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Moralities Colliding in Crisis: the Moral Orientations of Organisational Habitus in a Community Development Programme

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Abstract

This paper is based on multi-sited ethnographic investigation into a community development initiative called Big Local. Residents in marginalised areas of England were invited to form community groups to take control of the funding awarded to their neighbourhood, and to make decisions about how that funding should be spent. This paper shows that group members brought with them different «organisational habitus» (Shoshan 2018): developed dispositions about how to organise that had been acquired through previous involvement in collective organising. Rather than focus solely on the practices of collective organising, however, I propose that these organisational habitus were anchored by two different «moral orientations»: one steeped in a sense of responsibility to include, the other to govern resources effectively. My objective is to show that the practices of organisational habitus cannot be isolated from the moral orientations that anchor them. In doing so, the paper shows that morality is not only fundamental to individuals' motivations for engaging in collective action; why they get involved and what they hope to achieve, but also to the very practice of organising. The analysis illustrates the entanglement of sense and practice, showing how one's motivation to participate shapes how one goes about doing so. This is both theoretically significant, in illustrating that practices of organising are not merely technical but morally imbued, while also having practical implications, by generating understanding of potential sources of tension, cohesion or longevity in groups. This suggests that those leading and facilitating civil society organisations would do well to facilitate conversations about how community groups choose to work, the way they do, and why. Doing so could help unearth members' positions about the change they want to bring about, overcoming tensions in groups, and cultivating an empowered civil society consciously working towards its imagined «ideal society» (Lichterman & Eliasoph 2014).

Keywords: civil society, community development, organisational habitus, embodied morality, everyday ethics.

Riassunto

Questo articolo si basa su una ricerca etnografica multisituata su un'iniziativa di sviluppo comunitario chiamata Big Local. I residenti di aree marginalizzate dell'Inghilterra sono stati invitati a formare gruppi comunitari per assumere il controllo dei finanziamenti assegnati al loro quartiere e per prendere decisioni su come spendere tali finanziamenti. Questo articolo mostra che i membri del gruppo hanno assunto diversi «habitus organizzativi» (Shoshan 2018): disposizioni sviluppate su come organizzarsi, acquisite grazie a un precedente coinvolgimento in forme di organizzazione collettiva. Tuttavia, piuttosto che concentrarmi esclusivamente sulle pratiche di organizzazione collettiva, suggerisco che questi habitus organizzativi siano ancorati a due diversi «orientamenti morali»: uno intriso di senso di responsabilità verso l'inclusione, l'altro verso un efficace governo delle risorse. Il mio obiettivo è mostrare che le pratiche legate all'habitus organizzativo non possono essere isolate dagli orientamenti morali in esse radicati. In questo modo, il testo dimostra che la moralità non solo è fondamentale per le motivazioni degli individui che si impegnano nell'azione collettiva, per il motivo per cui si impegnano e per quello che sperano di ottenere, ma anche per la pratica stessa dell'organizzazione. L'analisi illustra l'intreccio tra senso e pratica, mostrando come la motivazione a partecipare modella il modo in cui lo si fa. Ciò è significativo dal punto di vista teorico, in quanto illustra che le pratiche di organizzazione non sono semplicemente tecniche ma sono intrise di moralità, e allo stesso tempo ha implicazioni pratiche, in quanto genera una comprensione delle potenziali fonti di tensione, coesione o longevità nei gruppi. Ciò suggerisce che coloro che guidano e agevolano la strutturazione di organizzazioni della società civile dovrebbero, allo stesso tempo, veicolare degli scambi su come i gruppi comunitari scelgono di lavorare, sul modo in cui lo fanno e sul perché. Ciò potrebbe aiutare a far emergere le posizioni dei membri in merito al cambiamento che desiderano realizzare, superando le tensioni nei gruppi e coltivando una società civile potenziata che lavora consapevolmente verso la «società ideale» immaginata (Lichterman & Eliasoph 2014).

Parole chiave: società civile, sviluppo comunitario, habitus organizzativo, moralità incorporate, etica del quotidiano.

Introduction: Connectivity amidst isolation: working together in the face of crisis

Newberry Inclusive Community Engagement (NICE), a community group based in a marginalised part of London, was set up as part of a community development programme called Big Local. NICE's meetings usually took place in the shared space of a local community hall, where group members would arrive early to catch up over a cup of tea and a biscuit, before settling around a table to discuss the activities they were considering running for their local community. In May 2020, the group met for their regular

monthly meeting. There was nothing routine about this occasion, however: it was the second time they had met online following the announcement, a few weeks previously, that the UK would enter its first national lockdown in an attempt to stem the spread of the Covid-19 outbreak.

The act of meeting online was unfamiliar; the opening portion of the meeting was spent trying to get everyone connected and learning how to use the software. Some of the younger members had, in recent weeks, begun using an online platform for work meetings, but this was the first experience of meeting online for many of the older members. Crucially, several members had been missing from both this and the previous meeting. As a group that had regular conversations about the diversity of its membership and how to work inclusively, it was not a surprise that this absence was a concern.

