



Ethno-mimetic Methods, Care and Reflexive Governance

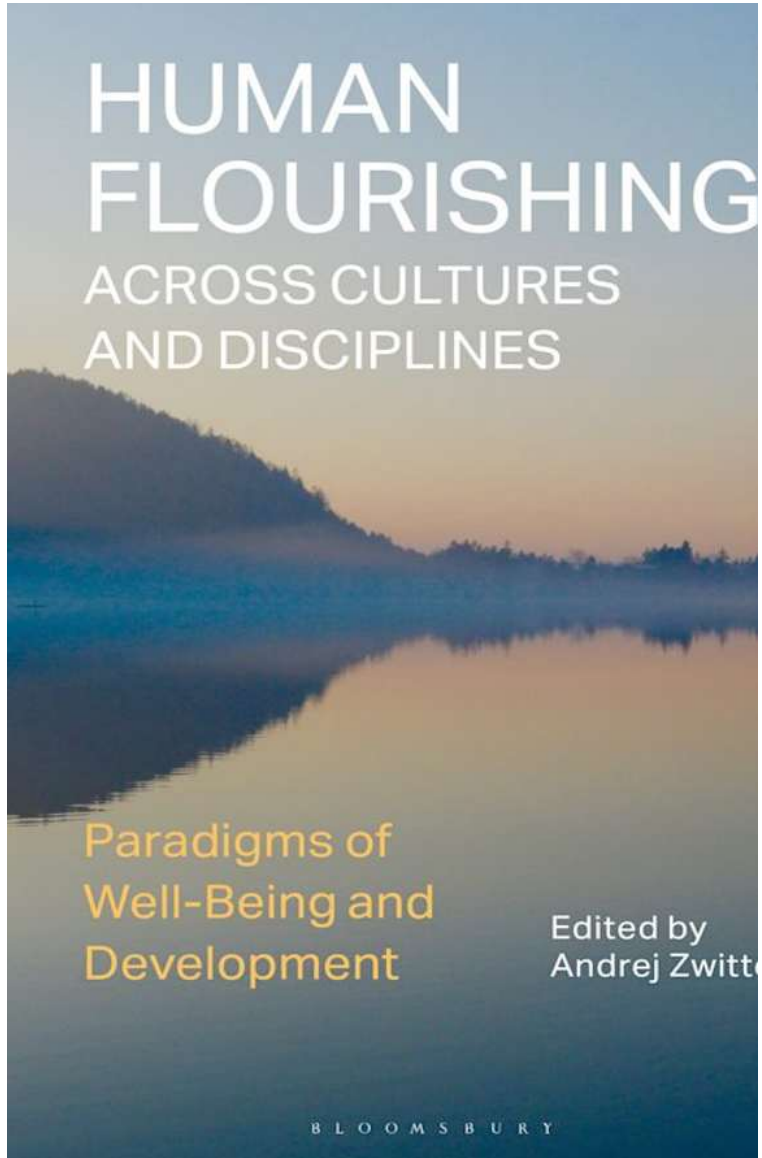
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Earth System Governance Conference, Bath UK

Session: Flourishing as Adaptive and Reflexive Earth System
Governance: Care, Worldviews, and Institutional Transformation

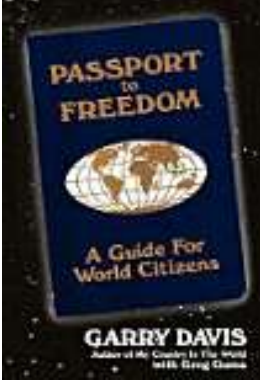
September 9, 2026



Interconnected pathways towards human flourishing

- towards a radical democratic imaginary of human flourishing.
- dismantle violent dominance hierarchies by engaging theoretically with feminist concepts of care, social justice (beyond 'white man's justice' Hudson 2006) through socially engaged ethno-mimetic research in and with communities
- foster more caring, just, collective social futures as human flourishing and reflexive governance –governance must be reflexive and open to contestation
- Radical Hope

