

Multinormativity in the everyday

How migrant newcomers navigate rules and values
in Rio de Janeiro in the twenty-first century

Tilman Heil

UNIVERSITÄT ZU KÖLN / MECILA

Introduction

Not least since the renewed recognition of the globalization and transnationalization of lifeworlds in the 1990s, the social sciences and humanities have studied the plurality of normative frameworks within which our lives take place. Responding to some shortfalls of legal pluralism, multinormativity has been introduced as a concept to address various ills of previous debates (Duve, 2017; Vesting, 2018). Addressing conviviality and the question how people navigate norms and values in the everyday, three aspects seem to be particularly pertinent: 1) to avoid the bias privileging codified law, multinormativity stresses the plural sources and formats of normative frameworks; 2) to recognise that normative frameworks are not discrete but overlap and influence one another so that multinormativity could be described as a field of entangled forces and frameworks; and, 3) to

show, in line with the praxeological turn, an analytical interest in the processes of norms in the making that stresses the circumstances and contexts under which normative outlooks are formulated. Multinormativity seems apt to account for the dynamism of the normative aspects of our lives. This dynamism is centrally animated by the distinctly qualified encounters that happen in hierarchies; an empirical condition that conviviality analytically addresses. Here, I discuss how normative questions are an integral part of everyday conviviality, not just of law makers but also of ordinary people. Ordinary people are authors and agents of normativity.

These aspects gel with the debates regarding ordinary ethics in the last ten years in social and cultural anthropology (e.g. Lambek et al., 2015). Lambek (2010a, p. 9) considers “[...] ethics as a cover term for recognizing the complexity and perhaps inconsistency of human action and intention, a complexity that we think is neglected in much social theory”. As there is no coherent differentiation into the use of “ethical” and “moral”, he argues, they can be used interchangeably. Anthropology has become increasingly concerned with an adjectival definition of the ethical that zooms in on people’s talk and action, rather than being concerned with the cataloguing of rules and norms. Hereby, this recent debate is quite distinct from that of the debates of legal pluralism (Duve, 2017). It adopts some of the concerns of multinormativity, despite not using the term to frame the debate. Zooming in on the praxeological turn underlying ordinary ethics, Mattingly (2012, p. 164) specifies: “[...] The moral in any society is dependent upon the cultivation of virtues that are developed in and through social practices”. More than a theoretical exercise, the possible synergies between multinormativity and ordinary ethics can serve to better understand ethical questions of complex and unequal urban situations, such as the ones that unfold in metropolitan spaces in the Global South. I draw from my multi-year ethnographic research with newcomers from West Africa and Southern Europe in Rio de Janeiro (Heil, 2021a, 2020d). To advance the conversation between ordinary ethics and multinormativity, I ask how

ordinary people, such as migrant newcomers, navigate and thereby give meaning to norms and values in the transnational and relational lifeworlds they inhabit. This argument mainly grounds in the lives of young Senegalese men who work in street vending in Rio de Janeiro and who belong to the Murid Muslim brotherhood of Senegal. I only discuss the experience of young Spaniards when it comes to the everyday ethical evaluation of the migrant situation and their often irregular legal status.

The article unfolds in six moments; the first three broaden the debate, while the latter three offer concrete ethnographic analyses. To destabilise some of the underlying assumptions of legal pluralism, I will show how the debates of transnationalism and sociality in relation to mobility and relationality provide two cornerstones and conceptual inspirations to my thinking on multinormativity and ordinary ethics. They are followed by insights into ordinary ethics, judgement, and self-formation that are central to the subsequent ethnographic vignettes from Rio de Janeiro: the navigating of the normative everyday, the possibilities to invert hierarchies through ethical self-making, and the resulting conundrums of living together. In situations of deeply unequal urban relations, the normative dimension of conviviality provides a space in which inhabitants can carve out their space.

