

**To Feed the Social Body:
the Comparative Study of Places of Food Redistribution
for Low-Income People in Vienna**

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, **Svitlana Shynkarenko**, candidate for the MA degree in Sociology and Social Anthropology declare herewith that the present thesis titled “To feed the social body: comparative study of places of food redistribution for low-income people in Vienna” is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright.

I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Vienna, 08 June 2025

/s/ Svitlana Shynkarenko

ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I study food redistribution services for low-income people in Vienna. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted at two sites —SOMA Sozialmarkt and Le+O (Lebensmittel und Orientierung) —I explore how food, as a matter of everyday nutritional necessity, becomes a symbolic actor and tool that embodies political rationalities. The thesis utilises the concepts of ‘feeding the social body’ and ‘staginess’ as a framework to demonstrate how places of food redistribution for low-income individuals organise the temporal, spatial, and emotional dynamics of governing specific categories of population. I argue that separate shopping areas for low-income people also function as spaces to reproduce spatial exclusion and enact forms of neoliberal governmentalities in the implementation of distributive politics. Expectations from the service provider frame consumers' behaviour in separate shopping areas for low-income individuals. Being a receiver of social benefit and being a consumer in a space that pretends to be an ‘average’ grocery shop results in misrecognition, miscommunication, conflictual emotional outcomes and resistance. This thesis contributes to anthropological and interdisciplinary discussion on food redistribution and the neoliberal transformation of welfare. Ethnography reveals how food functions as a mediator through which moral economies, the social ordering, and neoliberal governmentalities become materialized and thus recognized.

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INTRODUCTION

I entered the physical space of my field site and got confused and curious, “What is it?”, – the inner voice lamented. I took this palimpsest of my imagination and started to ‘read’ each layer, trying not to be overwhelmed by affective reactions. Thus, what is it? It looks like a grocery shop, you enter and turn right to go to the shopping zone, and then on the right side is a tiny corner with vegetables. I see partly brown, partly green broccoli that is supposed to be more green than brown, – my expectations tell me. A giant wall with sweets grew in front of me. Sweets lay down on shelves as pages of the former year's calendar; you may find already expired sweets and even those that are still before the date of expiration. Here is your not consumed in time Christmas, Easter, Valentine’s Day. You go further. You see a little fridge with processed food, like fish, sausages, and cheese products. You go further. On the left side you meet a new wall of shelves with an extremely varied set of spices. Here you may become nostalgic, remembering what happened in your life in parallel with the life of a small bottle with rosemary you hold in hand and read: expired 2020. Most of the food here has expired. At first glance, there is not enough (or rather some items are absent at all) proper food, like rice, spaghetti, or non-processed meat and vegetables. There are a lot of restrictions compared to the average supermarket. Announcements about rules and restrictions with yellow highlights are written on walls (Fieldwork note, Soma Sozialmarkt, 2024, Vienna)

In January 2024 I entered SOMA Sozialmarkt in Vienna with two main motives: to balance my own income and spendings and to start field work for Ethnographic methods class. In terms of research ethics, I see the following contradictions and challenges I am aware of. On the one hand, I initially entered the social market because of personal financial issues. According to Austrian law I am a low-income person, and I can have access to such places as social markets or social services that provide food-redistribution. On the other hand, I am in a privileged position as a student at a prestigious educational institution. My mixed social positions will require additional reflectivity. Furthermore, my ‘field’ is located

metaphorically ‘at home’, as I settled down in Vienna in August 2023, but due to forced migration I did not feel that Vienna could be named as ‘home’ at that stage of my migrant life. Therefore, my ‘field’ for current research is ‘at home’ and ‘not at home’ at the same time. After the initial stage of research from the perspective of visitors and ‘silent’ observation I was curious to develop this project into bigger research and consequently shifted my position to ‘visible’ and formal one.

As a field, I have chosen two places as main sites for observation during fieldwork, including rare visits to different places of food redistribution as additional spots of the same network and social markets of other networks. I decided to compare two projects that redistribute food to low-income people. The first project is Le+O with a network in Vienna. The Le+O project of food redistribution promises “sustainable support for households affected by poverty” to empower people “to help themselves”. The measure of aid consists of the redistribution of food and individual, free counseling services. The project was launched by Caritas in collaboration with parishes in Vienna in 2009.² Caritas is an international grassroots organization. Caritas Director Klaus Schwertner, Archdiocese of Vienna, defines the objectives of Caritas as follows: “Together with governmental and non-governmental partners, our donors, and more than 15,000 volunteers, we work towards a world without social inequalities, poverty and hunger. Together with foundations, we want to improve the living conditions of our target groups and make a social impact. In Austria, in Europe and worldwide.”³

During fieldwork in one place of the network I met announcements with written additional “markt”: Le+O markt, when in other spots of food redistribution were printed just Le+O +

² <https://www.caritas-leo.at>

³ <https://www.caritas-wien.at/foundations-philanthropy>

Location. This tiny detail may enlighten some stages of the process of implementation of experimental practices, such as food redistribution services.



Figure 1. Le+O Markt

The project redistributes food with a small contribution to logistics costs, as stated on the organization's website. Thus, a certain amount of food items cost 4.80 euros (1 package) for households with 1-3 people or 7.30 euros (2 packages) for families with more than three people. The variety of food items differs from visit to visit; sometimes, it includes more items, and sometimes fewer. It depends on the number of registered visitors and the amount of food supplied. Users of services pay these costs at the improvised cash desk.



Figure 2. Cash desk in Le+O

The second project is SOMA Sozialmarkt Hilfswerk in Vienna, a social supermarket for low-income people⁴, which is a “non-profit association or company” and a member of SOMA Österreich & Partner. The idea of Sozialmarkt is to collect surplus goods from commercial

⁴ <https://www.hilfswerk.at/oesterreich/>

companies and to sell them at reduced prices to low-income people. It is beneficial for people affected by poverty, industry, and trade. Why did I choose this particular Sozialmarkt? I was curious about the hybridity in the sense of its multiple promises and functions. Thus, this particular Sozialmarkt functions in cooperation with: AMS (Arbeitsmarktservice) - the Vienna Public Employment Service (PES further), with aim to integrate people into the labor market; and Neustart, a non-profit “aid organization for the society’s coping with criminality” that provides probation service “as an alternative to a prison term”⁵. The first Sozialmarkt in Austria was opened in 1999 in Linz (Grünhaus et al. 2019:9). The Number of social markets in Vienna has risen nowadays to 35-40, data differs.

The main idea of these organizations is to provide daily products at symbolic prices for low-income people. According to Austrian law from January 1st, 2024, low-income people are people with income below the limit: single people or single parents - 1,155.84 euros; people aged 25 and over who live with other people in a marriage, registered partnership or civil partnership (per person) - 809.09 euros; additionally for underage children (per child) - 312.08 euros.⁶

My initial research questions were: How do food redistribution actors, such as SOMA Sozialmarkt and Le+O projects, reproduce spatial exclusion and enact forms of neoliberal governmentalities? To approach this empirically, I reformulated the question as follows: How do spaces intended to provide aid and hospitality at times come to symbolize threat and hostility in the experiences of their users? How do negotiations between actors in social services related to food redistribution for low-income people represent modes from hospitable to hostile practices in subjective perception by users of services, and what are the

⁵ <https://www.neustart.at/en/vision/>

⁶ https://www.wien.gv.at/sozialinfo/content/de/10/InstitutionDetail.do?it_1=2101751

moments of conversion (hospitable to hostile and vice versa)? How do users of services and providers/managers of services evaluate these moments from their perspectives and, thus, at the same time, mirror ideologies, myths, and narratives existing in a field?

In general, several organizations in Vienna redistribute food to low-income groups of the population. Among them: Partner markets of the umbrella organization SOMA Austria & Partners (SOMA Wiener Hilfswerk, Vinzmarkt, Samariterbund Sozialmärkte); Le+O – Food and Orientation; Wiener Tafel; Team Österreich Tafel; Sozialmarkt Wien; Foodpoint.⁷ In my study I combined two projects (SOMA Wiener Hilfswerk, Le+O – Food and Orientation) to compare ideologies, narratives, techniques, misrepresentations, misunderstandings between declared and implemented, expectations by each side (providers and receivers) of the process of food redistribution. Comparison as one of the methodological devices I found apposite because : 1) both projects (the charitable and the “genuine” Sozialmarkt) use the ‘average supermarket’ as model to follow in providing the service of food redistribution for low-income people; 2) projects collaborate with branches of the penal system; 3) both projects cooperate with the Public Employment Service (PES); 4) both of them use voluntary unwaged work, and labor of waged employees. And the main commonality is the food they redistribute. This food has expired already, even one month ago, or will expire literally today or tomorrow.

My research is based on qualitative research methods. Ethnographic fieldwork in SOMA Sozialmarkt in Vienna was conducted during February - August 2024; in Le+O in July and August 2024. Despite several short communications with service users, I interviewed 7 users of these services; 3 managers and 1 producer who supplies food to a food bank that redistributes food among social services. Among those people I followed one family (woman

⁷ <https://ecology.at/files/berichte/E10.916.pdf>

and two children, further Maria) and conducted a series of in-depth interviews for one month, doing shopping and receiving food with her. Additionally, I followed the food as an actor that was metaphorically rated by quality for moving within one organization from project to project. For instance, food redistributed for low-income people has not been used for community cooking project (another project of Caritas). Umbrella organization is the same, but food in first place is expired, with signs of rotting and mold. Food in second place is bio, in good 'shape', brought there by one of the producers of bio vegetables in Austria. I made this additional exploration of one more project of Caritas to see how social services shift their goals, visions, and play with ideologies in a speculative way. In each case I used food as a symbolic entry point for comparison to build arguments in analysis. The language of communication with users of services was Ukrainian and English, among my users-informants were 2 men and 5 women, mostly Ukrainian refugees and work-migrants, as well as one person from Hungary and one from Kazakhstan.

