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Complicity and Antagonism

Anthropological Views of Geneva

Edited by Alessandro Monsutti, Françoise Grange Omokaro,
Philippe Gazagne and Sandro Cattacin



THE
GRADUATE
INSTITUTE
GENEVA

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INSTITUT DE HAUTES
ÉTUDES INTERNATIONALES
ET DU DÉVELOPPEMENT
GRADUATE INSTITUTE
OF INTERNATIONAL AND
DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

FACULTÉ DES SCIENCES DE LA SOCIÉTÉ
INSTITUT DE RECHERCHES SOCIOLOGIQUES



UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE

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Context: Seminar Qualitative Methods in the Social Science 2013-2014

Drawings by Heather Suttor

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TABLE OF CONTENT

FOREWORD	5
INTRODUCTION: COSMOPOLITAN VIEWS ON DIVERSITY	7
CONTESTED SPACE: CONSUMPTION, SOCIAL INCLUSION, AND EXCLUSION IN THE MARCHÉ DES GROTTEs	17
ENGAGING IN THE FIELD	20
POWER IN THE FIELD: NEGOTIATING OUR PRESENCE	22
MICROPOLITICS AND SOCIAL RELATIONS	24
FOOD CONSUMPTION, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION	27
CONCLUSION	31
OF GAMES AND GAMBLING IN LE SAGITTARIO: SOCIAL MIX IN A GAME HOUSE IN GENEVA	35
WHERE WE SPEND TIME TOGETHER	37
GAMES OF CHANCES	40
A WORLD OF MEN AND BROTHERS	44
CONCLUSION	47
IDEOLOGIES OF SOCIAL MIX ON SENTIER DES SAULES	51
DISCOVERING SENTIER DES SAULES	52
BECOMING PART OF THE COMMUNITY	56
FROM PARTICIPANT OBSERVERS TO INTERVIEWERS	57
IDEOLOGIES OF SOCIAL MIX	59
Dimensions of diversity on Sentier des Saules	59
Ideologies of unity on Sentier des Saules	60
Ideologies of separation on Sentier des Saules	62
Conclusion and aspects for further research	64
A JOURNEY THROUGH LES PÂQUIS: ENCOUNTERS WITH DIVERSITY	67
FIRST IMPRESSIONS IN THE FIELD	67
NEGOTIATING OUR PRESENCE	71

ONE PLACE, TWO TRAJECTORIES	75
WIDENING OUR GAZE	79
MOVING ON...	81
THE PÂQUIS DISTRICT, BETWEEN WALKING AND TALKING	85
FIRST WANDERINGS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD	85
A SPACE IN MOTION	86
TIME AND THE OTHER	87
CONCERNING THE INSTRUCTIONS	88
THE CITY AS NARRATIVES	89
“THE NEIGHBOURHOOD, FOR THE NEIGHBOURHOOD, BY THE NEIGHBOURHOOD”	91
PROTECTING A HERITAGE	92
STREET CORNER CONVERSATION	93
BETWEEN COMPLICITY AND ANTAGONISM	95
THE PALACE OF DELIGHTS	96
LITTLE BY LITTLE, THE METAPHOR UNFOLDS	97
PUTTING THE TERRITORY INTO NARRATIVES	100
BIBLIOGRAPHY	103

FOREWORD

This book is the result of a collective undertaking whose context should be clarified. It stems from our desire to develop a joint research project about the city of Geneva that questions the paradigm of diversity as a factor of social stability. Our project *Cohabitation, connivences et antagonismes en situation de “nouvelles” mixités urbaines* (*Cohabitation, complicity and antagonism in context of the “new” urban social mix*) was supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF, application number 10001A_143379) and took place between 2013 and 2016. Focusing on Geneva, a unique anthropological and sociological laboratory for studying cities and migration, we proposed to re-examine neighbourhood sites while remaining sensitive to the existence of translocal links. Our ambition was to revisit the Chicago School’s studies on neighbourhood relations in the light of transnationalism’s achievements by asking ourselves the following question: How can these two approaches become complementary in order to explore the transverse links between different groups in a localised urban space? The aim was thus to study diversity in an urban context without restricting ourselves to a binary relationship between local and migrant populations, or between majority and minority groups.

Five people participated in the research project: Philippe Gazagne, post-doctoral researcher at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Maxime Felder and Loïc Pignolo, assistants and doctoral students at the University of Geneva, and ourselves. In parallel with the research itself, students from both institutions carried out small fieldworks during the 2013-2014 academic

year, adopting the conceptual and methodological framework of the SNF-supported project. A first volume was published at the end of 2015, featuring contributions from participants in the University of Geneva's Master in Sociology methodology workshop (Felder, Cattacin *et al.* 2015). This current collection brings together work carried out during the Graduate Institute's Master in Anthropology and Sociology of Development seminar on qualitative field methods.

The team presenting their work here was composed of Savannah Dodd, Juliana Ghazi, Victoria Gronwald, Sarah Hayes, Aditya Kakati, Samira Marty, Linda Peterhans, Dagna Rams, Rosie Sims and Heather Suttor, all of them masters students of anthropology and sociology at the Graduate Institute. Philippe Gazagne participated in this collective effort with a chapter setting out his rambles in the Pâquis district. Françoise Grange Omokaro, Lecturer at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, joined the editorial team along the way, providing patient and rigorous comments on successive versions of the various contributions.

Sincere thanks go to Dougal Thomson, who translated several sections of this manuscript from French into English and who performed in-depth editorial work on the whole. Last but not least, this project would not have been possible without the many residents of the Pâquis, Grottes, Jonction, and Plainpalais neighbourhoods, who told us about their everyday lives, who strolled alongside the authors, opening their shop or apartment doors, giving their time and their trust. May this small volume be a tribute to the richness of their lives.

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INTRODUCTION: COSMOPOLITAN VIEWS ON DIVERSITY

*Alessandro Monsutti and Françoise Grange Omokaro*¹

Each year, first year students of the Graduate Institute's Master in Anthropology and Sociology must attend the seminar *Qualitative Field Methods in Social Science*. The pedagogical approach is based on the premise that field researchers do not set off to discover a pre-existing reality but rather construct their object through reflexive movement, negotiating their presence with the people they meet and interview. Our pedagogical principle can be expressed in three *words*: *Learning by doing!* Through our field philosophy, our method can be seen as a manifesto for *slow research* (Allegra 2013). Teaching is structured around three major axes: observation (including participant observation, so dear to ethnographers); interview techniques; note taking and keeping a field diary. Particular attention is paid to issues involving writing, in both its practical and theoretical dimensions, and to ethics. Seminar participants implement the research techniques discussed in class during a fieldwork conducted in Geneva and the surrounding region.

For the spring 2014 seminar, students were given the task of conducting their research in accordance with the conceptual and methodological framework of a research project on diversity in Geneva entitled *Cohabitation, connivences et antagonismes en situation de "nouvelles"*

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¹ Co-teachers of the Seminar *Qualitative Field Methods in Social Science*.

mixités urbaines (Cohabitation, complicity and antagonism in context of the “new” urban social mix). Participants were free to define their object of study: a street or a path, an open market, a restaurant, a bar... They were instructed to take a reflexive look at their approach by organising their work around several thematic and methodological axes: social diversity in public spaces; migrants’ transnational links; negotiating their entry and exit from the field; appropriating social sciences’ main qualitative techniques; the possibilities and challenges of multimedia; the role of languages in ethnographic inquiry; ethical issues. While only a minority of students spoke French, the diversity of their origins (Switzerland, Germany, Poland, England, Spain, USA, Australia, Brazil, Israel, India and Indonesia) and linguistic skills (French, English, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Polish, Arabic, Hebrew, Hindi, Bengali...) were noticeable. Many participants had a migratory trajectory themselves and multiple senses of belonging. Diversity ran through them; it was already within them, not the result of encountering the sociological realities of Geneva. Through their distanced perspective, the seminar participants demonstrated that an anthropological approach is not the prerogative of Westerners who look at an exotic and distant other, but is traversed by a double effort of familiarisation and defamiliarisation. For these young researchers from all over the world, joint reflection on their entry into fieldwork was a concrete opportunity to clarify their epistemological posture. What’s more, the classroom situation represented in itself an experience of discovering diversity and decentering one’s views with non-English-speaking teachers speaking in English to people from all five continents. It was a question of acquiring basic techniques of qualitative research while at the same time becoming conscious, in a reflexive and comparative manner, of how the way each person looked at Geneva differed from that of his peers because it was informed by multiple biographical, cosmopolitan and transnational trajectories. Studying neighbourhood social life made it possible to discuss the

role of social class in mobility, as well as the distinction between globalization from above and from below.

In this didactic context, what should the teacher's role be? Where do we stand in the process? Are we intermediaries or guides on a journey of discovery? In fact, the movement is twofold: we discover how these non-Genevan students discover Geneva. Year after year, we are confronted with a recurring reaction among students: intimacy as a condition of the production of qualitative knowledge is often experienced as an intrusion or a mug's game; the task of ethnographic investigation is accompanied by a feeling of guilt linked to stealing snippets of life. To disclose one's results is to betray the trust of the people one met during one's fieldwork (Monsutti 2007). Faced with people confiding their hopes and frustrations, students become aware of their ethical responsibility. They gain awareness, more intensely than through reading any methodological textbook, of their positionality, their social trajectory and identity, as experienced by them and perceived by the people they meet, shape their sociological production. This is where our didactic and epistemological premise resides: contemporary ethnographic inquiry cannot do without its context of production, or be separated from wider social and political issues (Fassin and Bensa 2008). The construction of the object is thus inseparable from a reflexive journey.

Week after week, the students share their feelings, explain their unease and discomfort, comment on each other's experiences. Thus, they discover by themselves that while a certain amount of know-how and techniques should be mastered, most methodological and ethical problems cannot be solved by predefined toolkits. They collectively produce their object; the exchanges become a form of catharsis, where frustrations are made explicit, shared and analysed. Putting things into words, first by speech, then by writing, is liberating. The students write a final report in which they confront their positionality

as researchers and analyse their collected data: How did they justify their presence and activity to the people met during their research? How did the people they met perceive these young ethnographers from all around the globe? How did their perception influence their responses to questions? A group of these reports was selected for significant editorial contribution from the supervisory team. They form the framework of the present manuscript.

During the deconstructivist movement that marked the collapse of the functionalist-structuralist paradigm and the emergence of post-modern critique, anthropology went through profound reflection on the production of its own knowledge (see, for example, Clifford and Marcus, eds 1986). Notwithstanding certain excesses in this trend, it is no longer possible to conduct empirical study without making explicit how access to information was obtained, and how the researcher's presence was negotiated. Of course, social sciences are not fiction. To be sure, historians and sociologists do not produce novels, and neither do anthropologists. Each of us must resist the temptation of exoticism when describing and analysing past or present social practices; each of us must follow the rules rigorously, adopting a methodological approach that gives protection against subjectivist drift. But recognising this requirement, which is the basis of academic work, does not mean giving in to a positivist illusion under which the researcher discovers an external social reality and faithfully transcribes it in a text that forms its unequivocal representation. Writing is not a tool that examines research results from all sides, making it possible to communicate them; the question of textuality is at the heart of social science epistemology, and it must be theorised as such. The social sciences, at the risk of condemning themselves to tedium, must assume their literary dimension (Jablonka 2014). A researcher conducting a field investigation has subjective feelings whose explication and analysis form essential steps in his or her heuristic approach. Equally, an author who captivates his readers with his style

can better convey his purpose; his descriptions already contain reasoning, a dialogue with literature, a position in a theoretical debate. Writing is therefore conceived of here as an anthropological and sociological method: it is not a question of transcribing results, but of taking on a creative process with its aesthetic dimension; it is about presenting and sensing atmospheres, people, settings, interactions. Creating emotion in the reader is not incompatible – quite the contrary – with cognitive experience.

Five chapters follow, interspersed with Heather Suttor's drawings, which themselves contain both reflexive movement on the relationship between the investigator and the respondent, and an anthropological look at diversity in Geneva.

Samira Marty and Rosie Sims explore the weekly market in Les Grottes, a colourful neighbourhood near the train station, where they question their positionality as customers and as researchers. It is through buying and consuming food, rather than by attempting to explain their project, that they manage to negotiate relationships with the people they observed and interviewed. A malaise remains in their minds: Have they profited from the specific social relationship established between an ethnographer and her object? Did they have to pay to acquire the information they needed? Via the disturbance their mere presence caused, a first image of Les Grottes as an open gathering place gave way to a more complex vision of a space traversed by subtle hierarchies, disputed between permanent shopkeepers and those who inhabit the market one day a week, between those living in France and Switzerland, between regular customers and passing trade.

Dagna Rams and Aditya Kakati introduce us to the world of the *Sagittario* gaming hall in Plainpalais. It has long been a meeting place for Italian immigrants from the neighbourhood, and is now run by an

Eritrean woman. The two groups of regulars – old Italian workers and young asylum seekers from the Horn of Africa – live side by side with no hostility or real connivance. They are distinguished by age and origins, but also by the games they play. Building on their research team's gender mix, the two authors show how the *Sagittario*, an especially masculine environment run by a woman, may appear as paradoxical on several levels. It is simultaneously an enclave and a space of liminality, a suspended testimony of the migratory waves that have succeeded one another in a district experiencing rapid gentrification.

Savannah Dodd and Victoria Gronwald lean towards the Sentier des Saules in the Jonction district, which runs alongside the river Rhône. After an intimidating entrance into the field, they initially seek to negotiate their presence by going to a reassuring place: the Ethno Bar, frequented mainly by Anglophone students from the nearby Webster University student residence. It will be through a process of gradual familiarisation, by taking pleasure in visiting places, that they pass beyond the observation phase and engage in interpersonal exchanges. Their initial conversations highlight wide diversity among those who use the Sentier des Saules, as if valorising social mix was part of the place's dominant ideology. Soon, however, more subtle temporalities and spatialities emerge, marked by avoidance strategies and differentiated uses of public space.

Juliana Ghazi, Sarah Hayes and Linda Peterhans turn their attention to Parfums de Beyrouth, a Lebanese restaurant on rue de Berne. As two of them have lived in the Middle East and can speak some Arabic, the first contacts are easy. For the team members, going out for a kebab is an everyday act requiring no justification. What's more, the only female restaurant employee turns out to be Brazilian, like one of the researcher. Behind a harmonic façade, it quickly emerges that the young American woman exchanging a few words in Arabic with

the tenant, and the Brazilian student talking with the cleaner are collecting conflicting stories. Diversity of perspective responds to diversity of object: the initially warm welcome cracks, offering a glimpse of the power relations that inflect all social interaction.

Adopting sociologist Jean-Paul Thibaud's methodological approach of *parcours commentés* or "guided walking tours" (2002), Philippe Gazagne takes his readers to the Pâquis. He accompanies cultural mediator Adib on strolls that form a pretext for discovering the neighbourhood, its inhabitants and its users. The assumed subjectivity of the author and of his guide, in a reflective game of mirrors, becomes the condition for telling the place's story. A new image takes shape of a Geneva neighbourhood resisting its reputation as a home of drug trafficking and prostitution, which aims to highlight the district's history of cohabitation, linked to its social and migratory heritage. As a conclusion to this little volume, the city is appropriated in many ways and loses its objective reality.

What do we learn about Geneva after reading these chapters written by students from elsewhere? Is this a simple collection of anecdotes and impressionistic notes representing nothing but the authors' idiosyncrasies, of narratives seeking to provide an aesthetic representation – whether visual, olfactory or aural – of the city? Taking small steps, Savannah Dodd, Dagna Rams, Philippe Gazagne, Juliana Ghazi, Victoria Gronwald, Sarah Hayes, Aditya Kakati, Samira Marty, Linda Peterhans, Rosie Sims and Heather Sutor bring places, people and atmospheres to life without skipping over their intellectual and moral doubts. One of the ethnographic approach's richnesses becomes clear in the reading: loyalty within a relationship and emotion, far from being obstacles, are valuable heuristic tools, a method for discovering that allows small facts, gleaned almost at random, to become significant. The fluid style adopted in this collective work reflects the characteristics of the object being studied. Via their distant

gaze, the authors show how diversity is experienced in the form of movement. They also reveal the place of subtle, micro-political logic in a public staging of belonging, in the appropriation of areas, in a diversity of profiles highlighting in turn their origin, genre, class and intersectional organisation within the public sphere. The Lebanese restaurant employee's aspirations to integration and a better life resonates with the gentrification process under way in many districts of Geneva, where social distinction is signalled through different consumption habits; the affirmation of being a citizen of the Pâquis neighbourhood is a response to the apparent informality of the Sentier des Saules, which seems only at first sight an area of spontaneous sociability; the areas' various categories of use, whether multiple or shifting, temporary or permanent, are in search of legitimisation, which is occasionally incompatible, as in the Grottes; everywhere, the validation of localism or multiculturalism collides with the competition for the occupation of space; dissonance and complicity, antagonism and solidarity are not only declined by belonging, by origins; the Pâquis restaurant owners with Middle East origins are jealous of one another; while two groups appropriate and cohabit a space like the *Sagittario*, their relationship is cool but not conflictual. The city's re-appropriation by migrant groups is accompanied by permanent transnational links and recurring unequal relations, whether linked to origin, age or gender. The city appears simultaneously as a space of tangible encounters and of imaginary projections.