Transnationalism and mobility

Starting from the 1990s, the social sciences increasingly engaged with the multiple faces of globalization, stressing its effects on the cultural and social dimensions of life, from the global to the local. The seminal book *Nations unbound* by Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc (1994) initiated the anthropological interest in the transnational lives of migrant communities, deeply challenging the national container view of modern states and the concurrent methodological nationalism of the social sciences (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002,

2003). The taken for granted social categories such as nationalities and the hegemony of nation state institutions in structuring lives of mobile subject had to be critically reviewed. Other spatial and temporal contextualizations as well as further social and political institutions—emergent from above and below—had lasting effects on individuals, communities, and large-scale collective formations and their becoming. In a local turn, some authors proposed to speak of translocalities as this seemed the more meaningful dimension of locally lived lives than any reference to the world of static nation states (McFarlane, 2009; Lambert, 2002).

In contrast, numerous scholars held onto the idea of transnationalism to recognise that, while the world was interconnected through the mobility of good, people, and services, national governments had remained a major force in the administrative and normative regimes enforcing and controlling such mobilities. States regulated border regimes, defined categories of mobility and imposed regimes of immobility, as well as granted citizenship or made people and their movements illegal (Glick Schiller, 2018, p. 203). If nothing else, these debates show how in studies of migration and mobility, the role of the state as a main force of regularisation was debated, increasingly seeing it as one institution among many. Yet, the extent to which states exercise power over a national territory or a (trans) national community and their normative frameworks has remained a central concern.

As a concept, transnationalism exemplified the challenges that had led to the mobility turn (Urry, 2007, 2000; Cresswell, 2006). What initially seemed a celebration of a world freed from thinking in blocks and nation states, soon saw troublesome dialectics reintroduced: between mobility and immobility, flow and closure, movement/migration and sedentarism (e.g. Geschiere and Meyer, 1998; Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2013; Freemantle and Landau, 2022). These binaries have remained important in structuring our lives. Apart from conceptualising the role of nation states in governing im/mobilities, the ways in which mobility and stasis are part of

lives and their meanings, including normativities, move into sight. Judging from the debate of transnationalism, it becomes clear that the interplay of normativities is neither neutral or free in practice, nor is the way in which they are addressed by social science analysis. Rather than starting from stasis and stability, an analysis that takes mobility as a constant possibility, is by far more apt to address the uncertainties, cross-fertilizations, and changes that become meaningful in personal and institutional lives, also regarding their normative and ethical foundations.

Relational selves

Apart from challenging the methodological nationalism and advocating awareness for the uncertainties derived from postulating mobility, critiques of the modern conception of the individual that stresses relational selves equally questions the idea of bounded entities and identities and the stability they suggest. While this applies to concepts and norms, it also applies to the very idea of the human person and their sociality, once more stressing the processual constitution of life.

Following Strathern's (2020, p. 11) thorough discussion of the anthropology of relations, the dynamic between entities and relations is at stake. stressing relationality "is frequently understood as confronting assumptions about the intrinsic nature or self-identity of things" (and people). Individuals are imagined having fixed identities with, at best, extrinsic relations that leave their essence untouched. Rather than giving priority to the discrete nature of entities, which remain unaffected by their relations, entities only come into being through their very relations. The social processes of relating inform the meanings, judgements, and frameworks within which life unfolds. Rather than seeing the social as extrinsic to entities, as the modern notion of the individual suggest, relations are intrinsic to what constitutes the self. Barad (2006) has called attention to how

entities are *intra*-related, rather than only inter-related. While interrelations presuppose a plurality of discrete units, such as in legal pluralism, intra-relation describes fractal bodies which allow other bodies in, yet precluding that they would be fully subsumed. Intra-related or fractal bodies describe irregularities that are objected to kaleidoscopic permutations, continuous changes, and alternating forms. These bodies change in dependence of the scale chosen and the angle under which they are approached (cf. De la Cadena, 2015, p. 32).

Such a conceptualization of the social constituted by relational selves introduces a powerful framework to analyse how mobile people live in transnational social fields, connected to numerous spaces and their respective normative frameworks, themselves constituting normativities through their relations. At the same time, understanding selves as relational also sheds light onto the very challenges addressed by multinormativity: the nested existence of normativities and their constitution in processes in which different normative frameworks are partially connected, overlap, mutually influence one another, stand in contradiction, and remain distinct, all at the same time. These dynamics constitute the everyday of (the making of) ordinary ethics and multinormativity. Next, I introduce some of the ethical dilemmas that result from such multiplicity.