A new field of experiment appeared in the process of outsourcing welfare functions of the state to non-governmental civil society actors. For instance, since the 1980s Austria has been focused on activation labor market policies (Ludwig-Mayerhofer and Wroblewski 2004:492). It connotes a transition toward an 'active' welfare state, aiming to activate and facilitate beneficiaries of social assistance in entering the labour market. To modernize the welfare state and make it fitting to neoliberal demands, collaborative projects, such as welfare, labor market, and social and employment programs dynamically linked by public policy, started their development (ibid:486). Socio-economic enterprises and non-profit projects, along SOMA Sozialmarkt and other social markets, were invented as tool to reintegrate target problematic groups and to feed them, selling expired food, or redistributing expired food for logistics costs in special separate places to meet objectives of projects.

Inspired by ideas and reflections by Ferguson (2015) on distributive politics, I would argue that social markets were invented as one link in a chain of implementation of such politics. Ferguson's reflections are focused on different schemes of providing poor relief in very different contexts of African countries, like direct cash transfers, as he puts it in words – “giving a man a fish”, or specific activation projects “to teach a man how to get a fish”. Thus, expanding and following this line of thinking in a specific Austrian context, I may interpret that as firstly poor people were given “fish” [cash] in the form of unemployment benefits (it could be a state organization such as PES - Public Employment Service that provides transfers). According to Ferguson, this “fish” is distributed not as a gift, but as a “rightful share” of the wealth of production, that is enough for all, I mean for all men, including able-bodied men. Ferguson stresses that “people who receive cash are at the same time being “drawn into” a “neoliberal” world of market exchange” (Ferguson 2015:120). Then the man is invited to bring “fish” [cash] to specific separate grocery shops, invented to provide shopping opportunities for low-income people. Low-income men [male, female] bring “fish” [cash] to social markets to spend there that “fish” [cash]. “Fish” is going back to some 'pocket' of some social service. But in the case of Austrian politics, at the same time a poor man should be taught how to get a “fish” by himself, not just to receive distributed “fish”, or as Ferguson says, “goods are shared, and chores distributed, in an equitable way” (Ferguson 2015:121). People are still dependent on a note of confidence related to their agency or ability to become a risk taker, to take proactive position because they are consumers again, they may shop (not just receive food for free).

This attempt to sell under the mask of sustainable consumption and food redistribution for low-income people, even expired products, helps to balance the economy and helps to grow a new type of consumer ‘additional consumer’, or ironically playing with words – ‘surplus consumer.’ For instance, for companies-stakeholders SOMA Österreich & Partner specific

monetized impact for the 2018-year results in 1 094 592 euro (Grünhaus et al 2018:24). The number of attempts to sell expired products is more than one, and it happens within social services. Then traces of what is the state part of the chain, what is the non-governmental civil society actor's part of the chain become intertwined, and boundaries within are blurred. But methods and techniques to implement governmentality and exercise power are similar for governmental and non-governmental organizations (Ferguson 2014). Donors of food are international giants like REWE group (for their companies, it plays a role of social added value); or private actors (for them this activity works as the demand of time to lead business under a moral responsibility mask that is beneficial for businesses). I asked one of my informants, who holds a managerial position within a social service institution: “Why do businesses donate food for your organization?” “Because it is beneficial for businesses to utilize expired food, they do not pay for utilization of this food; they redistribute it via a network of food-redistribution services,” – the manager explained. But what exactly is food redistribution? EU guidelines on food donation from 2017 define food redistribution as a process of collecting, recovering, and providing people with surplus food that might otherwise be wasted (C361/4).⁸ The General Food Law of 2002 establishes a legal framework for the redistribution of surplus food. It says that all consumers must be treated equally. The safety standards of food directly marketed to consumers should be equal to the safety standards of food redistributed to those in need via redistribution and charitable organizations (ibid:C361/12). In the following chapters, I will look at the set of entangled relations between actors involved in food redistribution. My goal is to find out moments of conversion from hospitable moments or practices in providing social service into hostile moments or practices. Thus, it happened that all the ‘rejected’ met in one separate space: food and other products rejected by the market of goods; unemployed people rejected by the labor market; migrants rejected by countries of origin; those who committed crime and are rejected by the penal

⁸ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=oj:JOC_2017_361_R_0001

system from the “free life”, – with a common aim of market, state, civil society actors: to sell, to activate, to discipline. And to reintegrate food with the body, a man with labor, prisoners with a “free” life.

Food redistributed among different separate entities [institutions] specifically invented to govern different population groups for selling to low-income people becomes a tool itself. It often creates invisible first-glance outcomes in addition to the representation of the power hierarchy. In writing, I will metaphorically follow the process of shopping in an ‘average supermarket’. I recognize it as routine, mundane action that involves specific self-evident algorithms for doing things. I will combine the two field sites and switch narration from place to place. To make reading more understandable, I will signal what episode is related to what place. I make these speculative jumps between places and projects because, as I mentioned before, both follow the idea or elements of how a supermarket functions. I use the sequences of things to do when people shop as a skeleton of analysis.

For the thesis, I have chosen a structure that follows the idea of staginess as a frame for narration. First, staginess presupposes the specificity of a place that serves as a stage for actions and is distinct from other stages. Thus, in the first chapter, I treat food as a code and an actor that represents social order, hierarchy, and boundaries of social relations. I refer to separate social supermarkets for low-income people as an exclusionist spatial practice.

Secondly, staginess requires the use of time frames. I elaborate on this in the second chapter, specifically in terms of temporal dis-belonging experienced by low-income individuals. To approach these issues, I use concepts of ‘time horizon’ and ‘postponed time’ to show the disunity in temporalities between social categories. I approach food as an actor and use concepts ‘less-time’ good, and ‘more time’ good as metaphors for the time that people have

for consuming food before it is ‘completely’ wasted. Time itself becomes a distributed product.

The third component of staginess is emotional expectation, built on a picture of promise that can differ from an image of staged-in-place action and consequently may provoke an emotional response. Staginess creates new limits of choice and may mislead the user in terms of expected (by provider of service) behavioral norms to frame the user's action. Therefore, in the third chapter of the thesis, I will expand and elaborate on the dynamic of external and internal conflictual negotiations between users of services and providers of services while stressing the issue of admitting new limits of 'choice'. Concepts appearing there include ritualized action, as I analyze a particular sequence (what resonates with staginess but uncovers a linkage with the religious context) of food redistribution that takes place on the territory of a church. After that, I pay attention to affective reactions as emotional outcomes, with a focus on disgust as a moral emotion and resistance practice.

Overall, this thesis contributes to anthropological discussions on food redistribution in the Austrian context, inviting critical reflection on moral economies under neoliberalism. It offers an ethnographic account of how expired food becomes an active actor and mediates governance, moral hierarchies, and spatial exclusion of specific population groups. Through a focus of mundane everyday practices and negotiations with food, it enlightens an ambiguous space of aid.

CHAPTER 1 – STAGINESS AND SEPARATENESS AS EXCLUSION PRACTICES

Initially, my entry point of the research was expired food as a mediator of a pattern of social relations, where I followed the logic of treating the food as "a code" and the message it encodes may be found in social relations that represent "hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across the boundaries" (Douglas 1972:61). Claude Fisher stresses that "food is central to individual identity, in that any given human individual is constructed, biologically, psychologically and socially by the food he/she chooses to incorporate" (Fisher 1988:275). Food as an actor "makes the eater" (ibid:282), and it plays a role in a sense of collective belonging (ibid:280). In the case of my research, 'choice' as agent-dependent action or 'freedom to choose' is limited by new framings. Users of services need to adapt their own perception and understanding of 'choice' as proactive action and to digest what is 'choice' embodied in the narratives of the network of social services. Especially those types of social services like Sozialmarkt that pretend to look like average supermarkets. This 'choice' looks like an illusion of free 'choice', or free 'choice' within some restrictions; those tend to regulate consumer behavior of service users. This regulation is very often caused by food demand that is higher than food supply.

When you enter a Soma Sozialmarkt there is no magnetic frame at the exit from the store. But instead, there are at least ten workers in a small hall. A picture that you (user of service) may notice before the cash register – open your backpack and show the contents. There is another picture on the door of the toilet – you cannot enter the toilet with a trolley bag and a backpack in case you want to secretly transfer the products that you have stolen into a backpack. Before entering the shopping zone, you have to leave your trolley bag. "Why are those pictures there?" – I asked my informant-manager of the service. "Prohibition to use trolley bags in shopping zones makes the job of a cashier easier", – the manager answered. "But what about

the demand to open backpacks and show it to the cashier?" – I argued. The manager smiles. "Did you have a lot of cases when people steal something in Sozialmarkt?" – I continued. "Actually, some pictures were placed here before I started my contract. The prohibition of using the restroom with a backpack has a history. Someone had stolen toilet paper. So, this rule was a reaction," – explained the manager. "How about the picture inside a restroom? Here is an explanation of how to use the toilet brush properly, and the picture shows us someone who is brushing him/herself with a toilet brush. Crossing red lines tells us not to use this toilet brush that way. Have you had cases like that?" – I moved to absurdist exaggeration in the dialogue. The manager laughs and says: "No, we thought that this picture would facilitate people to use toilet brushes for original purposes, to clean the bowl". "But it feels a bit offensive from the perspective of a visitor" – I decided to share my opinion with the manager.

1.1 The idea to create a place for shopping of the poor

Poverty and prosperity were seen as inseparable, at least from the eighteenth century (Polanyi, 1957). Pauperism and the political economy were coupled as an "invisible whole" (Polanyi, 1957) by many thinkers since then. The Act for the Relief of the Poor, as one of the first institutional attempts to manage poverty in semi-commercial society in England in the first half of the sixteenth century, officially declared the appearance of the poor. "While the poor in the middle of the sixteenth century were a danger to society, on which they descended like hostile armies, at the end of the seventeenth century they were merely a burden on the rates" (Polanyi 1957:109). According to the Act for the Relief of the Poor, poor people were divided into groups, depending on their ability to work, age, and gender. Consequently, categories of deserving and undeserving poor appeared. At that time, parishes were legally responsible for poor people within their territory.