CONTESTED SPACE: CONSUMPTION, SOCIAL INCLUSION, AND EXCLUSION IN THE MARCHÉ DES GROTTES

Samira Marty and Rosie Sims

We finally went up to buy some organic rosé. Whilst queuing, I made eye-contact with an elderly couple standing next to me, who were savouring a glass of white wine together. I overheard them talking about how crowded the market square was today. I nodded in agreement, trying to engage in the conversation. With a light smile on their faces, they pointed out to me that there was a whole new generation of market visitors. Tongue-tied, I nodded and added that we belonged to this new group as well. Then, I asked them if they came to the market often. They concurred and explained that they lived in the grey building next to the square, where the man owned a little business [...] The woman wondered where we were studying. "Not far from here, at the IHEID, next to the Place des Nations," responded Rosie. At that moment, we reached the front of the line and it was our turn to be served. Before turning our back to the couple to pay, I wished them a pleasant evening, and expressed amiably that we hoped to see them soon. "Yes," they replied in a friendly tone, "see you next week!" [Excerpt from Samira Marty's field notes, 6th March 2014]

Arriving by train in the city of Geneva is a noisy and busy affair. In the bustling station, people are running to catch their train, others are in a hurry to take the tram or bus to their next point of destination, and everyone seems occupied with the daunting task of getting from A to B in the midst of the crowd. When one manages to leave the station by the south side, you are not yet free of the throng, as taxis

vie for your attention, whilst people dash across the road to catch their next mode of transport. However, exit through the north side of the station, and you will have a much quieter experience, especially if one is to cross the main road and follow the first little side street into the beautiful and quaint quartier of les Grottes. Indeed, Geneva is made up of this mosaic of very different districts, each with its own distinct feel and sociality. The Quartier des Grottes is one piece of the puzzle, and the city of Geneva's guide to the place describes its "rebellious and anti-establishment spirit" (Ville de Genève 2014). Indeed, les Grottes stands out as a different sort of space than the busy city that surrounds it. Located behind Gare Cornavin, it feels separate from the urban hustle and bustle of the city. In fact, some call it a "spatial intrigue" (Cogato Lanza et al. 2013: 13). Built in the 19th century, the area has become a target of a modernisation project, an objective that has triggered resistance since the 1970s (Cogato Lanza et al. 2013: 12). These past struggles for autonomy were translated into acts of squatting - its graffiti-sprayed remnants of the time remain on the building walls. The claims of alternative forms of living and collectivity are also residues in people's memory (ibid).

One of the area's main events for social gatherings is its weekly market. The Marché des Grottes is held every Thursday from four-thirty to around eight in the evening, although people stay on even after the stalls have closed for the day. Located on the big square, surrounded by tall apartment buildings, Place des Grottes is a site of convergence, where the narrow roads meet and open up. The produce on sale includes wine, apple juice, cider, cheese, soap, *sirap*, fresh fruit and vegetables, bread, oil, olives, dried fruits, nuts... Most of the products are local and organic. Moreover, the majority of the stallholders are permanent, and are present every week, although during our research we noticed some changes. Furthermore, the market is attended by a wide variety of people, including elderly couples, families with children running riot, teenagers, young adults, bohemians, homeless people using their wits to acquire food and wine, people in suits coming after work... the list goes on. In terms of gender, we observed that in the late afternoon the people doing their groceries are mostly women, whereas men tend to arrive later and congregate

around the wine stalls and drink with their friends. However, there is no clear gender divide, and both occupy the space in a harmonious fashion. Finally, a large variety of languages are spoken, both by sellers and consumers, reflecting the idea of an “international Geneva.”

The market’s spatial dimension is quite compelling. As mentioned previously, the square where the market is held is a central place, almost like an arena upon which all may gaze, from the street, the cafés and the shops, as well as from the apartments above. We were also intrigued by the horizontal space of the market itself. The slope of the Place des Grottes seems to reveal a certain hierarchy: the majority of people gather around the organic wine seller at the top of the market and the bakery stand next to it, occupying the space lengthwise from the central fountain upwards. The Turkish vegetable sellers, on the other hand, are situated at the very bottom of the square, seemingly pushed to the lower margin. This lower section of the market, located adjacent to Cornavin train station, always seems quieter, and people only stop briefly to buy their required produce. Around the wine stalls, on the other hand, people congregate in groups around upturned barrels serving as tables and the limited seating possibilities under the wine sellers’ tents. Moreover, the layout of the market is strictly ordered and controlled by public authorities who check each seller’s permit. According to our informants, the organising committee is the authority behind the market that decides on the sellers and the location of their stalls. The committee is composed of several individuals living in the area, who try to promote goods produced locally (Ville de Genève 2014).

As regular visitors of the market, we were intrigued by the locus of social interaction. The central location of the fountain served as a very fruitful starting point of encounter. Often occupied by children, this fountain is a hub of activity in itself, as parents supervise their offspring and young adults use its edges as a seat or table alternatively. The market is dynamic, evolving throughout the year, changing with the seasons and the time of day. We developed friendly relationships with the stallholders through weekly small talk, as well as with some

of the inhabitants of the adjacent streets that we met for instance whilst queuing, as our introductory paragraph indicates. Through these various interactions, we started to grasp an understanding of the mosaic of relations between the market, the inhabitants surrounding it, and the area of les Grottes in general. In addition, our quest for information had a snowball effect, and we would meet new informants as people referred us to others, such as Seraina² suggesting that we talk to Emilie about how the market came about: *“Do you know Emilie? She was the one who initiated the market. You should talk to her, she owns the café nearby, go and see her.”*

We thus began our field research in February 2014, and for the next four months we focused geographically on the Place des Grottes and an adjoining street called Rue de la Faucille. The purpose of this study is to attain a greater level of comprehension of the social processes around the Place des Grottes during and outside market hours. Therefore, we did not just put an emphasis on the market, but also on a café, an artisanal atelier and a flower shop on Rue de la Faucille. In order to grasp an understanding of the existing social relations, our key questions mainly focus on the following issue: How does the market provide a space for social interaction? How are encounters during the market hours facilitated by consumption? Is the social mix occurring during Thursday afternoons/evenings representative of the overall mix of the place outside the market's hours?

ENGAGING IN THE FIELD

For this study, we conducted participant fieldwork, meaning that we attended the market on a regular basis as customers and researchers. We held informal interviews with as many different individuals as possible in terms of age groups: children, students, middle-aged market visitors and retired people. In terms of origin, we met people from Switzerland, Canada, the US, Greece, France, Turkey, Tunisia and Spain as well as people having grown up in and/or just living at the

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² Names have been changed for anonymity

Place des Grottes. Our interlocutors had diverse various socio-economic backgrounds: we talked to squatters and punks, wine connoisseurs, a homeless man as well as numerous people characterised by some of our informants as “bobos” (*bourgeois-bohemian*), that is, people who are relatively well-to-do with left-wing values, with a particular social capital that translates into their alternative way of being. Through the snowball effect of people introducing us to others, we created a small network of both inhabitants and regular market visitors. In short, the wide range of Geneva’s societal composition became our object of analysis by trying to grasp an understanding of the existing micro and macro-perspective of the social and economic relationships of the market as well as in the surrounding area of Les Grottes.

In addition to these weekly market visits, we held a formal interview with Seraina, the owner of an artisanal atelier in an adjacent street of the Place des Grottes. We had not met Seraina before this encounter and received her contact details through one of our professors who knows her in person. Seraina mapped out the history of the market that was established thanks to the active efforts of some of the area’s residents. She pointed out the importance of a café owner nearby whom we had talked to already, identifying her as a main organizer of the quartier’s activities. According to Seraina, the social composition of Les Grottes was mainly divided into friends’ circles. Allowing us to draw parallels between the spatial layout of the market and the spatial arrangement of les Grottes, Seraina mentioned divisions between the inhabitants living closer to the station and those living higher up in les Grottes. Besides the market, the active residents regularly gather in communal spaces such as the Maison Verte³, using it for private events, small concerts and self-defence courses for girls.

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³ Although it must be pointed out that this was set up as part of the canton’s social political agenda

POWER IN THE FIELD: NEGOTIATING OUR PRESENCE

Our entry into the field did not feel particularly disconcerting, as we had already been regular visitors to the market for a long time. People from all different backgrounds and styles of dress came to the market and nobody seemed bothered about these differences - maybe a remnant of les Grottes' rebellious past - and so we felt comfortable and blended in with ease. However, as we began to appropriate the space as our field of enquiry, we became very aware of our own presence, and of its impact in relation to existing tensions and micro-politics that played out between the different people occupying or traversing this space. Questions of our own positionality and subjectivity continually cropped up, and compelled us to be reflexive about our research. Power circulated on many levels, and we were neither exempt from its grasp nor from its proliferation. What did it mean to be a researcher in this market? How to negotiate the tension between being a researcher and consumer? And what broader consequences could this have?

Being a consumer and researcher at the same time has been a concern that remains unresolved. We cannot shake the unnerving feeling that the stallholders were just answering our questions because of our role as potential customers. On one particular occasion, the cheese seller completely ignored our friendly enquiry until one of us actually took out our purse, ordered some cheese and asked the very same questions again. To provoke another similar situation, we went up to the Tunisian olive seller just to ask him how it was going, staying on the right side of his table without making a move towards the front where his bowls of olives were placed. Friendly, he answered that things were good and asked how we were doing. One of us made a comment about his new competition, as a new cheese stand that was also selling dried tomatoes and olives had just been set up. Not very impressed, he said that a little competition always brought fresh air and that fresh air was good for business. Once again, he asked how we were and suggested we try some of his salted almonds. We declined the offer in a friendly manner, so he turned his back to us –

the conversation had ended, the strange feeling remained. This, along with other occasions, gave us the impression that we were mainly perceived as potential customers with a clear economic aim to consume.

The negotiation of our presence on the field has been a real concern for us during our research and still seems unresolved, especially with regards to the power relations created through purchases. In our understanding, power in the field is omnipresent and awareness of it is a crucial precondition of successful fieldwork in the sense of “doing no harm”. For instance, during one market visit, a homeless man approached us, asking us for some red wine. As usual, we tried to be very friendly and filled the cup that he was holding. We toasted by raising both our glasses and we asked him where he was from. In retrospect, we wonder who of us was exploiting this situation to achieve his or her respective goals, him or us. “Buying information” contrasts with the easy-going exchanges we had with other customers. During these occasions, discussions were easy to enter, as there were no existing obligations or pressure. In addition, we sometimes could be perceived as objects of competition from the sellers, as they vied for our potential consumption. Talking to one seller rather than another could earn us unfriendly looks from another who would recognise us. Moreover, we tried to be very talkative with the stallholders, and sometimes customers got annoyed with us, as we were taking quite some time to conclude our purchase.

The mediation of our presence was not limited to the market. When we visited the café of Emilie, one of our main informants on Rue de la Faucille, we were received very differently depending on her mood swings. Sometimes, we felt like intruders in her space, unwanted and a hindrance to her daily routine. Despite us being regular customers, she would ignore us on occasion, or be rather brusque in her responses. Other times, she was lovely and talked at length about les Grottes. This slippery tension between her and us was a difficult aspect to negotiate, and we were very much aware of the impact of our presence at all times in her company. Maybe she felt comfortable enough with us to behave in such a way, but overall we found that she was like this with most customers. In addition, this behaviour was

very emblematic of the notion of the rebellious spirit that was said to characterise the area. Emilie was definitely defiant, and opened her café when she felt like it, rather than having regular opening hours like most other places in Geneva. When asked about her opening hours, Emilie said: “I refuse to follow the dictatorship of social norms concerning labour. Working in an office from 8 to 5 (...) that is not a good quality of life [to me].”

The gender aspect was also an issue that warrants attention, as most of the stallholders are men, and we were often whistled at by the Turkish vegetable sellers from the lower end of the market. Depending on our mood, on occasion this made us feel uncomfortable, and other times we would joke with them. This is reminiscent of Sartre, who says “in fact, sociologists and their ‘object’ form a couple where each one is to be interpreted through the other, and where the relationship must itself be deciphered as a historical moment” (1980: 21). But can we talk about an equal relationship; equalized through the exchange of our consumption for the access to his or her knowledge that we were depending on?

Ultimately, we think these questions do not have to be answered immediately – they become part of our “rucksack”; carrying their weight to wherever our research might lead us will hopefully help us to continuously negotiate and re-negotiate our presence, purpose and existing power relations on the field.

MICROPOLITICS AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

Clearly, personal relationships among sellers and customers emerged as a key component. The Tunisian olive seller stated: “my customers, they are always the same people. I know them all.” Seraina brought up this aspect in our interview with her and stated that she didn’t buy vegetables from the Swiss organic seller anymore because she thought he was unfriendly and stingy: “I spend 50 francs there every week and he never makes a token gesture.” This implies certain expectations of reciprocity, of a counter-gift in exchange for her commerce. Consumption thus became very much a political act, with clear ideas and

values motivating the choice of which stalls to purchase from. This breaks with the notion of fluidity in relations between consumer and producer, which characterises the concept of social mix somewhat differently. Moreover, there is a distinction between the occasional visitors who come for the wine and cheese, and those who do their groceries every week at the market – the latter are the people that engage with consumption in a specifically political manner, and through whom the micro-politics of the market become visible.

Seraina added that most inhabitants of les Grottes had personal issues with certain stallholders; for example, the overpriced French cheese seller or the Turkish non-organic and non-local fruit and vegetable sellers in front of the Boucherie caused outrage to some people. “I boycotted the Turkish sellers for two or three years out of solidarity for the organic vegetable seller [...] but everyone does this here, we have all boycotted certain people.” This slippage from “I” to “we” denotes some form of community or social group for whom she presents herself as the speaker, as a sort of representative, at this particular moment in time. This further implies a sense of collective solidarity between certain groups of people, manifesting inclusionary and consequently exclusionary practices among the market’s visitors. This development of a “symbolic boundary” (Lamant and Fournier 1992) seems to reveal fissures that are gradually exposed.

Conversations such as these revealed the myriad of social tensions with which we found ourselves confronted. What clearly came out of our research was that boycotts and other such political actions were based on personal politics, and on the question of whether produce was local or not, or organic or not, rather than being due to the nationality of the stallholder.

Critical in our attempts to understand these areas of tension amplified by customers and their individual choices, Lamla (2007) developed a theoretical framework of “consumer citizens”. He describes that democracy has become an angle of consumption and autonomous decision-making, and, simultaneously, that consumption itself has become an expression of politics. According to Lamla, the field

of politics has shifted from ballots to shopping carts in times of neoliberal capitalism. The intention of the market's committee to support mainly local producers and to promote organic production can be considered as a conscious decision and "making of politics" (ibid.). The extent to which this idea of the local has been enforced is debatable and emerged as a source of contention amongst the inhabitants as we have discussed previously.

As a matter of fact, not all market sellers offer organic products. There is, for example, the fruit and vegetables stand at the lower end of the market with products from Italy, Turkey and Spain coming from conventional production. Moreover, one of the wine stands sells only non-organic wine, and during our last market visit a second cheese stall was present offering non-organic dairy products. Emilie, the café owner, told us in an informal conversation during a brunch that it was not just the organic versus non-organic products that had become a source of tension, but also the differences between the Swiss and French producers. The discourse on whether the sellers were crossing borders with their products was an important subject of contention. She said: "I never buy the produce from the market. The prices (...) for example of the cheese (...) 40 francs a kilo, it's outrageous. And the cheese comes from Haute Savoie [in France], not even from here. And at the same time, people refuse to buy Swiss cheese in the supermarket for 26 francs a kilo. It's pure hypocrisy."

Seraina had a different point of view on this, stating that it would make much more sense from an ecological perspective to buy Gruyère cheese produced in the Haute Savoie in neighbouring France than the Swiss version from the Fribourg region. However, she criticized the prices of the French cheese seller: "there is good cheese, for sure, and homemade production takes time too. But the sheep's and goat's cheese, for example, cost half the price in the French markets on the other side of the border [...] but I still buy it."

This *frontalier* topic was mainly raised by street inhabitants and not really by market visitors, who were sometimes not aware of the origin of their purchases. A medical student from Geneva explained that he did not care about the origin of the products that he was consuming

on the market, but rather about the high prices of some goods. However, the notion of *frontalier* and the controversy and emotions it aroused are important facets to consider, as they raise the question of legitimacy in occupying this particular space. Who should be permitted to dwell in this place? How is legitimacy constructed or contested through the political act of consumption? We believe this to be an important aspect in considering the micro-politics of the market, and we will return to this point below.

FOOD CONSUMPTION, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

Attempting to understand the social interactions and occupancy of the Place des Grottes can also be complemented with the help of the theoretical framework offered by Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu's work *Distinction* (1984 [1979]) provides some tools with which to consider the market's customers and occupiers (for not all are consumers of the produce for sale, but all are consumers of the space itself). Indeed, he describes how taste, which appears as a natural result of one's agency to choose products, is in fact culturally constructed and shaped by the social milieu to which one belongs. Thus, taste is a marker of social class (ibid: 2). Bourdieu states: "[c]hoosing according to one's taste is a matter of identifying goods that are objectively attuned to one's position" (ibid: 232). Furthermore, he argues that tastes are determined by the relation between the field of production and the field of consumption (ibid: 230). When one considers the produce available at the market, it is distinctive in that it is either organic, or local, or simply only available at that place at that particular time. Indeed, the fact that it only happens once a week, during a set time, adds to the exceptionality or exclusivity of the place. Through their taste of attending the market, they express a certain form of cultural capital that distinguishes them from others. So, when we take into consideration the diversity of people attending the market, the question arises: who occupies this space, and how?

In our formal interview with Seraina from the artisanal atelier, she suggested that many of the people who lived in her building on the

square did not actually attend the market. She explained that the state-owned housing was inhabited by many migrants from around the world. She spoke of how sometimes it was difficult, as they did not speak any common language. Indeed, she stated: “the newest arrivals are either Indian or Sri Lankan, then there is an Algerian married to a Swiss lady, Italians, Chinese, Thai, Portuguese, Spanish... a real mix! So it is not always easy, especially with language barriers. So the children don’t always mix”. She asserted that these people do not go to the market, and put forward some of her ideas as to why this was so. According to her, the market isn’t actually more expensive than other places, such as Migros or Coop. However, she explained that the migrants in her building didn’t usually go to the market as they preferred cheaper places such as Aldi, or specialised shops, such as Indian or Chinese stores. Thus, her reckoning suggests that money and taste could be the reason for their non-consumption at the market. In addition, we never saw any Indians or Sri Lankans living in Les Grottes area on our weekly visits, which concurs with her appraisal of the situation.

