rekha Didi helped me get some breakfast. Perhaps Mariam's right just to tell Nalini that she has something wrong with her eyes. Ain't my country. Problem is, same thing would happen in my country too. Where in the world do they really talk to each other? Everyone's so interested in work and not actually working. Ironic. Teaching kids to talk, to read with phonics, without teaching them to speak. Because we have not learned to speak to each other. How can it be that we haven't learnt this? Why make words when you can't use them to express honestly? Oh! The fucking irony.

Jeevan

The self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities

Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari (1989: 275)

Jeevan and I sit on blue plastic chairs in an empty classroom. The chairs are child-size and we hunch on the corner of a child-size table, notebooks open. Jeevan is the school's resident teacher-trainer and has recently also taken on the role of deputy headteacher. I've had numerous long and insightful conversations with the teachers and staff at the Ark school, but this is the first time I've sat down with planned questions and a conscious interview technique. I begin deep and broad, and hope Jeevan is an a philosophical mood.

'So, Jeevan, what is your vision of education?'

'Ah,' he begins, smiling, 'first, the definition of education in India is all wrong. It is too focussed on the academic, not enough on the holistic. Teach For India always question themselves. All us educators need to constantly redefine what education means. We need to get a solid definition of education that gets implemented in schools, not one based on marks. For me, it's about creating learning environments that help kids explore themselves. I came to this view of education after college, only through my time at TFI. Here I learnt the idea of having a vision for yourself, not a job you desire, not a thirst for marks, but the journey of discovering who you are. Both my parents took four years to accept me joining TFI, and they're both teachers! They would tell their friends that I was taking a break before going to do my MBA. This is another definition we need to change, the definition of success. We need to stop defining it through money. I get so upset when I see old school friends of mine, Harvard MBA graduates with high-paid jobs in Delhi, throwing rubbish out of their car windows. I went to a private all boys school in Delhi that my parents couldn't really afford. No-one told me that I was ruining my life trying to fit in. I only really began learning, I mean proper learning, when I began to teach myself.'

I step in, 'How do you like to teach classes?' He replies, 'I teach children to think for themselves, I teach them that they can choose to do whatever they want - they can choose not to come to school, or to fight with other kids - but I try to explain to them what those choices actually mean. I teach them that not every experience in life will be great, but we can learn from each experience. It's all about the choices we make. Kids will pick up Maths and English themselves, they will figure out the academics. I am honest with the kids and tell them: I don't have all the information in the world, but I promise we can try to find it out together. I want them to always question: how? Even if I write 2 + 2 = 4, I want them to ask: how?'

I mention Ark's focus on academics and ask Jeevan his views. He explains, 'Next year an outside organisation will provide a music curriculum for the kids here at Ark, and I'm making "arts" part of the 5-week teacher training institute this summer. I do believe that the best lessons are conducted outside, in the physical world, but there is a different reality here, these children come from very poor backgrounds. For them, life is about getting food on the table. That's why our kids need high grades, so they can go to college, and then they can make choices about how to live. To bring about systemic change, we need to slowly and continually reform our definition of education. Sadly, we still have to prove ourselves to the government, so we need our kids to get high marks. Also, our school is in its first year. In the life cycle of a school, the first year needs more structure, as it puts less pressure on teachers having to build their own structure. Once you have consistency, then teachers can change a little.'

I ask Jeevan what made him join the Ark school. Jeevan replies, 'I joined Ark in August 2015, two months after the school opened. I was sold on this vision: 20 Ark schools in India by 2020. If we want to achieve such an ambition, we need teachers with experience, and that's why we need TFI. The first thing I changed in the school was lesson planning. I suggested we send kids home earlier to free-up working hours so the teachers could do more planning. This I could change, but I can't change the basic structures as it's still an Ark school. But also, I've seen nothing in Ark's vision that would make me feel restricted as a teacher.'

Jeevan now begins describing his own time as a Teach for India fellow. 'I stayed in Pune for three more years after my [two year] TFI fellowship', he says. 'I left home and lived in the community to help open a community centre for kids. At this point, our school only went up to 7th grade. We fought, and now it's open till 10th grade. I stayed and fought for my kids. Now they get into 11th and 12th grade junior college. One time, I paid 40,000 rupees [€500]

for a bus to take kids to school. It was totally unsustainable, but I had to show how much I cared, and how committed I was. I went back this January to help them choose subjects before grade 11. If you're really committed to making kids life better ... - listen, teachers come to a school and want to change everything, but they'll be gone after a year. So I say, fine, have your games, but the school will still be here after you go. If you say, I'll be here for 5 years, then fine, but otherwise just fit in to the school you're employed in. Nalini and I set some basic rules, for example, we need good behaviour management.'

