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Conviviality as a Politics of Endurance:

The Refugee Emergency and the Consolations of Artistic Intervention

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ABSTRACT

Against the impasse of despair in the public response to the refugee emergency, artistic interventions emerge to offer fleeting significant opportunities for restorative and reparative action. This paper takes up conviviality as a conceptual tool to understand artistic interventions to the forced migration and asylum issues that variably aim for healing, empathy, and reflexivity. Drawing on comparative research consisting of interviews of artists in France, UK, and the US and textual analyses of their performances, we discuss specific motivations and diverse representational practices that aim to enact togetherness-in-difference. We discuss the potentials and risks of convivial artistic productions, which we argue produce a politics of endurance that "helps people live better with circumstances they cannot change" (Feldman 2015).

Introduction

The anthropologist Julie Peteet (2005) once described the refugee camp as a "landscape of despair and hope". Writing about her field site in Beirut, Lebanon, where four million displaced Palestinians were managed, refashioned, and confined in "rubble-filled" and "geosocially isolated patches of land" over several decades, Peteet evoked a paradox of refugee camps as sites of poverty and misery but also of creativity and resistance—a paradox that resonates to this day.

Global news, with its diverse motivations, occasionally bears witness to camp tragedy: *Reuters* reported aid workers' sequestration of knives, rope, and rat poison from camp-dwellers in northern Kenya in the face of rising incidents of refugee suicide as the prospects of their asylum grew dimmer by the day (Fick, 2018). But the news tells other stories too: those of traditional aid agencies and philanthropic foundations, of artist to activist groups committed to offering refugees relief and consolation beyond the usual aid packages. Beyond the basics of food, shelter, and sanitation, support is increasing for initiatives that aim to provide refugees with rituals of convivial sociability.

For instance, theater and art, with their promises "to connect, unite, and reclaim our individual and collective narratives," (Good Chance, 2015) are gaining valuable space within refugee camps, as seen in efforts by the artist collective Good Chance Calais, which has built temporary theaters in refugee camps where people can come together, perform standup comedy routines, and exchange stories. A broader pedagogical component also involves remediating refugees' stories for theatergoing publics in the West.

Broadcast and interpersonal media also promote leisure and intimacy within the setting of the refugee camp. Internews, for example, supports humanitarian radio in crisis-affected areas: their radio broadcasts not only news and factual programs, but also entertainment genres of popular music, drama, and even cooking shows for the culinarily

inclined (Fluck, 2017; Ong, 2019). Photojournalistic mediations have also familiarized us with the (now politicized) figure of the smartphone-wielding "connected migrant" (Diminescu, 2008), whose excitable act of selfie-taking on the shores of Greece invites contemplation about her embrace of the "frivolous" digital vernaculars of the day while standing outside of ever-persistent symbolic borders.

Engaging with this inherent paradox of despair and hope in humanitarianism, this paper reflects on the meaning and value of artistic interventions that aim for convivial socialities with and among refugees. Against the dominant backdrop of government securitization and populist hostilities in the refugee crisis response, what does it mean to offer fleeting possibilities for togetherness and celebration? Do such invitations to healing, empathy, and reflexivity lay the groundwork for political action and social change? Or do they ultimately represent a failure of the humanitarian imagination: an implicit admission that it is easier to support therapeutic artistic projects that offer palliative care for people coping with suffering rather than to engineer definitive solutions to end the crisis? And finally, beyond camp confines, how might these interventions help reshape perception of the refugee crisis among Western audiences and publics?

Focusing specifically on artistic responses to the crisis of forced migration, the paper presents how convivial socialities are enacted from a diverse range of artist intentions and communicative strategies. Simultaneously fraught with the risk of trivializing tragedy as well as the potential to create opportunities for social repair and personal recovery, conviviality as a mode of sociality manifests in different registers. By comparing and contrasting three artistic interventions addressing both refugee and host public

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communities in France, the UK, and the US, we discuss three specific opportunities they offer in resolving the paradox of hope and despair: conviviality for healing, for empathy, and for reflexivity. Our empirical material consists of interview data, performance pieces, and online public documentation (texts, videos and photos) about three specific artistic interventions. Drawing from interviews with artists and textual analyses of their curations and performances, we discuss the ways in which artists attempt to resolve the humanitarian paradox of hope and despair through particular representational and performance practices.