Ordinary ethics

The debate of ordinary ethics grounds in the assumption that the ethical or moral is immanent to interaction and to our being in the world, the existential condition of what Heidegger termed human thrownness (Mattingly, 2012, p. 169; Lambek et al., 2015, pp. 16-17).¹

¹ Such a view is foundational for both an ordinary ethics from a first-person perspective (Lambek et al., 2015; Lambek, 2010b), as well as of a poststructuralist Foucauldian conceptualisation. Both strike a balance between moral freedom and creativity and moral unfreedom caused by structures and discourses. Mattingly states that the

Considering contexts of migration and arrival of newcomers to heterogeneous urban fields in Brazil, I want to debate this *thrown-togetherness* (Massey, 2007) in two steps. Inspired by the focus on how normativity is constituted, I firstly ask how newcomers judge actions of the people around them as good or bad, right and wrong, respectful or not. Secondly, I ask how they form themselves as ethical subjects in this field of endless tensions and contestation. Both practices —judgement and self-formation— are best described as contentious processes. My interlocutors' biographies exemplify lives in which countless conflicting perceptions and positions situationally become available given the multiple, local, and transnational worlds within which social actions become embedded.

Judgement and self-formation as debated in ordinary ethics sharpen the understanding of the everyday of multinormativity. In ordinary ethics, “the ‘ordinary’ implies an ethics that is relatively tacit, grounded in agreement rather than rule, in practice rather than knowledge or belief, and happening without calling undue attention to itself” (Lambek, 2010a, p. 2). For newcomers, unmarked practices and agreements at times seem extraordinary and therefore become marked. At the same time, the values of newcomers can become marked in their difference and therefore questioned. Accessing new spaces and experiencing different encounters, the quest to reconcile one's own normative frameworks with those frameworks within which one becomes embedded unfolds as a process in which dilemmas claim centre stage. Rather than being exceptions, ethical dilemmas become everyday. These dilemmas demand those who experience them to judge and thereby mediate between obligation and convention, on the one hand, and creativity and freedom, on the

major reason why in philosophy both approaches, the person-centred and the post-structural virtue ethics, cannot be combined, is the different conceptions of the self. While the self in the former maintains a humanist approach, the latter constructs the self mainly as the effect of collective practices and structures, the latter allowing things, that in a humanist logic are perceived as objects, to be subjects as well and thus occupy an ethical location (cf. Mattingly, 2012, p. 175).

other (cf. Lambek, 2010a, p. 25-26; Fassin, 2015, p. 176). In the act of judging, the tensions present in relational self-making become clearly apparent as people oscillate between feeling bound by the power of existing moral frameworks and their ability to deliberate and decide.

Judgement is effectively social, and “non-individualistic” as Hannah Arendt had put it (Benhabib, 2003, p. 189). As a relational and social practice,

Judgment requires the moral-cognitive capacities for worldliness, that is, an interest in the world and in the human beings who constitute the world, and a firm grasp of where one’s own boundaries lie and where those of others begin. [...] Whereas thinking requires autonomy, consistency, tenacity, independence, and steadfastness. [...] Judgement requires the] capacity to appreciate the standpoint of others without projection, idealization, and distortion. (Benhabib, 2003, p. 191)

In a multinormative context, it is crucial to consider numerous standpoints and think of judging as relational, yet projection, idealization, and distortion regularly interfere in this process, which can cause conflict. These processes and the known impossibility to run away from the world in which one is embedded create the tense context in which judgement takes place.