In Austria today, various techniques and strategies are employed by different actors to develop services that manage poverty and support groups of the population in precarious life situations. One of them became the field of my research. SOMA means "Sozialmarkt" – a special "supermarket" for "persons in need" with exclusive access (Grünhaus et al. 2019:3). After proving the level of income in the household, you, as a visitor, receive via postal service the personal plastic card that looks like an ID card, with personal data and photos. Unlike England in the sixteenth century, in Austria, every person, including able-bodied men (read as gender in plural), may rely on social support and have a membership in social markets.

1.2 Multifunctional space: kill two birds with one stone

Subjectively, the space of the grocery shop feels like a room for an experiment. We may look at the SOMA Sozialmarkt as an attempt to find relations between different phenomena, for instance, to tie levels of unemployment with criminal statistics. Visitors and workers became a locus of interest, of correction, of management, of hope, of desire to change, to teach, to look after. A small space is prepared for different actions such as: to shop, to consume, to work, to serve a sentence, to volunteer, to leisure, to socialize. And to correct. In one place several logics meet with the aim of correcting something. The first thing to correct – poverty. The second thing to correct: people who committed crimes and may avoid imprisonment via social work in the social market. The third thing to correct: unemployment (or poverty?). The circle is closing, and processes are intertwined. What is cause, what is effect is not easy to disentangle.

The camera eyes were watching this place, and once the guard said: "I remember you, but I need to recheck your membership card, because the manager will notice that I broke the rule". Local tactics of managing problematic populations in an experimental way of

implementing a mundane program – shopping opportunities for low-income people – or playing a game "supermarket" lead to the question about what kind of political rationalities they are? The regulatory framework in Austria, namely the new Needs-Oriented Minimum Income Framework, was adopted in 2010 by social services and pictured their activation architectures.⁹ The problem of poverty is "an essential element in programs that seek to exercise legitimate and calculated power over it" (Rose, Miller 1992:182). In one space, the logic of punishment overlaps with the logic of consuming.

Different labor regimes overlap as well. Labour as punishment, forced labor as an attempt to avoid punishment, non-waged voluntary labour, and labour as an attempt to prepare a person to be able to participate in the labour market. If looking at the situation from a different perspective, expired food; inmates [prisoners], meaning those who have failed to operate their lives in a legal way of participating in prescribed social order and unemployed, thus those who are not able to support themselves in employment-relations; migrants; elderly people who are Austrian citizens meet in the same place. The elderly population is not a target group to correct, but they are here due to their low-income life situation. Did all the groups meet here in a spatially separated place coincidentally? Power, as Miller and Rose stressed, – is more "a matter of 'making up citizens' capable of bearing a form of regulated freedom, than imposing constraints upon them" (Rose, Miller 1992:174). This small space playing game 'supermarket', where the workers [employees] are former inmates or unemployed people with temporary contracts and who are placed by PES here, and customers are low-income groups of the population, – represents a regime of placing people in separate spaces or creating an enclosed stage for them to be corrected under supervision. The aim is to activate and install self-regulatory techniques in citizens, to make them suitable to live outside this experimental

⁹ <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=LrW&Gesetzesnummer=20000246>

field of experiment or to keep them inside this place under the watchful gaze, making the line of demarcation between the classes more 'touchable' in a very material sense?

When a project implements unfitting modes of functioning, unexpected outcomes may occur. For instance, the Le+O charitable project uses the elements of an 'average supermarket' functioning to follow its approach. As mentioned before, the project proposes a set of products for registered recipients of food services with a price of 4.8 euros per household and a frequency of visits allowed – once a week. A place is in a still-functioning parish or a desacralized parish, as was the case with my central site for participant observation. Inside, there is a cash desk; very often, it is placed before the 'shopping' area, where you pay before receiving your set of products. These costs are organized under the name 'logistic costs', but this detail, with 'cash-desk' pretending, may create an illusory perception in visitors-receivers themselves as average consumers, who may, for instance, complain about expired food, even if it costs around 4.8 per set of food items. Paying at the cash desk before receiving food is counterintuitive, as it goes against the natural sequence of getting food with payment.

“Kassa” and logistics costs that users pay before receiving redistributed food are a sign of conflictual attempts to follow the logic of supermarket functioning and provoke questions: why do users pay before? In some parishes and other places of food redistribution within the same network, cash desks are placed after the food is received. The order of sequence “you get food – you pay” is intuitively ‘more respectful’, thus ‘hospitable’ in interactions with the visitors.

1.3 Staginess of the ‘Shopping for low-income people’

In the following passage, I use the report of the study conducted by Grünhaus et al. (2019) on behalf of SOMA Österreich & Partners as a metaphor for a script that depicts a staged process. I define 'script' here as an ideological declaration. I refer to 'staginess' as pretending, artificiality, game, play-acting. Comparing the script and the results of the field observation, I

will examine some contradictions and juxtapose them or agree with them. As a frame for comparison, I have chosen 'staginess' instead of 'performativity' for the following reasons:

- 1) in text, I refer to the word 'stage' as 'scene', literally it is a specific place where scripted actions are taking place which presupposes something material, specifically built, prepared in advance, with delineated boundaries of place and actions;
- 2) staginess presupposes strict following the script, excludes the possibility of improvisation, even the word itself contains elements of a negative attitude towards the process it describes;
- 3) I found reasonable to use monosyllabic words in writing;
- 4) the word 'stage' can also mean a link in the process. Thus, social supermarkets are not only stage [scene], but stage [link] in a chain of neoliberal governmental programs to manage population. After receiving a social benefit [fish], the aid institution invites the man to bring this 'fish' back to a specific link in the chain of distribution of all fish to all people.

In my field notes "Mirrors are everywhere" for the Ethnographic methods class I wrote about the place: "on the left of the entrance is the reception of goods and at the same time garbage cans, which creates a certain symbolic irony, because the goods accepted by the store are in some sense garbage, the store mostly has all expired products" (2024). Interestingly, visitors waiting for their turn to enter the space may stand along a row of garbage bins. Placing garbage bins next to the entrance of social markets is not an exception and represents specific aesthetic (or anti aesthetic) of the working order of the city (Jacobs in Scott 1998:142). Social supermarkets very often are located in a city far from the place of living. Customers may visit "sozialmarkt" from Monday till Friday, from 10 am till 14.00, once per week it works till 18.00. The time needed for shopping by some of my informants is around 2,5-3 hours (time to go there, be there and for the way back), as a visitor you may visit the store only once per day. Despite this strict rule, my informant shared a manual on how to break this rule and buy more than permitted to buy there. I did not check this recommendation personally,

but I will look at this disobedience from the perspective of resistance practice in the third chapter.

I propose exercise for imagination. Some imaginary 'You' who must reflect on the problems of our time and invent a project. You hear the slogans "poverty", "inequality", "migrants", "hunger". You have a budget, you have a task, you hire a contractor, you look for prototypes in history, and how to organize the process. You found a prototype case and even inspiration in "our modern roots" that "can illuminate the contradictory forces and needs that inspire and torment us" (Berman 1988:35). Your task is to adapt it to "here-and-now" times that abound with "environmentalism", "anti-capitalism", green movements and ideas to make life sustainable, added social value, global ethic = this sentence may be never ending. And you, as a director of the institution have an insight: "Oh, we do this according to the same principle as it was done when pauperism became officially recognized as an issue. So, we wrap it in a mask of "sustainability" and "shopping opportunities for low-income people" to play in providing shopping for the poor. And we also pretend to build this stage as if it is like supermarkets in order to increase the level of agency of people, because the discourse of compassionate aid is nowadays moving toward "post-compassionate forms of aid". The aim is to produce "dutiful subjects ready to repay the "hospitality" more than following the former moral imperative to save "suffering bodies or lives" (Giudici 2021:27). You want to do a deal: "to improve the economic environment by shaping economic policies to meet scientifically ascertained social requirements" (International Bank 1950:615 in Escobar 2012:25). You may have critics but also you have good reviews. Membership may be the only low-income person. Because this space is not for everyone. Excluded inclusiveness.

Hence, we will stage the script "Shopping of the Poor". Director: SOMA Österreich & Partners. Advertising manager: "Competence Center for Nonprofit Organizations and Social

Entrepreneurship". When you read information on the website of the institution, you may have expectations in your mind. You look at the image of a promise. And before the moment of entering the space (of experience), in one pocket, you hold a picture of (your own) unconscious expectation or, using Walter Benjamin's vocabulary, "horizon of expectations", and in the other pocket, you have a picture of promise (imposed by an institution and brought to your eyes to be seen). Drawing on Benjamin's ideas, Habermas argues that each present generation, on the one hand, bears the responsibility for the future generations; on the other hand, it is responsible for the suffering of past generations (Habermas 1991:14). This reflects communicative, universal historical solidarity that ties former with later generations (ibid). Despite this bond between former and current, Habermas stresses that the “messianic power” of the present is too weak to be able to undo all “injustices of the past” (ibid:15). Thus, the burden of modern time-conscious responsibility with an orientation toward the future has laid on the “shoulder of a problematic present” (ibid:16).

Continuing to read the script about SOMA Sozialmarkt, one significant point stands out: an additional "largest value" is generated in the form of monetized social added value. The amount of social added value consists of 6,331,013 euros (or 6.6%) among volunteers. In 2018, 494 people volunteered in the 28 social supermarkets. Among the benefits of volunteering were mentioned positive feelings of being meaningfully active in doing something good, which structured the everyday life of volunteers. Additionally, volunteers are sensitized to disadvantaged social categories and are concerned about reducing food waste (Grünhaus et al. 2019:46). This part of the script illustrates "zones of intimacy" where poverty meets “volunteerism, philanthropy, and other acts of neoliberal benevolence” (Roy 2012:105–106, cited in Muehlebach 2013:455). Roy stresses that nowadays, global ethics express themselves via such attempts to find a “moral compass” for variants of market rules associated with poverty interventions. Among them may be recognized as “responsible

finance”, “consumer protection”, and humanitarianism (ibid). Unpaid volunteer work is often viewed as socially beneficial nowadays. Andrea Muehlebach argues that the "institutionalization of volunteerism" functions as "a laboratory for the production of new "responsible citizens", especially in a context where the "care" sector has been privatized (Muehlebach 2012 in Giudici 2021:28).