«Digital exclusion» was an emerging form of marginalisation that was quickly becoming a «hot topic» in these early months of the pandemic. The non-participation of members tapped into several concerns that were exacerbated in this new and strange situation: the widespread fear of isolation and what to do about it; the awareness that some segments of the population were more vulnerable to exclusion than others; and the knowledge that this exclusion could affect their ability to meet their most basic needs, including accessing food and medicine.

As people logged on, the atmosphere was a mixture of giddiness and fear; the former arising from the opportunity to see friendly faces amidst isolation, the latter from the emerging realisation that we were living through a crisis. Evident in the tone of these interactions is an increasingly urgent concern for NICE's neighbours, both those known to the group, as well as for the more abstract Newberry «community». NICE had been granted funding to make the local area an «even better place to live» (Local Trust 2019); the sense of responsibility that came with this funding took on a new urgency in the crisis situation.

The extract below describes a heated debate that unfolded in this meeting. The contentious issue is how to include absent colleagues. Group members' different interpretations of the situation, and their approaches to dealing with it, are evident in the different ways they talk about the problem; the actions they propose; and the kinds of knowledge they draw on as they work towards a solution. I argue that two «moral orientations» underpin the forms of communication and practice that guide group members' participation in this conversation, as well as the life and work

of NICE more broadly: an orientation to include on the one hand, and to govern resources effectively on the other. I argue below that these moral orientations act as anchors to the «organisational habitus» that members bring with them to the group. Ruth and Liz feel an urgent responsibility to get absent members connected, and Ruth shows frustration when she feels that her plan to involve them is being blocked by unnecessary procedures; Mark and Matt want to ensure that the correct processes are in place before embarking on action.

NICE steering group meeting, May 2020. Location: online.

The group begin discussing their «Covid response»: the activities they are considering running to support their community during the pandemic. Liz, an older White woman who has worked in a range of community work roles, and is now employed by the NICE steering group as a member of staff, has been tasked with developing proposals quickly. Mark, a White, middle-aged man who is a manager in the public sector, and chair of the steering group, asks Liz to talk the group through the proposals.

Mark introduces the topic and hands over to Liz, pre-empting the passionate debate that follows: he says that he wants to ensure that there is plenty of time for discussion, «because I know there are a lot of strong opinions in this space».

The first idea they discuss is a «digital inclusion» initiative. This would begin with the most pressing issue of providing digital support to NICE members who had not been able to join online meetings, with the potential of rolling this support out to the wider community once they had a system in place.

Liz: «We've now sourced a tablet, which Gladys has, but we need to find out whether it's working».

Gladys is a retired, Black, steering group member who is not confident with technology. There is a box on the screen with her name in it, but we can't see or hear her. A little while later, a second box appears that also has her name in it, and she does speak at one point, but it is unclear how much she can hear. Both boxes disappear around 9pm; the official closing time of the meeting, though the conversation is still in full flow.

Liz talks the group through the challenges that another group member, Leah, is facing in joining the meeting using her phone, saying that she «needs to investigate», implying that there is more going on.

As well as Mark and Liz, there are three steering group members who are active in this section of the meeting. Hugh and Holly are White «young professionals»; a term used by the group to describe some of its newer members,

all of whom have moved to Newberry in the last few years. Located in one of the more marginalised London Boroughs, Newberry is gentrifying, though property is less expensive than in the surrounding areas, making it an attractive neighbourhood for «young professionals» looking to get on the housing ladder. Ruth is a very active volunteer in the local area but has not yet officially been voted onto the NICE steering group. She is a passionate advocate of the digital inclusion agenda, and drives it forwards in this meeting and at other times. There are also two attendees who are paid by Local Trust, NICE's funder, to provide them with support: Ray is a White, female, community development professional who gives the group general guidance and advice on a range of issues, and Matt is a Black, male, community activist who runs another local not-for-profit organisation called Strengthening Communities in Newberry (SCN), which manages NICE's finances and acts as the legal employer of its staff.

Liz shares more details about the challenges that group members face as they try to get connected.

Matt: «Can I just say that I'm not comfortable listening to conversations about people's personal finances».

The group discuss whether they are happy to allocate some budget to buy data and/or equipment for steering group members.

Ray reminds the group of their broader vision of inclusion: «Essentially what this is about is enabling people to take part in decision-making». This mission of inclusive decision-making is embedded within Big Local's rhetoric of empowerment.

Ruth aligns herself with Ray and tries to build momentum: «I agree. I've got a couple of tablets and phones and things coming in, so if this is something you want to do, then we can use this as a pilot».

Mark puts the breaks on this momentum: «Can I ask where you've sourced these, Ruth?»

Ruth: «They're all donations. These are things people have donated».

Mark: «To you or to an organisation?»

Ruth, sounding as though her patience is being tested, replies: «To me. As I said, I'm a facilitator, so I put out a call for everything from baby clothes to electronics. People have contacted me». For Ruth, this is an urgent issue brought about by the pandemic, and the solution is obvious; the procedure-based line of questioning is simply holding things up.

Hugh: «I'm comfortable in principle that we provide something up to £10-15 a month – that seems uncontroversial. If Ruth has got things, then I think we should go for it. But I do think it should partly be means tested because if people don't need it, then they shouldn't ask for it, and we're not going to start paying people's internet bills, for example».