A key point appears here: that of non-meetings, and non-occupation of space. Augé (1995) who coined this term, speaks of a non-space as a space that is only perceived incoherently as a such. The non-occupation of space in the market proves to be a key point of reflection. Who occupies this space, and how? Who is absent from this space, and why? These are some of the questions that came to plague us during our research.

A clear contrast emerges from our research at this point. Indeed, there seems to be a separation, even a marked tension, between the inhabitants of the area, and the market visitors. The inhabitants tend to either go to the market early on, just as it opens in the afternoon to “avoid the crowds” as one informant put it, or they would not go at all, such as the case of the migrants described by Seraina. This non-occupation is a crucial feature of the area. Indeed, it reveals a subtler pattern of spatial inclusion and exclusion, that is not simply based on nationality, but that is a lot more complex and layered. When looking

closely at these patterns, we can observe different kinds of social interactions and the occupation of space, based on who is included and who is kept out.

These tensions also appear based on the different kinds of people that attend the market. There is much talk of the “bobos,” *bourgeois-bohème*, well-to-do upper-middle-class people of slightly bohemian appearance (though when one looks closely, the branded labels on their clothes from expensive boutiques become apparent), who live in the increasingly gentrified surrounding areas. Many come to the market with their children, who run around and play on the fountain in the middle of the square. Talking to some of the café owners and people that we grew to know from the adjacent streets, these people were not always well perceived. There seemed to be a slight antagonism present in their voices when they spoke of these “bobos” taking over the area. Seraina spoke to us about the difficulties some of the inhabitants faced concerning state housing; that is, you could only have a certain number of rooms according to how many children you had, and with her eldest daughter moving out soon, she knew she would have to find another place to live, as she would not be able to afford non-state housing in the quartier. In addition, priority for state housing is given to those with young families, and she knew she didn't have a chance. However, according to Seraina, there are groups of friends who have moved into state housing decades ago which has created an atmosphere of continuity in some buildings.

Drawing on the present discontent, some of the shopkeepers and café owners from the Rue de la Faucille expressed discontent at the crowdedness of the market, in particular on summer evenings. Some explained that they deliberately went there early to do their shopping, before the crowds arrived. Others, for example a young professional at an international organization, stated that they specifically liked this aspect of the market: “It is a vibrant and lively place [...] here, I finally have the impression that something is going on in Geneva after 7pm on a weekday.” We came across this “ideal type” of consumer quite often, characterized by individuals who are looking to consume and socialise in a lively environment and uncomplicated outdoor setting

after work hours. In fact, the leisure aspect was our own key motivation when we first came to the market in the late summer of 2013. The bright lights that surround the square, the noise of laughter and the redolence of the spicy vin chaud attract clientele that goes far beyond the core group of ethical consumers.

As mentioned earlier, the market's diversity is not chaotic or random. Throughout our fieldwork we noticed broader patterns of consumption, both of the produce and of the space, according to the type of person. These patterns were not strictly adhered to at all times, but seemed to be valid for the most part. For example, the Turkish fruit and vegetable sellers at the lower end of the market are never very busy. The people who buy from them are often alone, and move on swiftly after making their purchases. In contrast, the "bobos" seem a lot more leisurely, occupying the middle of the market, gathering around the fountain and the wine seller in the middle of the market (more expensive than the one at the top). They are also more static, occupying the same spaces for long periods of time. As for the local residents, some seem to do their shopping and leave, like Seraina described to us. Others hung around for a bit, before leaving too. And some did not appear at all.

Indeed, apart from Seraina, we never saw any of the café owners or shopkeepers from the adjacent street come to the market, emphasising the point we make on the importance of non-occupation of space. Furthermore, the young adults bought wine and then moved outside of the square to sit on the road around the market, taking over the pavements and smoking with their friends. Finally, the homeless move strategically from place to place. They are highly mobile, and understandably opportunist, as we soon found out. These patterns of consumption could be interpreted through Bourdieu's framework of distinction. Cultural practices are linked to social backgrounds, creating a "hierarchy of consumers" (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]: 1). Tastes and specific lifestyles are organised by category of consumer at the market, expressed in the patterns just mentioned. Through their specific occupation of space, and the choice in their consumption, the regular visitors at the market are distinguished.

CONCLUSION

To begin with, we conceived of the market as a space enabling social mix. Perceived by our friends as a cool, unique area in Geneva, an image promoted by the city itself (i.e. in the *Ville de Genève* guide), we were drawn in by the relaxed ambience, the good food and wine available, and the alternative feel of the place. Perhaps the fact that it is a calm enclave in the middle of a busy part of town, where a community spirit seems to exist, plays an important part in this perception. Maybe people are drawn in by the apparently friendly atmosphere. And maybe food is the key to creating exchanges and social encounters. Going beyond the idea of politically motivated ethical forms of consumption, the market is above all a space of social interaction and encounter, and we are convinced that is what facilitates the diversity of the crowd.

However, as our research progressed, we came to notice that when one scratches beneath the surface, the micro-politics of the place tend to be revealed, presenting us with a very different image to that which is sold to eager visitors. Tensions appear on many different levels, and between different people. Spatially, we have shown that the market is arranged in a way that the key attractions are at the top of the market, while others are pushed to the margins by the train station. The variation in the level of congregation highlights this difference, with the busiest space being at the top of the market, while the lower end remains markedly emptier.

On a social level, we have emphasised the tensions between the inhabitants and the market visitors, not only in terms of spatial occupancy (which is why Seraina does her groceries earlier on, when it is less crowded), but also in terms of the type of person who attends the market. Indeed, with the ongoing gentrification of *les Grottes*, a certain resentment towards the “bobos” was noticeable, as they represented those who could afford to reside there, while the fight to remain in state housing was difficult for some of the inhabitants who had lived there longer. In addition, tensions also surfaced as a result of the collision between the market sellers and the adjacent street’s

shopkeepers and café owners, who seem to begrudge the popularity of the market in contrast to their quiet street.

Finally, on a political level, micropolitics between consumers and sellers were omnipresent, particularly when the inhabitants of the area were involved. Indeed, the question of *frontaliers* was an issue, as we have demonstrated, when considering the prices and the origin of the produce. The matter of organic versus non-organic production also played a role in consumers' choice. However, we have also shown that sometimes personal relations overrode these issues, as there were certain expectations of reciprocity that appeared only on the market and that one would not find in a more impersonal supermarket for example.

These tensions and micropolitics raise different questions about occupation and non-occupation of space. Moreover, this incongruity between occupation and non-occupation is only visible to the attentive observer, and can only be revealed by spending a certain amount of time in the area. Indeed, the community spirit that we have mentioned is not all that it seems to the outside observer. Communities are formed by the intricate balance between inclusion and exclusion, and this tension is very subtle and not immediately apparent. This raises the issue of legitimacy. Who is approved in this space? Who is included, and who is excluded? These questions highlight the fact that there are subtle power dimensions present. How, for example, are the French *frontaliers* rendered legitimate (or not) in this space? Reinforcing this issue are the personal politics surrounding the market, the anger towards these *frontaliers*, which was expressed frequently, mostly in relation to the low prices on the other side of the border. We wonder how far is the anger towards the French *frontaliers* simply political "mainstream rhetoric" from a mainly right-wing shaped discourse? And could this anger just be masking wider tensions? This is only a part of the broader picture of inclusion and exclusion that we have discussed.

The issue of occupation and non-occupation thus plays a key role in the mapping of social relations in the market. It is a friendly space

that fosters social interaction and encounter, while simultaneously excluding some from its internal dynamics. This non-relationship, with the migrants from Seraina's building, and with most of the shopkeepers of the adjacent street, is an important component of the market's social composition. Integration appears to happen through consumption, and thus those who do not consume, be it the space or the produce of the market, are excluded from its core. Our research in the Marché des Grottes has thus led us to question the notion of diversity as a harmonious and always positive phenomenon. Therefore, we are wondering whether or not we can speak about "social mix" in the market, or if, after all, "social co-existence" would be a better term for this context. Could such a coexistence thus simply be an alternative way of envisaging urban living nowadays? Or should one delve deeper into the fissures that appear when one digs beneath the surface? The Marché des Grottes seems to be an ideal place for further explorations of this kind.



OF GAMES AND GAMBLING IN LE SAGITTARIO: SOCIAL MIX IN A GAME HOUSE IN GENEVA

Dagna Rams and Aditya Kakati

It is 5 o'clock in the afternoon on a weekday and the entertainments at *Le Sagittario* are slowly gathering pace. More and more men are coming in, and the bustle is shifting away from the solitary spectatorship of horse races towards billiard tables, card games and animated conversation. On the opposite side of the street, a bar with the zany name, *L'Elephant dans la canette*,⁴ is experiencing a similar awakening. Smoking a cigarette in between games, Ahmed points in its direction and lets out a sigh: "That bar is for the new generation."

Le Sagittario has been a feature of rue de l'Ecole de médecine, a vibrant street at the border of Geneva's districts of Plainpalais and La Jonction, for the past two decades. According to the oldest customers, the game house was set up by an Italian immigrant. His daughter's Horoscope sign served as the inspiration for the name of the establishment, but perhaps not for its interior design - daring representations of zodiac signs as voluptuous women adorn the walls. To the new owner Selam⁵, a female immigrant from Eritrea, the walls signal that the place is "very much a man's world". She took over the business some years ago and now she is often the only woman inside. With her colourful scarves, horn-rimmed glasses and a gentle reserve,

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⁴ *The Elephant in the Can.*

⁵ Names have been changed when the involved people could be recognized.

one would imagine her in a more poetic setting than the managerial position she currently holds.

The two successive owners brought their friends to the place and thus Italian and Eritrean migrants became the most represented among the clientele. Still, the place is diverse and while we cannot provide detailed statistics, the customers offered some help: “That man over there is from France, this one is from Tunisia, that one is from Pennsylvania in the US, Italy, France, Serbia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Italy”, one of the regulars, Amir, himself hailing from Tunisia, points at different men as he lists their backgrounds.

Le Sagittario’s eclectic list of entertainments and the demography of its clientele means that it stands out from the rest of rue de l’Ecole de médecine. The remaining seven bars on the street, *L’Elephant dans la cannette* included, have only opened in the past several years to meet the socialising expectations of the students from the nearby University of Geneva campus,⁶ young ‘creatives’ who have been transforming Plainpalais and La Jonction into the city’s alternative art scene,⁷ and young professionals buoyed by Geneva’s potent corporate and NGO-sector. All the new bars sport an aesthetic reminiscent of their equivalents in East Berlin, East London or Parisian Bastille – seemingly understated and minimalist, but affluent.

It is the singularity of *Le Sagittario* that first drew Dagna’s attention. The occasionally pulled down blinds and the lack of women meant that to brave entering, she felt she needed company. In fieldwork, there are occasions, when an anthropologist can make contacts ahead of time via mail or telephone, thus having the comfort of prior introductions and early familiarisation, but there also occasions when this is impossible. In such cases, one arrives as a stranger and makes introductions by imposing oneself upon the surroundings. Dagna found that a good policy in such situations – and one that allows for

⁶ E.g. the University of Geneva now has twice as many students as it had in late 1970s – a jump from 8,000 to 16,000 students in 2013 (http://www.ge.ch/statistique/graphiques/affichage.asp?filtreGraph=15_02&dom=1)

⁷ <http://www.ville-ge.ch/dpt5/documents/uploaded/doc43468a926948d.pdf>

speedier adjustment to the place – was to show up with a research partner. Aditya joined in the excursions and the different trajectories that the two – a male and a female – experienced inside this ‘man’s world’ serve as inspiration for some of the discussion in the article.

Our fieldwork often began with gathering courage over coffee. When courage was lacking, we observed the games and, when we finally mustered it, we approached the customers for conversation. Through these exchanges, and an occasional game, we wanted to get a glimpse of the life in *Le Sagittario*. How do the customers use the space for socialising? How do the diverse identities express themselves in the gaming house? Are the shared games and gambling successful mediators of people’s different backgrounds?

WHERE WE SPEND TIME TOGETHER

Le Sagittario offers a sense of refuge for its customers. It is perfectly suited for the purpose as one can spend a lot of time here – shifting between games, without the obligation of making purchases or entering conversations. The divorced Ahmed admits a tad mournfully: “What would I do home alone? I come here instead.” Asante shares a room with fellow migrants on the outskirts of Geneva in order to cut. Amir is our age and lived “happily” in Tunisia playing rugby and working in a tourist agency until he met his former partner, for whom he relocated to France; now they are divorced (for the second time). He comes to *Le Sagittario* whenever he is in Geneva: “I live in Lyon in a hostel, but it would be too expensive for me to stay the weekend, so I come to my friend in Geneva instead. He is busy at work on the weekends. I need to kill time. It is funny, but I only bet on horses when I am in *Le Sagittario*.”

Different paths lead the customers to *Le Sagittario*. Giuseppe, a regular in the bar, says that he and his friends started coming here because of the original owner - he was a well-regarded man in the Italian community and so a family of customers grew around him. Although these days *Le Sagittario* is a lonely representative of its genre,

we were told that not long ago similar establishments dotted the map of Geneva. According to the oldest customers, who also happen to be living in the gaming house's neighbourhood, *Le Sagittario* only became truly diverse once Selam took over, bringing in the Eritrean staff and customers. The house's further surge in popularity came after the closing down of some of its competition – "After the billiard place in Carouge close to home was shut, I needed a new place to pass time," explains Janice.

It is curious that the composition of customers in *Le Sagittario* reflects different moments in immigration to Switzerland. Up to 1980s, migrants from Italy were the main group to settle here, but their number has been shrinking ever since.⁸ More recently, Eritreans make up the largest group of asylum seekers and refugees.⁹ But there are also other migrants from outside Europe coming to Switzerland. In *Le Sagittario*, various men of Algerian, Serbo-Croat, Turkish, Tunisian or even US backgrounds come together, but usually have less of an opportunity to meet their compatriots inside.

There are commonalities in the biographies of the older Italian customers we talked to – Giuseppe, Michel and Roberto. They live in the districts of Plainpalais and La Jonction, walking distance from the bar, having benefitted from various social housing schemes that were organised through their employers or lower-house prices of the previous pre-gentrification era. They have been in Switzerland long enough to get Swiss passports and membership in the political community. They came here to the booming industries in La Jonction, where they enjoyed steady employment, and protection against the consequences of unemployment. In addition, Giuseppe and Roberto

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⁸ 'Italian Immigrants Shaped Modern Switzerland', http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/archive/Italian_immigrants_shaped_modern_Switzerland.html?cid=3564154 (Viewed on 27.05.2014)

⁹ 'Eritreans brave extreme journey for new life', http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/politics/Eritreans_brave_extreme_journey_for_new_life.html?cid=32080100 (Viewed on 27.05.2014)

built bridges to the place through marrying into Genevois families, ‘acquiring’ Swiss families in the process.

There are also commonalities in two detailed conversations we had with Asante, one of the customers, and Nahom the bartender, who came from Eritrea as asylum-seekers less than 10 years ago, when they were both in their early 30s. Dagna tried to find out more about one of the older customers of Eritrean background, Janice, but as she asked about his migration story, he looked at her apologetically saying: “moins personnel, Madame” (“less personal, Madame”). Neither Asante nor Nahom live in the vicinity of the gaming house, instead they have to travel from farther parts of the town. Asante and Nahom came to Geneva on their own, and while they have friends in other places in Europe, they admit to feeling a bit lonely. They are single, but not without hopes. Asante emphasises that he is “looking for the one all the time”. Teased by Dagna about his presence in *Le Sagittario*, where the women only come in the form of an odd researcher such as herself, Asante remembers his bigger mission and quickly asks Dagna about her marital status. Both men work odd jobs and are unsure how long they will be able to stay in Geneva.

More biographical interviews are needed to add nuance. But already, these ones provoke questions: How is it significant that some are able to connect over conversations about politics from which others are excluded? How significant are the different life trajectories for the interactions?

Dressed in a smart suit, Michel tells Dagna about his recent trip to the social services to fill his unemployment benefits documents. When did Michel come to Geneva from native Italy? “Long before your parents had you in mind”, he responds, still seemingly on edge from his dealings with the bureaucracy. He is dismayed at the lack of jobs for men “a few years short of retirement,” especially when they are mechanics. The topic makes him think about his grand-daughter, with whom he gets to spend more time now that he is unemployed - the sole bright point of the situation. He dives into his pocket to show Dagna the photo of the child he keeps in his wallet. “She is beautiful”, Dagna agrees. As Michel is putting the photo back in its place, he

remembers to show the membership card certifying his association with the Swiss People's Party, which runs an anti-immigration platform in Switzerland. At this point, Michel looks around the place cautiously and in a lowered voice explains that immigrants are decreasing his chances of getting a job. When Dagna points out that he too, after all, is an immigrant himself, Michel takes offence, "But I am Swiss now!" Ahmed, Michel's long-term friend, who listens to the conversation, waves his hand in resignation: "I am a socialist, and I think that migrants are not the problem."

All these histories bring home a bigger point – that the extent and nature of integration depends on immigrants' characteristics and the economic and political context in their own country and at the destination at the time of arrival (e.g. Waters & Jimenez 2005). For example, the legislation regarding naturalisation in Switzerland has changed in the past decade making the criteria more stringent. Admittedly, the fact that Switzerland recognises Italian language and shares a variety of characteristics with its Southern neighbour means that immigrants from Italy were not as likely to face downward mobility as migrants from outside Europe.