I cut in here as it gives me a clear opportunity to discuss one specifically contentious teaching tool: the smiley-face behaviour tracker. I ask, 'How did you decide to employ this behaviour tracker?' Jeevan is passionate, 'We all agreed on it together. We had a meeting to discuss it and me, Nalini and the teachers agreed. The thing is, teachers need to ask at the start: what structure does this school have, and check if it suits them. We've employed some new teachers for next year, and I've offered them chances to tour the school to see what they're getting into. Young people always question things, but what happens to the kids when you leave? If you can't commit to being here then don't try to change the system. I only commit to something if I can put 4 - 5 years in. I was told by my superiors and peers that I should leave TFI, but I couldn't, I had to stay with my kids. The behaviour tracker is meant to be a support, in fact, the tracker is meant to be a reflection of the teacher's face. It's about respect.'

I ask again what is it about Ark that attracted him. Jeevan replies, 'I took this job because I believe in Nalini, not because of Ark. We are here to serve the parents. It is a job. I get paid.' He pauses for a minute and I remember that before TFI, Jeevan had worked for accountancy firm Ernst & Young. He continues, 'It is a choice I made. I want to do this job. I love it. But I get money for it and parents want to see results. And, my job is to change parents' mindsets. I have a duty to those parents. I have made commitments to parents, to grandparents. I say to them: even though we don't use normal government methods, please stick with us. Only 1% of the population of India go to college. There are not enough foot soldiers, that's my frustration. Not enough people on the ground in India trying to improve conditions. I had much more control and freedom at TFI, but I left for many reasons, money, family ... In teaching, in India, we don't work in an environment that allows us the luxury of movement. I'm consciously trying to be a person who stays, who makes longer term impact.

I am silent now, and let Jeevan speak, 'I don't agree with Ark's long term vision in India,' he muses, 'I don't even think there is one! But, we're developing that vision as we go. I was sold on a solid vision, but that vision fell apart because they didn't have clarity of experience with the government. At TFI there is less hierarchy, at Ark there is more hierarchy. At TFI I could speak to anyone and they always listened, I could speak directly to the founder. When I came to Ark, I had to adjust to having a job. TFI wasn't a job. And now I've chosen to stay here ... the school is enough, for me as a foot soldier, and all else is bonus. If I can't change Ark, that's ok. The only place I could truly be myself, and not be judged for it, is my classroom. That's my ideal classroom. All the kids can be themselves and not be judged. My belief in this structure comes from real life examples. I ran a TFI training session where we brought a panel of kids to prove that this system works. I love talking about idealistic education, but I also know that this is a system that works. Our efforts have to be focused on the teachers. Only when teachers are having conversations like these', Jeevan waves his arm between us, 'then ... Another time me and my kids cooked for two hours and then went out to meet homeless people and served them food. This was the children's idea, I just guided it. But it takes years for teachers to have the confidence to run these kinds of lessons.'

I mention that some of the teachers at Ark abound in confidence. 'Yes,' he replies, 'but they need to be more assertive. It's not good behaviour management. These kids need to be put on a different life path, you need to become a different person as a teacher. I had to be assertive, to stop fights, to stop kids from stealing furniture. For me there is only one question: is the choice we're making good for the kids?'

As he finishes his thought, six-year-old Chetan enters the room with a mischievous grin and begins drawing a picture in Jeevan's notebook. We've been sitting for over three hours and the conversation is ready to come to a close. I ask what his next steps are. He replies, 'I will facilitate new ways of setting up conversations between teachers and Nalini. I believe basic structures need to be there in the school. We need to feel successful. We need to show success.'

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> *In an institution, the effective, that is unconscious, source of power, the holder of the real power, is neither permanent nor obvious. It has to be flushed out, so to say, by an analytic search that at times involves huge detours by way of the crucial problems of our time.*
>
> Félix Guattari (1984: 19)

Jeevan is the locus of two similar yet dissimilar educational development machines. In the conversation above, Jeevan grapples to align these machines, at once hoping to produce a pedagogical synergy and a coherent story for himself as a 'foot soldier' battling for social justice.[7] The first machine is Ark, a product of the neoliberal erosion of state-controlled education in the UK, and the deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of the Indian primary education landscape that characterises our 21st century global connectedness. The second machine is Teach For India, an independent branch of the 'Teach For' movement whose manifestation in India in 2009 is another sign of Foucault's 'governmentality' that sees the executive power of the nation-state shift into the hands of supranational corporations and NGOs (Foucault and Senellart 2008).