While dilemmas arise due to individual trajectories and the potentiality of individual freedom, relational practices also highlight the training practices of Foucauldian self-formation in collective contexts, for example, religious or cultural groups, in which character is cultivated and selves (trans)formed (Mahmood, 2005). Here, an individualist, strong first-person position is lacking or at least continuously curtailed. Still, such collective training practices function more as a horizon of potentiality than an everyday imposition. The process of self-formation is one during which inconsistencies and struggles are fought (Foucault, 1997; cf. Lambek, 2015; Mattingly, 2013). Again, the power of a highly institutionalised normative

systems, such as of religion, remains juxtaposed to the potentiality of judgement derived from the processual constitution of selves within the multiplicity constituent of multinormativity. In the everyday, these contradictions can be articulated, explained, or remain unaddressed and camouflaged. As moral predicaments, contradictions are constitutive of the human relational condition.

The case of migrant newcomers exemplifies the situation of having to deal with being thrown into a different world. The potential for struggles, insecure judgements, and contradictions in talk and action are multiplied. Newcomers cannot but engage with the different moral orders or discourses that co-occur in the situations of encounter and co-presence. In the presence of others, the realisation of moral ideas “rather envisions a moral striving that in its uncertainty and its attention to the concrete specificity of the other is simply a dimension of everyday life” (Das, 2010, p. 377). Debating Hindu-Muslim relations, Das extrapolates on this uncertainty in the presence of the other: “For all our worldliness, then, we might never be fully at home in any particular world” (Das, 2015, p. 80). Therefore, the uncertainty, contradictions, and attempts to juggle variously in/compatible normative approaches characterises the ethics of newcomers as an ethics of mobile travellers. In the omnipresence of constraints, challenges, and adverse forces, a fruitful understanding of the everyday ethical navigations or strivings grounds in people’s active reactions to, and handlings of, the divergent histories of people and places that become part of newcomers’ life trajectories, if only temporarily.

Such an approach to an ordinary ethics in a mobile world with a focus on relational self-formation is clearly distinct from legal pluralism with which it engages at best as a backdrop or one of countless normative orders that coincide (Duve, 2017). Ordinary ethics, instead, shares an interest with multinormativity; both pay close attention to the messiness of social life of which the normative is part. Ordinary ethics in a mobile world provides an exemplary framework to understand how people continuously navigate through dilemmas, inconsistencies, and contradictions of multinormativity, how they

contest and invert existing hierarchies, and, finally, how living together becomes at once commonplace and highly disturbing.

Navigating the normative everyday

The three foregone sections on mobility, relationality, and ethics underpin a comparative analysis of the normative everyday of mobile subjects. They are, at the same time, directly related to the ethnographic work with African (and European) newcomers that I have performed since 2015 in Rio de Janeiro. I have conducted participant observation and semi-structured interviews with around 70 newcomers, who arrived within the last twenty years from Spain and Senegal (Heil, 2020d, 2021a). We discussed the hopes, aspirations, struggles, and setbacks newcomers experience in their place-making practices in Rio de Janeiro that are embedded in local and transnational life trajectories. Most insights into normative processes derive from informal commentary and group debates that I documented in fieldnotes. The struggles, dilemmas, and nuances did not seem to easily fit within the interview format of question and answer. Rather, in the process of co-labouring (De la Cadena 2015), we produced an understanding of the complex moral frameworks within which we were all embedded, even if to different extents and in distinctive ways.

Such constant movement through uncertain and multi-layered terrain is aptly described as navigation (Vigh, 2006) of which judgement, dilemmas, mobility, and relational self-formation is part. To navigate in Rio de Janeiro meant to judge and take an ethical stance, only to revise it when the overall net of relations appeared in a different light, demanding a re-evaluation, or simply provided new influences. The language applied oftentimes was far from philosophical jargon and their everyday ethics came coated in at least three domains. The normative reasoning and self-fashioning happened in terms otherwise vaguely related to the state, to religion and origin,

as well as to family and neighbourliness. I will take these three domains as examples, the first in this and the other two in the remaining sections.