GAMES OF CHANCES

Le Sagittario seems never to experience an ebb in activity. During the weekdays, the entertainments focus around horse betting and lottery stands, with occasional card games. In the evenings and weekends, the place fills with customers, nearly all tables are occupied for card games and billiard tables are in full swing. The eclectic nature of entertainments - allowing for sociability but also solitariness means that people without friends still have a purpose to enter. It is a place for games and gambling, where chance and luck come into play, but for all the mysticism and randomness, there were some patterns, especially in the timings of who comes to play and who plays what. While the older Italian immigrants sit here throughout the day, some of them keeping up strength until later in the evening, the younger Eritrean men come to the place slightly later and at the weekends.

One can come to the bar as a mere spectator - this is perhaps what makes *Le Sagittario* different from the other places on the street. A single client would find it difficult to spend time on their own in the neighbouring bars. He or she would have to sit on their own, buy an occasional beer, hope for a conversation with a bartender or a stranger, or pass the time observing the general commotion. In contrast, *Le Sagittario* exerts no pressure on its customers to make purchases or to have friends. Games are a natural spectacle. As Aditya often felt a bit shy to begin conversations, he would, similar to other man who come here on their own, observe the games and slowly piece the conversation together with others around the games.

One can also come here for televised horse races that occur globally and can be bet on from the gaming house. Facing the entrance, a green machine awaits the customers, who want to bet on horses in locations as removed as South Africa and Australia. The betting newspapers are laid open and spread across every surface available - on the billiard tables, on the bar, on the window panes. The horse betters sometimes enter the bar as if in a daze, leaf through the newspaper and log their choices on the machine. As Dagna stands around with a couple of customers talking about the games, their friend enters the bar, walks by failing to notice anyone, going straight to the machine in a nervous pace. One in our group shouts: "Maurice! Maurice!" Maurice, as if woken up from a dream, raises his eyes, smiles nervously and quickly goes back to his dealings with the machine. "That's what horse betting addiction looks like," Maurice's friends say and laugh. On another note, Rashid, upon being asked by Aditya on the intricacies of betting and perhaps some useful strategies, is told to "stay in school" rather than indulge in the activity.

The atmosphere is unobliging and soon minutes turn into hours. "I don't remember, when I came here... Let me look at the clock... It's my fourth hour," says Amir staring at his watch incredulously. He has bet on three games so far. "Madame, Madame, I just noticed that I am 15 minutes late for my shop," Billy, a manager of a tobacco shop in La Jonction, tells Dagna, but still he finds the time to place his last bets before leaving the bar.

The running consensus among the horse betters is that most of the time, the betting ends in failure. The drop and surge of adrenaline that accompanies the games creates the basis for the socialising. The men stare together at the screens, discuss the races, and rub off the imminent failure with jokes. “So if you keep losing, why do you keep playing?”, Dagna wants to know. Part of this addiction is self-explanatory - after all, addictions rely on creating compulsive habits. But part of the explanation is that a lot of the men feel removed from opportunities. Selom’s comment is befuddling at first: “In Geneva, they give you money to your right hand and take it from your left.” Asked what he means, he explains that in Geneva, one always ends up without money, seeing as everything is expensive.

For many of the customers, the limits of *Le Sagittario* are typified by the radius from which one can see the televisions. When Dagna suggested to Amir and Salom that they go deeper into the bar to observe the games, they both admit never to have ventured in that direction – this is even despite the fact that Salom has been coming here for the past 4 years and Amir comes here every weekend.

Deeper inside the bar billiard tables hide and at the furthest end, in an alcove without windows, one finds more tables for card games and a single table used for the game of *goriziana*. There are various etiquettes of gaming. “Who pays for the games?”. There are two answers: “the one who loses” – that is true for billiard and *goriziana* and as for the card games, that require no financial dealings with the staff, whoever loses pays for the drinks. Another option is that the costs are split between the players, creating impromptu billiard alliances. But this practice as one of the regulars explained, “detracts from the excitement.”

We observed that card games were usually the most popular among all the regular customers, while billiard tables are the main draw for those from outside the circle of regulars. The card game tables are close to each other, which means that even if the customers play in different groups, noise travels between tables and occasional conversations result. While it often seemed that there were divisions

between the tables, with men of Italian and Eritrean backgrounds sticking in their own groups, this observation was always vehemently opposed by the regulars, who emphasised that “we are all friends here.”

The game that drew its players and observers almost exclusively from within the Eritrean community was *goriziana*. It is mainly played in the evenings and during the weekends. The walls around the table for *goriziana* are plastered with advertisements for DVD copies of Ethiopian soap operas and occasional festivals and events. The game requires the use of a billiard table and the following befuddling set of equipment: a set of pawns of two colours, a set of balls of two colours, and a marker of another colour. We had the rules explained to us on different occasions, but each time the intricacies of the game evaded us. Janice, one of the older customers in the bar, who came to Geneva “a long, long time ago, but Madame [to Dagna], who are you to ask me such personal questions”, explained that the game requires some training – “All men in Eritrea play it, so this is why we also play it here.” The game came to Eritrea from Italy - its former colonial power, but the men of Eritrean origin are the only ones seen to play it here.

We talked about the game to Giuseppe, who had also heard that the game was of Italian origin, but had never seen anyone in Italy play it. Despite the fact that we caught him watching the game, Giuseppe dismissed the game as “uninteresting,” and voiced his suspicion that “it is played for money.” (Janice said the game is played in keeping with *Le Sagittario*’s general etiquette – whoever loses pays.)

As games provide a theatre of interactions, Giuseppe’s initial dismissal of the game was followed by at first a prolonged lecture about how there were good and bad Eritreans, based on whether or not they worked and as such had a source of income, and swiftly from there, he engaged in a conversation with Asante, an Eritrean refugee who was watching *Goriziana*. Giuseppe wanted to know more about his experience of coming to Geneva. The conversation ended up with

Giuseppe decrying the plight of refugees and the countries they come from.

Le Sagittario thus offers a place where the sheer number of interactions, the proximity between people from different backgrounds creates possibilities for socialising irrespective of whether there is a prejudice that underpins the interactions or whether there is curiosity. The proximity does not necessarily result in a better mutual understanding, and occasional appearances of remarks hinting at prejudices, the customers still share in the pursuit of entertainment. After all, *Le Sagittario* is not a political venue or a formal conference; people's opinions might be voiced casually and no one requires anyone to uphold to specific values, other than the rules of the game and the decorum of peaceful socialisation.

This is perhaps the danger of looking for symmetric and recurring configurations in such informal context, when it is precisely the lack of any coherent and systematic mode of interactions and behaviour, suggesting a richness in stimulating socialisation between people of different backgrounds. For example, after seeing a couple of Italian and Eritrean tables playing their separate games or after seeing the impromptu billiard alliance, we wanted to know whether there are regularities of which these interactions are examples, and Nahom shook his head, saying that it depends on the customers. Perhaps this sense that everything “depends” suggests that the place is mixed - that individual preferences rather than formulaic group dynamics push people to meet strangers or keep within the realm of their friends.

A WORLD OF MEN AND BROTHERS

Alongside the gambling and gaming nature of the place, we found it interesting that men from different backgrounds created for themselves a place where they could unite under the banner of shared masculinity. For all the social diversity that the place has, there are almost no women inside. Before commencing the fieldwork, we had walked past *Le Sagittario* on various occasions. Since we had not encountered

any female presence, this lack of representation was for Dagna an initial deterrent against entering the location. The addition of a male research-partner, Aditya, created a context of research and teamwork that allowed navigating the place. Once familiar, we rarely stayed together, as it was easier to venture on our own and this approach seemed to be more accessible for conversations. Dagna was pursuing conversations and Aditya kept to his own observing the commotion in the bar and following occasional conversations.

Asked about the lack of female presence, Nerayo suggested that he and other Eritreans could feel like they were at their '*brother's*' place, at *home*, speak their own language and create a sense of familiarity. He invoked a sentimental narrative in which migrant experiences somehow converged together under the sheltered confines of this place.

It is possible that migration from Eritrea is more biased towards men, the question being difficult to gauge. However, as emerged from Milion and Nerayo's narratives, it was often due to military conscription and such 'forced' duties that many men sought to escape. The bias might have also been present with regards to the Italian migrants, a lot of whom came here to do factory jobs in the metallurgy and car sector that was previously an important component of the life of La Jonction.

A sense of brotherhood was invoked once again when Milion reported an incident that occurred in the bar. Apparently a person of 'African' origin had come and asked for a shot of whiskey, went outside the entrance and smashed the glass on the floor, eventually leaving the bar in a hurry. Milion insisted that the person had no right to act this way – after all, they are all Africans, they are like *brothers*, and should treat each other so. He added that the man might not have felt comfortable doing the same in a bar owned by a white person.

It is unclear whether the place is actually uninviting to women or whether it is uninviting by the sheer accident of there being no women inside. There was a point when Selam, the owner relayed through Giuseppe, who in turn told Aditya that Dagna should not be

hanging out with the men on her own. Giuseppe added that she should be fine as Aditya was there to 'protect' her. At the time, Dagna was talking to a group of older men, who were otherwise immersed in their card games. One of them was showing others a photo of his grand-daughter, one was immobilised by a breathing pipe, and one was an old acquaintance of everyone in the bar. The irony between what the message implied and the seeming innocence of the set-up led Dagna to think that perhaps the owner simply believed that a woman in 'a man's world' is by default out of place.

In contrast, no one ever seemed to have asked Aditya as to 'why' he was present. His approach of hovering around the games and watching, and occasionally engaging in conversations during pauses just seemed the 'natural' thing to do. Selam on another occasion told Aditya that she was not happy with the way the 'lady' (Dagna) approached the customers to ask questions. The former opined that 'people are polite' and would not refuse to answer but she hinted that she felt that customers could be distracted from their focus on winning the games. After all, losing games (or game-time, since many games like billiards are charged by the hour) could also mean losing money. It is interesting that on these separate occasions the narrative coming from the owner (or the interpretation thereof) seemed to fluctuate between Dagna's well-being and that of the clients.

But the fact that there were no women might have been more significant to us than it was to customers and owners alike, who generally denied it. Once when talking to Ahmed and Michel, we asked them about the big absentees and they insisted that we were wrong. They even wanted to find ocular evidence of women, but failed and then quickly back-tracked, "maybe they aren't here today." They were not there on most of the days, but perhaps we should give Ahmed and Michel credit, after all they were the insiders. Milion responded to similar questions by saying that there are days when there are many women present, and he even mentioned 'Swiss women' who apparently often come to play 'fussball'.

Amir once enumerated the different marital situations of the men inside: “this one is single, this one divorced, divorced, married, divorced, single, married.” Million had spoken about his divorces and children. After a beer or two, he complained that women here are very difficult as they are very ‘free’, while in Eritrea he could reportedly beat them if he wanted to.

Le Sagittario allows an escape from these circumstances. It is perhaps also a place where the men can escape from the obligation of starting a family, and all the responsibilities that the pursuit inspires. Salom candidly acknowledged that at the moment he has nothing to offer to a woman: “I am working odd jobs, it is not the perfect time to start a family.” Amir spoke in a similar timbre: “I have now been divorced twice, look where that left me - I am homeless, my things are in the place of my former wife. I come here to stay with my friend, who is in exactly the same situation as me.” Amir also teased one of his friends inside the bar that he is currently “married to a telephone” – his sweetheart far away in Burundi; he calls her every week, but has not seen her in more than three years.

CONCLUSION

We can hardly claim to end on a definite note. From the study of spaces such as *Le Sagittario*, what we can refer to as an ‘enclave’, where certain phenomena of social encounters and transformations can find expressions. These enclaves act as liminal spaces for interaction.

It is possible that beyond such enclaves, which is outside *Le Sagittario*, non-European migrants are often subject to being seen as ‘suspect’ citizens. For example, the single time that *Le Sagittario* was mentioned in Geneva’s local newspaper GHI was in an article headed “Plainpalais: Eldorado de la drogue.”¹⁰ The photo of the gaming houses is as if shot from a safe distance - the image is blurry, but resolute enough to reveal two non-white men. Inside we read the “the

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¹⁰ *Plainpalais, drug Eldorado.*

establishment is frequented by the African community”. And we learn that the female author of the article has been warned against walking around the club late at night. The drug dealing is supposedly taking place around Plainpalais as a whole and “next to *Le Sagittario*” in particular, but given how little distance there is between the different clubs on the street, “next to *Le Sagittario*” could just as well be “next to its neighbours”. This narrative stands in stark contrast with what the bar means to its many customers - young and old - who come here to build a sense of community and invest in hopes about turning their lives around by winning horse races or the lottery.

Le Sagittario is also far quieter compared to its loud neighbours on the increasingly gentrified street. Still, the state authorities via the police have recently forced the establishment to take off the signboard, citing that it is supposed to be a ‘historic’ heritage building and should not look ‘like a bar’ from outside to the general public. One wonders if any of the adjacent buildings are as old as the one housing *Le Sagittario*, and if so would they have been subjected to the same censorship. (All other bars continue to display their banners.)

The fieldwork in *Le Sagittario* made it clear that this seemingly simple place works as a kaleidoscope of migration to Switzerland. It presents a case of a place where people who may otherwise be relegated to the margins carve out for themselves a space of socialising inside the city - the Eritrean refugees find themselves in the hub and heart of gentrified Geneva, against often racially loaded prejudices and undertones, while the working class Italian migrants are able to claim the space in which they reside, but which seems to cater more and more to the lifestyles of students and professionals. In their difference from the larger vicinity of the neighbourhood, they come to experience a world of familiarity defined by various individually determined parameters such as proximity, people speaking the same language, enjoying similar games and activities, perhaps finding a way to experience the city on their own terms.



IDEOLOGIES OF SOCIAL MIX ON SENTIER DES SAULES

Savannah Dodd and Victoria Gromwald

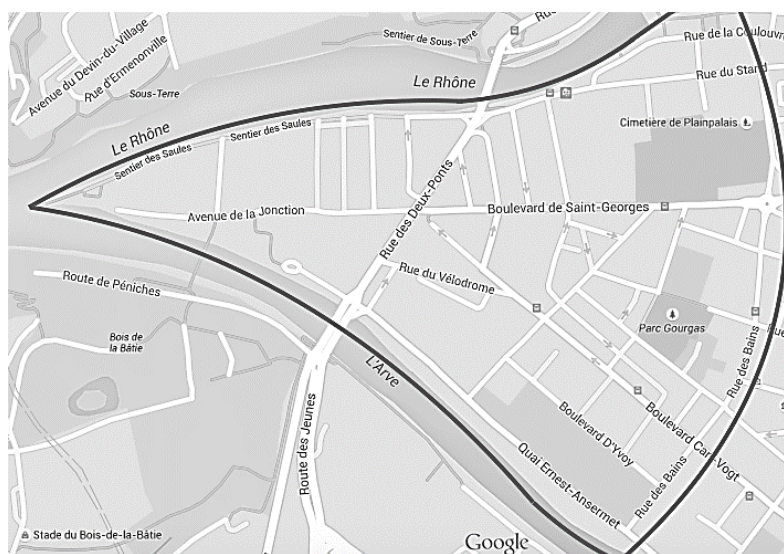
Sentier des Saules, a pedestrian path running parallel to the Rhone River in the Jonction neighbourhood of Geneva, drew us like moths to a flame. This street, that draws people from all across the city, serves multifarious facets of life: people from different socio-economic and national backgrounds work, live, and pass their leisure time along Sentier des Saules.

Apartment buildings line one side of the street, while fishermen cast their lines into the river on the other side. On the two docks jetting out into the river, locals gather to drink beers and smoke joints. Warmer days bring barbecue parties in the grassy stretches between the path and the river, and the wooden pallets interspersed along the riverbank serve as buffet tables. Young and old float in the river Rhone to cool down on hot summer days. L’Ethno Bar stands at the beginning of Sentier des Saules, where the pedestrian street intersects a bridge and a heavily trafficked road, Rue des Deux-Ponts. This ‘hip’ bar caters to all kinds: from the high-fashion anglophone undergraduates living in the dormitories just above the bar, to the *Genevoise* crowd in their mid-forties who wear their greying hair long. About halfway down the path lies Usine Kugler, an artist cooperative with ateliers and photography studios; an artists’ refuge from the intensity of city life.

In spring 2014 we set out to study this site in the middle of Geneva, characterized by different dimensions of diversity. We were interested in how the people interact and how they perceive the space – as a space of unity or one of separation.

DISCOVERING SENTIER DES SAULES

We did not set out to study Sentier des Saules; rather, a series of choices brought us there. When we first entered the field, we walked the whole of Junction, the stretch of land sitting between the Rhone and the Arve rivers and extending in a cone-shape at Rue des Bains.



Although we both live at the edges of this neighbourhood, we felt like outsiders. Neither of us had previously spent very much time in the neighbourhood apart from running errands. We sat in cafes, our pens poised above our notebooks, recording mundane details of life happening around us. Feeling like voyeurs, we peered into the daily

lives of those around us, observing the relationships between the people who sat together over coffee, who spoke together in passing, who shared a cigarette in the street.

When we were talking with people, they replied in short, guarded phrases. The first person with whom we spoke was the man running a convenience store on Boulevard de Saint-Georges. He answered our questions hurriedly, as though we had disturbed him, although the shop was empty except for us. We tried to involve him in a more in-depth conversation, but to no avail. He did not understand what we were doing there, why we were asking about the products he offers and the nationalities of his clientele, or what our questions were aiming at. At that point, we were not sure we understood what we were aiming at either.

We only knew that we intended to explore the extent to which people of different nationalities, ages, and genders intermingle in Jonction. This foundational question led us to choose this neighbourhood because of the coexistence of businesses alongside residences, the high immigrant population, and the proximity to our own respective homes. Yet, after our first day out, we felt distant from Jonction, disconnected from our surrounding community, and discouraged about our research plans. Our second time in the field, however, yielded more fruitful results.

For our second exploration of the field, we decided to go somewhere that students such as us might feel at home: a bar. We assumed that l’Ethno Bar, conveniently positioned at the heart of Jonction, caters to a student population because it sits just under the Webster University residence. We decided that our easiest way to access the neighbourhood would be to speak with students who are close in age to us.