Liz: «No-one's asked for it; it's what I've found out through conversations».

Mark: «How about the suggestion about buying hardware, Hugh?»

Hugh: «It sounds like Ruth has already got things ready to go».

Ruth: «Absolutely. I don't quite understand the issue. But we can see from this pilot if it works and [decide if] it's something we [want to] roll out.».

Mark: «Ray can I ask, from a due diligence point of view, if we don't know where they've come from, then that could be an issue, right?»

Matt, interrupting: «That's an issue for us [SCN] actually, because we need to underwrite this». Although Ruth is trying to interject, he keeps going – «can I just finish?» She appologies, looking frustrated. He carries on.

Matt: «They need to be independently PAT tested. If anything goes wrong and they burn the house down while they're charging, we would be liable»

Ruth, beginning to sound exasperated: «I don't know how to PAT test it. I'm sorry, Matt, the minute you started talking in acronyms you lost me. I'm just concerned that people aren't socially isolated which is a huge mental health problem». Ruth clearly wants to get this done informally to speed things up.

Matt: «I'm sorry. It's just a simple electrical test».

Ruth: «The [tablet] I gave to [a group member], I made sure she knew it came from me». A brief but poignant comment: Ruth plants the idea that these things can be done without organisations and the formalities that come with them.

Mark suggests that the group buy new equipment instead of using second-hand donations.

Ray: «I think this is a bit of a wasted conversation, to be honest».

Liz: «I'm not sure what the issue is»

Ray: «Do steering group members understand that they can call in?» [Using phones rather than tablets.]

Liz gives more details about the barriers that group members face.

Ray, pointedly: «Can we please not talk about people's personal issues? I think that would be really helpful»

Liz again mentions a group member by name, and Ray interrupts her, loudly and slowly: «Liz, can we please not use people's names?»

Mark asks for a vote on providing data and hardware for 12 months.

Hugh: «I've just quickly done the maths on that». He calculates 15 pounds a month to get absent members set up and suggests £570 as a budget to vote on – NICE often take a vote as a way of moving on from difficult conversations, as well as a performance of democratic decision-making.

Holly: «That sounds like an amazing amount of money and we can approve it and stop talking about it!» She gives a big smile and a double thumbs up, very much ready to move onto another topic. The steering group votes. It passes. They move on.

As Ruth attempts to persuade colleagues to support her plan to get absent members connected as quickly as possible, she is guided by her *moral orientation* to include. In contrast, Mark and Matt's moral orientation is to use the group's resources responsibly by employing effective governance techniques. As group members negotiate a plan of action, these moral orientations and their attendant interactive norms and organisational practices are brought into tension, sometimes leading to feelings of surprise, discomfort or annoyance, as seen in the glimmer of frustration Ruth exhibits when she resists Matt's use of acronyms; a communicative form that excludes those «not in the know».

My objective is to show that actors' moral orientations act as anchors to their «organisational habitus» (Shoshan 2018). These moral orientations manifest as an embodied sense of how things ought to be done as individuals engage in group life. I show below that actors' moral orientations were entangled with their dispositions to interact in some ways and not others, and their preference towards certain practices of collective organising, such as how they felt evidence should be processed, procedures developed, and decisions made. Organisational habitus are the sets of assumptions about how to organise, and with what aim, that actors have acquired, developed and refined through engagement with the various spaces in which they have organised with others, be that in workplace or civil society; community groups, voluntary organisations, family life or religious settings. Groups also develop collective habitus, in which organising practices play an important role; these co-evolve with the habitus of the individuals who make up the group. While the habitus of groups, and the individuals that make them, are fundamentally co-dependent and co-evolving, I build my argument here through analysis of the organisational habitus of individuals, while using this analysis to draw out the implications this has on group life.

This analysis shows how organising practices are infused with a moral sense of how things ought to be done to bring about social change; *how* one sets about bridging the gap between one's reading of what reality is, with one's sense of how it ought to be. It shows how the behaviours and practices that arise from, and reinforce, the moral orientations that anchor them, offer actors a sense of coherence of individual intent, purpose, and practice, even though the journey of arriving at these orientations may be fraught, and the process of enacting them tense. In doing so, the paper argues for an analysis that views moral orientations as concerned not only with the end

goal; the change one wants to see, but also with the process of getting there while working responsibly, and the entanglement between the two.

Stemming from this analysis, the paper offers three theoretical contributions in the form of proposed developments to the organisational habitus concept. First, it argues that organisational habitus are anchored by moral orientations, rather than consisting solely of organising practices, structures and processes. This does not contradict Shoshan's version of the organisational habitus concept, but shifts the focus, offering a new and expanded notion. Second, it shows how the moral orientation of an individual's organisational habitus arises as a *felt sense* of how things ought to be done; morals are «things we feel» (Prinz 2007: 13). This second point brings the organisational habitus concept back to the idea of disposition, central to the notion of «habitus» as developed by Pierre Bourdieu (see Bourdieu 1991): rather than being a conscious choice about what practices to use, an organisational habitus is an intuitive sense of how to relate to one's colleagues or co-volunteers in the shared endeavour of bringing ideas to action; a sense that emerges and evolves throughout one's life-course of collective organising. Third, it shows how the organisational habitus that individuals bring with them to the group may be different to those of their colleagues and co-volunteers. This can be a cause of emotional angst for individual members, as moral orientations collide with those of colleagues.