Newcomers and migrants interact with the state at first when they cross state borders. Responsible for a territory that, in global comparison, has been receiving relatively few newcomers, the Brazilian institutions have reworked their legal texts that define the normative framework under which newcomers can come and remain on the territory (Ribeiro de Oliveira, 2017). This process culminated in the implementation of the new migration law in 2017. Under the lens of multinormativity, two institutional analyses show impressive results to which I can only hint: first, the interaction between the Ministries of the Exterior, of the Interior, and of Labour and their respective organs have struggled to forge new procedures while maintaining existing best practice (Ribeiro de Oliveira, 2017; Camineiro Baggio and Madrid Sartoretto, 2019); and second, the national Brazilian law has been influenced in varying degrees by distinctive restrictive and facilitating legal developments from different parts of the world, while also maintaining distinctive principles, such as that of strict reciprocity of treatment at the borders (Feldman-Bianco, 2018). All these dimensions became part of the everyday, when my interlocutors had to act within these changing frameworks, which happened both in interactions with state representatives and in the everyday of trying to maintain a sense of legitimate local permanence.

To remain in the national territory, both Senegalese and Spanish newcomers navigated this legal framework that became part of the active normative landscape within which their ethical self-formation took place. Their interactions with the state and its representatives were formative, as well as their national and transnational experiences and justifications. Throughout the 2010s, Senegalese collectively achieved to walk their claim to legitimate residency from the local Caritas Offices (in charge of administering refugees and asylum seeker) and the Senegalese Consulate to the ministries in Brasilia. In 2019, their efforts materialised in a specific regulation that

organised their regularisation and guaranteed their permanence in Brazil. Until then, they had been dependent on the precarious documentation of continuously extended protocols documenting their initial asylum claims (Heil, 2021a, 2018).

In contrast, countless Spaniards, who during the same period were simply barred from obtaining legal residency, struggled how to act upon their irregularity and frequently performed tactical manoeuvres before the state institutions and the public (Heil, 2020d). While Spaniards expounded their ethical dilemma linked to illegality, Senegalese never suffered the same fate. Eduardo² confessed the distress in crossing the triple border to Paraguay and Argentina as well as getting a new Spanish passport every so often. In contrast, El Hadji, like many others, affirmed “C’est tranquille ici” [It is peaceful here] when it came to legal status. Senegalese encountered a national framework in Brazil that in their case has been in relative sync with their own ethical claim to freedom of movement. My interlocutors were very aware how this contrasted with other Senegalese who had attempted immigration in Europe, where they were objected to illegalization, precarity, and—frequently—forced return. Nonetheless, some of my Senegalese sensed that public discourse in Brazil was slowly changing, influenced by hegemonic normative orders that increasingly criminalise the mobility of the poor and residents from the global south. In 2019, Moustapha analysed how Brazil had *not yet* a problem of xenophobia, but clearly one with racism. From passing unnoticed in 2014, Senegalese more recently had become a category in the emerging public debates on migration. With growing public knowledge of their origins, the legitimacy of their claim to asylum and the legitimacy of permanence in Brazil on humanitarian grounds had started to be questioned.

² All names are pseudonyms to respect my interlocutors’ privacy and safety.

Invert hierarchies through ethics

The plural normative relationalities in the regulation and justification of migration describe only one meaningful terrain which newcomers to Rio de Janeiro navigate. For the Senegalese, this terrain did not even seem particularly relevant since it was rather easy to adhere to the norms, to which they moreover maintained a pragmatic stance. More taxing ethical dilemmas were fought in relation to what it meant to be a good person. They struggled in countless encounters in Rio de Janeiro, in which they identified ethical outlooks that caused them pain, with which they disagreed, or which outright devalued their lives. Two spheres of contention might serve as examples: origin and religion.

Until Senegalese became a category in the public discourses on recent migration, my interlocutors were often addressed by more generic terms—*negão*, *angolano*, *africano*—which frequently had a negative connotation (Heil, under review). In an urban fabric characterised by racism, inequality, and steep social hierarchies, my interlocutors were troubled by the fact that they had been slotted into categories that prejudicated their lives. As a result, though, Kalidou and others experimented with ways to ethically maintain a distance to these categories as well as to the people who locally stood for them more than they themselves. The superficially identarian character of these categories referenced deep ethical concerns of self-understanding and formation. For example, Angolans had been a significant, if not the predominant, group of African newcomers to Rio de Janeiro, nowadays concentrated in the Maré district of favelas. Over decades, Angolans had restricted access to the neighbourhood; they experienced tensions and suffered from negative stereotyping by Brazilians, also Black ones (Toledo de Souza, 2012; Petrus, 2001). Broadly, the accusations against them were based on the unproven involvement in drug and arm trafficking with Angola (Petrus, 2001, pp. 9-13). Independent of its truth value and somewhat familiar with

these accusations of practices that they themselves judged negatively, my interlocutors made every effort to distance themselves from what “Angolan” signified.