We ultimately argue that, for better or worse, convivial artistic productions produce a politics of endurance that, following anthropologist Ilana Feldman, helps "people live better with circumstances they cannot change" (Feldman, 2015, p. 429). Comparing three convivial artistic interventions, we reflect on the different qualities of the politics of endurance they evoke: from pragmatic commitments to alleviating harm, and from addressing immediate needs to creating political solidarity that in turn directly exposes broader structures that create or perpetuate oppression (see Scholz, 2008). While convivial artistic productions have generative potentials to help people endure in precarious times, we also reflect on the risky volatilities they pose for the artists, refugee performers, and audiences involved.

We chose these three particular projects because they are representative of artistic interventions originating from very different conditions of cultural production: in France, the UK, and the U.S. Our first example, Borderline, illustrates artistic responses to the European refugee crisis, which offered people trapped in refugee camps an opportunity to participate in a variety of convivial productions. Our second example, Lalya Gaye, represents artistic productions of UK-based migrant and refugee artists whose work is thematically concerned with experiences of belonging, displacement, and

intolerance in multicultural Western societies. Our final example, the work of Jose Torres Tama, offers an interesting contrast by zooming in on experiences of institutionalized marginalization and racism in a non-European setting: the American South, with a specific focus on New Orleans. It is important to note that the artists we discuss express different political and activist commitments, where only one self-identifies as an activist. We approach creative practice here along with the notion of DIY citizenship (Ratto and Boler, 2014), which is a form of critical making that seeks to challenge exclusionary political structures and power imbalances.

The (Pre)Conditions of Conviviality

Conviviality is defined as a mode of sociality that is fundamentally concerned with ways of living with difference. As Magdalena Nowicka and Steven Vertovec (2014, p. 342) recount, conviviality has been "used as an analytical tool to ask and explore the ways, and under what conditions, people constructively create modes of togetherness". Modes of togetherness can be strong or weak, fleeting or enduring, intentional or accidental. Such encounters may occur in either centers (e.g., established arts venues in Western zones of safety, addressing audiences distant from suffering) or peripheries (e.g., refugee arts projects in detention centers within zones of danger). In this section, we review how scholars describe the conditions and dimensions of conviviality and make normative judgments about the significance of convivial socialities as a response to specific social concerns.

Conviviality as an analytical tool has been primarily applied to the study of multicultural relations in urban contexts. Paul Gilroy's influential work, for example, is concerned with convivial socialities arising from naturally occurring social interactions in the multicultural city. Gilroy's formulation of conviviality as a mode of interaction where

differences are negotiated in real time is fundamentally a response to the failures of a top-down version of multiculturalism that misunderstands and oversimplifies culture as an ethnic property of particular groups. For Gilroy, a more optimistic conceptualization of "convivial multiculture" recognizes the fluid and spontaneous processes of cohabitation and interaction by which urban-dwellers may live with differences, without becoming fearful or hostile. What is interesting in this vision of conviviality is the emphasis on a bottom-up, creative and unruly mode of interaction—"a sort of open-source co-production" (Gilroy, 2006, p. 43)—which requires the active support of sociologists, urban planners and politicians. However, one of the problems with this vision of "convivial multiculture" is that convivial relations might appear naïve, routinized and banal in the face of global inequalities (see also Johansen, 2015). Nevertheless, we argue that Gilroy's notion of conviviality is a useful analytical tool to examine how convivial socialities come to fruition in collaborations and social interactions cultivated by artistic interventions.

In media and cultural studies, Myria Georgiou (2016) considers whether and how urban communication infrastructures can incorporate more conviviality into their design and planning. Taking the case of a multi-ethnic neighbourhood in London with stark inequality and diminishing public spaces as a result of government budget cuts, Georgiou argues for the development of more and better communication spaces for "throwntogetherness" to foster community belonging and trust. For Georgiou, conviviality is primarily a centripetal mode of sociality that should bring together diverse people as a corrective to problems of inequality and segregation. Georgiou observes that the most common convivial interactions are forms of civil inattention which produce an "acknowledgement of others' right to the city" (Georgiou, 2016, p. 13). She distinguishes

these everyday convivialities from the more exceptional moments of togetherness where "civic responsibility and solidarity emerge" (ibid.: p. 14). Georgiou's essay ultimately argues, "Conviviality is not enough," which conveys a normative judgment that there is no value in conviviality in itself, and that it is ultimately precious only when it acts as a *means* toward a higher value of political commitment. Her argument resonates with criticisms of humanitarian interventions that focus on helping people cope while structures of inequality remain unchallenged (Feldman 2015).