We entered the bar and approached the counter to order a couple glasses of wine. Both barmen stood behind the cash register at one end of the bar. In front of the cash register where both barmen stood, stood a group of five middle-aged men and women, impeding our access to the counter. They all spoke French together, in contrast to

the American music playing overhead. The women were in long skirts and parachute pants. One man had a silver hoop in his earlobe.

At first we waited behind the group, expecting them to make way for us once they had finished paying their tab. However, it quickly became clear that they had no intention of moving. We tried to wedge ourselves in the side to attract the attention of the bartender, but we were completely ignored, both by the group of five and by the bartender. After about five minutes of uncomfortably waiting at the edge of the crowd, feeling on the brink of giving up, not just on the glass of wine but on the whole research project, the female bartender asked if we had been served.

Now equipped with our glasses of Merlot, pencils, and notebooks, we chose a table with a good vantage point of both the main and rear doors of the bar. Since our first trip into the field was characterized by uncomfortable encounters, we decided to have an evening of pure observation. As we wrote down everything that happened around us, we still felt like voyeurs, watching people's interactions, and like outsiders, as we were nearly denied access at the bar by the regulars. Yet we felt more comfortable, more self-contained at our table in the bar than we had walking the streets and attempting conversation in our first entry.

It was not until our third entry into the field that we began to feel the space opening up for us. We returned to l'Ethno Bar, set with the intention of sparking conversation and making connections. We chose a table on the patio outside and watched the groups of people around us, trying to determine which group might be the most open to speaking with us. A group of three middle-aged businessmen stood just metres away smoking cigarettes. Compared to the two sets of couples and the long table of about twenty young men, the three businessmen were the most approachable group. We excused ourselves for interrupting them and asked for a cigarette. Our small request turned into a two-hour conversation about life as expats, career paths, and world politics.

We learned that these three men all emigrated from Morocco almost thirty years ago to attend university and begin their careers. Now, they all live in or around Jonction, and they were happy to facilitate connections for us with other regulars of the bar and other residents of the area. After this first meeting, we met with them two more times at the same bar, during which they introduced other local residents. Sentier des Saules flowed in and out of the conversation, and we soon realized that the people we were meeting in the bar all had connections to the street: two of the men we met were fishermen who spent their days on Sentier des Saules fishing from the banks of the Rhone; another man was involved with a local planning committee for a renovation of the street. Sentier des Saules began to call our attention.

We narrowed our focus from the whole of the Jonction neighbourhood down to this one pedestrian street, and we began to spend most of our free time along Sentier des Saules as participant observers: walking the length of the path, sitting on the docks on sunny days, hiding in the warmth of l’Ethno Bar when the temperature dipped. Although we became a visible presence along the path, there remained a certain discomfort in the way we approached the area. We never had time enough to settle in as “regulars.”

Participant observation carries with it the advantage of reducing “the problem of reactivity” (Bernard 1994: 141), meaning that people behave differently when they know they are being studied. As the participant observer spends a lot of time in the field as a peer with the people studied, he or she soon fades into the masses, allowing the researcher to become invisible and to have access to a higher validity of data. However, as we only had three months to conduct the research, we never reached the point of being completely “normal” to the people in the field. We still stood out, especially since we are two young women in a predominantly male area. However, being young women also aided us in establishing connections with people; not only was it easy to approach women around our age, but also men were eager to speak with us.

After observing the people along the path, we identified four groups to target: people who sit on the dock and along the river, fishermen, patrons of l’Ethno bar, and Webster students. By the end of our research we had managed to speak with people from all these groups, and more, except for the Webster students. The contacts we made with other people almost prevented us from meeting them as when we were in Ethno Bar talking to the Moroccans or the fishermen, we were somehow very distant from the Webster students.

BECOMING PART OF THE COMMUNITY

While visiting Jonction and Sentier des Saules in our free time throughout April, we finally started to feel more at home in the neighbourhood and we began to identify with that area more than with the other side of Plainpalais. We slowly changed our habits of where we went to do our grocery shopping and where we relaxed on a sunny day. This gradual gravitation toward Jonction and the field encounters we had in early May led to our inclusion and feeling of belonging at our field site.

On the 4th of May, we walked along Sentier des Saules to start filming for our ethnographic film. With our camera in hand, we strolled passed several families, groups of young adults, and fishermen. When we came to the end of the path, we sat at the dock beside a group of five men in their 30s to 40s who were listening to North African music and drinking beer. We recorded the music and used music as a catalyst for conversation. We approached two Algerian men sitting closest to us and explained that we were doing a study about the area. We ended up talking with them for about an hour, and, by the time we left, everyone in the group knew us and said that we would be welcome to join them again in the future.

When we returned the next day, we encountered some of these Algerian men again, near the beginning of the street, and had a short, friendly conversation. A little further down the path, we met another man who told us that he spends time there every evening and that we

should come on the weekend to join a barbecue with him and his friends. He even showed us a “secret” of the regulars: a corkscrew attached in the chain link fence for communal use. It made us feel even more included to learn about the little secrets of the regulars.

We had another encounter that evening which seemed to open the field even more for us: we met the artist Thierry Feuz on the way back toward l’Ethno Bar while he was spray-painting a canvas covered with leaves. We stopped to speak with him and he ended up graciously giving us a short tour through the Usine Kugler, one of the biggest artist spaces in Geneva. We were very impressed by the space and felt honoured that he showed us his studio and others belonging to other artists, taking us into spaces that are usually not easily accessible to the public. He gave us a flyer, inviting us to an opening in June, and invited us to visit him at his atelier any time.

It is very interesting how the dynamics of how we feel in Jonction, at Sentier des Saules and especially at the dock have changed since the beginning of our research. Now, at the end of our research, we feel included in the community and not at all unsafe. Toward the end of our research, we spoke with a French girl of about our age who seemed fearful of the area, referring to the many men that hang out at Sentier des Saules and to criminality. Our interaction with her reminded us of how we used to perceive the area and we were surprised by the drastic change in perspective we underwent during the course of our research.

FROM PARTICIPANT OBSERVERS TO INTERVIEWERS

As participant observers we struck up casual conversations with the people around us, however stilted those conversations might have been, but we slowly shifted from our role as participant observers to that of interviewers when we decided to make a short ethnographic film out of our experience along Sentier des Saules. As we did not want to risk compromising our relationships with our interlocutors by putting them in the potentially uncomfortable situation of being

filmed, especially since some of them discussed sensitive topics like drug use, we chose to only record their voices.

The first time we set out to voice record our conversations, we stumbled upon a friendly and eager interlocutor nicknamed “Lucky.” Lucky was one of the Algerian men we spoke with about North African music at the dock. During our hour-long conversation with Lucky, who was very happy to let us voice record the conversation, he told us his perspective about life along *Sentier des Saules*. Although we are unsure, we surmised that Lucky is homeless, and he told us that he spends all of his days hanging out in Jonction, primarily at *Sentier des Saules*. After our interview we saw him many times along *Sentier des Saules* and sitting on a bench outside the grocery store in Jonction, however sometimes when we stopped to chat with him he did not seem to know who we were.

Sometimes eager participants like Lucky took on a theatrical role when we started recording, enunciating very clearly and loudly to ensure that each word registers. Contrastingly, participants who were less eager to be voice recorded dropped their voice by a few decibels the moment that they apprehensively agreed. We chose not to record some of the people we spoke to because they appeared very uncomfortable with the interruption to their day. Instead, we left some interactions as organic and unadulterated conversation, instead of manipulating it into an interview and changing the nature of the relationship.

We combined the voice recordings with the image of the path as you walk along *Sentier des Saules* from l’Ethno Bar to the last dock. We decided to let the image of the film focus on the space as our research is spatially grounded. In addition to concerns for the privacy of our interlocutors, we decided to not show the people speaking in order to activate the imagination of the viewer. Additionally, taking into account that we interviewed a wide variety of people with different origins and of different ages, seeing the people might evoke certain preconceptions, skewing the way that the viewer understands the space.

We mixed two elements that belong to the old and the new ways of ethnographic filming. While the camera was “clearly tied to the person of an individual filmmaker” (MacDougall 1998, p. 86), in this case Savannah, representing what we saw while we were walking instead of what an “omniscient, floating eye” would see, the sound consists, as in the old ethnographic film making, of fragments put together.

IDEOLOGIES OF SOCIAL MIX

DIMENSIONS OF DIVERSITY ON SENTIER DES SAULES

In terms of residences, Jonction and Sentier des Saules are socio-economically diverse areas: there are new expensive flats springing up alongside older budget apartments. However, as a place of leisure, Sentier des Saules seems to cater primarily to the lower socio-economic echelons, especially in the cooler months. The stretch of road provides loitering grounds where people can sit smoking and drinking day in and day out in semi-privacy, sheltered by trees and tucked out of the fray. In summer it is full of young people, mostly students of the University of Geneva, but also interns from the United Nations agencies, who jump from the bridge into the cool Rhone and have barbecues. Seeing this incredibly mixed area, we began to wonder how the people in this area relate to each other, and how people use and perceive the space of Sentier des Saules.

In the course of our research we met people of entirely diverse socio-economic backgrounds: men working in International Organizations and banks, Webster students from oil-rich families, bohemian fishermen and artists, and the unemployed. We also met many people of diverse nationalities: Moroccans, Algerians, Brazilians, Swiss, Serbs, French, and Russians.

Although French is predominant, the multi-national diversity is also reflected in the various languages spoken along the street. In addition to French, we heard a lot of Algerian Arabic, Portuguese, and Russian.

With regard to age and gender, we identified a distinct change from spring to summer along Sentier des Saules. During the colder weeks there were almost exclusively men in their thirties and forties, whereas in summer there was a large presence of students, both male and female. In l’Ethno Bar, the ages and genders of the clientele varied at all times, ranging from hordes of undergraduate students to quiet couples in their late forties. However, we did note that l’Ethno Bar seems to be a particularly popular place among single men in their twenties. We watched many of these young men enter the bar, grab a beer and a table for two. Often, they would either sit alone playing with their cell phones, or another single twenty-something guy would join them at the table.

During the summer, not only is there an influx of young people to Sentier des Saules, but also there is an influx of people who do not live or work in the neighbourhood. We met several people who travelled out of their way to spend time at Sentier des Saules on the weekend. Clearly, there is a wide variety of ways that people relate to the space: some live there, others work there, some pass their free time. Some come regularly, or even every day, while others only sporadically find their way to Jonction. Some come alone, others come with friends, and some of the regulars come alone to find their friends.

IDEOLOGIES OF UNITY ON SENTIER DES SAULES

The perceptions people have of the diversity and the interactions between people on Sentier des Saules varies greatly. While everyone seems to agree that there is a great diversity of people, whether or not people actually ‘mix’ is debated. First hand, we observed that we see neither the bankers who are said to live in the new apartments nor the Webster students from the residence above l’Ethno Bar hanging

out on Sentier des Saules. Our overall perception of the diversity at Sentier des Saules is that there seem to be many diverse, clearly defined groups that stay among themselves.

Yet some groups, especially the ones at the dock, seemed less bounded than others. Despite breaking into groups along more or less ethnic/national lines, we sometimes saw people interacting with each other who we had met separately before. This was the case especially for the “regulars,” people who live in the neighbourhood and spend a lot of time on Sentier des Saules, usually smoking and drinking. For example, we met two Eastern European men who had lived in Geneva for some twenty years, then, the next time we visited Sentier des Saules, one of the Eastern European men was sitting with a group of North African men that we had also previously met.

However, the locals’ ideologies of social mix did not necessarily correspond to our own perception of social mix along Sentier des Saules, nor were the differing perceptions compatible: they ranged between the two extremes of people saying that there is a lot of interaction between people versus those who said that groups stay separated and do not interact. The first perspective we heard was that there is a lot of diversity and interaction among the people hanging out along the path. Lucky explained to us that he prefers Geneva over Zurich – where his brother lives – and over the German-speaking part of Switzerland in general because Geneva is more open. He used Sentier des Saules as an example to embody this idea, stating that the people who hang out at the dock live in the area, all know each other, and have a very good relationship. He emphasized the diversity among nationalities, highlighting Brazilians, Algerians, Portuguese and Spanish as examples. He confidently stated that national diversity is not an issue and that they all get along very well. Similarly, other people who live or work close to the path also claimed to know many or at least a few people who come to Sentier regularly, and that they also meet up spontaneously, and without regard to nationality. For these people, the other regulars are their neighbours and Sentier des Saules is their backyard.

We discovered two symbols of unity among the regulars by the dock, a decoration on the fence and a corkscrew, indicating that the dock is the space where people interact most. With yellow duct tape, the word “Jonxcool” is written on the fence, and, on the adjacent face of the fence, is written “La Pointe” in white duct tape. “La Pointe” has been torn away partly because, as was explained to us, the regulars have rejected this name, accepting instead “Jonxcool” to be the new name of the square. Both the group of North African men and a group of Caucasian men with a woman and child referred to the name and sign of Jonxcool independently of each other. The second group also showed us a corkscrew attached to the fence in-between the letters X and C. They explained that it is a communal corkscrew that only the regulars know about. Therefore, although separate groups of regulars have naturally formed along ethnic and national lines, they have created unifying symbols that ally the groups of regulars.

IDEOLOGIES OF SEPARATION ON SENTIER DES SAULES

However, some people expressed the contrasting view, that there is very little social mix. One of our contacts who works for a neighbourhood association emphasized that people do not tend to mix, citing as an example that the artists from Usine Kugler, which sits right along the path, do not interact much with the other people. He suggested that many of the groups are separated by national origin. Further, one man we encountered while he was barbecuing with his family admitted that they tend to sometimes stay in their group too much. Interestingly, he suggested that the space is designed in such a way that it leads to separation: “And you see, there’s also a space between the tables, which creates a... a separation, I’d say.” He was specifically referring to the wooden platforms that are set up along the banks of the river, each separated from the next by approximately ten metres of grassy space.

During the course of our research, we were repeatedly asked whether we were Webster students. People seemed to mostly react

positively when we said we were not. One of our contacts commented on the negative image that Webster students have among the neighbours: he said that they stay separate, acting like they are too good for everyone else and are worried that people will take their money. He suggested that the Eastern European origin of many of the students may be the reason for their different social attitude. The neighbourhood association member emphasized that the Webster students usually do not hang out on Sentier des Saules, although they recently had a barbecue there, surprising the rest of the neighbourhood.

Some students from other Geneva universities and UN interns pass their time along Sentier des Saules. They have still different ideas about the social make up and diversity of the path. One young French girl from University of Geneva who was sitting alone had a very enlightening perspective, as her impression of the space is very different from that of the older men. She explained that she does not come here very often because there are a lot of men and drug dealers: "It is true that in the evening there are a lot of guys ... when it is still day, I take advantage of it, but I do not take too long to go home." Her impression of the area as dangerous and intimidating stands in stark contrast to that of Lucky, a regular from the dock, who said, "here, it's 'peace and love.'"

We spoke with some other university students, a group composed of three girls and two guys, about their impression of the space. One girl in the group took the lead in conversing with us, and she had a different perspective from the French girl - in fact, her perception of the space was closer to that of the older men. This Genevoise insisted that the area has a good ambiance and she stated: "It's quite free, you know ... [the police] come, but not so much ... there's nothing to really worry, no need for any controls." The lack of police presence as a positive attribute of the area is an important aspect of Sentier des Saules that we heard reiterated time and again. Many explained that, not only is it so safe that police presence is unnecessary, but also that the lack of police enables people to live more freely. For this reason, many people of all ages and genders use the space to smoke weed.

For other people, however, the lack of police presence is likely a contributing factor as to why some people are hesitant to wander too far from the main intersection at the start of Sentier des Saules. In some ways Sentier des Saules appears spatially divided in itself, even though it is one continuous path. Beginning with l’Ethno Bar and its clientele, the Webster students residence “Les Berges du Rhône,” and the neighbouring expensive apartments, the further down one goes towards the “Pointe de la Jonction,” the place where Rhône and Arve intersect, the lower the socio-economic status of people seems to become.

Some people clearly avoid walking all the way down to the furthest dock at the end because they do not feel safe or comfortable around there. For example, one day we were walking the path with a friend who was born and raised in Geneva. We were looking for a nice place to sit in the sun, and we suggested going down to the dock at the end of the street. He insisted that we stay at the beginning of the path because he did not feel comfortable around the men who hang out at the end of the dock. Not only was he independently aware of the men who hang out at the end of the dock, as we had not spoken about these men previously, but also it is interesting that he felt uncomfortable sharing the dock with them.

CONCLUSION AND ASPECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Although we only had the opportunity to conduct research during the spring, all of our interlocutors highly suggested that we return in the middle of summer. We have gone back a few times, as neighbours rather than as researchers, and we have found that in the summer, there are many more people along the Rhône – and not just the regulars. There are many younger people sunbathing along the river banks, individually and in groups. Whereas in the colder months the people along Sentier des Saules are mostly middle aged men, in the warmer months men and women of all ages come to tan, swim, and picnic. It would be interesting to conduct a study over several months, taking into account seasonal changes.

For this reason, our research can only be considered a snapshot of the situation of diversity and social mix at Sentier des Saules. The contradictory ideologies of social mix indicate that there is a lot more to discover. For example, what determines the various perceptions of diversity? What is the relation between perceptions of diversity and actions of unity or of separation? This relationship requires many more months to understand and deserves a much more thorough investigation.



A JOURNEY THROUGH LES PÂQUIS: ENCOUNTERS WITH DIVERSITY

Juliana Ghazî, Sarah Hayes and Linda Peterhans

“Along Rue de Berne, there are seven ‘kebab’ restaurants, another offering Indian food (if the menu is to be believed), some bureau de change offices and African hairdressing and haircare shops, which sell both wigs and shoes. Farther on, we pass in front of a bar and cross Rue de Monthoux, ending up in front of a temple. Here, the action is a little quieter” (fieldnotes, 3 April 2014).