Despite originating from a similar quasi-post-national geopolitical landscape, Ark and TFI differ significantly in their instructional methods and philosophies of education. These disparities are clear enough in the text above, as well as in other other portraits in this ethnography, so I will not loiter here with an explication. Instead, I seek to examine the grammar of neoliberalism that overcodes the manifestation of the Ark school, and the possibilities for critical pedagogy and long-term social justice that exist despite this overcoding. In my examination, the hegemonic neoliberal capitalist mindset is the 'holder of real power' that Guattari locates in the quotation above. As I showed earlier through Dianshi's portrait, the conflict arising from immediate interactions between Ark and TFI may cause too violent a 'friction' to be generative; but the potential for insight that occurs through Jeevan, as a locus of the two education machines, is the crevice from which we can exploit an inquiry into the supposed omnipotence of the neoliberal hegemonic monolith.

The most prominent symptom of neoliberal overcoding to be found in this site of the school is contained in this disarmingly shrewd aphorism from Mahatma Gandhi: 'There is more to

[7] I do not seek to mock Jeevan here; I believe we all have to make coherent stories for ourselves to maintain our sanity. The details of how I created mine can been found in the analysis to Katy's portrait, and in the 'fragments' of my notebook scattered throughout this paper.

life than increasing its speed.' The acceleration of daily life delivered through the train and plane of modernism and the cyberspace of postmodernism is also responsible for facilitating a global financial market that supersedes human comprehension. An acceleration of 'development' is a tempting - if not inevitable - response to the urgency of economic inequality that characterises our era, but as Gandhi intuited, speed has its price. One way of understanding our contemporary addiction to speed is to highlight the reactions against it. Carl Honoré's 2004 book, *In Praise of Slowness,* punctuated the anarchical, multi-sited, grassroots rise of the 'slow movement', and helped fuel specific 'slowisms' such as 'slow food' and 'slow travel'.

Jeevan's relationship with speed is evident in his belief that 'these kids need to be put on a different life path'. At the end of a long self-questioning monologue in which he constructs his devotion to Ark, he speaks in the language of speed; the kids cannot be left to discover their own path, they must be 'put' on a different one. As evident in other portraits of this ethnography, Nalini and Jeevan see life as a race for the children they teach, a race which, without the specific mental faculties and caches of knowledge that the government decide to nationally examine, the children will lose and thereby remain in the poverty of their slum communities.[8] Other symptoms of neoliberal hegemony are less visible than speed, they are revealed in the obsession with metrics, measurement and quantification that appear not just in the type of exams the government sets, but in diverse forms of social interaction, from how we treat our bodies (Dworkin & Wachs 2009) to how we combat climate change (Lohmann 2012).

In order to investigate how the teachers of Ark Lajpat Nagar can subvert their neoliberal capitalist overcoding and make use of intra-subjective generative friction as displayed by Jeevan, I look to Félix Guattari's concept of transversality. In 1960s France, Guattari began developing his concept of 'transversality' as a process through which therapists working with psychotic patients in a hospital setting could move past the traditional psychoanalytic pairing of the analyst-analysand and instead treat the dysfunctional nature of the hospital and of the community of patients as a whole (Guattari 1984)[9]. Guattari argues that it is the,'"imaginary

[8] Some argue (Clinard 1966: 3-4) that 'slum' has derogatory connotations, while others (Hunter 1968:6) claim that replacing the term with something more politically correct erases the true political state its inhabitants. I choose to use 'slum' to help evoke an accurate image in the reader, closest to common Western collective picturing of 'a slum in India'.

[9] Guattari's concept of transversality is a direct reworking of the Freudian notion of transference, whereby a psychoanalyst is able to take on the position of another for the analysand (such as their father) so that the pair can work through issues arising from earlier periods of the analysand's life which have been repressed. While transference is a two-way relation that happens in the consulting

incarnation" of some of the signifying articulations of the group [that] crystallises the structures as a whole, hinders its possibilities for change ... and restricts to the utmost its possibilities for dialogue with anything that might tend to bring the "rules of the game" into question' (1984: 15). The 'group' to which Guattari here refers is the collection of people who run a given institution, in his essay, the doctors and nurses who manage the psychiatric hospital. Guattari notes that the crystallisation of 'the structure as a whole' is a product of 'the signifying articulations of the group' via their 'imaginary incarnation'. In the Ark school, is it these 'signifying articulations' - Nalini and Jeevan's description of the child's life as a race; prioritising 'academic' learning over the holistic educative vision of TFI - that make the 'structure as a whole' and 'restrict' the potential for conversations with other ideologies that could 'bring the "rules of the game" into question'. By both vocally and physically repeating the laws of neoliberal overcoding, the teachers imprison themselves in a structure which forbids them from other becomings. To combat this, Guattari offers a new theory of intra-institutional communication.