The theoretical insights generated through this analysis have practical implications: practices of collective organising are not just technical but also moral, implying that groups need to be supported to analyse the range of ways in which that morality is experienced by group members. Designers and facilitators of community development programmes would do well to facilitate discussions around members' interpretations of their responsibility, empowering groups to more consciously engage with the moral worlds they create and empowering them to more consciously shape them. This may also support group members to better understand one another, and to overcome any tensions that rumble beneath the surface.

In bringing the investigation of morality into conversation with the concept of organisational habitus, the paper also contributes to the literatures on embodied morality (*inter alia* Zigon 2011; 2010; 2009; Jeong 2020) and ordinary ethics (*inter alia* Lambek 2010a; 2010b; Das 2012; 2015; Sidnell 2010). By investigating morality in the context of collective organising, the paper shows that moral orientations can be as concerned with the process of working together as with the goals one hopes to achieve;

seemingly technical practices also have moral roots. The next section provides a brief note on methods. The following section theorises this interaction between organisational habitus and morality. The following sections outline the organisational habitus that group members brought with them to their work at NICE, illustrating the centrality of moral orientations to them. By doing so, the paper shows how the structures and practices of collective organising are infused with the moral orientations that anchor them, generating insights into group dynamics, cohesion and purpose, as well as the necessary ingredients for cultivating an active civil society.

Methods

The analysis presented in this paper is based on ethnographic research with three community groups, which took place between October 2019 and October 2020. All three groups were part of the Big Local programme, a community empowerment programme that was launched in England in 2010. Through the Big Local programme, 150 areas were selected throughout England because they scored high on the Multiple Index of Deprivation, an Index which seeks to move beyond financial measures of deprivation (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2019). The 150 «Big Local Areas» were then allocated one million pounds each, to be spent by local residents. Due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, all three of the groups that participated in this research transitioned to holding their meetings online about halfway through fieldwork, meaning that the first half of the fieldwork took place in person, and the second half online. This led to significant changes in group life, which peppers the analysis of this paper as well as being explored elsewhere. The broader research project on which this paper is based explored how the residents who became involved with Big Local worked together, and what can be learnt about the politics of «community empowerment» from such a close-up investigation of the dynamics and working practices of groups. This paper presents one aspect of that broader project.

As I commenced fieldwork, I planned to conduct ethnographic research that would consist of participant observation and collaborative projects with groups, and in-depth interviews with members. The collaborative projects, through which I planned to contribute to the work of each group while following their lead on what might be useful, were a way of embedding an ethics of reciprocity in the research design (Powell & Takay-

oshi 2003; Rumsby 2018; Hilton 2018; Lassiter 2005) as well as enabling me to gain a deeper understanding of the activities and discussions that took place between meetings, and the different roles that people played.

To select which of the Big Local community groups I would conduct fieldwork with, I initially approached Local Trust, the organisation who administered the funding for Big Local and implemented the programme at the national level. Given that I planned to collaborate with the groups, potentially supporting their own research projects should that be a suitable avenue of collaboration, Local Trust agreed to provide me with information about which groups were interested in conducting research in their communities, and of those, which had already worked with a research specialist. The intention was to identify groups whose work I might be able to contribute to, and to avoid confusing their research process by overlapping with other researchers already providing research support.

I then approached a small number of groups with an explanation about my research project, and asked them (1) if they would consider participating in my research, and (2) whether I could collaborate with them on their work, potentially by supporting their own research projects, or anything that they needed extra capacity on. Three groups agreed to participate, and this began a long process of building our ethnographic relationship (a process I have written about in Bayfield 2022). Over the course of the year, I attended all of the groups' meetings, conducted in-depth interviews with 22 individuals who were heavily involved in the work of the groups, and engaged in collaborative projects on various aspects of the groups' work, such as running focus groups in the community and reporting on the findings, helping to design or analyse surveys, and supporting the development of one group's plan for the coming years.

Organisational habitus and morality

My starting point for building a version of organisational habitus that attends to the moral dimension of collective organising is the idea that human engagement with their moral subjectivities (Zigon 2013) is, for the most part, a felt sense of how things ought to be that arises through social practice, rather than a conscious engagement with abstract categories of right and wrong (*inter alia,* Fassin 2012; Das 2012; Lambek 2010a; 2010b; Hall 2011; Nyberg 2007). Ethics can become conscious and explicit, however, when they are breached, contested, or at tension with

those of the people around us (Lambek 2010a). Zigon's «moral assemblages» framework (2010) is useful for thinking with the co-existance of a multiplicity of moral possibilities. In his words: «Moral assemblages are unique conglomerations of diverse and often contradictory discourses as well as diverse and sometimes incompatible embodied moral dispositions» (Zigon 2013: 202). This approach, comfortable with contradiction, moves analysis beyond a «totalizing» account, instead offering a way of engaging with the multiple moralities that are brought into a situation by those involved, informed by their engagement with the world beyond it.