FIRST IMPRESSIONS IN THE FIELD

Our story begins on Rue de Berne in Les Pâquis, a neighbourhood that caught our anthropological antennas while walking around Geneva. Nestled between Gare Cornavin and the edges of the lake, rue de Berne is constantly bustling with people no matter the time of day or night. Rue de Berne is also located in a very central area of town. The railway station, Gare Cornavin, is only a few minutes walk away. Les Pâquis has become a space with constant frenzy of local Genevois, nearby commuters, tourists and transient individuals. Well known to be an area of settlement and shelter for (temporary) migrants, it evokes a sense of diversity one can find while walking around Les Paquis, along with prostitutes, drug dealers not to mention a constant police presence and patrol of the neighbourhood. The diversity is also apparent by way of cuisine and business - kebab shops, African stores, Indian food, social services centre, hotels bustling with multi-lingual clients, Brazilian women washing clothes at

the laundry mat, and a bar with a crowded terrace where men gawk at prostitutes. Les Pâquis therefore initially appeared to us as a place where a myriad of people, places, languages and occupations cohabit.

We were passing by this street almost every day to reach the train station. This is how we first heard of a certain place we would soon frequent on Rue de Berne. Friends told us of a small but famous restaurant with tasty food and authentic flair. The thought of it enchanted our curiosity. We thought, what about this place made it so special and supposedly the most well-known Lebanese restaurant in Geneva? We've passed by countless kebab shops in any given Genevois neighbourhood. Presumably, this restaurant was vying to be the best in town. What made Parfums de Beyrouth, on Rue de Berne in Les Paquis a hot contender? We decided to have a look for ourselves and see if all of the commotion was indeed a worthwhile discovery. We arrived at the doorway of Parfums de Beyrouth with the initial intention of discovering its flavour and reason for widespread acclaim.

From the start, we had a strong and distinctive connection to Arab and Lebanese food. Two of us spent extensive time in Jordan and Lebanon during previous studies and had longed for falafel and humus since our past travels. Another in the group had an even deeper connection to Lebanese food. Her late grandfather was born and raised in Beirut and worked in the family restaurant during his entire youth before moving to Rio de Janeiro. He brought with him to Brazil the family recipes which nourished Juliana through childhood. Not only did Parfums de Beyrouth remind us of the places and faces familiar to us in different stages of our lives, from Brazil to Jordan, but also invoked a sense of nostalgia of the past, of family members, friends, and sentimental yet fleeting memories. Therefore the beginning of our story with Parfums de Beyrouth in Les Pâquis starts with a sense of familiarity. However, with this sense of familiarity also comes a curiosity of the unknown.

"It's started raining and Ju, Sarah and I spontaneously decide to go and eat at Parfums de Beyrouth. It's almost 6pm when we

arrive. We thought that maybe this was a better time to find a possible way in, an access in order to really start our “fieldwork.” [...] On arrival there is no Fairuz music playing, unlike the place next door. We sit down and order, Juliana in French then me in Arabic. [...] Sarah gets up, she wants something sweet. I hear her talking Arabic and the cook answering her. I join her, telling myself that maybe we have our way in. The cook seems happy to hear us speaking Arabic and the boss quickly comes over, slipping in a comment: he has recognised us. We eat the treats, the cook catches our eye and sees we’re enjoying them. Sarah and I order another two baklava – elongated, tasting of coconut and rose water, they are delightful: zaki ktir, I tell him” (fieldnotes, 27 February 2014).

We rapidly noticed that despite its apparent Lebanese flavour, Parfums was a diverse setting. It was also a place of constant movement and activity. On any given day, waiters were busy taking orders from clients, as they sat and chatted among each other or waited for their take-away orders. In the meantime, there was always a waiter with his eyes and ears to the streets, spotting and smiling at potential clients outside. The rush hour didn’t affect their hospitality even though frenzy and even chaotic energy filled the air. Chairs would be quickly arranged if a bigger group arrived. As the number of customers increased, the possible seating arrangements would expand as waiters would escort groups to a second, sectioned-off room. During our numerous visits, we noticed the diversity of the clientele. Businessmen adorned in impeccable suits dined next to modest students and young couples, elderly men eating alone and tourists with their bulging rucksacks, crinkled city of Geneva maps, and 35mm cameras strapped around their necks. However, on rare quiet days or even after the lunch rush-hour, the place had quite a different atmosphere. The availability and also apparent fatigue of the employees could be felt intensely. As some were done with their daily shift, others were indulging in their own need for food or going over administrative work.

In such a dynamic and mobile context, how do we begin our study, given these constant social elements and activity that overlap

and intertwine each other? We did not know where to start or who to approach first. Not to mention we had to consider how we would be received and perceived by others. As we began reflecting on angles to adopt, we always seemed to revert to the idea of social mix as a notion that goes beyond describing diversity. We were familiar with the concept thanks to our anthropological training, however in practice we were confused and did not fully understand the complexities the term signified. The apparent encounters with people from different backgrounds were too general. We slowly asked ourselves what kind of relationship existed among the people living in such a diverse environment. We had had a glimpse of it through Parfums de Beyrouth where sharing a meal or eating it elsewhere didn't necessarily imply communication taking place between different groups of individuals. Therefore on an even bigger scale, such as Rue de Berne, how would our observations further contribute to our understanding of the dynamics at play on Rue de Berne and Les Pâquis? Thus, conducting fieldwork pertaining to questions of diversity derived from firsthand knowledge of the term and a doorway into how it operates and is negotiated amongst groups in a given city.

Questions began to fill our minds and the idea of negotiating the space coupled with interacting in a social complex environment led us to rethink our initial understanding of what diversity actually means as well as social mix. As important an issue, we stumbled on the question of what it meant to be a local in this Genevois neighbourhood and who was to be labelled as such?

In fact, the question of being a local and a foreigner happened to be an appropriate question to ask ourselves. We were three female researchers from three different origins and yet all living in or nearby Geneva: an American, a Brazilian and a Swiss. As a multinational team, we thought we fit perfectly with the social diversity around us in Les Paquis and of this idea of social mix that we were trying to understand and illustrate. Could we be both studying and intertwined in this landscape of diversity? Who is to be labelled and considered as a local Genevois after all? If one is even a bit familiar with Geneva, it is evident that the city is extremely diverse and popularly termed an

“international” community. Determining who is a local is therefore a challenging endeavour that would yield a broad spectrum of answers and opinions. In many social pockets of the city, one may not immediately find thought-to-be “Swiss people” but more so clusters of foreign residents – from Somali to Portuguese communities, neighbourhoods associated with different nationalities and ethnicities. Therefore it is difficult if not impossible to pinpoint a stereotypical local in a place like Geneva. Might everyone be both a stranger and a local as one navigates their way through Geneva’s avenues and neighbourhoods? Given this, is being a local determined by a specific geographical or spatial dimension in Geneva? These questions and suggestions aside, we as a research team were well aware of our internal diversity beyond our nationalities.

We quickly forged relationships by way of conversations over food and on Middle Eastern origins and adventures. We came back to Parfums over and over. We kept eating, chatting, and asking questions as Parfums became our entry point into the lives of the people of Rue de Berne. Somewhere in the midst of our visits and lunches at Parfums and to other establishments in the nearby vicinity, we arrived at our main inquiry: How do interactions among people at Parfums facilitate our understanding of Les Pâquis?

NEGOTIATING OUR PRESENCE

Language was a key feature playing in our research team’s favour: Among the three of us, two speak a decent level of Arabic, one is a native French speaker and one is a native Portuguese speaker. As we have mentioned, food played a leading role in this research and connected us to strong memories of Arab cuisine. It was then almost naturally that we centred our first conversation with the employees of Parfums on food. We asked how it was prepared, cooked, minced and arranged to create the meals. Conversation starters on food quickly turned to other topics such as family, Lebanon, the Arab world, and migrating to Switzerland. As our relationships developed we slowly revealed how and why we knew of Arab cuisine and culture and had

knowledge in Arabic. Our recent acquaintances at Parfums opened up to us quickly. We saw it as a sort of friendship; one built on shared moments, food, and trust in sharing lived experiences that were at times intimate and emotional. How did we feel about this friendship at first? In retrospect, were we a bit naive about it? The meaning of friendship seemed to be also different from the one we would each have attributed to it. We figured they considered us as friends considering the way they would react if we didn't visit the store for several days. Yet we were surprised to find a few months after our research project had ended, some employees barely seemed to recognize us and were surprised to hear us order in Arabic.

Thus even among themselves friendship seemed to be broader. On our side it was maybe naive but also comforting to be able to say or imagine that our relationship with the employees had evolved. Was the label misleading? In practice the very fact of saying "we know them," "they know us" created a bond we would now not necessarily call friendship as such but, at the time of conducting research, came to be thought as a means of identifying the employees and also at the same time subjects of our research in wider terms and make this new form of relationship somehow understandable to us.

The only female working at Parfums was the Brazilian cleaner, Elena. A meaningful exchange took place between Elena and Juliana. We considered the bond between them as based on a shared common language and nationality. But this encounter soon proved to be more dynamic and insightful. It was also the timing - when we met Elena it was early in the morning, we walked by the restaurant as she was cleaning. The boss was not around. Juliana approached her and started a conversation and most importantly, asked Elena about herself. "Where are you from? I think by your accent you are Brazilian, right?" Juliana had a very personal approach in addition to speaking Portuguese.

Juliana: Hello, excuse me, do you work here?

Elena: Yes.

Juliana: I was wondering if we could talk for a while... Where are you from?

Elena: Brazil.

Juliana: Really? Me too. It's even easier since my level of French is not the best one... (Changing to Portuguese)

Elena: I notice from your accent that you were not from here (smiling)

Juliana: So, I was wondering if you could tell me a bit of your story, and how did you end up here in Geneva...

Elena: Yes, I can tell you some stuff...But I must warn you: it's not a beautiful story or anything. I'm exploited here.

Elena admits her interactions with us gave her the sense she had a voice. We listened and showed interest in her story and lived experiences, which will be shared shortly in what follows.

We also established ties with the male employees of Parfums. Stories from Elena and the other (male) workers at times ran parallel but also tended to overlap. That is to say, they were a part of each others' lives without an evident articulation of this relationship. What insights did we gain from speaking and getting to know the men before meeting Elena and hearing her story? What did these insights tell us about how their lives are intertwined and connected? How were they connected?

Juliana asked him about the Brazilian woman whom the restaurant employs. He said that she comes in the morning and leaves early before the male workers and customers arrive. "She is just cleaning," as he motioned down to the floor and to the walls. And Juliana proceeded to tell him that she would like to speak to her. Omar then said, "She speaks a lot and knows a lot!" (fieldnotes, 15 May 2014)

Following that line, being a team composed of women only, we believe this had positive implications but was at times uncomfortable

for members of our research team. It often felt awkward to observe how they interacted and flirted with female clients. How they stared at prostitutes standing across the street. We became confused and self-conscious about how they might perceive us. One late afternoon was particularly challenging when we explained to some of the men our project to use a disposable camera. Suddenly we had the feeling to switch from the client and girls position to the role of a researcher or someone who wants something from the other. We became self-conscious about the “social mix” within us! Besides this episode, in which the reflection and oddness might have been just on our side, the perception between us and the employees became more casual after a few times dining in the restaurant, when they began making jokes with us. As time went on, they attended to our table in a more personal manner. They would come and see whether we wanted anything else and at times, they would ask personal questions: “Where are you from? How do you know Arabic? How do you like living in Geneva? Do you have a boyfriend?” Our male interlocutors took an active role in getting to know us and hence, in helping the space become one of connection and conversation.

At any time of day, we observed Parfums kebab owners as they ate with other kebab owners across the street, speaking French and Arabic interchangeably. Meanwhile, Ali yelled to the delivery guy on a motorcycle that there was a last minute change in one of the recent orders. A late delivery of vegetables arrived at Parfums and Omar scolded the seller for his tardiness. A large family demanded the free table be cleared of previous client’s trash immediately and to bring more chairs to accommodate them. A constant frenzy gave rhythm to the place and its people. Each and everyone seemed to have their own ways of dealing with it.

We had come to a stage in our research where we had witnessed the comings and goings of workers and people in the neighbourhood; we had often been dining at Parfums and talked a bit with the employees and even the customers. But what kinds of conclusions could we start to draw? We felt it was time to pause in order to give some space to different insights other than our “anthropological applied

observations.” It was time to delve into the testimonies of two people who agreed to share. Both worked at Parfums de Beyrouth but had very different points of view; Elena, the Brazilian cleaning lady, and Omar, the Syrian Kurdish employee.

ONE PLACE, TWO TRAJECTORIES

Our gender played a role in the way in which we approached our field site and how our interlocutors perceived us. In contrast, how might we consider our interactions with Elena, the only female worker, compared to our male interlocutors? Rather, considering our research team represented a milieu of traits to the people we encountered, we actively utilized what each individual brought to the ethnographic table in an effort to enhance our research as a collective. We as individual team members were also at an advantage when conducting individual fieldwork. Meaning that one of us might conduct fieldwork alone, visiting and speaking with a member of a certain community in French or Portuguese which we found was more effective than going as a group but benefited the team overall.

Elena is originally from the countryside of Bahia. She came to Geneva fifteen years ago to work as a housekeeper for a Brazilian friend. A few years later, she needed another job and went to Parfums de Beyrouth in search of a potential position. Although it has been more than ten years since she started to work there, she does not feel part of a ‘team’ at Parfums: She is the only woman, speaks a different language and spends her time alone in the early morning, cleaning up after long and busy nights. She told us about her lack of relationships with the other employees, emphasizing the fact that she feels like a stranger and so do they (the men). She said they were good people, but did not talk to her, or show any interest in getting to know her. “I think they only help each other. They don’t even realize how much I am exploited here... I never have a day off, nothing.”

Elena: The story I’m going to tell you today... well, it’s not a pretty story, ok?

Juliana: It's ok, I'm not in search for beautiful. I'm looking for something real.

Elena: Yeah... because I suffer a lot here. I don't even know where to begin. (fieldnotes 3 April 2014)

Elena continued by telling how certain she felt to be in Geneva, despite the tough nature of her work. She has been able to send her family money, to pay for her son's education, to build a house for her mother...the list of accomplishments seemed endless. She understands she had to sacrifice her life in order to provide a better life for her beloved ones. These revelations along with an interesting exercise conducted with our second interlocutor Omar, brought out another element that was not apparent to us at first and almost hid behind the apparent/obvious diversity. It was about power and Elena is one of many stories that comprise this broader scenario. In the case of Elena, she needed not only to follow her superior's orders, but also to comply in silence. At the same time she is the only one providing money in the recent year - which gave her a privileged position in her family.

With Omar's trajectory in what follows, further insights on power have added up and brought us to reflect even more on it and its possible relation/correlation with the diverse scene in Parfums de Beyrouth and Rue de Berne. The experiment was the following: We gave them a disposable camera and asked if they would agree to take pictures of their daily lives at work. What would we discover from this kind of perspective from 'behind the balcony?' As we told Omar about our photo's project, his immediate reaction was to 'ask for the boss' approval'. In addition, Omar told us 'during lunchtime, the boss doesn't like us to be distracted', meaning they have to follow orders from their superiors, and despite their close relationship, the hierarchical division was set.

After that, we went to speak with the 'boss' to ask for his permission. He said it was ok, and that we should arrange this with Omar, since he had 'la carte blanche'. He also told us we could come and chat with Omar once the photos were developed, so he could explain to us why he took each of them. A few days later, we came back to

Parfums in order to have this conversation with Omar. To our surprise they took many photos, but mostly of themselves. We thought of it as a way they found in order to get us to know a bit of their reality; and to show us that they are the main characters of their story, and not the clients. In a mix of French and Arabic, Omar started to show us the pictures, explaining the functions each of the workers at Parfums have, along with the preparation of food and details of it. He also explained how he learned French, where the other employees were from and where they lived. While asking some details about other kebab shops or logistic questions he didn't seem to know much more in the detail.

“He spreads out photos on the table and starts telling us about the activity that can be seen in the photo. I ask him who it is and he loses himself in the details, in describing the photos, and who is who. It's not easy to keep up with the names and the people involved. He narrates. Then he looks for a picture of the boss, THE boss of the kitchen, he says. He finds him in a photo, saying: “that's the boss.” [...] curiously, there are only three photos with customers, and he skims over them quickly with a nonchalant “ah, there are some customers,” clearly less interested in them than in his work or his colleagues. [...] At the end we tell Omar he can have whichever photos he wants. He takes the one of him that he said he didn't like, and one of us. As a souvenir for home, he says” (fieldnotes, 15 May 2014).

Omar is a Syrian Kurd who started working at Parfums de Beyrouth approximately two years ago. Before coming to Switzerland, he had lived in various places, even in Saudi Arabia when he was only six years old. He later returned there for ten years to work as a daily labourer. After that, he moved to Libya, Egypt and Geneva, where he has acquaintances with many people. Initially, he started working in a Lebanese restaurant in Rue de Berne before finding the job at Parfums de Beyrouth. Since then, he has been working at Parfums, having started with serving tables and gradually cutting the meat, preparing sandwiches and now has « ranked up » to taking customers' orders and relaying them to the person in charge of preparing their meal.

It was difficult for Omar to work at Parfums in the beginning, especially because he didn't know many of the customers as the other waiters did. Since he was not familiar with regular customers and with his fellow colleagues, he didn't have a privileged position at the kebab store. After a couple of years, he gradually knew the regular clients. In Omar's words the other cooks are in a ranking system which he highlighted while describing the pictures. He pointed to each worker saying who was number 1, number 2, number 3. Omar only presents one facet of the broader social picture of Les Pâquis and even of Parfums de Beyrouth. He asserted that Elena knew everything about everyone. But on the contrary, as we showed before, Elena admitted quite the opposite.