Writing about disability in queer theory, Jasbir Puar discovers in the core of conviviality a modest but simultaneously radical ethico-political project. Unlike notions of resistance or transgression which tend to privilege a "compulsory able-bodiedness" of capacity-laden subjects, Puar emphasizes the aspect of the self's radical unraveling and openness toward others in the convivial commingling of bodies. Conviviality is when "bodies come together and dissipate through intensifications and vulnerabilities" (2009, p. 169), such that the subject is "destabilized by the radical alterity of the other, in seeing his or her difference not as a threat but as a resource to question your own position in the world" (Saldhana, 2007, cited in Puar, 2009, p. 169). In the context of debility and woundedness, conviviality gains *more* rather than *less* social significance, precisely for orienting the body towards a radical futurity engaged in transition, movement, and change. This rejects the prescriptiveness of developmentalist time in favor of nonlinear "queer time" that respects diverse ways and temporalities in which people undo and repurpose wounds. In the context of humanitarian interventions to the refugee emergency, we will see this idea manifest in the choice to help people escape or enjoy the present.

Finally, while conviviality has not been used widely used as an analytical lens to examine the relation between conviviality and the arts, Nikos Papastergiadis' work on aesthetic cosmopolitanism (2007, 2012) shows how contemporary artists are in dialogue with everyday multiculturalism. He identifies a trend in contemporary art practice towards new forms of imaginative engagement with global mobilities and new forms of being at home in the world. For Papastergiadis (2012, p. 223), certain artistic practices, in which the viewer/audience member is no longer a passive and detached observer, have become a testing ground for recasting the relationship between self and other as a form of reflexive hospitality. While Papastergiadis (2007) recognizes that artists remain trapped within the commodity fetishism of the capitalist art market and the ideological underpinnings of institutions of culture, he also suggests that many contemporary artists (including non-western artists working within the institutions of contemporary art) are increasingly adopting a cosmopolitan aesthetic of openness (Papastergiadis, 2012) to articulate issues such as denationalization, reflexive hospitality, and cultural translation in contemporary art. More recently, Papastergiadis and Trimboli (2017) illuminate how the creative potential of imaginaries of cultural hybridity and diasporic intimacy yield a worldview that is best evoked through the concept of aesthetic cosmopolitanism. Marsha Meskimmon (2011: 6) builds on this idea of aesthetic cosmopolitanism by highlighting the importance of going "beyond seeing how works of art reflect the conditions of the world and consider ways in which art plays an active constitutive role within these conditions". As such, aesthetic cosmopolitanism sits uneasily with Beck's (2004) conceptualisation of banal cosmopolitanism as an everyday unconscious and passive cosmopolitanism, which can be found at the level of cultural consumption and media representation.

For the purpose of this paper, we approach conviviality as a mode of sociality that invites togetherness-in-difference in the affirmation of shared vulnerabilities through both repeated everyday encounters and the exceptional event. This paper offers reflection on the normative judgments one might place on convivial relations in precarious times: whether they manifest through social bonding in rituals of sharing vulnerabilities (Puar, 2009), the empathetic perspective-taking they invite from people (Gilroy, 2006; Papastergiadis, 2007), or the civic connections that form a basis for political solidarity (Georgiou, 2016).

Consolations of Conviviality

In moments of crisis, what purpose do convivial curations serve?

In peak events of tragedy, a common though overstated refrain is the "death of irony" (Randall 2011) where authorities and mainstream media often work to prescribe upon their audiences feelings of grief and mourning to summon their moral involvement. But in crisis contexts, conviviality may choose to work with and through irony by striking lighter emotions and generating softer affective registers. Through tender-hearted celebration, dark humor, or escapist entertainment, conviviality potentially resists a constitution of its subjects solely through their traumatic history. Instead it engages with a dialectical tension to at once render agency and hope and, at the same time, attend to woundedness and despair. It is thus important to be reminded of its possible pitfalls.