In the context of this fieldwork, explicit engagement with actors' moral subjectivities was provoked by the proactive and ongoing attempts to effect change that are an inherent part of community development: if morality is about engaging with the discrepancy between how things are and how they ought to be; about imagining that «our lives could have been otherwise» (Das 2015: 114) then community development is about working together to move towards alternative futures within and through specific local contexts. As I show in this paper, the moral orientations that emerged amongst my participants at NICE were not only concerned with what those possibilities were, but with the process of working responsibly to make them into reality, though interpretations of what that meant differed. Action is a core analytic focus of such an inquiry. In this paper, I focus on the collective organising of action: how should we organise to bring about the change we want to see, given an agreed upon discrepancy between how things are and how they ought to be? Many of the observations and analytic arguments below are relevant to civil society organisations more broadly, though I stay with the «community development» framing as it best resonates with this focus on attempts to bring about collective action.

This coming together of sense and action are central to the notion of habitus, as developed by Pierre Bourdieu, for whom habitus are «systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*» (Bourdieu 1977: 72); «manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking» (Bourdieu 2002: 43) internalised through engagement with our social surroundings (1977), that manifest as an embodied sense of how things are, and how to interact, given this sense. The often-used metaphor of *the game* to describe habitus is useful here: through ongoing exposure to a game one develops an intricate reading of what is happening that provokes a response; an action, or series of actions, the purpose of which is to have an effect on the game. Significant to the discussion of this paper, in the moment of responding, the «pur-

pose» or «intention» of the action may not be conscious to the actor, so immersed in the game that interpretation and response seem to arise organically (Bourdieu 1977). Though the lightness evoked by this metaphor of play may seem far removed from the more serious topic of morality, it captures the way collective organising involves the responsive and seemingly instantaneous (inter)action of those involved, even as they draw on different priorities or motivations.

Bourdieu has been criticised for a lack of engagement with ethics (Ignatow 2009) and morality (Lamont 1992). Gabriel Ignatow suggests that habitus becomes a useful concept to the study of morality if cultural settings are seen as shaping moral judgements (Ignatow 2009: 100) through the entanglement of emotions, culture, morality and embodied knowledge. This argument can be illustrated through an example, quoted in Ignatow (2009) from Haidt and Hersh (2001), who found that the moral judgements of American college students were better predicted by the emotional reactions they gave to hypothetical sexual scenarios than by their perceptions of harmfulness. This example is helpful in illustrating the point that moral judgements are as fundamentally cultural as they are emotionally embodied. My focus on the moral orientations of collective organising shifts the focus somewhat: this is not about abstract moral positions, nor long-held beliefs, but shows how, despite the seemingly practical, technical or procedural practices of organising, organisational habitus are nonetheless imbued with moral orientations. Investigation into the moral dimension of collective organising is not new, evident in the engagement with morality in the literature on social movements (*inter alia,* Jasper 1997; Brass 1991; Anderson 2014; Wang & Liu 2021). What I aim to do differently in this paper is to show that the moral orientations of collective organising are not only concerned with the end result, but with the process of getting there responsibly.

The concept of organisational habitus is a useful theoretical tool for such an endeavour, though one that I adapt. A notion that has been used by a number of scholars, sometimes under the rubric of «institutional habitus» (*inter alia* Reay 1998; Thomas 2002; Atkinson 2011; and see Byrd 2019, for a review), I take Shoshan's (2013) version of the concept as my starting point. Shoshan's version of organisational habitus emerged in the context of her work on the 2011 organising of protests in Israel. The major conceptual contribution she makes is to show that an individual's organisational habitus «spills over» from one context to others: as activists

engaged in organising protests, they brought with them organising structures and practices acquired through their engagement with the military. Shoshan proposes that this «militarism» underpins collective organising throughout different spheres of Israeli society. Her focus is on the «practical knowledge» and «organising patterns» of organisational habitus. My aim below is to show how these practical aspects of collective organising are inseparable from actors' morally infused sense of how they should work together to bring about social change. Rather than contradicting Shoshan's explication of the organisational habitus concept, I propose a shift in focus, and an extension of scope: her passing reference to the «normative beliefs» and «metaphors» that legitimise militarism as a way of organising indicate that she views the organising practices she describes as value-laden and ethically imbued. The next section outlines the moral orientations that underpinned collective organising at NICE, and shows how the organising structures and practices that participants saw as appropriate emerged through those moral orientations.

The moral orientations of organisational habitus in community development: A *felt sense* of how things ought to be done

NICE members' organisational habitus[1] consist of a set of interactive norms and organisational practices infused with their sense of responsibility to include, or to govern the group's resources effectively. The forms of social practice that participants came to expect in all elements of the group's life and work were informed by these moral orientations, from the types of knowledge they valued, and the way they felt the group should engage with that knowledge, to the way they interacted in the casual spaces before the «business» of the meetings began, and the more intentional deliberations that followed.

