

LOST IN PARADISE. SEPARATION AND TOGETHERNESS IN THE LIVES OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN FUERTEVENTURA

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Abstract

The goal of this paper is to analyze the autobiographical account and the behavior emerged from three months of participant observation in the inhabitants, intended as both individuals and communities, of two hostels in the tourist town of Corralejo. By subscribing to theories of spaces seen as learning environments in which groups of people are inherently “learning cultures” (Hodkinson, Biesta, James 2008), and individuals revise or reconfirm their views by being constantly immersed and interacting in their own communities, I aim to show how different types of communities, with different values and priorities, form – and are formed by – individuals with vastly different interests, attitudes and beliefs with regards to other individuals, other groups and the world around them.

I. Methodological and theoretical framework

The material presented in this paper is the result of three months of field work I spent in Corralejo, from the 19th of September to the 13th of December of 2017, while working on my master's thesis on the impact of mass tourism and migration on the development of small communities. Research was conducted by means of participant observation, semi-structured, recorded interviews, and more informal conversations, transcribed at a later moment. Interviews and conversations, carried out either in English, Italian and Spanish, were overt, and participation was voluntary; observation was overt as well, as I always specified my reason for being in Corralejo and the subject of my research. The identities of my informants are nevertheless undisclosed, to maintain their privacy; for this reason, personal details are kept to the minimum. When introducing an informant their initials, age and nationality are specified when available; quotations from interviews and conversations are reported within angle quotes, while initials of the informant and the date of the interview are specified in footnotes. In some instances, multiple informants produced identical or very similar quotations; those occasions are specified in the text and reported between apostrophes. Quotation marks are reserved for bibliographical quotes, referenced in footnotes as well. In the next paragraph, a brief historical and geographical description of the work field tries to explain the events that created the current situation in Fuerteventura and Corralejo, the divisions among different ethnic and social groups and the nature of the power relations existing among them.

The main focus of this paper are the biographical and autobiographical accounts of about twenty non-Canarian people aged between 24 and 50, who at the time of the interviews have been living and working in Corralejo for no less than a month and no more than three years. As a way of explaining somehow problematic and conflicting data – the Italian community being perceived as extremely tight from the outside yet showing deep differences and divides from the inside; locals and recently-arrived Spanish people having more mutual distrust than locals and long-time immigrants, and so on – I attempted to “combine major elements of participatory or situated views of learning with elements of Deweyan embodied construction”¹, in order to critically analyze the autobiographical accounts and behaviour of my informants as members of actively “learning” communities. Two distinct hostels, situated at the opposite sides of town and occupied by identifiably different groups of people, are considered as possessing “learning cultures”², or “being

1 Phil Hodkinson, Gert Biesta, David James, *Understanding Learning Culturally: Overcoming the Dualism Between Social and Individual Views of Learning*, Vocations and Learning, Springer Media, 2008, p. 27.

2 Where by “learning cultures” the authors mean “a particular way to understand a learning location as a practice

places where people act and interact”, thus “where learning of some types takes place”³. The individuals that constitute these cultures, sharing every waking – and sleeping – moment for long periods of time, accordingly shape their own habitus⁴ and identity, embody the characteristics of their own hostel's “culture”, which overlies and at the same time negotiates with their previous identities (age, gender, nationality, political affiliation and so on). Through meanings collectively shaped inside the community (or despite it) these actors learn to read the reality around them, adapt to it, and to act in it. The results determined by the efforts of these learning cultures are confronted with one another and with other examples of self-building, or anthropo-poiesis⁵, removed from the learning locations in which the aforementioned cultures act.

II. Historical and geographical framework

When the first international flights began landing in Fuerteventura airport, after 1973⁶, the island's economy ceased to be supported mainly by fishing and goat farming and starts attracting foreign tourists and international investment. This boosted massive construction development especially along the coasts, and created more workforce demands in the construction and service sectors, attracting waves of foreign workers⁷. This in turn – coupled with consistent migration from the former Spanish colony of Western Sahara, and the more recent “illegal” migration of Sub-Saharan Africans – determined a sudden increase in population, that tripled in size from 18.192 people in 1970 to 49.542 people in 1991⁸. The massive, tourism-oriented land developments ended in a speculative bubble following the 2008 financial crisis. Spanish and foreign investors abandoned their ventures in the island and left its economy damaged and the environment scarred by thousands of half-built construction sites, luxury resorts and housing complexes vastly oversized for the needs of the island.