The social-added value created for service users is worth 73,482,844 euros (76.9% of the total impact). In 2018, approximately 28,900 customers regularly shopped in social supermarkets. According to a study, customers benefit from money savings, “improved quality of life”, and “psychological relief” as a result of “greater financial freedom”, “less money worries”, and a positive shopping experience. Thus, customers may go to a social supermarket and buy a “broader range of products”. Usually, in such a supermarket, customers “can afford everything”, – a study commissioned by SOMA Österreich & Partners says (Grünhaus et al. 2019:46). But what does shopping in the social market tell us on an empirical level? What is ‘everything’ in a social supermarket? Is there ‘everything’? Are visitors allowed to buy ‘everything’ they want and can afford?

1.4 Equal distribution of food

Entering the stage of social supermarket you may see highlighted in a yellow announcement in Ukrainian (highlighted just Ukrainian part of announcement, other languages are not): "no more than four kinds of fruits and vegetables in one hand", after that looking around you may read the following ads: "fish, meat, sausage, milk, eggs, butter – only one product in one hand". Here is the corner for fresh vegetables and fruits. It is small, in fact, it has two bins. Depending on how lucky you are, there may be several branches of lettuce, lemons, limes, broccoli, and bananas. But fruits and vegetables are under the watch of the fair eye of

workers, because you cannot take fruits and vegetables yourself, you need to be responsible for other visitors and to think about them in a moment, to leave some items in an almost empty bin and to discipline you to act as advertisement recommends you helps worker, and worker protects the food from your appetite. You need to respect the 'not-enoughness' of food in the social supermarket. As we may assume from the announcements, the last and still ongoing wave of Ukrainian migrants did not respect this 'not-enoughness' and provoked the appearance of a new set of improvements in a script written before the Russian Ukrainian war. Almost everyone from my informants answered the question “What would you like to change in Sozialmarkt to make it more comfortable for shopping?”, – that they need to choose by themselves what they need, and they want to pick up vegetables and fruits by themselves and regulate this action without worker-mediator. At the checkout one more reminder “nudeln, reis, ol, mehl” (pasta, rice, oil, flour) – only one item in one hand. But chips, sweets, and products alike you may buy without restrictions. This observation reminded me of a similar situation in the time of the USSR when grocery shops were scarce, and you might buy something only for an allowed amount. But in Vienna nowadays, we as consumers may consume unlimited numbers of food items in an average supermarket, but we are not doing that. Does Vienna (or whatever symbol of representation is beyond this case) have enough food? Is having plenty of food on shelves in the average supermarket a naive picture of blooming 'enoughness'? But 'enough' for whom and 'not enough' for whom?

Announcements in Ukrainian led us to the data of The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) about the influx of migrants in 2022: "Ukraine, Germany and Romania were the top three nationalities of newcomers in 2022. Among the top 15 countries of origin, Ukraine registered the strongest increase (76 000) in flows to Austria compared to the previous year".¹⁰ Arabic language in a social market reminds that "despite

¹⁰ <https://www.oecd.org>

the small size, the country (Austria) faced a high influx of refugees in 2015, which led to a huge support movement orchestrated by civil society actors" (Hoffman et al. 2019:651). Like other European countries, Austria and the government could not manage refugee crises, consequently civil society actors started to compensate for the deficit in public welfare (Becker et al. 2016 in Hoffman et al.2019:659). Another language of announcement is German. Older visitors are Austrians mostly, or "integrated" migrants who have been living in Austria for a long time. "Symbolic struggles regarding solidarity" (Hoffman et al 2019:652) provoked the emergence of conflicts over the variety of meanings and types of solidarity in narratives and ideologies. While the far right promoted "exclusivist solidarity among ethnic and national lines" (Carvalho 2014 in Hoffman et al.2019:653), social movements actors expressed universalistic foundations of solidarity (Hoffman et al. 2019:659).

1.5 Pricing-techniques and food as a tool to switch objectives and ideologies within the same organization

Despite the Le+O food redistribution project, Caritas has one more food-related project – community cooking. I was curious about it and decided to join this community a couple of times. A set of dialogues with the manager showed that the community cooking project does not use food from the Le+O project, even though they have leftovers to save from being wasted. The manager from Le+O said the same. The community cooking project has donors, such as a producer of bio-vegetables, who attend every time the event takes place. To support my assumption regarding staginess, I was focused on the different objectives of projects by Caritas and how food serves as a tool with varying roles in various projects within the same charitable organization. When a community cooking project is implemented to show

solidarity and communality in cooking together using only bio-vegetables, the Le+O project may redistribute even food with rotten signs.

At the beginning of the thesis, I mentioned a ‘surplus consumer’ term, which I want to illustrate with the words of Maria: “You know, I do not shop in SOMA anymore. When I got there, there were not so many things, like proper food, to buy. But there are so many cheap sweets. I used to buy at least something, and my receipt showed that I spent around 20 euros on sweets. Then we eat them, and our bodies are not the same as they were before. And our bellies, mine, my daughter’s and my mom’s [laughing]. So, I stopped shopping there”. Maria is a middle-aged mother of two children who came to Vienna in 2022 from Ukraine during a time when hostilities were ongoing in her home country. I met her in Le+O Waldkloster during the summer of 2024. Unlike SOMA Sozialmarkt, she used Le+O Caritas almost every week during the first year of her migrant life because she needed to make ends meet due to family situations. Maria reflects on all stages of her internal conflicts and acceptance of the economic challenges of living abroad with two children: her older child was 13 years old at the time of relocation, and her younger child was born in Vienna. In her former life in Ukraine, she belonged to lower middle class. Here she experiences a change of social and economic position and tries to find her methods to balance life expenses.

Maria’s story reminded me of other nuances of shopping in social markets that my other informants shared with me. For example, in some social markets that I did not include in the thesis (Samariterbund, Vinzi), I made observations in place and asked users about their experiences with all social markets they had visited at least once; one practice caught my attention, especially. It sells food, for example, by piece, such as bananas or tomatoes, with a price for one item, not a kilogram. During summer, one banana costs around 20 cents, that type of banana you use for banana bread or a ‘less-time’ banana, or one tomato costs 50 cents

(Samariter case). This practice is going to shift the logic of evaluating the price to blur consciousness mathematically. People in social markets may be confused, and it is not understandable at the moment, that this price for one item is close to a market price in other “average” supermarkets, especially during the summer season (one banana in ‘more-time’ condition in average supermarket cost at that time 29 cent). “When you shop in Vinzi, my informant Olesya said, – all food items have the price written on the label, except fruits and vegetables, you as a consumer may know the price only when you are at the cash desk” (Vinzi case). Olesya was confused by this practice and found it uncomfortable shopping there. Olesya is from Ukraine; she is here with two children and a husband. Her husband is employed, and she tries to find a solution to their uncertain life in Vienna after relocation.

Practices I described above may represent a production of dutiful subjects that are ready to repay hospitality in transition toward a post-compassionate form of aid (Giudici 2021:27). This “repay” may happen in a literal “repay” with money for the expired food, or may be extracted in a less visible way, when pricing is blurred by mathematical tools, which consequently confuses customers in evaluation of food items. This immediately reminded me of one part of the script I was working on in the first chapter. In the report by Grünhaus et al (2019) it is written that every euro invested in the social supermarkets of SOMA Österreich & Partner creates impacts in the monetized equivalent of 8.47 euro. Thus, authors of study discovered that social supermarkets with little investment create a positive benefit for a huge number of clients. Goods that are a burden for enterprises in social supermarkets provide relief for customers of social services. “While some are happy to be able to afford more in other areas of life due to savings in the social market, other customers are relieved mentally in existential concerns” (Grünhaus et al. 2019:46).

To conclude, the segregation of special supermarkets for people with low incomes in Vienna, along with their limitations on consumer behavior, often accompanied by a hint of hostility

and humiliating demands, portrays the unique landscape of neoliberal governmentality and the management of people experiencing poverty in Vienna. The Sozialmarkt, where ‘shopping for the poor’ is staged, may be recognized as a practice of social exclusion. The management of specific groups within the population, auditing unemployment, the practice of correction, disciplinary practices, and boundary practices raise questions of ethics and provoke the perception of this special supermarket for people experiencing poverty as a form of ‘staginess’ to some extent. In the next chapter, I will precisely discuss the temporality techniques used intentionally or unintentionally by providers of food redistribution to support my argument for exclusionist practices. The time contained in a food item would be a central point of discussion and a mediator that represents interrelations between food, consumers, and redistributors.