Ruth and Liz's primary motivation in the ethnographic excerpt above was to ensure the inclusion of those steering group members facing access issues. This moral orientation informs their engagement in all aspects of the social and practical life of the group: they prioritise making people feel welcome and comfortable over working efficiently; they use an informal communication style so as not to alienate anyone; they view bureaucracy

[1] Following Atkinson (2011); Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008); Papacharissi *et al.* (2013), among others, I use «habitus» for both the singular and the plural.

as exclusionary and often unnecessary; and they value knowledge acquired through direct relationships with individuals, particularly those who face marginalisation. For example, prior to moving online, they would chat informally with everyone who turned up to meetings, making sure they felt welcome and included. Several group members had become less involved with NICE's work due to personal circumstances, so Liz kept in contact with them between meetings to make sure they felt «in the loop» when they could next attend. Ruth made use of her extensive informal networks; valuing the knowledge she could acquire by talking to local people. For example, when the steering group began discussing the possibility of supplying hot meals for staff working at their local hospital during the pandemic, Ruth steered them away from this idea, as she knew that local organisations had already got systems in place and the hospital was inundated with donations of food. Neither Ruth nor Liz engaged in extensive discussions about the group's processes or procedures; the bureaucratic dimensions of group life. While Liz had to draw up written project proposals as part of her job, this was a process she found frustrating, particularly as the proposals she had been asked to put together frequently got rejected by the steering group. Similarly, although Mark, as chair, had set a requirement that all proposals for activities or projects be submitted to the steering group in writing, Ruth never followed this requirement, often raising new ideas in the «Any Other Business» section of meetings, or simply jumping in when she felt the moment was right. This set of dispositions, interactive norms and practices is inextricable from Ruth and Liz's interpretation of the reason for the group's existence: to enable inclusive decision-making about collective resources.

On the other hand, Mark and Matt's primary motivation was to ensure that NICE and SCN were implementing good governance techniques that ensured the responsible and transparent use of resources. To do this, they wanted the group to evaluate evidence systematically, and to develop repeatable processes and procedures that would ensure accountability and transparency. Mark and Matt both tended to engage in the deliberative portions of meetings with formal, logic-driven interactive styles, with the aim of making rational, evidence-based decisions. In the passage above, both are keen to establish where the equipment in question had come from; an important part of ensuring that the group was working transparently. As Ruth pushes forward her idea, Mark and Matt both re-frame the terms of the debate by moving the conversation away from the needs of

individual steering group members and towards the status and origins of the devices. Ray and Matt also repeatedly request that the group not discuss specific individuals, wanting to «depersonalise» the meeting, a social norm seen as «appropriate» within formal meeting spaces (Van Vree 2002; 2011). Hugh was also someone who shared many of these concerns with Mark and Matt, though his preference for efficient decision-making as a way of rapidly mobilising resources for community benefit often lead him to steer clear of using meeting time to discuss procedural details, particularly when he perceived the topic of discussion to be relatively minor, or the sum of money small. This shows not only that actors can bring different assumptions about what an interactive space is for, and therefore how to engage in it, into the same organisation (cf. Lichterman & Eliasoph 2014), but that these different assumptions and their attendant practices can even be brought into the same encounter.

I suggest that the different aspects of attitude and behaviour I describe are not coincidence: organising practices and interactive norms arise from and through participants' moral orientations as felt, embodied dispositions. Emotions play an important part in motivating action, for both individuals and groups, though these emotions, infused with moral beliefs and arising through social surroundings, are «open to cognitive persuasion» (Jasper 1997: 110). Over the course of fieldwork, and as I repeatedly observed the different organisational habitus described being brought into tension in the interactive space of meetings, I was made aware in the private conversations I had with participants of how deeply felt their sense of responsibility was, though this manifested in different ways. What my participants were communicating was not merely their rational and conscious position, but a *felt* sense of how to interact, and with what aim, that fundamentally shaped how they participated in NICE, and that motivated their participation.

The interview excerpts below show that the emotions of participants were not only concerned with the goals of the group; this was not a case of moral outrage motivating action, of the kind articulated by Jasper (Jasper 1997: 128). Rather, the emotions Liz and Hugh describe were fundamentally concerned with *how* the group was working; concerns that seem to have arisen in part through the very different contexts in which they had previously engaged with collective organising, an observation that resonates with Shoshan's (2018) argument that organisational habitus «spill over» from one context to another. While Liz had been involved in community work her whole life, and through this involvement had been sur-

rounded by the rhetoric and practice of inclusion, Hugh's professional life had led him to have influence over large sums of public money; a responsibility he had come to take very seriously. This points towards organisational habitus, and the moral orientations that anchor them, being gendered in both the journeys that individuals take, the spaces in which they find themselves, and have access to, and the roles they are expected to play in those spaces. It was not a coincidence that the members who came to play a pastoral role, making people feel welcome and needed, and ensuring they stayed connected, were all women, across all three groups. Nor was it a coincidence that in the groups that had treasurers, the people who took on this role were both men. Of course, the sample size is small, and observations about gender are always only trends. These trends do, nonetheless, indicate that certain skills are associated with people of particular genders, who then tend to be granted more opportunities to develop them.