First, there is the danger that convivial interventions become mired by an ethics of individuatedness (see Puar, 2009, p. 168). Artists might project their own desires while inadvertently trivializing others' causes. Those controlling the means of representation

may sanitize other people's suffering by imposing a Western middle-class perspective. They might annihilate the voices of displaced subjects by reproducing dominant relations of power, particularly when the refugee is explicitly constructed as "victim" and the artist implicitly emerges as a rescuer. What is problematic here is not only that artistic productions might struggle to highlight the agency, dignity and the ability to cope of displaced people, but also that such performances can be caught in what Salverson (1999) calls an "aesthetic of injury". Performing "sad stories" of injury is a strategy of representation that emphasizes the difference and debility of the "other" (see also Jeffers 2008). There is here a point of connection with a type of cultural narcissism where attention is shifted to the moral branding of the artist as a savior or do-gooder. In her recent work on migrant-related selfies, Chouliaraki (2017) has shown, for example, how an international artist such as Ai Weiwei staged a fundraising event where Charlize Theron and other celebrities donned gold-tinted emergency blankets to draw public attention to the so-called European refugee crisis in the 2016 Berlin Biennale. In this kind of activity, she reads a cultural narcissism that capitalizes on the glamorous voyeurism around celebrity culture that ultimately erases refugee subjectivities from the communicative exchange.

Second, convivial interventions are vulnerable to accusations of depoliticization. Interventions aiming for therapy or momentary escape that focus on helping people cope with their suffering might replace any vocabulary of justice aiming to transform larger structures of inequality. Ilana Feldman's (2015, p. 429) inquiry into humanitarian projects of endurance that aim to "help people live better with circumstances they cannot change" can apply here. Feldman finds the endurance imperative as particularly acute in situations of protracted conflict where the humanitarian purpose to save lives runs

against the reality that "nothing you can do seems to likely to have much effect" (Feldman, 2015, p. 429).

However, one of the consolations of convivial culture is that this can also open up avenues for social and political change in moments of crisis. As expressive and embodied action, performance conveys meaning in a range of registers (e.g., gestures, tonality, scripts, silences, staging, sensuous modes on knowing). Acknowledging the potentialities of these non-discursive registers is important because, as performance studies scholarship has shown, texts and the archive are instruments of control, which are often threatening and inaccessible for many subaltern and marginalized groups (Conquergood, 2002, p. 147); it is thus important to ask what performances in popular culture and the arts might enable marginalized and oppressed social groups to carve out spaces of freedom and resistance to articulate their own struggles for belonging and inclusion. As Conquergood (1995, p. 137) puts it, "performance flourishes within a zone of contest and struggle". Looking at artistic performances as a collective exercise thus means paying attention to the dynamics of the encounters established in the context of cultural production (i.e., the process of devising a piece, the rehearsals, everyday life interactions outside the artistic space with proximate others) as much as to the meanings of performance text, and the conditions of reception (i.e., how audiences engage with a performance).

There is a point of connection here with Karina Horsti's (2017) research on her own experience of watching and discussing the documentary film *Days of Hope* in an immigrant detention facility in Finland with people who experienced and eye-witnessed experiences similar to those depicted in the film. While Horsti does not explicitly use conviviality as a frame, she suggests here that mediated witnessing is a practice also

predicated on social relations established beyond the text through encounters that take place in the context of reception of the film.

In what follows, we analyze how three artistic interventions manage and resolve these ethical and political opportunities and risks that face convivial performance. Drawing from a larger collaborative project on crisis cultures that examine modes of healing and repair among crisis-affected people, this paper specifically focuses on the potentials and limits of convivial artistic work. From interviews with artists and attendance of their artistic performances and exhibits from 2016 to 2018, we focus our discussion on three examples that illustrate diverse qualities of solidarity that convivial artistic productions can cultivate. The analytical categories in our typology of convivial socialities – healing, empathy and reflexivity – work as ideal types[i] (see Swedberg, 2018) and, as such, enable us to describe the emotions and dispositions they foster vis-a-vis the structural conditions of (forced) migration. Our analytical categories help us work through how artistic productions through their specific performative choices accomplish conviviality as temporary resolutions of the paradox of hope and despair.

Conviviality for Healing

Borderline is a play written and directed by UK-based and French theatre director Sophie Besse about a refugee camp called "The Jungle" in Calais, France. *Borderline* is a satire about life in the Jungle performed by a cast of European actors and non-professional refugee performers who lived in the actual Jungle prior to their arrival in the UK. The play has toured in the UK, Europe and some locations in East Asia. Besse trained in psychotherapy and drama before starting her own theatre company PSYCHEdelight, and

ran drama workshops for young women at a young offenders prison in order to heal trauma.