CHAPTER 2 – TIME AS SILENT CO-PARTNER, CO-WORKER, CO-CREATOR, AND CO-WITNESS: TEMPORALITY, TIME-MANAGEMENT AND TIME-CONTROL TECHNIQUES IN FOOD REDISTRIBUTION SPACES FOR LOW-INCOME POPULATIONS

This chapter explores the specificity of time measurement, time horizons, and time perception in a place where “sozialmarkts” sells expired food. The notion of ‘postponed time’ reveals subjective temporal disruptions when time and the logic of evaluating time are shifted. This shift may be described as follows: something that expired yesterday in “Sozialmarkt” and is perceived as fresh, something that was sold in average supermarkets a couple of months ago – arrives at “Sozialmarkt” after others (groups of the population) have already celebrated the holiday. For instance, Christmas or Easter sweets. These shifts picture a unique time-going – ‘postponed’ way, provoking invisible outcomes from first glance. Among them are temporal “belatedness”, temporal boundaries, not-belonging, and specific separate time-capsule for low-income consumers and clients of sozialmarkt. I define these invisible outcomes of food distribution projects for low-income people as time-related exclusion techniques. Thus, metaphorically, time is “distributed” as a thing, as a product. For low-income people in a “sozialmarkt,” ‘less-time goods’ (expired or going to become not edible for consumption very soon) are proposed with an economic justification such as reduced price. The time you have for consumption is also limited. The anxiety of consuming a ‘less-time’ product within a new temporal frame obliges consumers to speed up the time of consumption to avoid complete loss of food items and to cope with emotional outcomes. Halyna, a Ukrainian refugee, was settled in Vienna in the spring of 2022 for one year. She came to Vienna to help her daughter, Maria, with a newborn baby, and during this period, she used the Le+O service. During a conversation in September 2024, she was already in Ukraine; our communication was online. Halyna shared with me her observations: “Of course, it’s nice that a foreign country helps us; at first, it was like: wow - they care about us. During the first visits, the

impressions were pleasant; we brought a lot of products from there for a family of four. Sometimes, there were really good products, but a lot of them had an expiration date that expired a month ago or would expire tomorrow. Of course, since we had to save money, we ate it all, but somehow, it's not very nice when they give soy milk with an expiration date that expired a month ago, and we start to think about how to use it..to make pancakes for example... They gave us a lot of salads, but half of them may still be eaten, and half are such that they have to be thrown away. That is, someone there does not want to throw them away, and we have to throw them away. For example, I grew up in such a way that in our family, we never threw away bread at all. But here they give us bread that starts to mould in a few days, it's impossible to eat it, and they (in Austria) don't have such waste bins for the bread separately. I once went to Bio Mull containers to throw this bread away. And there everything is together, some sticks, Christmas trees. Putting bread in the same container [pause and sigh] I don't like it. Well, yes, there is a container for organic waste, but for both: the Christmas tree and the bread are considered organic" (excerpt from an interview, cited part is related to the experience in Le+O Caritas, Halyna 65 y.o, Ukrainian refugee, Vienna, 2024).

In sociology, there exists a concept of the general linear reality model. The phrase 'general linear reality' describes a way of thinking about how society works (Abbot 2001:38).

Researchers may put the processes of social life onto the algebra of linear transformations (Abbot 2001:39)¹¹. The concept of 'time-horizon' I borrowed from the general linear model

¹¹ Critically looking at the general linear model, it may be noticed that the social world is seen as an amount of 'fixed entities'. These entities have attributes or variables. Attributes in the process of interaction cause the appearance of outcomes, themselves measurable as attributes of the 'fixed entities' (Abbot 2001:39). The general linear model (GLM) assumes that if a cause changes, so does its effect as well and using GLM, sociologists can study the 'contextual' impact of the latter on the former (Abbot 2001:44). Cross-sectional data are used to discover how levels of 'context' affect the 'movement-behavior-change' of the 'more rapidly fluctuating variable' (ibid). If you remove the context, it may be assumed that in general linear model causes and effects have 'meaningful fluctuation over the same period' (ibid). This assumption leads us to the next one - 'theoretical belief in the unity of time-horizon' (ibid).

in terms of meaning: a time-horizon is the minimum length of time in which a meaningful change in a variable can be observed (ibid). This concept inspired me to think about patterns of temporality. I wanted to reflect on patterns that may represent the life cycle of food items with very material signs of time passing, such as rotting or moulding food and to extend this thinking into more abstract forms, such as how time is perceived within the system of social markets. Experiencing time passing may lead to unpredictable or unplanned outcomes that recipients of social aid may perceive as hostile, such as being kept in a 'time capsule' that is 'delayed', 'postponed', 'belated', or different from that of other population groups.

Different time horizons of divided groups of the city dwellers who are shopping in separate grocery shops, metaphorical or literal boundaries between classes, number of steps to make routine actions, such as shopping, or even the time you have fit in to speed up your consumption of expiring food, – led me to think about symbolic disunity of time-horizons in places where time-horizons are perceived as shifted.

2.1 Postponed time: to those who misbehaved, does Christmas come in early March?

Beginning of March. Christmas decorations appeared on the shelves. The Chocolate Advent calendar sets have been here since the end of January. Sweeties are not expired; they just arrived here a bit later than the time of celebration for the majority of the population. Consuming expired food may be considered a bodily experience. As a member of this service, you can eat only expired food. Returning to the notion of time that I mentioned at the beginning, there may be another glimpse to look at the situation. 'Food time' has passed. Or you must 'hunt' (stay in a queue before opening hours and enter first, as many users do) for the food with an expiration date – today or yesterday. The 'Yesterday' here feels almost like 'today'. This reversal of a way of perception of 'normality' or 'reality' leads to a confused

state of mind because you are allowed to eat food a bit later than people in ‘ordinary’ supermarkets’. Or you can buy Christmas decorations with your budget at the beginning of March. Your right to celebrate ‘in time’ with others is refused or belated. You may feel time as *postponed*. Furthermore, this process may be seen from the perspective of bordering practices that aim to disrupt the shared time structure through a logic of belatedness what is based on the idea of temporal dis-belonging and the denial of coevalness of the people from the other side of the border (Fabian 1983 in Khosravi 2000:416). But this temporality of uncertainty is far from exceptional only for migrants; it is for many people in the world, both migrants and non-migrants (Ramsay 2020:387). Johannes Fabian (1983) stresses that temporal distances and denial of coevalness by anthropologists reinforce a colonial hierarchy of knowledge and power. In sozialmarkt or Le+O, the majority of users are low-income migrants and refugees. I consider the walls of buildings and the separateness of grocery shops for the poor as boundary practice. In the following, I will explore some specific rhythms of temporality as one of bordering practice.

My observations and following the food as an actor led me to think about food items as ‘less-time’ items or ‘more-time’ items. ‘More-time’ food items, thus, still have time suitable for consumption in a network of average supermarkets, and they may lay on shelves in an attempt to be bought and sold at market prices. Providing a legal context that regulates selling the food in social supermarkets there are two type of date marking: the ‘best before date’ which indicates the date until food item is expected to maintain its “optimal” condition in case it is properly stored; and the ‘use by date’, when food from the microbiological point of view may cause danger to human health and this food item cannot be placed on the market.¹²

¹² Annex X to Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 in EU guidelines on food donation 2017/C361/18 in [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017XC1025\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017XC1025(01))

When a product reaches a moment in its life cycle, namely best before date (further BBD), using my own concepts I may say that ‘more time’ food items are switched into ‘less food’ items (but still before the ‘use by date’ according to legal framework).

To support my thinking about capsules of time experiencing I want to look at contradiction between narratives for different social categories. For instance, one of the giant businesses REWE Group [the same business donate food for redistribution] has started a campaign: “Freshness hero: check freshness every 2 hours”¹³. ‘Less-time’ food items or those products that did not meet requirements to be fresh enough to lay on shelves in supermarkets as symbols of threatening rights of consumers have two ways. One way is to become food waste. But, as my informant manager from the warehouse of Caritas told me, it is more beneficial to companies to donate ‘less-time’ food to social services. They (companies) do not pay for utilizing the ‘less-time’ food, and social services receive this less-time food for free, but social services pay logistics costs for delivery. Sometimes, a manager mentioned in our conversation, – supermarkets are not honest, and the food they give is ineligible to be redistributed further to users of social services and situations when the burden of throwing out this food and paying for it is replaced: from the supermarket on social service. This mirrored the situation described by my informant, Halyna. I started the current chapter with her feelings related to lettuce, which, in a moment of receiving it, was already spoiled. She also mentioned that she felt as if she had to do something that was not her responsibility. And the fact that the salad was spoiled was obvious. This interaction could be considered as a replacement for taking responsibility for utilizing the waste. When I was in a warehouse – the central spot where food from supermarkets is collected, I witnessed two massive columns of pallets with pineapples; they had just arrived. The manager smiled, talked with delivery drivers and came closer to check the fruits: “Look, it is what I said before, all of them are

¹³ <https://rewe-group.at/en/newsroom/2024/01/penny-fresh-from-the-field-to-the-shopping-cart>

covered by thin mould; I cannot give them to people”. I fell down into the inner dialogue with things I saw before: “I did not agree with her statement inside my thoughts, as I know from my fieldwork that spoiled, mouldy food, at least in one place of their network, is distributed among users”. To illustrate what I mean, I added pictures; once, the worker gave asparagus to me in Le+O, and some of the pieces were so rotten that they were falling apart in the worker’s hand. This worker continued to give me this food. Manager Le+O, in the same conversation, stressed that the organisation warns people to check all the food before consumption. Below is a set of food items that users of social services may receive:



Figure 3. Asparagus



Figure 4. Visibly moldy plums



Figure 5. Some insects in rice

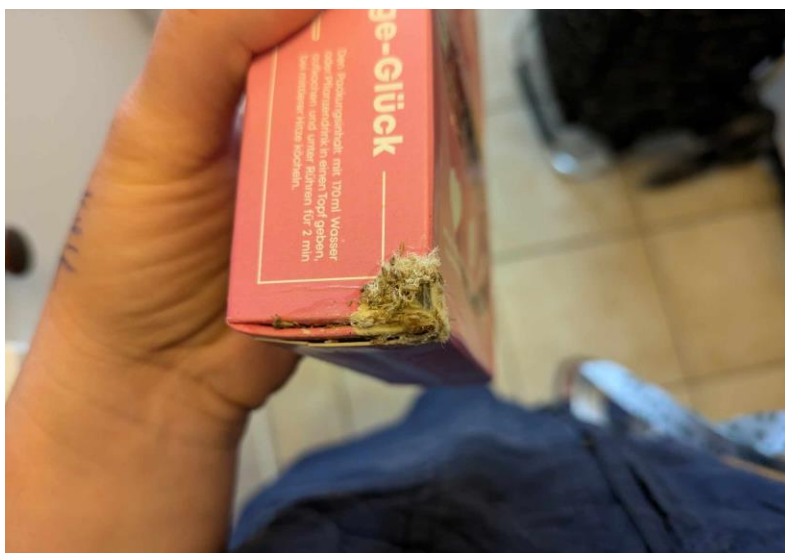


Figure 6. Mold and insects.