The crisis situation of the covid-19 pandemic was a period in which individuals' commitments to their moral orientations intensified. Below, Liz tells me about the anxiety she felt in those early online meetings, and reflects on why this was:

> [I was] frustrated because I knew that people would talk less on zoom, because Gladys: the first two meetings you couldn't even see or hear her for some of the time. And then Leah wasn't there at all; George wasn't there at all. I'd been trying to help them get on there. […] Gladys got on the first meeting, but she couldn't see or couldn't hear. I suppose I take that very very very seriously, just in my life and professionally: that people have to be part of the discussion. So part of it was professional unease, and concern. My basic thing is I have to always include. It probably comes from childhood[2]: I have to include people. So there was a whole level of stuff, which there always is, isn't there? I felt anxious about what I was having to do: I was wanting to get the minutes right; the zoom thing was weird; I wasn't thinking the participation was right; I was having to focus on the agenda; and I was so worried about Gladys: «hello Gladys, can you hear Gladys?». Talking to Gladys on the phone; Leah was there: [but] can you see her picture properly? So yeah, I can't separate that all out (Liz, NICE member of staff).

Although she had several responsibilities in her role, Liz carried this need to include with her throughout the various aspects of her work. For

[2] She is making reference here to the voluntary work she did alongside family members as a child.

example, she spoke of using the «power and control» that she had as a minute-taker to amplify the voices of those who she felt were being dominated, by asking for clarification on points they had made but had since been forgotten, as a way of ensuring that these points were considered by the group.

Hugh had a very different motivation, and was more concerned with what decisions were made than who made them. In the period leading up to the interview below, Hugh had invested a lot of time and energy into developing a new grants competition through which local residents could apply for funding for projects or initiatives. He had also pushed forward the idea that the group should donate a large sum of money to the local foodbank; an idea he was struggling to get off the ground. At the time of the conversation below, Hugh had made the decision to step back from the group.

> I was encouraged that I was able to get the [grant system] to work because I wanted to prove to myself that you could do something: if you really put a load of time and effort you could get something done, and morally it felt like the right thing to do, to try to do something with all that money around the time of the pandemic. I felt like the organisation was doing morally the wrong thing by just sitting there and being happy not doing anything, whilst people were struggling. I really struggled with why people were comfortable with that, and so I wanted to do something myself to at least feel like I was contributing positively to society. That weighed on me. And I think the money while I've been involved […] has really weighed on me: I think, well, if someone asked me what we'd spent the money on, would I be comfortable saying «this, this and this, and it totals this amount»? […] «would I be able to justify it? Would I be comfortable, if it was my own money?» […] And I felt that the dithering and the apathy of the group just really surprised me, and I don't know why they don't feel the same weight of the money; the scale of the opportunity for the area, and how their actions mean that the opportunity is just gonna kind of get lost, you know […] (Hugh, NICE steering group member).

Hugh's main frustration with NICE's working practices was that decisions were not made efficiently; the group's collective deliberations included too many tangents and work became delayed, resulting in the group's resources not being allocated with the urgency he felt was needed, particularly in the context of the pandemic. Hugh's preference for efficient deliberation meant that his contribution towards developing thorough procedures and processes took place predominantly outside of meetings, while attempting to steer the group's deliberations towards finalising decisions.

In the early months of the pandemic, the moral orientations of many group members intensified. This could have been because working in this context produced additional challenges to them living up to those moral orientations. Liz was anxious in online meetings because she could not use many of her usual strategies for including people. She felt an increased sense of urgency because she knew that group members were excluded in this new situation, and was desperately looking for new ways of supporting their involvement. Her motivation in the meeting above was entirely focused on supporting those facing the most significant barriers, in a way that resonates with the «tunnel vision» often used to describe those operating in crisis situations (Schraagen & Ven 2008; Arias-Hernandez & Fisher 2013). At the same time, the group was suddenly having to make decisions in the very different social context of online meeting platforms, in which it can be difficult to read one another's positions, and to cultivate a shared position as a group. In this sense, it is not surprising that some of the groups' early online negotiations were not as efficient as they had been in real life, nor that some of those members, like Hugh, who placed a high value on effective decision-making, became increasingly frustrated at this time.

The presence of multiple organisational habitus and moral orientations within the same group clearly has significant implications for the broader group dynamics. Most fundamentally, actors' moral orientations play an important role in how and why they engage in the work of the group, thereby shaping what they hope the group will achieve, and how they will achieve it. Perhaps most significantly, these competing orientations can be a source of tension, as seen above. This creates a challenge for groups when trying to arrive at a shared decision or, more broadly, in agreeing on a shared sense of purpose. To overcome this challenge, it was often necessary for NICE to conduct extensive negotiations before arriving at collective decisions. Compared with the other groups, they also dedicated more time to social activities, and to exercises seeking to define common goals.

The same cannot be said of the other groups. In Action Committee of Enderton and Danbury (ACED), there was a near complete consensus that the group should aspire to effective and efficient decision-making, with little discussion about how to make decisions inclusively. The group's arrival at this shared position was the result of a challenging history and fraught beginning. Many people had left the group, and those members who remained had a fairly similar outlook on how they wanted to work, meaning that they tended to arrive at collective decisions with relative

ease. A very high degree of consensus and similarity of approach can create other challenges for groups, however. For example, ACED sometimes struggled to generate new ideas, or engage in creative problem solving. The third group, Pondmead Action Community Team (PACT), had only a small number of active volunteers, who mainly had very little time. This meant that much of the group's voluntary work was carried out by only two or three people. As a result, what this select group could get done tended to be highly valued by other members, who were keen to support their work rather than debate the process through which they conducted it. NICE was therefore the group in which competing moral orientations were most explicitly brought into tension, due to their different historical journey and group composition.