The work of PSYCHEdelight and *Borderline*, in particular, are representative of a range of artistic interventions that have sprung up in in response to the so-called European refugee crisis. Artists and volunteers head to unofficial encampments to offer camp dwellers temporary relief from hardship through acts of sharing, dancing, and singing. Those facilitating these activities view the arts as important as food and shelter in addressing the humanity that exists in refugee camps. As a volunteer with the Good Chance Calais theatre puts it: "The arts allow people to relax and takes them away from the sense of where they are into a separate space" (Good Chance, 2015).

Besse's experience as a volunteer at the Calais refugee camp in 2015, where she delivered drama workshops with Good Chance Calais, inspired her to write a comedy about the Jungle:

> "When Good Chance arrived, there was an opportunity to run some workshops with refugees. That's when I witnessed the fact that refugees really enjoyed comedy. Comedy was the way they chose to deal with their tragedy, to try to cope with the difficulties in their lives, just to have a laugh once in a while, and I thought that was really interesting because I was not expecting that."

In her refusal to adopt the victimhood narrative, Besse pushes back against the dominant "aesthetic of injury" (Salverson, 1999) while embracing the potentials of comedy to enable capacity and agency for the participants (Mirzoeff, 2018).

Seen through the unfolding of an artistic intervention such as *Borderline*, conviviality as healing is better understood as experimental bonding that offers the possibility of healing trauma (Puar, 2009) in a context of cultural production where differences are not rendered banal and irrelevant – as in Gilroy's (2006) formulation of conviviality - but are acknowledged as distinct markers of difference that the participants willingly navigate.

Borderline carefully cultivates togetherness-in-difference as hard-won bonding that depends on relationships of trust built amongst European actors and refugee actors not only on stage, but also in contexts of cultural production and reception. "The people know it is not about the play only," she says. "We meet in between shows, I text some of them two or three times a week. It is really the consistency behind it. Otherwise the project would have never happened. I think the play came to life because there was trust and support within our group beyond the play".

Healing as experimental bonding stems from within a creative space of production marked by messy and unpredictable conditions of production, which are not seen as an obstacle but rather as necessary to construct togetherness. As Besse puts it:

> "… I accepted to work with some refugees who were not living in London. (…) So for me it was the opportunity to give them the chance to express themselves and be part of the project and feel less isolated. (…) Refugees in London have a bit more opportunity to meet other people, but those who are not in London don't. (…) So to have all of them at once in a room to rehearse was almost impossible. I think it never happened actually. I have never had my whole cast except during shows. So to create a play with people who are not actually in the room is a challenge."

As a collective experience, *Borderline* seeks to generate joy for both performers (at the level of production) and the audience (at the level of reception) through performance strategies such as an open-ended narrative (unscripted, relying on improvisation), and collaborative and collective authorship. *Borderline* allows participants to draw inspiration from their own experience of life in the Jungle and interpret them through comedy to ultimately express their dignity and hope in the face of hardship.

Comedic performance is designed here to elicit an affective, rather than an intellectual response from its audience. Besse notes: "Comedy triggers some curiosity for a lot of people. 'Oh, how can you do a comedy about such a tragedy!' Even if it's people who are not really interested in refugees, I think some might come because it is a comedy".

The play does not seek to convey a particular knowledge about the 'other' or transmit a particular story of life in the Jungle. Instead of hard facts organized into a clearly structured narrative, *Borderline* presents a set of loosely connected vignettes drawn from the experiences of refugee participants and Besse's own experiences of life in the refugee camp. Ultimately, the play refuses to provide the audience with a sense of secure knowing (see Burvill, 2008, p. 241) that is, arguably, associated to more intellectual forms of aesthetic engagement. As an artistic intervention designed to elicit joy, we would argue that *Borderline* does not seek to *assign refugees a voice*—which is a problematic trope in artistic, academic, and policy accounts of refugee experiences—but rather create a space where refugees *can be heard* in their own right.

Creating a space where refugees can be heard also means creating a space for the exercise of solidarity. As a convivial intervention, *Borderline* is a vehicle for a "pragmatic solidarity", in that the play was clearly devised with the intervention of alleviating suffering and addressing the immediate needs of its refugee performers. While, on the one hand, *Borderline* has the potential to empower refugees in terms of making them feel happier rather than helpless, on the other, the artistic production itself has limited potential to bring about the social and political change needed to cease the suffering of refugees. While Besse recognizes that the refugee actors who lived outside London are very isolated and that this one of the reasons why she felt it was important to cast them, there is also a sense that the convivial culture established in the micro-cosmos of the conditions of production leaves little room to mobilize audiences or actors themselves towards concrete political action.