'Transversality is a dimension that tries to overcome both the impasse of pure verticality and that of mere horizontality: it tends to to be achieved when there is maximum communication among different levels and, above all, in different meanings' (1984:18). In geometry, a transversal is a line that passes through two other lines in the same plane; Guattari's transversality uses the geometric transversal as a metaphor for how to connect two (or many) different levels of social strata. Communication can proliferate between different levels when, as Guattari puts it, the 'coefficient of transversality' is widened to encourage the humans present to relate to one another in 'terms of affectivity' (18). The coefficient of transversality is defined as 'the degree of blindness of each of the people present'; to widen this coefficient is to allow individuals to see each other more clearly, and therefore be moved to communicate. Such proliferation of communication could allow those who are running the institution to, 'secure collective control over the management of those things beyond rules and regulations that determine the atmosphere, the relationships, everything that really makes the institution tick' (19). Let us be clear here, widening the coefficient of transversality will *not* allow the people who run the institution to change the rules and regulations of the institution, these rules and regulations are still determined by the 'holder of real power', in our case, the aesthetic of neoliberalism. What it can do is allow the participants to take part in Guattari's 'analytic search' to 'flush out' the 'holder of real power' that *does* control the

room, Guattari's concept of transversality picks up on a similar process that occurs simultaneously between a collection of individuals. See Guattari's two essays in Psychoanalysis and Transversality: 'Transference' and 'Transversality'.

rules and regulations; it could help them to examine the enigma of the hegemonic discourses that overcode them.

At the end of the above discussion, Jeevan expresses his desire to use his new position as deputy head to 'facilitate new ways of setting up conversations between teachers and Nalini.' Ark and TFI have performed another dance, this time a micro-tango embedded in the identity of Jeevan himself, and this time the friction has proved more generative. It is, perhaps, within the teacher/management conversations spearheaded by Jeevan that Guattari's transversality, his 'maximum communication among different levels', can begin to manifest in the school. But this is only the beginning, if the Ark school wants to achieve the operational harmony enhanced through 'maximum communication', this communication must happen 'in different meanings', as well as 'among different levels'. It is in the following conclusion that I will approach this further question.

Sunday April 10th. 7.36pm

Noting here not for the sake of noting, no not quite. But more to remind myself that I'm here to do my fieldwork. And to convince myself that yes, I'm actually doing. But I feel I crossed a line this week. After that chat with Nalini. It's like I said to Mariam, the present tense is currently full. I am full. It's like I can't put pieces together anymore. Too many people's stories. Too much humanity. All those people squeezing through the vaults of that Muslim shrine in Nizamuddin on Friday evening, next to that beautiful flooded courtyard. Children crying, women sweating.

CONCLUSION

> *It seems to me essential to organize new micropolitical and microsocial practices, new solidarities, a new gentleness, together with new aesthetic and new analytic practices regarding the formation of the unconscious. It appears to me that this is the only possible way to get social and political practices back on their feet, working for humanity and not simply for a permanent reequilibration of the capitalist semiotic Universe.*
>
> Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies* (2000: 56)

As I showed through the introduction to this paper, the Ark school in Lajpat Nagar appears at a frontier of primary education provision in India. As evident in the introduction and the portraits that make up this ethnography, friction occurs at different scales in this frontier:

1) Macro-scale; the geopolitical, the supranational: where the 'anticolonialist' nation state (Chatterjee 1993: 6) meets the proliferation of the neoliberal aesthetic. The Ark school is literally governed by both the policies of the South Delhi Municipal Corporation, and the educational philosophy of the non-governmental organisation, Ark. It is the friction between these two powers at the frontier of 'education for all' that created the Ark Lajpat Nagar school.

2) Meso-scale; the inter-organisation, inter-subjective level, where friction plays out between organisations via metonymic individuals. This is the Ark/TFI tango described in Dianshi's portrait, where two deterritorialised education machines attempt collaboration.

3) Micro-scale; the cognitive, intra-subjective level, where friction occurs when individuals subsume two warring ideologies and attempt to represent themselves in a way that harnesses the energy of both. Jeevan seeks synergy between the educational beliefs of Ark and TFI, building friction that may be generative.

The five portraits of this ethnography reveal how the micro, intra-subjective level is the key to allowing generative friction at the meso, inter-subjective level. This conclusion will seek to reiterate the relationship between these two realms of friction by offering specific suggestions on how the school can work towards Guattari's 'maximum communication'. The final part of the conclusion will briefly question how action at these meso and micro levels has the potential to effect change at the supranational, or even hegemonic level.