Regarding the boss and his positioning over both Elena and Omar, we slowly formed the feeling that we could explore further situations in which hierarchy was created, exercised, and even valued amongst a collective. In fact, it quickly became clear that power relations - a word which has never been identified in such terms by our interlocutors - were not just apparent within Parfums de Beyrouth. By walking through Rue de Berne, the possibility to explore further power relations between different actors, such as between other kebab owners, drug dealers, prostitutes and bar owners, seemed to be a way to widen up our first observations within Parfums. On our side it also implied rethinking our own positionality within this nexus of power. And we quickly realised that by experiencing the daily life of Les Pâquis, we had also gradually become embedded in the social fabric of our own field site.

By widening up our gaze towards further activities happening around us, we honed in on the study of relationships between owners and employees; clients and employees; us and employees; that we could be able to understand the relationship and internal links between Parfums and Les Pâquis. In our view, the articulation of two employers' trajectories at Parfums de Beyrouth added up to our interest on power, for it brought another gaze from two very distinct individuals. Thus by adopting another strategy and incorporating

Elena and Omar in our understanding of the Les Pâquis and its dynamics, we also felt the need to take some time to move away from Parfums and explore further what the street reserved for us.

WIDENING OUR GAZE

Juliana – “How about we go to that one [kebab shop] over there with all of the people dining outside. From there we can observe Parfums from across the street and get a beer (since alcohol is not served at Parfums).”

Linda – “Or what about the bar with the closed red curtains in the window. Maybe we could go there but is it open?”

Sarah – “Are the people dining outside from the kebab restaurant or the mysterious bar?”

We proceed to cross the road, leaving Parfums to reach the other side where both the bar and the other kebab shop are located

We sit at an empty table at the other kebab restaurant

Juliana – “I think the guys from Parfums are looking at us.” Pauses. “Why are they all staring?”

Linda – “Did we do something wrong or do they see we are drinking beer?”

Sarah – “Yeah, it feels a bit strange to be on this side of the road, doesn’t it?”

Widening our own positionality within our field site resulted in a strange feeling: why did we feel strange being on the other side of the road? After a couple of weeks going to the kebab shop on a regular basis, we figured it would be interesting to explore the neighbourhood beyond our initial encounters. However we did not expect to face such an awkward situation with our “friends” at Parfums. When crossing the streets and intending to eat and have a drink at another place, we suddenly felt like traitors. Therefore, to us it became even more evident how deep we had become embedded in the social fabric

of our field site and within Parfums de Beyrouth. While it had not been self-evident, power dynamics between the owner, the employees and us seemed to have been present ever since we started our endeavour.

In an effort of further engagement, we ventured to the laundry situated a block away from Parfums de Beyrouth. Sarah's washing machine had broken and Linda suggested we should use this opportunity in order to interact with another group of migrants in the neighbourhood. We had heard that women prostitutes gather outside of this laundry every day. We were curious about approaching them. When we first walked into the laundry, Sarah had clothes inside her backpack. Upon entering the laundry, we immediately noticed women staring at us near the door. There were only two women inside the place, talking in Portuguese. They suddenly stopped when they saw us. We felt constrained. We were not aware of how much we stood out inside the local establishment. To avoid an awkward dialogue, we pretended to be lost and asked them how to get to La Poste. We left abruptly. Our sense of belonging within Les Pâquis felt blurred in that moment.

While analysing our field notes towards the end of our semester-long project, we noticed how we had been focusing on the social mix aspect, which had been a leading point for our research, but also on power. How had we become so reflexive about this type of relation?

We also noticed how we had mentally absorbed this association between social mix and power, step by step and that it had encouraged us to explore this possible lead to a further extent on Rue de Berne. In doing that, we touched upon other aspects embedded within this kind of relation such as the constraints and agency that migrants face when working or visiting this neighbourhood. What would the role of power be? Or when would power play an important role in these relationships? Each individual or group on the street seemed to be aware of their territory, and their limits within a given space. It complicated the broader picture of social interactions and power relations at play.

MOVING ON...

“When I get up to pay, because my train is leaving soon, I pay in Arabic. The test phase, even if I believe he speaks Arabic, is a “marhaba.” And it hits the spot: he replies with an “ahlein”. He cashes up, then Sarah and I leave for the station. We say “ma’a salaama” to the tea boy seated to one side, and he replies with a smile” (fieldnotes, 10 April 2014).

Qualitative research such as ours conducted in Les Pâquis brings a personal insight into daily matters but also remains a constant challenge as the positionality of the researcher is continuously renegotiated and expressed against another layer behind the backdrop of the expression of power. Our focus on Parfums de Beyrouth extended beyond our initial expectations and contributes to the further investigation of social relations and linked to social mix as studied by the social sciences. Despite Geneva being a bounded space, its variety of neighbourhoods constituting the “seemingly/apparent” unity of Geneva also splits the city into various portions, each of them playing out its relation not only within the city but also among the neighbourhoods and its inhabitants on a different scale.

The study of Parfums de Beyrouth within the neighbourhood of Les Pâquis has contributed to rethinking not only the dynamics at play in an international city whose frenzied characteristic can be found and expressed in various ways (such as in Les Pâquis), but also the relations among the space and its people. It demands a deeper understanding of the role of location/space and its power, which has an impact on shaping relationships or separateness and how it can be flexible and subject to change depending on how much of this power is being carried out by local, temporary and transient actors. Nothing seems fixed and unchangeable, such as the constant movement of the migrant in Les Pâquis and the kebab owner. Urban diversity in Geneva, as we studied through the lenses of Parfums de Beyrouth and how it is inscribed in Les Pâquis is shaped by its surroundings as a physical place and by people who reveal a constant negotiation of several layers of relations.

Initially looking at one specific kebab shop, we were guided by the experience and observations offered during our several visits, walks and interviews. A picture gradually emerged of a negotiation between location and relations, in sometimes unexpected ways. Expressions of power relations shapes the dynamics of a neighbourhood, offering the possibility to consider to a further extent deeper layers of evolving relationships, be it between locals or migrants, constitutive of a unity within Geneva or Les Pâquis beyond the individual. Just as power relations are a constant reshaping and renegotiating of space and time, our research endeavours carry on with the hope of arriving at enlightened understanding of social mix.



THE PÂQUIS DISTRICT, BETWEEN WALKING AND TALKING

Philippe Gazagne

“In modern Athens, vehicles of mass transportation are called *metaphorai*. To go to work or come home, one takes a “metaphor” – a bus or a train. Stories could also take this noble name: every day, they traverse and organise places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories.”

Michel De Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien*, 1980, p. 170.

“No one, wise Kublai, knows better than you that the city must never be confused with the words that describe it. And yet between the one and the other there is a connection.”

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, 1972, p. 61.

FIRST WANDERINGS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

A Thursday in the middle of summer, around 5 pm. Going down Rue des Alpes from Cornavin station, I turn left on Rue de Fribourg. I try to make my way through the busy terraces and groups of people on the pavement. I pick up fragments of discussions in a jumble of languages: English, French, Arabic, Spanish and others that I can't identify. This bubbling scene fascinates me. I grasp some more distinct bursts of speech and decide to slow down, as if trying to steal a few snippets of conversations. At the end of the street, the smell of grease

coming from the Chinese restaurant on the corner makes me uncomfortable. A turn to the right and a block further down is Rue de Berne, the district's central axis. I walk along the entire street, reaching the end at its intersection with Rue du Prieuré. Turning round to look at the road behind me, I'm struck by its scope, and by the longitudinal vision it offers of the neighbourhood. It unfolds in a grid of streets running perpendicular to the busy street corners. Here, the cabinet-maker and the local seamstress sit alongside bars frequented by prostitutes, shops selling African cosmetics, and Afghan, Kurdish and Indo-Pakistani grocery stores. The facades of modest or dilapidated apartment blocks sit adjacent to luxury hotels and opulent buildings. Stalls and working-class grocery stores sit beside boutiques, bars and concept stores. I like these contrasting elements. At the same time, I have the feeling that they form an indivisible whole.

I stride down the neighbourhood streets during successive explorations, following intersecting junctions, travellers and routes. I try to familiarise myself with these few streets and those who use them. A few regulars come and go, retracing their steps, hesitating then setting off in a new direction from where, a few minutes later, I see them reappear. Certain of them remain forever rooted at junctions. I have the feeling of passing through a series of enigmatic territories, whose usages and limits are constantly being negotiated. Whenever I stop moving, I soon feel like I'm being stared at. I try to initiate an exchange, a sign of recognition, a nod of the head accompanied by a smile. In return, I get perplexed looks, hesitating between fear and familiarity. Probably through concern of being too intrusive, I resume my walk. I am in the Pâquis, a district of Geneva that generates deeply contrasting feelings and which is often depicted as exceptional: a lawless area where people live together in diversity, a trafficking district and a model for social mixing.

A SPACE IN MOTION

Facing this spread out district, where should one look? How can one observe such variability, such fluidity? Walking is a tactic that allows

me, temporarily, to solve this dilemma and to postpone the choice. I had actually crossed this space in the past, often rushed by time, a destination or an appointment. Now, I want to let time float by, as my gaze does. Passing through places I frequented the day before, the urge comes to rid myself of previously perceived images and sounds, to let myself be surprised by a newly experienced city. Each new visit validates the heuristic scope of my oscillations in the neighbourhood: I manage to differentiate the everyday from the exceptional, recurring from intermittent. Space is set in motion. The neighbourhood's different rhythms become familiar: predictable, if not visible.

Walking doesn't simply mean moving from Rue de Neuchâtel to Rue du Prieuré. Also, and above all, it means qualifying the street with one's presence, being sensitive to atmosphere, being receptive to the reactions of others, modulating one's presence according to circumstance (Thibaud 2006/4). It also means interpreting, trying to give meaning to that which doesn't make sense, imagining. There is something fleeting, transitory, evanescent here. I try to impose some clarity, some visibility, by seeking out its wanderers, its practitioners who day after day mark out their neighbourhood, reappropriating it and producing meaning. It is a matter of comprehending this part of the city, not in an objective, univocal way, but by making visible its subjective and imaginary dimensions. Such is the methodological bias that guides my relationship with the field and its inhabitants.

TIME AND THE OTHER

A Wednesday afternoon, mid-July, at the intersection of Rue de Zurich and Rue de Berne in the Pâquis district. The sun has come out again in the neighbourhood. Adib¹¹ had put me off several times, invoking his diary's unpredictability or the gloomy climate. *"I have nothing against greyness and rain, but light seems more stimulating for such activity. Next week would suit me better, let's hope we have better weather then, inshal-*

●
¹¹ All names are fictional

lah,” he had told me. A month earlier, during the Pâquis district festival, I’d suggested the following: to accompany him on a walk through the district, letting him choose the route. As we walked side by side, I’d simply ask him to tell me what our stroll inspired in him. According to the method proposed by J.-P. Thibaud, “the experiment consists of undertaking a journey while describing what one perceives and feels in the course of the journey” (Thibaud 2001: 79-99). Spontaneously, he agreed, defining what was to be our place of rendez-vous: “from there, I will describe how the instantaneous, the expected and the unforeseen strike me...”

Adib, of Algerian origin, grew up in France and arrived in Switzerland in the 1970s, when he was about twenty years old. He does not live in the Pâquis. His presence is due to him having found a neighbourhood office for cheap rent. He settled there in 2008 as an intercultural mediator. This activity allows him to claim a sort of locality in the neighbourhood, “*a neighbourhood where the stranger no longer feels strange*,” as he likes to say.

CONCERNING THE INSTRUCTIONS

As agreed, I meet Adib on Rue du Môle, opposite the Pâquis school. He asks me an opening question, seeking to understand what is going to happen. “*Can we also go to places where people respond and interact with us?*”, he asks, before going on: “*Let’s try it, this will be an interesting exercise ... but, I choose where we’re going, is that right?*” By way of answer, I nod my approval. A final question comes before we set off: “*Shall we call each other vous or tu?*” Sensing his preference, I spontaneously suggest the ‘tu’ form.

As we go, he seems anxious to live up to my expectations, seeking to find out if what he is saying or doing interests me, or is at least consistent with my wishes. The stops along our way are punctuated by: “*I don’t know if this will interest you or not*”, “*you be the judge of what you find interesting from our conversation*”, “*the walk’s going well for you, I hope?*” or “*I talk without thinking, is that OK?*”

As for me, I'm careful to restrict my speech, limiting it as much as possible to non-verbal expressions and short reminders. It is a question, as much as possible, of freeing oneself from an interview situation, of not directing or inducing. I take care to avoid orienting events, putting my interlocutor in a position where he leads our exchange and determines our course. It's about promoting his speech as much as possible, what Michel de Certeau calls "the talk of lost steps" (Certeau 1980). For the sociologist, "the game of steps shapes the space. They weave the places." (p. 147). In that, a journey tells something. It is a narrative, insofar as it articulates moments and places, while testifying to a particular manner in which the city is used. Thus, the practitioners of the city create their own city through their daily travels; a metaphorical city, inside the first one. Michel de Certeau establishes an analogy between walking and talking, underpinned by the notions of "ambulatory rhetoric" and "pedestrian utterances."

THE CITY AS NARRATIVES

Between the walker's footsteps and the speaker's words, between ambulation and narration, what Adib calls our "*peregrination*" begins in Rue du Môle, "*a street that is full of life*", as schools starts for the afternoon. In a voice that is simultaneously fluid and controlled, tinged with humour, Adib takes care to point out to me the places (primary school, neighbourhood centre) and people we meet on our way. He salutes two school crossing guards: "How are you? These people are the neighbourhood kingpins." I barely have time to hear their answer, as Adib reacts to the police going by: "*It's nice to see the police are there, doing their job, because for a long time this area has been viewed as an abandoned part of town. Now there is at least a bit of control. It was always sad to read what people say about this neighbourhood, as if it were a home for delinquency, drug dealing, disorder, fear. In some streets you see considerable differences between situations, but life goes on in a normal way; the aggression people talk about all the time is not always there.*"

Adib repeatedly expressed his irritation at the neighbourhood's treatment by politicians and the media. He uses the term "propaganda" to describe these discourses on violence and insecurity. He himself admits to having been contaminated by this distorted picture of the neighbourhood: *"Back then, before I knew the Pâquis, I bypassed this neighbourhood. Everyone can be influenced, at that time I never set foot here."*

We must not confuse the district with the discourse which schematises it: Adib thus seems to paraphrase Calvino's formula. Tired of listening to outside voices talking about what the neighbourhood is like, he deplores the media's stigmatising nature, shaping the city dwellers' imagination and diverting them from their daily travels.

As if to challenge the authority of the media narrative, Adib goes on to say: *"People talk here, we are in a working-class neighbourhood, proud of its cosmopolitanism and its strong social ties."* We walk past the Pâquis-Centre school on Rue de Berne. While he speaks to me, Adib throws out greeting, mostly generic: *"Hi young fellow, are you well? ... See you soon, lad."*

"Between you and me, this neighbourhood is good to wander around in; you meet people you know, you say bello, you are not living anonymously," he adds from time to time. He manifests an obvious disposition to meet locals or passers-by in the district's public space. Adib is clearly known and recognised on Rue de Berne; by the postman, by residents and by shop owners or customers, due in particular to his involvement in the voluntary sector. Emphatically, he takes advantage of his notoriety to make me aware of the quality of the neighbourhood's social relations, whose politeness and greetings are highlighted by his comment that *"there is life and conviviality here."*

The city comprises writing and rewriting in the sense that, beyond its materiality, it is covered by a flow of competing narratives and representations. The city stands at the crossroads of discourse, many "invisible cities" shaping and giving meaning to its concrete space. To inhabit the city, to traverse it, means in varying degrees to invent it.

As a rejoinder to a non-native fiction – the stigmatising images assigned to the neighbourhood – Adib articulates a vernacular fiction and produces a counter-speech exalting the quality of social connections and relationships.

“THE NEIGHBOURHOOD, FOR THE NEIGHBOURHOOD, BY THE NEIGHBOURHOOD”

Lost in Adib’s story, I hadn’t noticed that he had stopped in front of a doorway on Rue de Berne: *“Now here we are at this workshop, and I think it’s important because this neighbourhood was a district where there were a lot of craftsmen, and more and more, these craftsmen have trouble surviving, and... uh... obviously, these workshops are taken over by speculators, people who want to run a bar, or do this or that, and it’s a shame that the neighbourhood is gradually becoming just bars, whereas before it was a place where there was craftsmanship, cultural activity.”*

Adib addresses the artisan: *“How are you, my friend? What do we feel when we come here? We sense the iron and welding, don’t we? ... In any case, as far as I’m concerned, I have total respect for the craftsmen who remain in the neighbourhood, there are so few of them left, as I was saying, there are less and less, and what will they be replaced by? By bars or whatever, by bistros or restaurants. It’s a shame that the neighbourhood is just turning into a place where people come from elsewhere, fill their bellies and leave. The neighbourhood is losing what were its strong points: craft and small trade. The last person left is the plumber on Rue de Zurich.”*

On several occasions the artisan tries to speak and to express his point of view. But Adib ploughs on, monopolising the conversation. I manage to question the welder about how long he’s been in the workshop. He has been working there for thirty-five years, all that time living in the neighbourhood, on Rue Plantamour. Adib jumps in again, saying *“There you have it, the neighbourhood, for the neighbourhood, by the neighbourhood.”*

“The instantaneous, the expected and the unforeseen...” On leaving the artisan, Adib’s words from a few weeks ago come to my mind. I realise

how much effort he must have gone to in preparing our stroll, selecting then tipping off the people we were to visit. While he seemed to have a marked taste for the unexpected, I now understand that he knows precisely where we are going, having previously picked out the precise spots he wishes to show me. There was nothing anodyne about our visit to one of the neighbourhood's last artisans. More than a simple anchoring point in the district, this stop gives expression to a form of nostalgia in keeping with the transformation of the neighbourhood.