Furthermore, the relationship with Brazilian Blackness was equally tense (Heil, 2020a; under review).³ Being called *negão* or *africano* indexed Blackness and Africanness, which both stood for ethical positions that had the potential to bring the Senegalese close to Black Brazilians in positive ways, resisting racial and colonial logics. In specific instances this was starting to happen, such as when the local circle of the Murid brotherhood performed prayers at the Pretos Novos memorial in Gamboa during a shared commemoration of enslaved African Muslims whose remains were buried there. At the same time, both *negão* and *angolano* caused a dilemma for my interlocutors as they locally stood for practices and subject positions that left them uneasy. Blackness—in particular being called a *negão*—invoked practices which many of the Senegalese judged as bad. My interlocutors much relied on hegemonic and media discourses in which hyper sexualization, crime, poverty, and dysfunctional family and gender relations negatively define blackness.

Africanness, on the other hand, came with its own set of derogatory prejudice. My interlocutors saw themselves locally confronted with a global imaginary of Africa as the world’s eternal heart of darkness, poor, underdeveloped, dangerous, and violent due to permanent warfare. In a long conversation at his stall on a street market, Kalidou first shared his indignation about the prejudice against Africa that he encountered on a daily basis before seeking relief in laughter. The instances in which Senegalese and Black Brazilians used both, Blackness and Africanness, to show solidarity grounded in a different ethics that only slowly grew into a counterweight to the still hegemonic colonial logics active in Brazil. These logics, which had started to consume many of my Senegalese interlocutors,

³ This and the following paragraphs provide a condensed version of the arguments more fully developed in the referenced papers.

reproduced normative frameworks of judging people and practices through which my interlocutors found themselves at the bottom end.

In contrast, Senegalese frequently continued to form their lives according to an ethics rooted in the transnational space of their religious and national diasporic networks. For a large number, it implied to meet to pray on a weekly basis. Within these religious and diasporic networks, Blackness and Africanness was linked to an ethical self-fashioning little to do with the continuous reproduction of colonial hierarchies encountered in Brazil. Peacefulness, respect, and equality within the family, the neighbourhood, and the state were portrayed as some of the key values according to which my interlocutors forged their relations. Without exception, my interlocutors remembered one of the main religious leaders, Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, and the first president of independent Senegal, Léopold Sédar Senghor, as famous examples of peaceful resistance against colonial oppression and successful decolonization. Alongside such illustrious examples, they invested in hard work to achieve their goals. While the tenacious vending activities at the beaches under the burning sun were a deeply individual affair and economic strategies kept to oneself, the support to carry on came from those around them, friends, flatmates, and co-nationals and co-believers.

The lived solidarity in their diasporic networks, the continuous responsibility to contribute to their family's expenses through remittances, a hard work ethics, and a reluctance to judge others—including their Brazilian surroundings (Heil, 2021b)—were significant instances of these ethics in their everyday. Sometimes this was referred to positively as Africanness, sometimes as the true struggle of decolonization of Blacks, and sometimes—as both had ambiguous connotations in the Brazilian discursive field—they tried to shape up the image of the good Senegalese and Muslim migrant. Such ethical self-formation that gave meaning to a national label and reclaimed the honourable conduct of Muslims globally was a continuous undertaking situated within the dense net of references and practices,

locally and transnationally. Some parts of this relational net were extremely strenuous, while others were supportive to their undertaking. As each dimension of this relational net referred to particular norms and values, my interlocutors were apt to combat extreme discrimination. At least subjectively, they managed to challenge and even invert socially meaningful hierarchies. It seemed to pay off to maintain a sense of relative superiority, never getting tired to reassure themselves that they were and remained good ethical persons.