Ark and the Independent: How to really tango

The first portrait shows how Nalini, as a head teacher caught between two masters, is inclined to adopt a rigid and hierarchical, albeit caring and passionate, school management style. She wants to ensure that teaching practices are uniform, that the school sticks to Ark prescribed teaching methods and programs (Jolly Phonics, Maths Mastery), and that the teachers perform government-imposed admin tasks with tedious precision. To speak with Erving Goffman, she requires 'a certain bureaucratisation of the spirit' so that her teachers, 'can be relied upon to give a perfectly homogenous performance at every appointed time' (Goffman 1959: 56). The next three portraits show how independent, imaginative and artistic teachers are difficult to accommodate into Ark Lajpat Nagar's standardising approach. We see how Dianshi, a headstrong TFI-idealist, struggles to feel motivated in the school, and how Mariam - another TFI-trained teacher, and pedagogical radical - attempts a subtler way to subvert school policy. Finally, we see that it's not just TFI-trained teachers who are at odds with the school's approach; creative, non-disciplinary, souls like Katy are also considered too disruptive to the school's 'academic' rubric. In the final portrait, an exploration of Jeevan as a locus of intersecting educational philosophies introduces the concept of Guattari's transversality, and the opportunity it provides for 'maximum communication' across 'different levels' and 'meanings' within an institution.

If Ark seek to open 20 'high-performing' schools in India by 2020, it would help them to find a way to accommodate the energy and imagination of teachers like Dianshi, Mariam and Katy. The school's actions show that it seems to already agree with this suggestion: despite

the various pedagogical disputes, Ark continue to accept TFI fellows and hire TFI alumni. The problem here is that Ark continue to engage with TFI on a mesosociological level, without looking at the micro-social roots of this negative friction.

I will now offer a selection of suggestions as to how the teachers and staff of Ark Lajpat Nagar could explore the way they communicate in order to recognise the possibilities and limitations of each of their subject positions, and use this knowledge to collaborate in a way that keeps teachers motivated, the government satisfied, and the overseeing Ark management both excited and placated. To use Guattari's language, I hope to reveal actions that would connect the vertical hierarchy and horizontal society of the school, and incrementally widen the coefficient of transversality that determines the collective field of vision.

'One obvious role for the radical intellectual', writes anthropologist David Graeber, is 'to look at those who are creating viable alternatives, try to figure out what might be the larger implications of what they are (already) doing, and then offer those ideas back, not as prescriptions, but as contributions, possibilities—as gifts' (2005:12). Despite my interrogation of its neoliberal practices, the Ark school has the potential to be a 'viable alternative' in the quest to provide schooling in India. The following suggestions, then, are my gifts. Of course, these gifts can be rejected and ignored, but I hope at least they carry the spirit of my desire to help my wonderfully loving, intelligent and committed ex-colleagues in their quest to support, nurture and indeed educate the children of Delhi that they teach.

1) Encourage less-forthcoming teachers to explore their own pedagogical philosophy. Regardless of how it appears to the head teachers, or the teachers themselves, each teacher I met in the Ark school has a personal belief over the way children should be taught. In the desire to develop a coherent, educationally-efficient school, the personal beliefs of each teacher can be eclipsed - and this is a sad loss. I am not suggesting that each teacher should be allowed to run their classes however they choose; only that if there is a genuine, open, calm, non-judgemental space in which the teachers can think through how they *like* to teach, the school community can collectively decide whether such visions can be manifested in a way that fits Ark's educational philosophy.

One example is Mariam's maths class as described in her portrait; through counting the students and working out how many new bins they need, the children both practice division (Ark's directive) and explore their emotional relationship with the environment (Mariam's). In this case, Mariam is a cognitive micro-site of generative friction; she wrestles with how to run her Ark-designed classroom, and achieves inspiring results. Another teacher, Alpana, had a different experience with experimental teaching. She worried that the school was 'too child-centric', an atmosphere which diminished her confidence when it came to speaking about the teaching she most enjoyed - the act of unscripted storytelling. Alpana said this would not be allowed by Nalini, that instead she needed to note what story she would tell the pupils in her submitted plan. I believe that if Nalini saw one of these lessons in action - as I did - she would be very impressed. However, Alpana is tactical; if she knows Nalini is likely to drop in and observe, she doesn't risk the creative thrill of story-making, but instead sticks to the back-up story outlined on her submitted plan. She says that the children are never more engaged than when they see her, Alpana, making up a story before their very eyes. At present, Alpana's practice has no opportunity to become a site of generative friction because it is not communicated upward, vertically, to the 'different level' of Nalini and her advisors.