In effect, *Borderline* does not provide criticism of the politics of endurance (Feldman 2015) but finds its ultimate purpose in the momentary acts of healing it cultivates. While not critiquing broader power relations that perpetuate suffering, *Borderline* nevertheless offers refugee participants a meaningful space to temporarily escape the harsh conditions of everyday existence in the UK. We can argue that the choice of the genre of comedy is consequential not only at the level of the performance text in terms of rejecting the "aesthetic of injury", but also in terms of creating an interim space where harm to refugee performers can be alleviated.

Conviviality for Empathy

Lalya Gaye is a Swedish and Senegalese-Malian digital media artist based in Northern England. Gaye's performance art pieces and installations invite audiences to identify with the experiences of minority and migrant groups through aesthetic experiences that are

visceral and sensorial. Her installations play with sound and light, and audiences are often invited to interact and wear particular props that convey sensations, "so instead of telling the story, I try to make pieces that make people put themselves in the shoes of other people".

For the purpose of this paper, we focus on the installation "Oh My Home – Lost & Found", a public space installation combined with a series of workshops and performances that thematically explore the notion of home. What Gaye, together with her collaborators Saadia Hussain and Ixone Ormaetxe, seek to create in the public space installation "Oh My Home – Lost & Found" is an experience where participants are offered an opportunity to engage with contested notions of migration and home by using as an aesthetic device an everyday object that is symbolically associated to migrants—barges bags. As Gay puts it, "These are bags that migrants use quite a lot to go back and forth between countries or to escape from a country or to establish themselves somewhere, because they're very light and very sturdy and very, very cheap". Notably, the bags are not used just as props that acquire symbolic significance by representing particular experiences of migration. They are used to create an aesthetic experience in which workshop participants, which might include, for example, street cleaners, architectural students and migrant women, get the opportunity to embody and reflect upon meanings of home, belonging and public space from their own subject-position. This experience of embodiment is apparent, for example, when participants are given the opportunity to wear jackets made out of the barges bags. When an everyday object publicly known as a working-class accessory becomes visible and embedded in public space through an art installation, audiences as participants are invited to reflect upon its symbolic meaning and acknowledge the experience of the migrant as a proximate other. Gaye's work is illustrative of a trend in

art and performance in which people who are not artists contribute to the making of art and performance. In such artistic productions, access to being an artist is open to amateur audiences, specific amateur recruits and professional groups. As noted by Jen Harvie (2013, p. 39) in contrast to that art does not require people to interact with it, art that delegates to its audiences requires them to engage, to collaborate and to reflect critically on social relations in modest and non-verbal ways.

"Oh My Home – Lost & Found" is an example of art that delegates to various non-traditional audiences and has the potential to democratize access to art. Using minimal narrative strategies and engaging the audience in embodied and highly interactive experiences, this is a piece that, as is explicitly stated in the project's website:

> "invites the public to reclaim public space as a meeting point to approach 'home' from a geographical, political and philosophical perspective. Everyone has a right to a home, no time to waste. Let's meet to discuss, mobilise and change things together."

We argue that this piece is illustrative of conviviality as empathy, a particular type of artistic convivial intervention in migrant and refugee performance. Here, togetherness-in-difference is predicated on empathy as a capacity that can be cultivated in participants and publics through engagement with artistic productions. While the workshops allow encounters that might offer a natural terrain for naturally occurring convivial relations amongst participants, conviviality as empathy is more subtle and ambiguous. As a performance text, "Oh My Home – Lost & Found" invites participants to become more

aware of proximate others' experiences of home, and more sensitive to the ways in which different social groups can reclaim public space.

As with Georgiou's expectations for convivial sociality, "Oh My Home - Lost & Found" does not intend for conviviality to be an end in itself; instead, conviviality as empathy here intends to cultivate togetherness-in-difference as a mode of inhabiting the world. Gaye sees empathy as an actually-existing capacity that can be cultivated in artistic spaces as an antidote to racism and intolerance. Her installations and performance pieces evoke sensations and experiences to elicit this human capacity to construct more humane forms of togetherness based on solidarity and collaborations across differences. She says,

> "[Empathy], that's what makes us human doesn't it? Yeah, and that's the fabric of society because we live together in this society, because we want to collaborate and work together and have a better life for each other. We don't all live in little bubbles and the only way for it to work is for us to have empathy towards each other."