Conundrums of living together

Apart from the direct interactions with the state regarding migration regulation and the specific struggles of ethical self-making and the judgement of others, newcomers join a collective of urban dwellers that is posed with the challenge of having to inhabit the same everyday spaces (Landau, 2014; Saunders, 2010). In my previous ethnography of Senegal and Spain, I had traced the diasporic knowledges of conviviality put into practice by Senegalese at home and abroad in contexts of religious and ethnic diversity (Heil, 2020b). The process of conviviality meant both cooperative and conflictive encounters on the basis of sufficient equality and a recognition of a shared humanity grounded in the practices of interaction, negotiation, and translation. Such conviviality was strained under the conditions in Rio de Janeiro and continuously pushed to the edge, questioning the feasibility of its existence (Heil, 2020c). In face of enhanced inequality and the resulting social stress under which these urban fabrics exist, the already uncertain outcomes of living together were further enhanced. Which role does the ethical practice of newcomers play in this?

As the last section in particular has shown, coalition and friction with those around them came awkwardly close and produced ethical dilemmas which newcomers faced since their arrival in Brazil and Rio de Janeiro. Coalition and friction produced turbulent sequences

as they followed each other closely. To arrive at temporarily stabilising judgements, reaffirm norms, or accept difference in what was perceived right and wrong or good and bad turned out to be a strenuous process which depended much on the in/actions people took. These in/actions shaped and reconfigured the relational webs which ultimately altered how any one of its members—local, newcomer, or other—constituted themselves. The cultivation of selves-in-relation to others moved centre stage.

In actual urban spaces, the co-existence of newcomers and long-term urban settlers was most of the time inconspicuous. While selling at the beaches, Senegalese vendors humbly offered their merchandise, readily moving on unasked, hardly insisting. Once at the beach, Bourama came close to me, set down his case with sunglasses, exposed chargers and power banks in his hand, small loudspeakers dangling from his wrist. Quickly realising that none of us would buy today, he straightened his back to move on. Taking off my sunglasses interrupted the routine, and Bourama, recognizing me, accepted a welcome short break of teasing, introductions, and laughter. These peaceful scenes only turned into trouble if my interlocutors were directly attacked, for example, in the form of a racist slur. While selling at Copacabana beach, Fallou had taken a man he identified as French to task after he overheard him complaining that Senegalese had come to pollute the city's finest beaches. While calling out such racism, Fallou also proclaimed their equal rights to be at this beach.

Moving through the city, most Senegalese abstained from greeting, something that had remained a key sign of respect in Senegal, especially when moving through uncrowded terrains (Heil, 2020b, pp. 113-124). In Rio, my interlocutors kept to themselves, unless they had created rapport. Such rapport, they even established with people, whose way of life or particular practices they did not share. Spending long days at his street market stall, Kalidou maintained good relations with some neighbours, looking out for one another, with others he kept a distance only hesitantly explaining why. He engaged in joking relations with regular passers-by and clearly identified those

with malevolent intentions. Apart from the dynamics on temporary or permanent markets, conviviality was maintained with a diversity of neighbours in their often precarious or underprivileged housing, the regular clients or passers-by of vendors of African art, or work colleagues for those who worked in construction.⁴ Maintaining relations was an ethical practice, despite the challenges that arose by the acts of those involved.

As a rule, my interlocutors did not share their opinion of what they thought of these encounters. First and foremost, they explained that they acted in ways to stay out of trouble and remain true to themselves (Heil, 2021b). The latter was deeply grounded in respectful relations, something that relied on reciprocity. The lack of a response or simply other ways of relating in public explained why in Rio de Janeiro many Senegalese had quickly stopped greeting. Only with time, I learned about further ethical underpinnings of their acts. In an effort to think along with my research, Moustapha put it outright: For many, their faith as Muslims of a Sufi brotherhood indicated that judgement was reserved for God alone. As humans, the challenge was to cultivate one's own, inner virtues.