In the last few years, however, the island has partly recovered. Tourism is still the most important sector by far (comprising approximately 80% of the total economic activity) and yearly around 2 million tourists flock to the sandy beaches of Fuerteventura. For the most part, these tourists come from Western or Central Europe: about 40% of them are Germans, and around 25% from the UK. Domestic tourism sits at a mere 6%⁹. The need for skilled, multilingual workers capable of catering to the needs of and communicating with international tourists – in an island where the local population had been always excluded, until recent times, from higher education – caused again a large number of people to move to the island from Spain, Europe and Latin America¹⁰. Despite the job opportunities resulting from increased tourism, the unemployment rate sits, as of the end of 2017, at around 30%; one of the highest values in Spain¹¹. Additionally, tourists today favor inexpensive accommodations: in the South, hotels specialize in family-oriented, all-

constituted by the actions, dispositions and interpretations of the participants”. Ibid., p. 34.

3 Ibid., p. 33.

4 Ibid., p. 33-35, quoting from Bourdieu's theories of habitus and field.

5 Francesco Remotti, *Contro l'identità*, Bari, Laterza, 2007; Francesco Remotti, *Fare umanità. I drammi dell'antropo-poiesi*, Bari, Laterza, 2013.

6 Antonio Delgado Arbelo, *Los aeropuertos de Fuerteventura. Larga lucha por entrar en los circuitos internacionales. Evolución del tráfico aéreo en el período 1980-1990*, Tebeto – Anuario del archivo histórico de Fuerteventura, no. 7, Puerto del Rosario, 1994, p. 377-404.

7 Guillermo Morales Matos, *Las islas Canarias, ¿una región aislada?*, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria/Carlos III de Madrid, 2002.

8 Josefina Domínguez Mújica, *La inmigración extranjera en Canarias al cambio de siglo*, Estudios Geográficos, LXVII, 261, Julio-Diciembre, 2006, p. 471-494; Diego López de Lera, *La inmigración en España a fines del siglo XX. Los que vienen a trabajar y los que vienen a descansar*, Reis: Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas, no. 71-72, Jul-Dec 1995, p. 225-245.

9 Portal Inteligencia Turística Fuerteventura, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.fuerteventuraintel.com/perfil-del-turista/perfil-del-turista/perfil-del-turista-visita-fuerteventura-ultimo-dato-2015>.

10 José Miguel Pérez, “Canarias gana 6.979 ocupados extranjeros” (20/07/2017), retrieved from <https://www.canarias7.es/economia/empleo/canarias-gana-6-979-ocupados-extranjeros-EE1644006>.

11 Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal (SEPE).

inclusive offers; in the North, the visitors can choose – aside from the traditional hotels – to stay in hostels (formally “surf houses” or “surf camps”) or even rent entire apartments.

Thus, while sale prices for lots or buildings remained relatively low – allowing big investors to buy and develop larger parcels of the remaining building land – rent prices in touristic destinations soared, doubling in prices in the last five years¹². Low-income workers found themselves displaced; many sold their properties and moved South. Of the 30.000 official residents of the municipality of La Oliva, only half are Spanish¹³; those who remained often prefer moving to the interior of the island. This leaves the coastal towns to be inhabited by a disproportionate amount of foreigners¹⁴. Corralejo, the main tourist resort in La Oliva, encapsulates all the main aspects of the changes undergone by the island in the last fifty years: just a fishing village until the '70s, it grew dramatically reaching a resident population of almost 17.000 people, spreading in every direction from its *casco viejo* due to the many hotels, malls, restaurants, and above all residential areas, that make up more than half the total surface area of the town. Corralejo offers a wide variety of services to tourists and aspiring settlers: restaurants, bars, clubs, but also car and buggy rentals, real estate agencies and clinics. Yet, many of its inhabitants, especially short-term and foreign workers, lack the money to rent a place and are forced to live in hostels indefinitely.

The many hostels of Corralejo are hidden in plain sight in its residential areas; every row of identical, two or three-story villas has its share of “surf houses”, as they're formally called even when they don't offer surf lessons. These hostels, owned and managed by Canarians and foreigners alike, usually employ foreigners in the 20-35 age range, either regularly paid and employed full time, or recruited via Workaway or similar online platforms, and employed part-time in shifts for a few months, without pay. In both cases, they have access to free accommodation, usually bunk beds in a basement. The two hostels considered in this paper, which I'll call respectively “Strawberry” and “Pineapple”, are very different from each other, and their characteristics shape two very different communities.