Across all three groups, those who took on leadership roles all had skills in the effective governance of resources, which they had gained through work or other voluntary activities. While this was predominantly men at NICE, ACED and PACT were both led by women. Nonetheless, across groups, those from more privileged backgrounds tended to have had more opportunities to take on management positions at work, and had developed skills associated in effective governance in the process. Some of these same individuals, mostly those with past experience of working in civil society spaces of various kinds, had also developed techniques and attributes that enabled them to facilitate conversations geared towards inclusive decision-making. It was these individuals with past experience of both governance and inclusion techniques who became the chairs in all three groups.

Discussion

Above, I outlined the moral orientations that underpinned the organisational habitus of members of a community group, NICE, in the context of a community development programme, and illustrated how these moral orientations were entangled with the organisational practices and interactive norms that individuals brought with them to the group. Through this analysis, I made the conceptual argument that the structures and practices of organisational habitus are anchored by moral orientations. Individuals' organisational habitus emerges and evolves throughout their lifetime of collective organising. Through this combined investigation into both morality and collective organising, I have shown that moral orientations are not only geared towards what groups

are trying to achieve, but also to the process of working together to bring about change. This has implications for understanding how individuals participate in civil society spaces and why, but also for unpacking some of the tensions that can rumble beneath the surface of group life, in voluntary community groups and beyond.

Given that people's access to participate in collective organising of different kinds is deeply classed, raced and gendered, organisational habitus are also patterned by the wider power structures of society: those who aspired to organise efficiently and effectively were all employed in formal institutions in which they had managerial responsibilities over projects or people; roles more easily accessed by those from more privileged backgrounds in terms of class, gender, race, and other axes of privilege. Those who took on a pastoral role, attending to the emotional wellbeing of co-volunteers both in meetings and between them, were all women, across all three of the groups. Analysis of the different organisational habitus that arise in community empowerment initiatives can therefore act as an heuristic device for understanding who becomes influential in these spaces, generating insights into how better to facilitate the involvement of those facing marginalisation in society more broadly.

The paper's second argument was that the moral orientation of an individual's organisational habitus manifests as a *felt sense* of how things ought to be done; the conscious awareness of such a sense might arise when it is undermined or contradicted. Although one's sense of oneself as a moral subject may not be clearly defined; «moral concepts do not have sharp boundaries» (Das 2015: 114), moral subjectivities can nonetheless come into focus at certain moments, such as when they are at tension with those of the people around us. The conversation about how to run the digital inclusion initiative was one such situation, though others occurred during the fieldwork period, such as a heated disagreement about whether use of the software «excel» to create NICE's budget would exclude people from participating. Curiously, although the two moral orientations outlined above were present in all three of the groups that were part of this research, NICE was the one in which they were most evenly represented, and also the only group in which disputes almost always centred around the inclusivity of working processes. This was largely a reflection of the broader and more diverse membership of the group compared with the other two groups, who both relied on a very small number of people who had time to conduct tasks between meetings, and who therefore tended to

choose how they conducted those tasks. The higher degree of consensus about appropriate working practices in the other two groups meant that the two moral orientations did not collide with the same intensity as they did at NICE: the moralities that together make up moral assemblages can have different degrees of influence.

This observation led to a third argument: that multiple organisational habitus, and the moral orientations that anchor them, can co-exist within the same group. The orientations to include, and to govern resources responsibly, are both concerned with organising styles, norms and practices. It was these moral orientations that emerged as most significant during fieldwork, though others existed. I have shown above how actors approached the same meeting through their different organisational habitus. The interaction between these organisational habitus underpinned the interactive norms and organising practices of group life, though they were never discussed explicitly. This interaction of contrasting assumptions was sometimes a source of tension for the group; a tension that intensified as moralities collided amidst the urgency of the Covid-19 pandemic. Although this collision contributed to the departure of one group member, both organisational habitus continued to co-exist in the group afterwards; this member's departure did not lead to a decline in other members' commitment to effective governance and, as with all groups, other changes in membership meant that the precise balance of organisational habitus continued to shift and evolve over time.

The theoretical insights generated through this ethnographic analysis have practical implications. If the way that groups work together is not just a question of the techniques used to organise collectively, but of the moral orientations that anchor these practices, then enabling groups to unpack their moral positions, as individuals and groups, could bring a number of benefits. Doing so would help individuals to gain clarity on their own motivations and those of their co-volunteers, and to analyse how these motivations affect their participation in group life. This could help individuals to understand why they and colleagues work the way they do, and what differences exist, and to work towards consciously developing working practices that are grounded in a shared sense of responsibility and purpose. Incorporating the facilitation of conversations about organising practices and moralities into community development programmes could therefore empower civil society groups to more consciously shape their futures together, and those of the communities they serve.

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