Figure 7. Inside the box

2.2 Food identity as a mirror for social order

This section describes different temporalities within supermarkets compared to social markets or Le+O projects, when other groups of the population are treated with various approaches to

time as abstract categories in a very physically solid way, looking at the time via the life cycle of food items. Additionally, it represents symbolic separateness via temporal techniques of classes of consumers. In the essay “Commodities and the politics of value”, Appadurai referred to the cultural biography perspective (formulated by Kopytoff, 1986) of moving specific things and their trajectories through different “hands, contexts and uses, thus accumulating a specific biography or set of biographies” (Appadurai 2013:40). Applying this to our case I would say that ‘more-time’ food-items on the way of becoming a ‘less-time’ food-items are living their life cycle as commodities, shifting their food-identity within places, spaces of their selling and bringing its social message along. Social messages from the perspective of the social service provider may be imbalanced with social messages that the consumer ‘reads’ empirically.

I refer to food identity as follows: one food item may live a reciprocal story; the end of a food item is a new beginning of a food item. The same item experiences a quick and immediate shift of food identity depending on the place it was placed and the people it ‘sees’ around. People may touch it, take it from a shelf, evaluate it, put it back, or buy it. When this food item loses its attractiveness in the average supermarket, it is sent to social services to enter a new commodity circle (which differs from the first one, but still, this item plays a role as a commodity, even if it is considered a “commodified gift”). In the first place, this commodity was not sold; in the second place, it became a desirable object and was sold. The same food item shifts from an undesirable object to a desirable one, and the food itself lives as an actor: as a tool of politics and policies. In one place, food safety regulations do not allow the sale of this food due to the protection rights of consumers; in the second place, it is dressed in a role of social support and is suitable for consumption and selling. In the same essay, Appadurai articulated “elite tastes” as functioning like a “turnstile”, which first selects from external

possibilities and then provides models and direct political controls for production and internal taste (Appadurai 2013:37).

My interlocutor, Inna, a 35-year-old mother of two children, settled in Vienna in March 2022. We communicated with her in 2024 when she already had a part-time job. Inna described one episode when she received [bought] a set of food items in Le+O. Among other things, she got truffle butter. She remembers her confusion as she described a “mismatch between her economic status and the type of food she ate at that moment.” In this case, the reduced price of this particular product plays a compensatory justification for selling expired food items or 'less-time' food items. Inna was first focused on the ‘positive’ aspect of experiencing a new or ‘elite taste’, which also created internal conflict. It deepened her understanding of her economic accessibility to some food. Thus, in the average supermarket, no one bought this ‘elite taste’ truffle butter, and the truffle butter relocated to social service, where people with lower incomes could afford to purchase this item. In this case, the woman did not know how it should taste before the BBD or when this product was in ‘more time’ condition. And it provoked me to think about time as a *co-partner* of low-income customers of social supermarkets or Le+O projects. The time made some ‘elite taste’ products ‘less-time’ products, thus not suitable for consumption in one place by one group of population, which opened the door to ‘elite taste’ for another group of population.

Once, in a waiting queue, I was talking with another middle-aged woman. When I told her that I was there for the first time, she recommended: “Cook as fast as possible because this potato will be rotten by tomorrow compared to potatoes from the average supermarket, which keep fresh for a longer period.” Most products are in specific boxes with specific temperature regimes. Even vegetables, like potatoes, sometimes when you get them, are cold and wet; with temperature gaps (inside the box and outside during the summer period), potatoes

become rotten a bit faster. Returning to the vignette I started this chapter with, I want to explore one more ‘time negotiation’ with ‘less-time’ products. Halyna was concerned about soya milk that expired one month ago and shared her reflections. She could not bring herself to throw it out, and she could not consume it like milk to add to coffee or drink. She decided to cook pancakes. It uncovers hidden layers of negotiations with food as a category. The woman found herself surrounded by contradictory types of anxiety. The first one was the anxiety about consuming a ‘less time’ product, and she tried to use this milk as an ingredient. Frying was one more defense mechanism to protect the body from potential adverse health impacts. A fear of hunger causes the second type of anxiety, as family narratives and artificial famines are embedded in consciousness. In the same passage I cited, she mentioned that for her, it is very hard to throw out the bread and feels it as placing responsibility from the social service to them, delegated it to the people.

This woman evoked a transgenerational trauma surfacing once more in her precarious existence in Vienna and represented the profound social, psychological, and historical meaning of grain and bread in the political and economic life of Ukraine and the world. Using grain as a tool of political economy reminds the period of artificial famine in 1932-1933 on a territory of the USSR. In cases like these, I approach time as a ‘co-witness’ and ‘co-creator’ in negotiations with food within social services. Moreover, negotiation with ‘less-time’ products unpacks traumatic experiences and places someone like Halyna in a choice-reduced state: on the one hand, she is framed by her trauma –she cannot throw out the expired food freely; on the other hand, she has to save the food from being wasted. I recognize this moment as a moment of conversion from hospitable into hostile, which is what I look for in my research: when something sent as a message of support, feels ‘bad’ or humiliating for the receiver.

When you, as a customer, are done with shopping in sozialmarkt, there are two cash registers in the store. Sometimes, only one cash desk is open. But never once did I hear from customers what I hear every day in ‘ordinary’ stores, ‘Zweite kasse, Bitte’, which means in English ‘Can you open a second cash desk, please?’ Symbolic and/or social exclusions occur along specific dimensions empirically shown to interact or intersect with other dimensions of social inequality (e.g. gender, milieu, class) that further reinforce exclusion or inclusion (Anthias, 2009, 2012; Mijic 2020). It is about being involved in social change or, in reference to Berger and Luckmann, being a part of the fundamental social dialectic (Mijic 2020). But people here stand as long as necessary and perform the expected algorithms of waitingness. Expected here may be described as silent and obedient. Sometimes, people are reminded at checkout that they have taken more articles about goods than they are allowed to. Some cashiers take away surplus goods that cannot be bought by more than one type. Sometimes, they twist the goods in their hands for a long time to evaluate the expiration date (actually, it has already passed; the question here is how much time passed since the expiration date) to decide whether to make an exception from existing rules and show powerful generosity or take the goods out of the buyer's hands. This is a moment of *extracting time* from the hands of the consumer: a bitter mixture of embarrassment and apology. Metaphorically, time is distributed as a thing or product. If it is a ‘less time’ product, the cashier may allow you as a visitor to purchase it; if it is a ‘more time’ product, the cashier may not allow you to buy this product.

Summing up, the time contained in a food item becomes a tool representing social order, power imbalance, control of consumer behavior, and exclusion or inclusion in customer-seller relationships, or exclusion-inclusion on a broader level of societal dialogue, causing disunity in time horizons between different groups of the population. The time it takes one person to consume ‘something’ is not the same as the time it takes another person to consume the same ‘something’. ‘Something’ from the social supermarket has already expired. It

contains an embodied element: feelings that you, as a consumer, must speed up consumption and save the food item, dealing with anxiety about consuming expired food, the risk of bodily effects, and other emotional outcomes. These outcomes are my third element of interest in exploring relationships between actors. Affective reactions and moral emotions are significant parts to study when the topic is related to precarity.

CHAPTER 3 – NEGOTIATIONS BLURRED BY EMOTIONAL OUTCOMES: EFFECT OF PLACE, TABOO ON AFFECT IN PLACE, RESISTANCE AND COUNTER RESISTANCE

Everything begins with a special check-in near the entrance to the church courtyard. The worker finds your name in a list of registered visitors, and after this, all visitors, without reminders, when they approach the worker-administrator, raise their hands in the direction of the worker. Purifying is the beginning of food redistribution. People behave as if they are familiar with the sequence of acts. The worker fills the visitor's hands with a fluid purifier. "It" (the fluid) has no smell; it fills visitors' hands generously as if they were washing their hands with water. In "ritualized action" as "receiving the food", you may feel like it is an unavoidable additional micro action before the main macro action. "It" - "to purify hands before you start the ritualized action of receiving food" creates a storm of assumptions. Hygienic demand? But what if it is water? Holy water? The ambiguity of observed action fills us with broken logic, and do we have to look beyond rationality? Does the church, where the "ritualized action" of "receiving food" takes place, purify the hands of visitors with water (holy?) hidden (?) in a bottle of antibacterial fluid? (Field notes, Le+O, 2024, still functioning church, Vienna).



Figure 8. Purifying before the entering the place of food redistribution

This thesis examines the comparison between the way the population expects interactions with institutions providing social services and empirical experience in place, and how gaps between a picture of promise and the picture of ‘reality’ frame double-sided relations between the service provider (sozialmarkt, Le+O project) and the user (low-income consumer) of the service. This process of negotiation provokes intense feelings of participating in “ritualized action”, which is scripted and has to be followed by consumers obediently. Otherwise, institutions will not provide services for those who disagree with established ways of behavioral norms. In the following chapter, I will approach food redistribution by the Le+O project through the frame of ritualized action (Bell 1992). I chose this frame to reconcile intertwined contexts. Collaboration between religious and secular actors makes the process of food redistribution in the context of a church building neither entirely religious nor fully secular. It connotes that the ritualized action of food redistribution is staged in a manner that represents hierarchy, power relations, and social order. The ritualization of the food redistribution process signifies its political context.

The following conflictual situation, which I will analyze in detail, takes place in the building of a church that was desacralized around 5 years ago. Other spots of the network of food redistribution Le+O are placed in still functioning churches. This fact provokes questions about food distribution as ritualized action with an aim to reproduce the established order of things and even when actors are resistant and not obedient, a system through a sequence of affective reaction may show opposite resistance with a tendency to punishment via exclusion in answer. This I will illustrate with ethnographic material below. Furthermore, I will include an analysis of affective reactions and emotionally colored outcomes. To elaborate this, I will take inspiration from Catherine A. Lutz’s ethnography “Unnatural Emotions. Everyday sentiments on a Micronesian Atoll and their challenge to Western theory” (Lutz 1998).