When loosening up, most of my interlocutors took issue and shared the horror they felt when witnessing some of the family and neighbourhood relations in Rio. Ndeye reiterated a recurrent example: "C'est pas normal qu'ils ne protègent pas leurs filles et leurs sœurs" ["It is not normal that they do not look out for their daughters and sisters"]. My interlocutors, both men and women, identified a deep lack of respect and care for female family members which they perceived in teenage pregnancies, casual dating involving loose sexual relations, or the objectifying dress of women they found both vulgar and seducing. More often than a patriarchal logic outright, care and protection were foregrounded. Everyday violence, extreme

⁴ I here leave out the experiences of highly qualified Senegalese who had come to Brazil to study a master or doctorate, with whom I spent less time in participant observation and who—in general—were more outspoken about their surroundings.

individualism, and the excess of poverty and homelessness furthermore served as examples for defunct neighbourly relations. The trouble such practices caused my interlocutors explained their refraining from generous interactions. Despite all, they still had to do justice to their own moral compass, which they said was grounded in their upbringing, their religion, and their worldliness as global travellers. Part of this self-formation demanded the effort to maintain cooperative, if fleeting, relations whenever possible. It exemplified their continuous struggle to reconcile their own ethics, themselves dynamic and in the process of change, with the acts around them which, taken together, are constitutive of multinormativity.

The conundrums of living together discussed in no way refer to conviviality as a normative state of affairs of how living together should be. Rather, conviviality means the process of engaging and relating to the multiple hierarchies understood in complex, intersectional ways. Some speak of the co-constitution of conviviality and inequality and suggest marrying them into conviviality-inequality (Nobre and Costa, 2019; Costa, 2019). In Rio de Janeiro, I have been able to highlight modes in which people in the everyday draw from heterogeneous and intersecting normative repertoires to carry on, most of the time trying to comfort themselves in an otherwise discomforting and unpredictable middle ground between stability and crisis, coalition and friction. Multinormativity draws attention to how not only the everyday of contemporary unequal cities is about living with ethical contradictions. For those not in the position to impose their way, it is also about having to find equivalence where there seems to be none, obliged, willing and used to staying with the trouble. This changes the conception of the ethical and the normative. Instead of conceiving them as defined by stable constellations of rules, the ethical is always in process, intrinsically contradictory and unstable. Stable norms and values remain, if at all, as an aspiration for some, while for others they always present a coercive force, mainly there to exclude them.

Conclusions

Analysing how migrant newcomers understand and navigate the norms and values in the lifeworlds they inhabit, I have advanced in six moments. The first three moments contextualised the move from legal pluralism to multinormativity in pertinent conceptual developments that happened in parallel: Contextualising transnationalization within the debate about im/mobility, I firstly stressed that multinormativity should be conceived of as in-process. Taking mobility as a constant possibility, opens an analytical awareness for the uncertainties, cross-fertilizations, and changes occurring in everyday multinormativities. Secondly, it seems opportune for the debate of multinormativity, to recognise the constitution of selves-in-relation. As our lives are constituted at the confluences of a fractal web of relations, so is multinormativity. Thirdly, briefly reviewing some of the pertinent debate about ordinary ethics, in particular the challenges of judgement and self-formation, I made the case to include the ethical struggles of “ordinary” people into a broad conception of multinormativity. These debates are pivotal to understand the richness of the making and unmaking of ethical or normative lives.

The second three elements have intertwined the foregone conceptual considerations with some of my ethnographic findings from Rio de Janeiro to provide examples of how to unfold multinormativity that is confronted with the challenges of inequality and conviviality: Juxtaposing the experiences of Spaniards and Senegalese, the fourth moment has highlighted the plurality of the complex and changing navigations of normative frameworks imposed by the state. It has exemplified the most conventional way of addressing multinormativity in contexts of migration. The fifth moment has dived into the potential to challenge some of the worst inequalities manifest in contemporary urban hierarchies. Relying on religious and national idioms, my interlocutors from Senegal engaged in a delicate balancing act of solidarity and boundary making to revise

the least favourable relative positions attributed to them through ethical self-making. Finally, the conundrums of conviviality derive from living within a context of multinormativity in which ethical contradictions and discrepancies are omnipresent but still succumb the attempt to avoid utter social breakdown.

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