If a less-forthcoming teacher, like Alpana, had an explicit space in which to express her joy of storytelling, free from the fear that she will be disciplined for ignoring Ark policy, it could lead to all sorts of enriched cohesion. Alpana mentioned that she felt more cared for when Becky, a teaching consultant from Ark's UK team, came to spend a week at the school. However, Alpana is perhaps most likely to feel this confidence if there is also room in the school for her to express feelings about her personal life, which leads me on to point (2).

2) Create more space for inter-personal emotive learning. Whether or not we think it best to restrict the expression of personal-life emotions in the school environment, these emotions will always surface. Therefore, it could be best to create a specific space in which teachers and staff can share aspects of their personal lives, and their emotional (not necessarily rational, critical or pedagogical) relationship with the school. This gives everyone a chance to speak about how they are feeling. If teachers have to return home immediately after school, make this session part of the school day. Sacrifice one afternoon a week to emotional exchange. Complete Thursday's lesson plans on Tuesday afternoon, freeing up Wednesday afternoon for this meeting.

In her portrait, Nalini mentions how she thinks the school is a 'safe space' for the children, a place where they can avoid the chaos of Delhi city life. Considering Alpana's observation of child-centrism, it could be interesting to explore how to make the school a 'safe space' for teachers too.

Nalini believes that school is not the place to express emotions about one's personal life, and she's right to be concerned. According to Guattari, opening up the coefficient of transversality too quickly could cause chaos and institutional breakdown (1984). However, Guattari also notes that, 'risk' is a central factor in 'the emergence of any phenomenon of real meaning'; if the school wants to recalibrate the two machines of TFI and Ark to work together, practical actions must occur.

3) Share information about how the school operates with all the teachers. During my time in the school, I was often lenient with the children; I would let them play-fight and throw their bodies all over the classroom. I saw no problem in this until Nalini shared her fear that the school could be closed at any moment if one of the children got hurt. If a child got hurt in the school, it would give the government a chance to proclaim the Ark school 'a failure', and the government would withdraw from the project. If this is indeed the case, I think it is important for all teachers to understand this. Despite being told not to let children play rough, I did so anyway because I thought I knew best. Only once I realised that the school was in jeopardy did I change my behaviour, and acted more vigilantly to stop such rough play. This is but one example, but for me it reveals a general problem: if teachers are not told of the true, practical, immediate reasons why the school imposes such commands as 'don't let the kids play rough', then they will not only fail to follow them, but will feel like 'outsiders' to the grander project of the school. This is my interpretation, it may be that other teachers feel differently. Nevertheless, I think it is a serious point to address, and could be part of the solution to creating a more intimate, trusting, collaborative community in the school.

*

The application of these three suggestions would, in my opinion, help the school grow into a more coherent community, and have direct impact on the children's learning. Teachers, enriched with the knowledge of why the school operates in the way it does, would be invested with a new sense of ownership over the school. Their responsibility now supersedes the

practice of helping children learn; they are directly linked to the creation of the school as a socio-political event. As part of the development into this new responsibility, teachers are given more room to explore their own preferred teaching methods. Through open dialogue, teachers are sure to find compromises between their own method and that guided by Ark.

Beyond Neoliberalism: How the group-subject might speak ...

It is possible that such changes could lead to the creation of what Guattari calls a 'group-subject' (Guattari et al 2015), and that the power of this group-subject could have political implications that stretch beyond the limits of the school. He writes that 'a subject is not necessarily the individual or even *one* individual' (2015: 69), but that a group can also become a subject if it finds a way to base itself on 'the assumption of an internal law', and releases itself from the 'external law' that causes it to be a 'subjugated group' (64). By an application of the suggestions above, the teachers can create a new 'law' that encompasses both that of Ark and their own imaginations. A group-subject forms 'subjective unity ... by diverting the meaning of habitually used concepts' (65); groups must seek to rid themselves of individuals who claim to 'speak for' the group, so the group-subject can speak for itself. Guattari writes that it is only when the group, or the institution, becomes a subject itself that, 'it can acquire subjective consistency and start making all sorts of changes and challenges' (71). The important point for the case of Ark Lajpat Nagar, is that Guattari claims these group-subjects can only form when they are, 'attached to an institution and in some sense or other they have a perspective, a viewpoint on the world, a job to do' (107). In Guattari's perspective, schools like Ark Lajpat Nagar are imbued with specific opportunities to reorient our conceptions of subjectivity, they become spaces that question the ideology of individualism inherent in the neoliberal hegemony.