3.1 Discipline, broken taboo, and affect (misdeed/misthought = punished)

I would like to begin with a quote from Asad: "The human as agent is now responsible - answerable - not only for acts he or she has performed (or refrained from performing). Responsibility is now held for events he or she was unaware of - or falsely conscious of. The domain in which acts of God (accidents) occur without human responsibility is increasingly restricted. Chance is now considered to be ramable. The world is disenchanted" (Asad 2003:194). Thus, the human being as the carrier of agency is responsible now not only for what is done, or what is not done, but also human agency carries responsibility for events that a person was 'falsely conscious' of or unaware of.

The topic I work with is rich, nuanced and even ambiguous. To study aid and precarity may be challenging methodologically, due to the emotional weight involved and the difficulty to grasp additional emotional filters and analyze them. The anthropology of emotions provides conceptual tools for studying emotions ethnographically. Drawing on Catherine A Lutz's exploration of Ifaluk's world of morality and emotions I use the concept of *fago* defined as compassion, love and sadness in American-English terms (Lutz 1988:144) as well as *song*, which may be described as justifiable anger, moral anger or morally approved anger.

They will help me map the spectrum of emotional reactions and interactions in the field and gain an understanding of different types of interactions within social services.

Maria narrates about a friend of hers: "Once my friend Olga (it was Olga's first time visiting Le+O) reached out for the product lying in the box and took the first thing that was offered to her without waiting until it was handed to her. This action is not allowed. You need to wait for the product to be given to you, not to touch it even in a moment of verbal agreement to take it in case the worker asks you, very often some workers just put the product in your

hands. They (the employees) were outraged and said, "We have such rules, so will she continue to take or take everything back?" (Olga started to cry and left the queue). And it also surprised me so much that they (two workers) said it angrily.

- That is, did Olga part of a circle (of taking food) of it and then started crying? (me)

- Yes, she passed part of it and started crying. And she ran away and sobbed, and the next one (worker) shouted at her - to take off everything and not serve you? [to return what the woman had already received], and then the worker said - we are not a store here; you don't have a choice here! And so on [...] And this time for some reason she (the worker) turned on such a bitch, then I said - please, understand.. and I started to cry as well, it touched me, and I told her - we are from Ukraine, and it's not about that at all [pause] it's just [pause] something triggered us, and I sob and say - if possible, I will take these products for her. And the worker immediately smiles and has such [pause] humanity. And I explained to her - please, understand, it's not about your rules at all, that is [pause] a personal. And she (worker) later made excuses for her anger [...] As a result, I finished that circle (of taking food), and they tried to give her (for Olga) the best (food items) after that" (excerpt from an interview with Maria, 2024).

In Lutz's description, "something immoral or taboo has happened here, and it ought not to have happened" and "talk about song often reinforces the prerogatives of the more powerful members of Ifaluk society, as it is they who have most appropriated the right to be described, or to describe themselves as justifiably angry" (Lutz 1988:156). Applying the notion of **justifiable anger** to the case with the social market, the worker, who sees the broken rule "not to touch food before it is given in hands", became angry. From her perspective she is justifiably angry, she defends violation taboo and discipline in space. Continuing the analogy, "to become justifiably angry is to advance the possibilities for peace and well-being on the island, for it is to identify instances of behavior that threaten the moral order" (Lutz

1988:156) may illustrate the worker's responsibility to be a guard of the discipline and to govern prescribed way of being things in a particular institution. The visitor as a receiver (but in fact “buyer” of the set of products at a symbolic reduced price) of food is someone in need. Le+O is a giver, but in fact a food redistributor for someone in need. Here appears a contradiction of the "give-receive" process. As a user of Le+O, when you see the picture "Kassa", you may perceive this space as pretending to be a supermarket. In "Unnatural Emotions", Lutz emphasized that the primary context in which *fago* occurs is one in which some persons confront others who may be in some way in need (ibid:121). Thus, persons who are somehow in need cause compassion in others (ibid:121). A woman worker demonstrated a process of misrecognition which had happened in the context of practice. From her perspective, it could be described as: "What is experienced in gift-giving is the voluntary, irreversible, delayed, and strategic play of gift and counter gift; it is the experience of these dimensions that actually establishes the value of the objects and the gestures" (Bourdieu in Bell 1992:82-83). When my informant Maria after conflict one more time explained how they (Maria and her friend Olga) perceive this demand – not to touch the food – the worker "made excuses". It may be also said that woman-worker demonstrated the tension between her as a "guard" in Foucauldian "watcher" or "guardian" position and her as someone who is "giving" compassionate aid. Significantly, anger appeared first, followed by regret and hyper-compensatory generosity, revealing a power dynamic that maintains legitimate control over the service user. Lutz would describe a similar situation in the moral and emotional life of Ifaluk's people as “a durable and automatic link” that connects “the suffering of one person” and “the nurturing of others” (Lutz 1988:121).

3.2 Negotiations between actors: visible and hidden

Looking at the same conflictual scene from a different perspective, I would argue that situations when state and non-state organizations negotiate with each other or non-state organizations with beneficiaries of their services reveal moments of conversion e.g. from

hospitable to hostile. I refer to moments of conversion as moments when something that tends to be, or to pretend, or to look like, or to follow principles of let's say 'goodness', or hospitality in the general sense of the word and melted in one pot a lot of meanings behind, in some specific moments 'cross the line' and appears on a side of a mode of hostile practices. The process of auditing and controlling conditions in place by Marktamt may clarify some aspects of the dialog between organizations and their interdependence and hierarchy. If non-compliance with hygiene standards and temperature standards for product storage is detected, the social service must correct the situation within the next couple of weeks. Informants representing this organization share the challenges of their negotiations with a state. Most complaints were related to "Das Marktamt", an office that manages the municipal markets, monitors compliance with food law regulations, and controls consumer protection¹⁴. The manager of Le+O stressed that rules, such as wearing gloves, not allowing people-visitors to touch the food are demands of Marktamt's side, but on site misunderstanding may happen, and shifts of perception of this rule from hospitality-mode to hostility-mode. Following this line of thinking it may be said that the state cares about you as a visitor, it protects your health and it mediates your relationship with a social service, it controls the work of social service within a specific legal framework and specific hygienic framework. Otherwise, an informant-manager (Le+O project, Warehouse department) from the side of social service claims that there is no law, just manuals and guidelines, and they (service) work in the 'grey zone' or using Ferguson's language about distributive politics and their challenges in a zone of "the gray technocratic machinations of the social security apparatus" (Ferguson 2015:168). Thus, they (services) are responsible for all the risks, like dealing with probable health issues of their visitors caused by consuming expired food. And they (services) need to do additional informational work with visitors, like having specific stickers-reminders on packages, like "boil eggs before eating" to avoid such cases in providing food distribution. "Fortunately, till

¹⁴ translated from German with Google translator: <https://translate.google.com/>

today, - the manager of the service said, - there were no cases of suing from the side of clients of service”.

However, the scene of conflict from the previous section signaled that moment of conversion when Olga (friend of my informant Maria) touched the food before the moment the worker gave it to her. It is forbidden and Marktamt's demand – visitors are not allowed to touch the food, and it is actually about how the “state” frames care and protection in this particular moment. But for users of the service, this demand is emotionally colored and disrespectful. When a worker started to scold a visitor for breaking a rule, in this particular moment an affective reaction of the woman happened, as she began to cry. Olga did not understand what was wrong in her actions. It was an offensive moment of hostile frame that she did not expect. Christopher Krupa and David Nugent argued that affective relationships with a state maintained by many people are structured around “frustration and disappointment — affective responses born of promises so rarely kept by those who speak in the state's name” (Krupa & Nugent 2015:15). The worker was ‘dressed in a role of defense of state's rules’ [representing the state] and thus wanted to avoid the punishment from controlling state-organisation in case they do unannounced visits of control. For Olga in that moment, the state-demand “not to touch products” was not about care and protection, it was about humiliating her as receiver, as visitor, diminishing, disrespectful, and overwhelming. But Olga does not know at a particular moment that this rule is from the state side. She thinks that workers and social services humiliate her and impose passivity as expected behavior in such a place. Ferguson and Gupta stressed that state and non-state organizations use similar techniques of government across domains (Ferguson, Gupta 2002:995).

The state, as Foucault argued, “is nothing else but the effect of a regime of multiple governmentalities” by decision-making centers, sources of finances, and relationships between local powers (Foucault 2014:77). Negotiations between scales may be pictured as:

scale below may find/have reasonable ground to grow concerns about humiliating practice imposed by scale above. Overall, complaints are similar and generalizing they relate more to the sphere of responsibility when explanations of who is responsible for what to make things better, very often look like a "hot potato" game when team members throw hot potato-responsibility as fast as possible to a scale above or below because of ambiguity, sensitivity and controversy of topic of food redistribution for low-income people.

3.3 Disgust as invisible resistance and other practices in negotiation with social service

As I already said in the introductory part of the thesis I have access to my field site as a user of the service. It provoked an ethical issue, and I switched my positions in research from secret to visible. During the 'secret' phase I experienced controversial feelings when a worker wearing gloves held the partly rotten asparagus and gave it to me. My hands were not protected by gloves. Visitors may not be confident enough to ask to throw out rotten parts of greenery, they (my informants and me) mostly accepted all the food and then at home just threw it out. I may say it is very challenging to avoid the storm of emotions you can be filled with. Haidt referred to disgust as a socio-moral domain (Haidt et al., 1997 in Haidt 2003:9). All variants of disgust provoke a wish to avoid, break off the contact with the offending entity, in parallel with wish to wash, to purify or remove any contact that was made with the offending entity (Rozin&Fallon, 1987; Rozin, Haidt, &McCauley, 1993 in Haidt 2003:10). Absurdity and theatricality of interaction may be additionally enlightened by previous scenes like purifying hands of visitors before food distribution, the rule not to touch food before a worker gives it to you and so on. Once, Maria noticed a similar internal conflict to mine; when she was approaching the fruit department in Le+O, a worker-volunteer took oranges that were visibly partly covered by blue mould. This worker moved, and Maria was shocked for a while and became angry, as she commented on her thoughts: "Oh, are you kidding me?"