III. Pleasure Island

Strawberry hostel, in the Southern suburbs of town, is made up by the opposing halves of two distinct semi-detached houses, with a wall separating the two verandas. Both buildings share their whole other side, the “internal” wall, with private houses. The hostel is managed only by workawayers making five hour-long shifts, five days a week. They're basically in charge of everything: cleaning, handling check-ins and check-outs, assisting the guests and acting as intermediaries between the guests and the owner. They're never really alone, however, as the manager visits them at least once a day to pick up payments and to make sure everything's in order. The manager also sees and hears everything through a couple of cameras and microphones installed in both houses. There's a curfew at 11 PM, and outside visitors aren't allowed on the premises. These things don't seem to excessively bother these workers. The reasons behind this can be summed up in a few sentences: it's not a very hard job, it's for a limited period of time, and it leaves lots of spare time to surf, go to the beach or relax. When asked if it doesn't bother them to work for free, they all reply that the main goal behind their choice is not to earn money, but to avoid spending too much for what's basically a two or three month-long vacation. A 29-year-old French woman explains how she usually spends the whole summer working as a waitress 4-5 hours a day, everyday, in the French Riviera; for her, Workaway it's not only a vacation, being more relaxing by comparison, but an opportunity to make new experiences. As a 24-years-old Belgian workawayer, put it: «it's like being in Erasmus». Only when the manager's request become too excessive the

12 Portal de la Dirección General del Catastro (DCG), Goolzoom.

13 Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE).

14 Silvia Fernandez, “La presión turística deja a los residentes sin piso que alquilar” (23/10/2016), retrieved from https://www.canarias7.es/hemeroteca/la_presion_turistica_deja_a_los_residentes_sin_piso_que_alquilar_-MBCSN438985

voluntary nature of their job resurfaces: 'they're not even paying us!'

Workaways get along well with each others and with tourists. In many cases, the seemingly perennial summer weather and the repetitive activities create the illusion of being in a bubble 'outside of time', reminiscent of Pinocchio's 'Pleasure Island' or similar places. The location is important only as long as it offers what they're looking for: sun, sea, surf. When I ask C.C., a 26-year-old Spanish man, the reason why he chose Fuerteventura, he replies:

«It was a last-minute change of plan. In short, I've been traveling for a long time. The important trip I was supposed to take now, I was supposed to go to California, to harvest marijuana, but I got afraid and on the same day I decided not to go I looked for a Workaway, and a lot of people had suggested me Fuerteventura because of surfing, the weather, the atmosphere»¹⁵

C.C. has already been in California once before, working in a marijuana plantation during harvest without a work permit. He did it because it gave him the opportunity to explore the continent – in the span of a few months he managed to visit not only California but also Mexico, where he worked in a *chiringuito* for some time – and the pay was very good, however work conditions were very harsh and the chances of being caught without a visa were high, so he decided against trying his luck a second time. He also worked as a tour guide and translator for Spanish groups in East Asia; he liked that job because it paid well and gave him the opportunity of traveling far, but it also forced him to move from one place to the next, visiting «up to three sites in a day, without really absorbing anything». About Fuerteventura, C.C. is conflicted. On one hand he's happy to be traveling far from home, meeting new people, surfing almost everyday and not feeling the obligation of going around visiting anything, on the other hand he feels like the place «is too touristic». Asked to elaborate, he explains:

«In Mexico I know lots of local people, I work with local people. Here I don't know any locals. [...] It seems as if here the locals stay [just] within locals, the tourists with other tourists, the surfers with other surfers, the Germans with other Germans, the Italians with other Italians. [...] I don't know, this is what I don't like, the atmosphere. Like it's a good atmosphere, because there are no troubles, but it's like a touristic bubble, like it's a place just for vacation. [...] If I didn't surf, I'd stay... [no more than] a week»

When I ask C.C. how he feels about the friends he made in the hostel, and if he isn't worried about losing them when he's going to leave Fuerteventura, his reply inadvertently gives an explanation about the concept of being in a “bubble” as well:

«I'm used to it [friendships ending]. When I meet someone, and we become good friends, I really enjoy that friendship. I learn a lot from these people, but in the end... I know from the first moment that it's going to end. I never think “it's going to last forever”. [...] It always has an expiration date, even when you say “we're going to meet again”, it's very unlikely. But at the same time, since you know it's going to end, [...] it's more intense. I feel better with these people than with my life-long friends in Barcelona, that I see everyday, with whom I go out everyday, we've always been the same people, for the last ten years... Here you feel like a little kid, you know? [...] When we were kids, and we played games, or had some kind of activity that we really loved... like I loved going to the park, playing soccer, it was really fun, it was the best, no? But then this sensation, as the years pass, it ends, and you don't feel it anymore. And now I notice that with this kind of places, like Workaway, or the hostels, it's like some kind of place where you can meet people your age, and you get a little bit of that feeling you had when you were a little boy... it's a bit weird, but... it's a bit like the same feeling because it's the same [kind of] people as you, doing the same things you're doing, they're taking things the

15 Interview with C.C., 13/11/17.

same way as you, and everybody wants to take things the right way... everybody is more or less on vacation, everybody wants to play instruments, listen to music, have barbecues, go surfing, looking for chicks, looking for guys, I don't know, it's unreal. It's unreal. [...] It's like being in another world, it's crazy. In the end I don't know where I am. [I'm] out of reality»¹⁶

CC talks about everybody being “more or less on vacation”, without distinction between hostel workers and real tourists. At the same time, he's not talking about just “any” tourism: he specifically means a relaxed, easy-going, surf-oriented kind of tourism. This obviously limits the age range of the tourists he's considering, so in his account the older tourists, or the long-time workers who stay in the hostel, completely disappear. The surfer identity is constantly reinforced by car trips to remote beaches, entire days spent chasing waves, and nights spent watching surf documentaries. At the same time, the curfew, the ban on external visitors and the almost constant surveillance mean that almost all interactions are limited to the group of workers, guests, and the few people that get to sneak in. B.P., a 30-year-old woman from Argentina who moved to Fuerteventura in search of a place where it was «summer all year round», shares similar convictions about tourists, even though she acknowledges the existence of non-surfers:

«It seems to me like it's kind of a dirty tourism, a kind of tourist that doesn't fit too well in the island. I'm going to be tremendously honest, it's a lower middle class tourism. [...] There are two types of tourists. There's the people aged 40-60, lower-middle class, who come here to go out and drink alcohol [...] and the surfers, who come from September to December, and it's a “traveling” tourism, they don't think... they think less about moving here, but all those who arrive here think about settling down»¹⁷

She concludes by saying that surfers are actually a much-needed presence on the island, as they bring “fresh air”. Identifying this kind of younger, more active tourism as “traveling”, far from being an innocent or casual remark, means consciously subscribing to the tourist/traveler dichotomy, implicitly recognizing the latter as superior, while at the same time including oneself in this category. The perceived difference is the same that C.C. noticed when he complained about “not absorbing anything” of the places he visited as a tour guide.

However, as tourist/traveler presence – although nice as long as it conforms to expectations – is fleeting, the tightest bonds are formed between workers, especially those who aside from being together during work hours and meals also share their free time. The shared time in the Strawberry is also a time for learning in the most conventional sense: thanks to C.C. and B.P. I learned to speak basic Spanish, as did a 30-year-old woman from the UK, thanks to another Argentinian woman. B.P., in turn, used feedback from communication with English-speaking staff and guests in order to improve her English. During our interview, she offers me more insight into the division in groups that takes place even between two very close hostels, and the prominence of English as the pivot language in the hostels of Corralejo. Talking about her commitment in improving her English, she compares her attitude with that of her Slovenian boyfriend and his friends:

«It seems to me like it's a bit selfish, you know? Also I feel like it's almost about “defending” his language. He speaks Slovenian at work, in his hostel [...] also he speaks a very harsh, a very “Russian” English, and I always tell him, “you don't speak Spanish and your English is very hard to understand”, but he replies “well it's my accent and I don't intend on changing it”, like he has something to defend. [...] He says “I'll never speak like an Englishman, because I'm not interested”, as if with [this attitude towards] English he linked the idea of defending his roots. [...] I see this in a lot of his friends also, we went on a boat trip and they spent the whole time speaking Slovenian, and then we had a pool party and again they spoke

16 Ibidem.

17 Interview with B.P., 19/11/17.

Slovenian [...] while having the barbecue we were in two separate groups, the Slovenians and the ones from [our] hostel»¹⁸

Far from being preoccupied with facilitating communication and openness towards other groups, her boyfriend and his friends actively try to take distance from “Englishmen”, and by extension from other non-Slovenian people, be it tourists, other foreign workers or Spanish people. This stubbornness vilifies any attempt at communication, even if the two communities effectively share the same spaces and partake in the same activities. B.P. tells me that she notices this exact behavior in another group of people: the Italians.