Both the practical suggestions above, and this theory of the group-subject, are not simply offered to make school life more pleasant for the teachers, the aim of their application is to make a direct impact on both what and how the children learn. As Guattari writes, 'the level of transversality existing in the group that has the real power unconsciously determines how the extensive possibilities of other levels of transversality are regulated' (1984: 18). If the teachers are invested with the 'real power' to practice open 'maximum communication', they

will 'unconsciously' allow the children to practice their own transversality, their own emotionally open communication. Or, to skip Guattari altogether, the children will mimic the role models they are given. If the teachers' communication is mutually supportive and sustaining, then the children's inter-communication will also be. Teachers who feel holistically aligned with how and what they teach will emanate confidence and excitement, ways of being that will be adopted both consciously and unconsciously by the children.

Such changes can also have much wider political significance, as noted by Guattari in the leading quote to this section; it is these micro changes that disrupt the reapplication of neoliberalism and pick at the seams of its apparent totality. ‘Friction’, writes Tsing, ‘is a reminder of the importance of interaction in defining movement, cultural form, and agency’ (2005: 6), and it is an exploration of how we interact, according to Guattari, that reveals new possibilities for human agency. Spivak argues that, 'the relationship between global capitalism (exploitation in economics) and nation-state alliances (domination in geopolitics) is so macrological that it cannot account for the micrological texture of power. To move toward such an accounting one must move toward theories of ideology - of subject formations that micrologically and often erratically operate the interests that congeal the macrologies' (1988: 293). If we read Spivak alongside Guattari, we notice how transversality has the potential to subvert micrological subject formation and thereby operate new interests - the 'new solidarities' and 'new gentleness' perhaps - that congeal into something different from the neoliberal aesthetic of our time.

- - -

Tuesday February 9th. 4.30pm

At 2'o clock playtime the kids in Mariam's Yr 1 Class taught me the colours in Hindi. Lal - Red / Nila -Blue / Pila - Yellow / Hara - Green / Golabi - Pink / Sinati … ? - Orange / Chocolatic (?) Brown … ------ Total Freire.
After a day of them staring at me, giggling at me, reifying me, imploring me … for the last 15 minutes they were in charge. Thrusting coloured blocks in my face, demanding repetition after repetition - I was overwhelmed, but compliant, happy + getting educated. Teacher getting taught. Knower getting knowledge, but the kids <u>becoming</u>

Coda

Children. Where are they? Sadly, children have been glaringly absent from this paper. I introduced the ethnography with an image of me in the community, with the children and parents who are the end-point of all the educational forces discussed. Since then, they have not much appeared. Children make schools work. As we saw, Dianshi and Nalini had to come to a consensus once term began - whatever the stage set, the show must go on. And it is the spontaneity of children that ensures that no matter how rigid a school attempts to deliver 'education', the children will always reject, subvert, parry and side-step a linear learning process. Whenever I felt confused, upset, lonely, tired, or angry while writing notes in a hidden corner of the school, I had one panacea remedy - go be with the children! This thesis goes out to all those smiling faces and mischievous grins, if only we could unlearn our adult bounds and remember to to be as loving, curious, immediate and imaginative as them.

METHODOLOGY

> *The very act of storytelling, an act that presumes in its interlocutor an equality of intelligence rather than an inequality of knowledge, posits equality, just as the act of explication posits inequality.*
>
> Kristin Ross (1991: xxii)

Research Questions

I went into the field with two research questions:

1) Can a school system designed by one group of people for the children of their society be successfully transferred to another society without causing such rupture to the system as to make it socially toxic?

2) Can schools be learning environments that facilitate children to discover their interests, and thereby build a subjectivity that allows them to give meaning to the world?

My plan was to research these questions via two symbiotic but distinct methods. I would approach the first question, which can be summarised as 'Can education practices travel?', by exploring how the teachers, parents and children felt about administering/receiving these education practices: did they find them valuable, relevant and welcome? I would hold semi-structured interviews and collect 'data'.

I would approach the second question, i.e. 'Can schools be flexible?', by becoming an assistant teacher in the school, by attempting to try out new teaching practices in response to

what the kids taught me, and by learning about how other teachers bring radical pedagogy into the classroom.

As it turned out, and as I explore in the analysis of Katy's portrait, I became so absorbed in my role as teacher that my duty to conduct semi-structured interviews faded. However, my growing intimacy with school processes - both administrative and pedagogical - and the performativity of my classroom actions constituted a subjectification process through which I felt myself in deep solidarity with the teachers. It is with the perspective of this subject position that I offer the five portraits that constitute the 'meat' of this ethnography.