Gaye's work enables convivial interactions where audiences-participants are invited to adopt a particular grammar of solidarity: solidarity as civic imagination, in which people envisage a better societal and political system (Bennett, Cordner, Klein, and Savell 2014). It enables audience-participants, who are capable of exercising empathetic perspective-taking, to imagine better ways of living with difference in the world.

While it is easy to recognize the potential of empathetic perspective-taking as a human capacity that can be cultivated by experiences of aesthetic engagement, conviviality as

empathy offers limited political for collective mobilization, because nurturing empathy in the ways discussed above is a highly individualized, subjective, and situated experience. What Gaye wants to do with her work is to make audiences be more sensitive to the world around them and their relations with others; in her own words, "not exactly to push 'you should be doing that or that or think that' but rather 'what do you think about it?', and using empathy and trying to evoke emotions or experiences, I think is what we've been doing here".

Conviviality for Reflexivity

Our third example focuses on the performance art of Jose Torres Tama, an Ecuadoran immigrant to the United States who resides in New Orleans, Louisiana. Unlike the two previous artists, he explicitly self-identifies as an activist, tackling political themes of victimhood and exploitation of immigrants in his one-man shows that combine standup comedy, poetry and high-drama reenactments. Torres Tama also contributes his photography skills to documenting protests organized by Latinx communities in Louisiana.

The focus of his artistic projects is to foreground the plight of Latinx immigrants in the US, particularly Mexican undocumented laborers in New Orleans. He engages with contradictions in the public image of New Orleans as a city of refuge for marginalized people, particularly for ethnic and sexual minorities in the American South (Schippers, 2015), yet with a dark history of institutionalized discrimination toward Latinx immigrants in cultural and economic policy. Torres Tama says he is most well-known for his solo performance show *Aliens, Immigrants and Other Evildoers* (2010), which tackled anti-immigrant both in broad US policy and culture and specific to the New Orleans experience. In our interview in April 2017, Torres Tama says he is in the middle of

producing another show entitled *The United States of Amnesia,* which he aims to tour at university campuses, town halls, and arts venues.

From interviewing Torres Tama, viewing videos of his performances, and reading his scripts, we recognize an explicit aim to draw attention to the potentials and limit points of everyday conviviality in New Orleans public life. We see his performances as precisely enacting *reflexive conviviality*—that is, provoking self-reflection about the limitations and unintended hidden injuries inflicted by relationships of togetherness-in-difference especially when they are emptied out of any political commitment. In this light, Torres Tama's position on conviviality shares similarities with Georgiou's (2016) position that "conviviality is not enough," and it is merely a precondition to the higher value of political engagement. As such, his performances evoke the political critique of the politics of endurance (Feldman 2015).

While his humorous reenactments and witty catchphrases (his mantra is "No guacamole for immigrant haters!") hone in on togetherness-in-difference between the dominant majority culture and Latinx immigrants through food, entertainment culture, and labor relations, he simultaneously undercuts this with dramatic monologues that expose social inequalities, separation, and oppression. He uses playful humor to foreground people's romanticization of New Orleans as a melting pot of cultures and its celebration of sexual promiscuities, but is always quick to switch tone to explicitly argumentative polemics about the exploitation of laborers. In the interview, Torres Tama argues,

> "After [Hurricane] Katrina, this city was reconstructed by thousands upon
> thousands of Latino immigrant labor—many of them who suffered atrocities that

are just mind-boggling that I've recorded over the course of the last few years. This is post-Katrina wage theft, you know—horrible working conditions then right after working, deportations left and right. After all the hardship, then they would call immigration agents, and that I mean is brutal."

Torres Tama is painfully aware that his work is a striking provocation to New Orleanians' identity as a hospitable and welcoming people. Scholars such as Mimi Schippers, for instance, have documented the city's embrace of LGBTQ people who feel excluded from other cities in America's conservative South (Schippers, 2015). Further, in the aftermath of Donald Trump's travel ban in 2017, New Orleans saw several demonstrations to open up the city as a "sanctuary city" that would uphold safeguards against deporting the undocumented—even if city officials were themselves quick to assert its support for national government's hardline stance against immigration (Rainey, 2017). Torres Tama recognizes that his aim to provide provocative commentary and stir self-reflection needs mediation:

"You know, I've had people very adamantly leave the show and walk right in front of me on stage when I do my Katrina monologue. So I also aim to seduce with humor. There's always going to be moments of truth-telling that is really difficult, so you got to package it."