IV. Runaway Island

Among the foreign residents of La Oliva, the Italians are the largest and fastest-growing community. Official estimates put their number at about 4.200 people regularly registered at residents in the Ayuntamiento of La Oliva in 2014, but by 2017 their number was up by almost 38%. This is particularly evident in Corralejo, where most Italians live, work and often own businesses or apartments. All the signs point to an apparently highly cohesive group, capable not only of growing and thriving in a foreign environment. The Italian community, however, isn't as tight as it seems. In more than one occasion my Italian informants advised me and others against trusting our own compatriots, because 'some people just want to scam you'. In many cases they speak from personal experience, and one of the most frequent warnings is 'I've taken the worst *inculcate*¹⁹ from other Italians'.

In regards to Fuerteventura, I've heard the term 'Isola degli Scappati di Casa', roughly translated to “Runaway Island” from a surprisingly high number of Italians, where by “runaways” they intend “Italians”. Sometimes it's in reference to the poorly devised plans they make when they decide to move; some other times it's an allusion to “someone” being literally on the run from something (taxes, the law, responsibilities). The community also seems to be divided into two subgroups with precise differences, for example when one arrived on the island, or where one lives. M.S., a man from Southern Italy, told me: «it's better if we speak Spanish, they hate us less this way». When I ask if he can clarify what he means, he tells me:

«There are at least ten thousand Italians in Corralejo officially, but who knows how many others are here irregularly. We ruined this island [...] just listen around, everywhere you go they speak only Italian. [...] Italian people behave here like Albanians did in Italy twenty years ago, and like we did everywhere else. We're like Attila, grass doesn't grow anymore wherever we pass. The upside is that the people who soiled this place were from Northern Italy, so we [Southerners] look better by comparison. [...] I've been living here for three years, before this new wave of Italians arrived. You can recognize them: they go around barefoot, dressed like fake surfers. They live all together, in six-bed rooms»²⁰

This description of “new wave Italians” aptly describes a stereotypical hostel guest, even though it would fit more the Strawberry profile than the Pineapple. The latter, located on the other side of town from the former, occupies a terraced house a few blocks away from the dock, near the town center. The owner, a Canarian, visits once every few days; every aspect of the hostel is effectively managed by LG, an Italian man in his twenties, alone. Due to its vantage position with regards to possible workplaces downtown, and its strict rules even compared to the Strawberry – no outside people, no parties, curfew at 10 PM – the hostel doesn't attract as many short-term workers and tourists as long-time workers without a home, or people looking for a long-time job. Coincidentally, most of the guests are Italian.

18 Ibidem.

19 Italian expletive meaning “swindle”.

20 Informal conversation with M.S., 26/10/2017.

Other “outcast” Italians live their relation with their nationality, their national identity and the meaning it assumes in Corralejo as problematic. L.P., 24 years old, has been working in another hostel for one year, since first arriving on the island. During our interview, she offers some insight on the old/new wave divide:

«the ones who arrived ten, nine years ago, they all learned Spanish, they have more respect [...] the ones who arrived five, four, three years ago until now [...] they don't speak a single word in Spanish, they only mix with other Italians, and it's the thing that irks me the most since I'm first of all a migrant, I made my first pilgrimage from Argentina when I was 9, and the things me and my family had to do to integrate in Italy... In Italy nobody gives a shit about you if you don't speak Italian. [...] I don't get how it's possible that people who have been living here for two years don't know a single word in Spanish. Two years! Speaking that horrible Italian stuff and thinking it's Spanish just because they change a few words. It's very disrespectful»²¹

L.P. is Italian in her documents, but she doesn't like to identify as such; the bad experiences she lived in Italy, and the way many Italians act in Fuerteventura, prompted her to take distance from it and embrace her Latina identity, or her «faux-native» identity, as she called it. She's not the only one looking to reshape her identity: E.V., a 37-years-old Italian construction worker I met while at the Strawberry, confesses:

«when I'm in public with my daughter I tell her to either speak Spanish with me or shut up. I'm ashamed of being Italian sometimes. I'm proud of what my grandparents did, of what my parents did, but Italy did nothing for me»

M.G., another 35-years-old former construction worker I met at the Strawberry, arrived on the island last March. Despite having bad experiences with Majoreros both on the workplace and outside of it, because of his being Italian, and despite not renouncing to his identity, he resents an Italian acquaintance and former employer of his, who in his words «ruined him», way more than any Majorero. All three of these people – L.P., E.V. and M.G. – tell me in some way that you're ultimately alone on the island, that 'Fuerteventura gets out either the best or the worst out of people', and that the Majoreros, embodying the “will” of an almost personified island, can accept you or refuse you.