During my fieldwork, and throughout writing this thesis, I still kept my two original research questions in mind, but the first became obscured by a growing belief that Ark's 'educational practices' can't travel simply because they didn't work in the first place. This belief comes from Ark's 'results driven' classroom approach which serves to maintain a neoliberal ideology that posits competition as the defining characteristic of human interaction.

With this revelation in mind, I replaced the question of travelling practices with an exploration of how this new Ark school, through its collaboration with the government and other non-profit teaching organisations like TFI, could present new opportunities for understanding how primary school education in India can be provided. With this new question in place it became easier to link my two methodologies into one: my experimentation with teaching practices and collectively designed lesson plans was now a direct way to question what new opportunities the Ark Lajpat Nagar school could offer.

The result is this ethnographic thesis, an emotional and political attempt to explore what sustainable teaching practices can arise from the multi-sited friction resulting at the educational frontier of contemporary India.

Interpretation and Representation

My ethnography is written for different audiences. One intended audience is the academy, and therefore my thesis contains theoretical analysis of social forces, and philosophical understandings of knowledge and power. Another is the teachers of Ark Lajpat Nagar, and

therefore contains more specific observations and direct suggestions. Yet another audience is the general reader who is interested in what it feels like to be an anthropologist in a school in India, what types of people there are, what values do they have, what are their views on teaching and learning - this is especially why I wrote the portraits with different tones, rhythms and forms. I believe that the way you tell a story is just as important as what the story tells.

Throughout this investigation, I sought to be an engaged anthropologist. I believe that Ark's arrival in India is an indication of the globalisation of a neoliberal utopia, and the neocolonialism that this implies. My ethnography seeks not to reaffirm the inescapable reach of neoliberalism, but to problematise it; to look for ways to subvert this arrival by exploring the political opportunities that might constitute social justice for the teachers and pupils of this Ark school.

This ethnography seeks reflexivity - 'the conscious self-examination of the ethnographer's interpretive presuppositions' (Robben 2012: 514) - through an application of narrative and auto- ethnography. It is presented in a way in which, 'both the Self and Other are presented together within a single narrative ethnography, focused on the character and process of the ethnographic dialogue' (Tedlock 1991); and as autoethnography it aims to be, 'an approach that acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don't exist' (Ellis et al 2010:3). Furthermore, it seeks an 'impressionist' telling that 'tries to keep both subject and object in constant view', in order to, 'braid the knower with the known' and encourage the reader to, 'experience something akin to what the fieldworker might have experienced during the narrated events' (Van Maanen 1988: 102-107).

I chose to be an assistant teacher in the school, and to enact this autoethnographic writing method, based on other experiences I have had as a drama teacher, creative writing tutor, and English language tutor both within and outside of formal learning institutions. These experiences, and my work at Ark Lajpat Nagar, confirmed my belief in Paulo Freire's philosophy: that teaching/learning is always a 'dialogic' exchange in which both 'teacher' and 'pupil' learn (Freire 1996).

In order to further my 'impressionist' autoethnographic project, I have distributed throughout this thesis fragments from the notebooks I kept during my time in the school,

texts written *in situ* and without the benefit of hindsight. These fragments are unedited snapshots of my emotio-intellectual body-mind state at a specific time and place; they are predominantly intended to reveal my recurring moments of joy, confusion and exasperation during fieldwork, and as an attempt to show my own vulnerability and contradiction while I systematically dissect the actions, feelings and thoughts of my colleagues at Ark Lajpat Nagar. The characters in the portraits all say things in the moment which they may not necessarily agree with if approached in a more sober, distanced format; or to put it another way: they're human. I display the notebook fragments to democratise my ethnographic analysis, rather than paint a self-portrait (although I do share Katy's frame), these 'raw' notes are more of a photographic attempt to capture my own journey of becoming.

'Criticism itself is commodified as it colonises social life' (Pelias 2000: 223)

I recognise that in my position as ethnographer I have both created and absorbed cultural material during my time in the school, and this thesis is an academic commodification of that social experience. I especially use Katy's portrait and its subsequent analysis to question the ethical implications of my role as anthropologist in the school, and as an investigator and producer of 'knowledge'. Despite these self-analyses, I still display 'the fieldworker's scientific desire for generalisation', and the, 'inherent violence of field research', of which Vincent Crapanzano warns (2010: 55-78).

Ultimately, I hope that my narrative and auto- ethnographic techniques facilitate a reflection on my partiality, subjectivity and co-emerging subjectification as teacher/pupil in concert with other co-emerging teacher/pupils.

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