This "packaging" comes through humorous segments of spoken word poetry that are interspersed throughout the one-hour show. For instance, he offers funny comparisons of Latinx people vis-a-vis everyday objects such as snacks, while commenting on police incarceration and labor inequalities: "Tostitos are here to stay / In fact, we're new and

improved and fat-free / We're good for the economy / I'm Latino therefore I'm spicy / I'm brown therefore I'm a suspect / I studied art in college therefore I'm unemployed".

The centerpiece of his performances is his tribute to illegal Latinx immigrants, whom he argues were the unsung heroes who rebuilt New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Here he displays high-emotion reenactments that draw from real-life relationships he formed out of his community and activist work. Compared to the previous two examples of artistic intervention that are content with fostering more open-ended modes of conviviality, Jose Torres recognizes everyday potentials for friendship while arguing that "conviviality is not enough". He wants to people to be indignant, and crafts his texts with the aim of triggering their political imagination and activating their activist sensibilities.

However, there are clear limits to a reflexive conviviality that demands political solidarity from its audiences. Torres Tama is often dependent on university partnerships, where academics invite him to their campuses in light of class discussions around immigration. According to local academics in New Orleans, Torres Tama's rather high talent fee and reputation as a "controversial" firebrand performer often draw caution from socially conservative event organizers, particularly in predominantly red states in the American South. Torres Tama is aware of this reputation and plans to develop future productions using comedy to focus on contradictions of everyday convivialities while toning down the high drama.

Curating Conviviality

The anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli (2011, p. 32) uses the concept of endurance to describe people's "ability to suffer and yet persist". What this article has done is to offer

three specific examples and perspectives on the potentials and limits of invoking convivial sociality in order to address current issues around migration and asylum. We examined how three examples of artistic interventions from Europe and the US offer temporary and incomplete resolutions to the climate of despair around the refugee emergency and anti-immigrant populist responses, by invoking different dimensions of convivial sociality. They offer Western audiences an "interruption" (Pinchevski 2005) of their dominant imaginary of the strange, unwanted other (see Zaborowski and Georgiou in this issue).

Convivial artistic productions can aim for healing, empathy, and reflexivity for their audiences and participants, whether in zones of safety (in the West) or zones of danger (within the refugee camp itself), by cultivating diverse qualities of togetherness needed to endure the precarious present.

In Table 1 below, we summarize our three examples of convivial artistic interventions and the specific forms in which they enact a politics of endurance.

Table 1. Convivial interventions and their politics of endurance

CONVIVIAL ARTISTIC INTERVENTIONS	POLITICS OF ENDURANCE	LIMITATIONS
conviviality for healing	bonding	escapism rather than change; situational togetherness

conviviality for empathy	perspective-taking	individualized, open-ended, potentially elitist
conviviality for reflexivity	political solidarity	narrow reach; audiences' "switching off"

The anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli (2011, p. 32) uses the concept of endurance to describe people's "ability to suffer and yet persist". Endurance is often the default outcome of interventions aimed at refugees themselves. Though artists intend for their entertainment and humor to help vulnerable people cope, we observe a keen awareness from artists themselves to refrain from naive celebration and make space for attachments to form within these moments that serve as preconditions for potential, perhaps even better, futures. Here, though similarly saddled with limitations of reaching and connecting with broader audiences, interventions that promote conviviality for empathy and conviviality for reflexivity go one step further and help lay the groundwork for future public and political action.

We recognize that conviviality is a kind of social connection that needs strengthening and directionality in order to achieve any kind of structural change. However, in the face of many dramatic political and moral failures in the global response to the current refugee emergency, we recognize convivial interventions as acts of everyday refusal of despair and apathy, inviting audiences and participants alike beyond fleeting moments of hope towards the reality of lasting change.

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[i] Originally formulated by Max Weber, the ideal type is a useful heuristic tool because, as argued by Heckman (1983), it provides researchers with a unified approach to the analysis of subjective meaning and the critical assessment of structural forms.