Do you think you'll give me these oranges?" But the worker threw it away and offered her other fruits in edible condition. Maria noticed, at that moment, her relief and gratitude. A significant detail to add in Le+O is that the garbage cans are placed next to the workers' workplace. It connotes that workers make decisions independently to check food items before redistributing them to visitors or not to check at all. Based on my observations and experiences with informants, some workers do check, while others may give rotten food. As described above, experiences may provoke disgust as a socio-moral emotion, leading to a wish to avoid them. We remember Olga's emotional outcome when she broke a rule and was 'punished' by 'guard' of 'ritualized action' for Olga's tabooed voluntary agency-present behavior. Olga never came back to Le+O, even though she needed support. Inna remembers her feelings as she put, "I feel like they (social service) treat us as a waste of society". Inna visited Le+O a couple of times. She continued to visit SOMA Sozialmarkt for six months, although not very often, once every two weeks, as she explained that it was not easy to manage visits there while already working. This type of negotiations may be united under a group of 'those who denied' continuing interactions with services due to the pictured reasons.

One more type of negotiation I may illustrate with an episode with Halyna. She told me at the end of the interview: "I hope I didn't say anything that could offend them (social service)". Halyna and her daughter Maria represent what I describe as the 'anxious type'. It connotes that they rely on social services and food they can afford there, but they cannot say, 'Please, do not give me this rotten onion,' nor can I. They simply discard a part of a food item at home (as Maria does) or try to save soya milk for cooking pancakes (as Halyna does).

The manager of social service inspired me to think about the third type of negotiation. The manager recommended that to make ends meet in Vienna, I need to collect all the benefits available to me as a low-income single mother. The manager said: "You may go there and have that, and then you can go to another social market and collect the provision for the whole week". Married couple Alina (from Ukraine) and Bakir (from Kazakhstan) may

demonstrate what I define as ‘explorers’ or ‘searchers’ in negotiation with social services “No worries, Austria likes single mothers; they (aid services) will support you”, – mentioned Alina in our conversation. Alina and Bakir have five children. They lived in Europe since the University period of their lives. Both already have EU citizenship. One year ago, Bakir lost a job, and Alina is on maternity leave with their youngest child. Since then, in an attempt to balance their economic situation, they have actively utilized all types of social assistance available for families like theirs in Vienna. Alina remembers her first impression when she visited SOMA Sozialmarkt: “When I came here, everything looked a bit ‘poor’ and ‘sad’. But right now, we have discovered what we may buy here, what is worth buying, what is safe and what is not. And we try to visit SOMA once a week”. Bakir shared with me his method for ‘resisting’ or overcoming the rule of ‘one visit per day’. He tries to buy something they need at one cash desk, and then they all together sit in a café and drink coffee. After a pause, he goes back and buys something else, paying at a second cash desk with another cashier. In general, their narration was like a story of adventures within social services. They narrated as if they enjoyed it and were aware of all the types of allowances they may receive from both state and non-state organizations. Due to said above, this type of interactions reminds me of ‘explorers’ or ‘searchers’.

To sum up, Foucault argued that social security, despite its positive effects, also has “perverse effects”, which may be supported by narration by Alina and Bakir (Foucault 1988:160). Under “perverse effects”, Foucault meant making people “increasingly dependent” (ibid). To follow this thought, Foucault divided institutions into two ways they move to make people dependent: through integration or exclusion and marginalization. He stresses that society needs to resist both (Foucault 1988:162). Ferguson (2015:117) argued that distribution and dependency are associated with social security transfers. On the one hand, those excluded from the world of waged labour are claiming access to resources. On the other hand, those excluded are being seduced into “the cash nexus” Trojan horse

(ibid:121). “Traditional” gift-giving contains competitive and antagonistic motives and is highly interested (ibid:125). The real society, as puts Ferguson, combines sharing and self-interest in a single act (ibid:126). Discipline and rules prepare a stage for "the spectacle of public events, substitutes the uninterrupted play of calculated gazes" (Rabinow 1984:193) and this spectacle has its own specific "nest". To place low-income people in separate supermarkets rather than managing food shelves with expired food in ordinary supermarkets, for example, is, in my view, a form of spatial "nesting" (Rabinow 1984:190).

CONCLUSION

I began my thesis with a description of a subjective mismatch between declared ideological values and witnessed empirical realities in places of food redistribution for low-income people. Why did it happen and what is the perception of this mismatch by users of ‘sozialmarkt’-es? This question served as the driving force behind my study. In my view, this mismatch occurred due to miscommunication, misinterpretation, and differing assumptions and expectations among the parties involved in the social dialogue that took place in social markets. My main insight was related to, as I may define them, ‘hostile practices’, or something that provoked complaints by each side of the dialogue. Surprisingly, those on the lower scale complain to those on a scale above who are complaining on scale above them. Each scale’s complaints are similar and relate to the replacement of responsibilities. Furthermore, social dialogue is not a term that describes communication between providers of social services, such as food redistribution, and the users of these services. Dialogue in this context can be visualized as the provider's ‘speaking’ and the user's ‘listening’. The user’s ‘talking’ is not always welcomed as I discovered.

The user of social services at the same time is a consumer, because the place works as a “supermarket for the poor” but not as a full-fledged consumer because they don’t have the same rights. Limits of consumption are prescribed in a script of doing things in place. Users can choose but within obedience. The complexity of the rules restricts the number of choices. Resistance practices such as complaints related to expired food are not welcomed. To buy what you need and even with the money you have - you cannot. Consumers of such social markets have to be taught how to act in this role. Otherwise, punishment via exclusion may occur.

Nevertheless, a feeling of emotional bitterness shapes the staginess “to feed the social body” when you, the observer, are watching it. Your reflection echoed Nancy Fraser’s provocative statement that “neoliberalism has built an entire accumulation strategy by expelling billions of people from the official economy into informal grey zones, from which capital siphons off wealth” (Fraser 2022:6). May I say that social supermarkets are silent observers of neoliberal strategies when I witness the following? In Samariterbund (one of the supermarkets that operates under the same umbrella organisation as Sozialmarkt SOMA), even this social supermarket has a cash desk and the option to pay by card in the food department. However, in the non-food department, you, as a customer, may pay by cash. Only. Cash-witnesses are silent.

Reflecting on the limitations and weaknesses of my research, my mixed (at the beginning) or shifting (at the end) positionality required additional analysis. It may lead to hyper-identification in some situations, which I attempted to balance in the third chapter when discussing how the whole field of precarity and aid assistance is blurred to some extent by double-sided emotional outcomes. One more limit was linguistic, I do not speak German, thus I could not communicate with German speaking people. Third thing that I may add is temporal frames of observation in each field site: in SOMA I started observation a bit earlier, as I mentioned, I did this work for Ethnographic methods class, but I think I compensated this imbalance by thick descriptions and analytic framing of both projects in comparative coherence, when places and actors are in dialog with each other. Messages of this dialog I attempted to decode, including silent visual messages. If I were given more time and access, I would continue researching the topic of moral emotions in the field of assistance using an interdisciplinary approach.

To sum up, mundane practices, such as shopping in separate grocery stores for different social categories, may enlighten the mechanisms of state spatialization in order to govern,

audit, count, and reintegrate, even via the ‘hands’ of non-governmental actors using food as a tool for feeding the social body (Gupta, Ferguson 2002:984). And repetitively going back to my argument: after giving fish to a man, the man is invited to the sozialmarkt to exchange this fish for expired food, and the man leaves fish in the pocket of an enterprise that provides the service of redistributing [selling] food for a man. Based on common ethnographic findings, I may say that, man sometimes is shy to declare out loud: “I do not want this food that you redistribute, part of it is extremely expired, I am afraid to consume it, but I will be politely receptive as you expect me to behave and I will be not complaining at the place, I will complain later anonymously via site”. Then, man brings this food waste that the supermarket ‘utilizes’ via a food distribution system that ‘utilizes’ food via users of services those (users) ‘utilize’ received food to the garbage bin in their residential area. Man pays utility costs from social benefits/fish he/she got earlier for utilizing waste. Sometimes, man is complaining, but still, leftovers of gift narratives in welfare function bring moral ambiguity in the process of negotiations between the provider of service and the user of service. The user of the service is still neither a full-scale consumer nor a passive receiver. What type of subject does this structure aim to produce, or what kind of body is fed? Isolated, disciplined, receptive, supervised? (Mitchell 1991:93). Or. Activated, reintegrated, proactive, responsible?

To clarify, I do not want to juxtapose bad and good, black and white, hospitable and hostile. Misinterpretation and miscommunication, the sensitivity of a field of aid and precarity can lead to unintended outcomes, as I wrote in my thesis. With my thesis, I wanted to recognize the multiplicity and complexity of meanings and interactions, their nuances, and ambiguity. I examined narratives and provocatively positioned them between two extreme points on the spectrum: hospitable or hostile. Catching the moments of converting ‘rather hospitable something’ into ‘rather hostile something’ was the most rewarding part of my research.

The intimacy and privacy of mundane practices were the focus of my research. These micro-interactions represent how the social body lives, where it shops, what it eats, what it complains about, and how it negotiates with others. It shows the voice of this body and how it is expected to talk in social dialogue. Through my study, I attempted to illuminate spatial hierarchies and social order by examining concepts of ‘feeding the social body’ and ‘staginess’. I conducted fieldwork in a place where comprehensive theoretical concepts, such as ‘exclusion’ and ‘neoliberal governmentality,’ became very solid and tangible, even if the governance of different social categories presupposes drawing walls and boundaries to make certain things less visible.

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