Conversely, the “new wave Italians” of the Pineapple, lacking the capital to invest in social relations inside Corralejo – money, connections, a house – and thus forbidden from gaining the “acceptance” of the rest of either the Italian or Majorero community, but far from reaching the solipsistic fatalism or the identity crisis of those deprived of a solid “community”, create a culture of their own inside the hostel. They eat together, spend free time together, help each other with finding jobs if needed, sometimes plan looking for a house together. As noticed by B.P., they're unconcerned with making themselves understandable to foreigners; Italian is the first language by far in terms of usage. When they choose to speak to the Spanish guests, they do so either in English or in the fake Spanish described by L.P.. One time, during a difficult conversation, a frustrated Spanish man cried «You're not speaking Spanish! I don't understand you!», to no avail.

They're as supportive towards one another as they're poisoned against “outside” Italians, with whom many of them had bad experiences. L.F., 47 years old, while trying to comfort the 27-year-old H.G., recently-fired from a job by his Italian employers, explained:

«The Italians who own businesses here, 90% of them [...] you'll have trouble finding someone among them who treats people with respect. They're the ones who exploit their compatriots the most. Worse than Rumenians in the '90s. [...] like you arrived ten years ago, your place works well, but in the end you're making fucking

21 Interview with L.P., 16/11/17.

Interestingly, both 'old wave' and 'new wave' Italians, like MS and LF respectively, draw parallels between their conditions and those of Balkanic immigrants in Italy at the end of the 20th century. Another parallel is the one created by the shared opinion the Spanish and Italian guests of the Pineapple have of the natives. 'They're thirty years late', the Italians usually say; 'if not for us, they'd be still herding goats'; 'they're lazy, even lazier than other Canarians'; 'the locals can't work'. The Spanish people, on the other hand, justify the high unemployment rate by saying that 'the locals just want to collect welfare, rent out their parents' house and live in Puerto del Rosario without working'. Conversely, their position with respect to Italian people in the hostel almost mirrors how they feel about the 'invasion' of the island by the 'trapicheros' Italians: «they're going to colonize the place like they did with Ibiza and Formentera, we've sold off this fucking country», an Aragonese man exclaimed once, frustrated with the scarcity of jobs and the impossibility of finding a reasonably priced apartment. Another Spanish man, not finding a single good knife, complains about it with G.L., the worker, who tells him that the good knives «are all in the other hostel». Another time, a Japanese tourists wakes up because of H.G. going around the hostel, singing, throwing doors open and shutting them closes. He comes down and complains to me and the rest of the Italians about the fact that H.G. doesn't behave as a tourist, isn't a tourist, and shouldn't stay in a hostel. We all shrug, as if saying 'such is life'.

V. Conclusions

In the closed environment offered by a surf house in the tourist resort of Corralejo, the relationship between staff and guests, or among the guests, is played on hidden power relations that ultimately make the various social actors involved in the field into members of more or less coherently defined communities; not every actor has the same weight in shaping the community, nor is everyone conversely molded by it to the same degree. These processes aren't inherently "good" or "bad", as they merely serve to the individual to adapt to the situation at hand. In some cases, like in the Strawberry hostel in the observed period, this means potentially opening up both as individuals and as a collectivity to other groups and individuals, as long as they can fit into a general, coherent narrative. In some other cases, like in the Pineapple hostel in the observed period, internal cohesiveness is achieved by excluding the possibility of opening to other groups or individuals. Regardless, the individuals who are parts of these communities, in this sense identified as "learning cultures", contribute in some way to changing it, and in turn "learning as becoming"²³, reinforcing or reshaping their own habitus, their beliefs, their way of looking at themselves, at the social interactions taking place inside and outside of their own community, and their way of looking at and interpreting reality.

22 Informal conversation with L.F. and H.G., 30/11/17.

23 Hodkinson, Biesta, James 2008, p. 40.

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