PROTECTING A HERITAGE

The walker's steps, like the speaker's words, are always inhabited, inflected and shaped by what is absent, says Certeau. Our stop at the workshop echoes like a visit to a historical site. It is a way of contextualising the present in the past, of giving new life to the Pâquis story. The "invisible city" outlined by Adib nestles in the memory. There is a heritage to be protected, a character to be preserved, which is repeatedly referred to as "original." With this term, Adib expresses the desire to preserve an essential nature, specific to the neighbourhood.

Les Pâquis is a neighbourhood that resists, as symbolised by the "Bien Vivre aux Pâquis" association of which Adib is a member. This is the vision of the neighbourhood which he is trying to convey to us: inhabitants and traders are organising themselves in order to keep going. That applies to street level as well as the upper floors, referring to the relocation of local and long-standing businesses and the fear of low-income households being displaced.

Later, a second commemorative stop leads us to appreciate the shade of an inner garden, hidden behind a building on Rue de Bâle. "This is what remains of the old neighbourhood meadows, where the Pâquis name comes from, these were meadows where cattle were brought to graze. This garden is a remnant of these ancient meadows, and it has stayed wild. The people living in these buildings had small plots and made them vegetable gardens." Previously, during the same

visit to the same inner courtyard “where you can see the original cobblestones of the old farm,” another member of “Bien Vivre aux Pâquis” had explained to me the nomenclature of the Pâquis streets: *“The street names (Bâle, Valais, Neuchâtel, Berne, Freiburg, Zurich) refer to the massive arrival of Swiss confederates in the 1860s, who came to work in Genevan industry. It was then that the Pâquis district was built, by constructing subsidised sanitary housing to accommodate these working migrants. All this tells a story. Since 1860 there has been a tradition of immigration in the neighbourhood, and it continues today.”*

Living in the neighbourhood implies producing and reproducing specific myths. To the district’s working-class heritage can be added a second strong image, that of a long tradition of being a place of passage and immigration. These two dimensions overlap and feed each other.

In front of the school, we run into Gilles, an acquaintance of Adib. Gilles certainly isn’t tongue-tied, the conversation going as follows.

STREET CORNER CONVERSATION

Adib: *“This guy here is the best, hello young fellow.”*

Gilles: *“Salaam alaikum.”*

Adib: *“So if we’re going for a stroll, we need to go with him. Here is someone who can tell you about the guts of the Pâquis.”*

Adib [addressing Gilles]: *“I’m going on a journey with my friend Philippe to see different places, different shops. The way I’m doing it is to go around the district in my own way, talking about the places I go.”*

Gilles: *“Ah, one’s born in the Pâquis, one dies in the Pâquis!”*

Adib: *“Absolutely. We love the Pâquis. You know, when I arrived in 2008, I realised that if any neighbourhood was alive in Geneva, it was right here.”*

Gilles: *“You see, forty years ago, there was the car show at Plainpalais, they all descended on the Pâquis. The call girls of the Pâquis have always existed. There were always drug deals, but dealers back then were discreet, unlike today.”*

The Pâquis has changed [Adib: absolutely!], but Geneva has changed, the world has changed. What is interesting here is this diversity [absolutely (Adib)], there are elders, there are families, people who would never leave the neighbourhood for anything in the world! [...] Well, there will always be xenophobes, fascists, double crossers, people who shake your hand and say salam alekoum, then bitch about you behind your back ... But the neighbourhood is interesting. Okay, saying that, it's true that there is drug traffic, it's always been going on but before it was discreet, while now it's out in the open, I mean, a tourist coming here sees a street with nothing but dealers, it's crazy! I don't think you find that anywhere else.[...]"

According to Gilles, who has lived in the neighbourhood for forty years, the area has always been a place for passing through, for debauchery and entertainment. He nevertheless mentions a growing tension between the working-class side of the neighbourhood and its tradition of welcoming immigrants. *"Nothing has changed, but at the same time, things have changed"*: for him, the difference is one of intensity; previously discreet practices have become overt. He openly addresses the issue of *dealers* – hitherto avoided by Adib – being more enterprising and visible than in the past. Without animosity, he appreciates how their increased number and larger operating area can raise fears.

After we left Gilles, and in reaction to his remarks, Adib evoked, for the first time, the drug dealer issue: "Here we are, passing through the neighbourhood, and everyone's doing their thing, respecting one another, and I think that's extremely important. You meet the whole world here, people from all corners of the globe, from all walks of life and all social classes, from the undocumented homeless to people driving big Rolls-Royces, teasing the dealers to give them their dose. Clearly, that's the reality, we can throw stones at the dealers but they've built their customer base here, including many rich kids from the international schools."

Through his use of the word "teasing", Adib emphasises coexisting, contrasting situations, that of luxury and marginalisation, associating the presence of small-time drug dealers with that of affluent consumers, attracted by the bright lights of one of Geneva's most visited districts. A space where the intensity of activities – especially

nocturnal – and the consumption of drugs and alcohol go hand in hand. He invites us not to confuse density and aggressiveness: what makes the Pâquis neighbourhood stand out is precisely this social and cultural mix, a coexistence that overall works quite well, given that it “teases.” The term chosen by Adib is mischievous: if someone causes another an inconvenience, it is obviously out of humour, not malice. He astutely invites us to relativise this seeming aggressiveness. If there is incitement here, it’s necessary to put things in perspective: in a neighbourhood with a strong extraterritorial attractiveness, outside agents (consumers) are the most enterprising. The presence of small-time dealers speaks, above all, to the importance of consumption.

BETWEEN COMPLICITY AND ANTAGONISM

Adib explains what comes next : *“Now we leave Rue de Berne and enter Rue des Pâquis, we’ll visit a Tunisian friend who has a shop there, a real jewel of oriental delicacies [...] it’s worth seeing, this shop.”*

On Rue de Berne, he explains that he regularly goes along it, from Rue du Môle to the post office: *“There are things I like here, and things I don’t. In particular, I always walk this pavement and on this side of the pavement there are quite a few ladies who proposition me. You see [...ab...] they call out to me and I say ‘hello, I have what I need at home.’ So, no aggression towards them, I’m just saying that [...ab...] everyone is in their place in this neighbourhood, what’s important is that people respect each other so that there is no aggression or aggressive behavior towards anyone.”*

A little further on, we pass in front of a vacant shop. *“There was a big shop here selling Iranian crafts, a bit kitsch. It’s closed now.”* He feels the need to clarify this further. *“Now I must explain something: in this neighbourhood, rents have gone up crazily. Why? Because they’re looking for whoever will pay the most. The people who own those buildings do not live here, they just want to make the most out of them, and to do so they have to sacrifice these shopkeepers or artisans. The majority of places that have been taken over have become bars or restaurants. When we do this, we finally despise the inhabitants. Before, you see, the people living here had everything they needed on the spot, to*

hand: if they needed a locksmith, they went to the locksmith, and the same for the cabinetmaker or the shoemaker. All these craftsmen were here and little by little, they've been driven out because the rents have increased, taken over by anonymous corporations, we don't even know who owns the building."

The pragmatism displayed by Adib towards "*the ladies propositioning me*" contrasts with the illegitimacy leant to "*speculators*," those "*anonymous agents*" whose exteriority from the neighbourhood is emphasised. "*What we need is to keep this tolerance, this diversity, and not create what some speculators want, which is a promenade like in Monaco where only the rich can go.*" Adib stresses how the grip of speculative real estate jeopardizes this multicultural and working-class neighbourhood, with rising rents signifying the replacement of the local population by sociologically foreign inhabitants. "*In Geneva, there is a normal, local city and an international city, and we tend to ignore the local side in favour of promoting International Geneva.*" In this respect, "tolerance" of those who work the streets contributes to maintaining social and cultural diversity, while at the same time constituting a sort of resistance to the transformation of the neighbourhood and the real-estate forces menacing it. Thus, Adib is inclusive towards certain actors while creating boundaries and signifying social distance with those whose presence is seen as disrupting his normative appreciation of the neighbourhood. Through this process of redefining places and negotiating between different ways of neighbourhood life, Adib testifies to the dynamics of urban change. He does so by establishing boundary markers, constituting the nearby and the distant, an outside and an inside, seeking to characterise what belongs to this place: who is entitled to inhabit it? Who is the Pâquis native? Should we prioritise inhabitants or users? And what forms of trade and policy do we want to promote?

THE PALACE OF DELIGHTS

He suddenly interrupts his sentence to salute his Tunisian friend: "*Salam Alekoum. There, I told you I was going to stop by.*" We have already reached our destination.

Adib: *This is Ahmed, my Tunisian brother. Here, we have the pearl of the Pâquis. In his shop you have beauty for the eyes and the smell of honey, it is magnificent. All you have to do is keep silent and inhale the odours. When I come here, I feel like I'm somehow back home. I'm glad you brought these flavours to the heart of the Pâquis.*

Ahmed: *I was born amidst honey and oriental pastries, from the age of 5. Hamdoulillah, things worked very well here.*

Adib: *Again, what can one say other than stay silent and smell this honeyed atmosphere.*

Me: *You should put benches here for that.*

Ahmed: *I'll tell you why I don't put out benches. I don't do it, because the Pâquis is a fragile neighbourhood, you don't want people sitting down, they'd start making fun of folk, or of women passing by. We want this to remain a place where, when you come here, you feel comfortable.*

Adib: *Honey and bitterness!*

Ahmed: *We want everyone to be respected, for women and families to be comfortable.*

Adib: *Incivility. That's the Pâquis' problem.*

Ahmed: *Just a bit, you can't control everyone.*

Adib: *Thank you very much. This guy was born in honey. Congratulations in any case, because you have succeeded, you've made your dream come true, you see? Above all, this is proof that who comes from elsewhere can succeed, that the person from somewhere else can contribute something, here in Geneva. I strongly believe that the Pâquis has come about thanks to those who came here from elsewhere.*

Adib, leaving: *Right. Let's continue our journey... It's not going to be anything fancy, if that's OK with you?*

LITTLE BY LITTLE, THE METAPHOR UNFOLDS

According to Michel de Certeau, there is as much art in shaping a path as there is in shaping a turn of phrase (1990: 151). Our journey

is taking shape, little by little. Its territory unfolds over a narrative sequenced by successive acts (our visits to selected merchants). *"Yes, obviously, I'd like to visit some native Swiss shopkeepers, like my neighbour who has a pearl shop, but she's on holiday right now. But in fact, most of the people who we're going to see this afternoon are Swiss, people who came from elsewhere and who have done everything possible to make sense of their lives and the neighbourhood where they live,"* Adib seems to apologise.

Our tour continues with a visit to his hairdresser, *"a young Algerian,"* where we are welcomed by the goldfinch song *"of my childhood."* This stop with Ibrahim is rather brief, just enough for a *"hello, young man,"* a cordial accolade, an ode to *"the smell of my childhood brilliantine"* and a touch of humour: *"This is the only place where I can toss my head back, where I know my head is in good hands."*

Smooth talking and humour spice up our journey. Showing real concern for narrative, Adib's oratorical style plays on a double register, simultaneously descriptive and epic. His story is sung as much as spoken, transmitting an experience, releasing aromas, titillating our olfactory memory and our imagination. Visiting these places, Adib seeks to put my senses in a stir, to prick up my ears, to make my mouth water: *"And here's my Pakistani friend, standing is in front of his market. During Ramadan, he and I organise meals for the locals. Here, we're arriving at a place that is close to my heart. Let's pop inside for a moment. We'll take a look, smell the curry. This is the bazaar where you can find anything. All the odours mingle with each other; there are very, very good limes, beautiful pomegranates, [uh] good melons, there are beautiful mangoes too, beautiful colours, sad-looking bananas but I think they serve some good purpose: the blacker they are, the better [...] here are some beautiful watermelons, there's everything."*

In the grocery store, we exchange few words with Adib's Pakistani friend. The visit is more like a culinary epic. The produce is luscious, abundant, extraordinary. It is overflowing with energy. If the bananas seem sad, it is to better regale us. Just like foreigners, these fruits have come here to give us the best of what they have. These tasty fruits tell us stories. They invite us towards contemplation. More than simple

description, Adib creates an exegesis of the area, suggesting atmospheres, insinuating the places we visit and interpreting them.

By telling fragments of these few traders' stories, Adib gives us access to some of his anchor points in the neighbourhood, to the places he visits. These spots bring memories back to him. He sometimes lets himself go, sharing anecdotes from his childhood. He testifies to his way of life in the neighbourhood, lived both as a place for speaking to others and a place for socializing, where friendly, professional and political relations intermingle.

At the same time, his oratorical performances help make this district an exceptional space, a space of unusual sociability that couldn't be found in other parts of Geneva; a place of conviviality between different cultural traditions and residential trajectories, where paths are punctuated by greetings and mutual acknowledgments. This depiction of generalised mutual understanding manifests the sense of belonging to a local community. Playing at being "from round here," creating a like-minded community, affirming that "here is different from elsewhere."

With his colourful language, Adib's anecdotes mobilise the imagination and ideas which reveal the cultural mix, successful and emblematic migratory paths, and migrants' contribution to the blossoming neighbourhood. *"It's a district that came back to life because the people who came here contributed their best. But there is also the worst. We must strike a balance between what is good and what is bad."*

If Adib's interlocutors try to nuance his words, he doesn't hesitate to regulate their remarks, notably if someone says *"the district is fragile"* (the Tunisian pastry chef) or *"one can't travel a hundred metres without passing a drug dealer"* (a carpet seller). He does this by applying his own formulation: *"There are all sorts of extremes in the Pâquis, but there are some very beautiful middles, and we must work with these middles to create harmony."*

PUTTING THE TERRITORY INTO NARRATIVES

According to J.-P. Thibaud (2001: 79-99), the itinerary method's main interest is its ability to generate "perception in motion reporting" and thus to "capture in real time" inhabitants' direct experience. It is a question of seizing situations, reactions which slip through watchfulness or intention; and to be on the lookout for anything which might disrupt the flow of the story and the journey.

Walking alongside Adib, very few things hinder the fluidity of his speech. His disposition to create a narrative takes precedence over public interaction. In the presence of our interlocutors, he tends to hog the conversation and nuance their words. In what is supposed to be a posture of exchange and dialogue, he aspires to monopolise the discussion. While he disputes the media narrative's authority, he seeks to reproduce the same discursive influence. He himself constructs a narrative of space which tries to make us accept a particular history of the Pâquis, with the desire of singularising the territory and thus characterising its inhabitants.

Along the way, Adib associates certain places with the district's flourishing, others with its annihilation. In attributing atmospheres to places he creates discontinuity, constituting a nearby and a far away. He organises his speech using three ingredients: the working-class neighbourhood, nostalgia for the local businesses found there, and a tradition of welcome and immigration. The neighbourhood's friendliness and the quality of its social ties take on exaggerated proportions, contributing to its exceptional quality. He promotes the continued existence of the neighbourhood's village character, a place where people meet and take time to talk to each other, which he associates with maintaining a social and cultural mix. He points out how certain activities have ceased, drawing my attention to abandoned shops and commenting on the inadequacy of particular buildings. His narrative integrates description with causality, tales of abandoned shop windows with analysis of the neighbourhood's class relations and economic struggles. He shows, emphasises and accentuates whatever he

considers important. His commented path is built upon different aspects of a narrative (Veyne 1971): cutting, ordering, staging choices, highlights (the visits to the shopkeepers) and explanations which allocate narrative meaning and the desire to create links which otherwise wouldn't reveal themselves. One of the narrative's aims is to promote a participatory urbanism, from the bottom up, claiming "rights to the city" (Lefebvre 1972) through opposing a neighbourhood guided by logics of profitability and profit.

This "stylistic metamorphosis of space" (Certeau 1980: 154) also implies the elision of certain elements. The narration of an especially sociable space requires hiding part of what's real. Adib puts to one side another, narrative weave, one organised around opposing ingredients: violence, insecurity, the drug dealer issue.

Not all my interlocutors subscribe to this constructed image of the Pâquis. The guided tours allow one to explore different ways of inhabiting and perceiving the neighbourhood's public space, to qualify it and to interact with its other users, from which emerges a whole of crossed paths, contradictory feelings and people's individual ways of constituting their own territory through the district. Each of them, in their own way, refutes totalising discourses' pretension of reality. They reveal how the city has no objective status, but exists only through experiences which, by revealing it, invent it and bring it to life. Through these diverse logics of appropriating the city, we can better understand neighbourhood dynamics from the point of view of its users, those who move around it. The invisible city is that of the inhabitants' words. Those words reveal the extent to which the urban experience is an experience of sharing the perceptible (Laplantine 2005: 11). To better understand them, it is necessary to pay particular attention to the oscillations of sensory and perceptory life, and not, in seeking to understand the social, to leave out the perceptible's fluid nature, or behavioural modulations, which cannot be done through immediate observation, but only in the long term.

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Since the beginning of the twentieth century, social diversity and its consequences have attracted the attention of anthropologists and sociologists with urban life as their object of study. Focusing on Geneva, a unique laboratory for studying cities and migration, this volume brings together texts and drawings produced by students of the Master of Anthropology and Sociology at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva. It focuses on the social dynamics observed during the spring semester 2014 in the weekly market in Les Grottes, a gaming hall in Plainpalais, the Sentier des Saules in the Jonction neighbourhood, a Lebanese restaurant not far from the main train station, or during a guided walking tour in the street of Les Pâquis. Through small everyday life stories and fine-grained descriptions, the various authors evoke places, people and atmospheres without skipping over their intellectual and ethical doubts. One of the ethnographic approach's richnesses becomes clear in the reading: emotion and loyalty within a relationship, far from being obstacles, are valuable heuristic tools, a research method that allows little facts, gleaned almost at random, to become significant. The fluid style adopted in this collective work reflects the characteristics of the object being studied. Via their distant gaze, the contributors show how diversity is experienced in the form of movement. They also reveal the place of subtle, micro-political logic in a public staging of belonging, in the appropriation of areas, in various profiles highlighting in turn their origin, genre, class and intersectional organisation within the public sphere.

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