DSIS Project



- Broader contexts to narratives of transformation – Polycrisis, European crisis and the new world order marked by global realignment and long-term consequences; nationalism, identity politics, rise of populism and the far right; wars, genocide, deep social harm to people and planet; ‘post truth’ ‘fake news’ and growing risks to academic freedom.
- As a member of **DSIS** and **Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies Global Network (HDIS)** and leader of **Collective Social Future Institute** vital importance of facing our global challenges collectively -hold on to ideas of global citizenship
- Dynamics of humiliation, human dignity and repair
- Dynamics of transformation
- Renewed methodologies – feminist ethic of care, participatory research, foster dignifying relationships – socially just – counter-hegemonic and radically democratic - towards human flourishing and Hughes and McAleese’s (2027) ‘sacred ordinary.’

Ethno-mimetic methodologies

- Ethno-mimesis a practice and process of interdisciplinary sociocultural research and analysis –interplay of critical research, artistic praxis and social action – sensuous knowing
- Advance social justice and human flourishing
- Intersectionality as foundational
- Participatory, collaborative and appreciative
 - Inclusion, participation, value all voices, action-oriented interventions
- Ethnographic, participatory, biographical, and art-based
- Analyse findings collaboratively, centring marginalised perspectives and intersectional analysis
- Knowledge sharing and advocacy
- Ongoing reflexivity and accountability (power dynamics, positionality, risks of co-option and neutralisation, address potential moral injury and dynamics of humiliation)
- Envisions and enacts - based on a dialectic of mutual recognition, congruence, care, respect and recognition for human rights, cultural citizenship and democratic processes – counter post truth, fake news, ‘post-emotionalism’ (Mestrovic 1997).

Applying ethno-mimesis to earth systems governance

- Breaking rationalist hegemony – managing the earth requires inter and transdisciplinary research to understand the lived, sensory and unequal impacts of environmental degradation on communities, on the human and more than human
- The importance of ethno- mimesis using art, biographical narratives, and PAR, and Fem PAR - to make policy and governance more democratic, inclusive and reflexive to human and ecological realities
- Emerging constellations help us to understand social systems of power and emphasise relational, reflexive, intersectional and opportunities for human flourishing “ a deeply integrative concept grounded in epistemic humility, cultural diversity and spiritual insight” (Zwitter, p 284).
- “This perspective advocates for a development model that is rooted in local realities and leaverages indigenous knowledges and practices”(Zwitter).

Example - EuroBorderWalks Applying ethno-mimesis to earth systems governance.

- A central challenge facing Europe in recent years is the increase in borders and bordering, especially relating to border security concerns around unregulated migration, increasing nationalism, the risks of soft or porous borders, and geopolitical shifts, including the impact of Brexit.
- A central aim of the EuroBorderWalks project is to work collaboratively across biographical sociology (WIBM and ABN) and art making practices (ethno-mimesis), as well as through three artist commissions, **to open up horizons for scholarship, knowledge and understanding that makes a difference, not only in better understanding the problems and challenges associated with the three borders at the edges of the European Union (Poland/Ukraine, Croatia/Bosnia Herzegovina and the RoI/NI Border)** and the very meaning, experience and evolution of the three borders, but also to contribute to **European policy and education**.
- We seek to tell a biography of the three borders, in the context of the history of ‘bordering’, ‘borderities’ ‘borderscapes’ and in so doing seek to speak back to the European Project, to understand, envision and enact critical analysis including critical pedagogy and visual and counter cartography - visual representation of important landmarks, symbols, memories, stories, soundscapes - towards ‘mobility Justice’ (Mimi Sheller).

‘Partitioned Lives’ the Irish Border through time, space, place and history in the present

University College Cork, University of Łódź, University of Zagreb, Limerick School of Art & Design/Technical University of the Shannon, Władysław Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź

The NI-ROI border runs for 499km from Lough Foyle in the Northwest to Carlingford Lough in North East.



Border as a complex assemblage

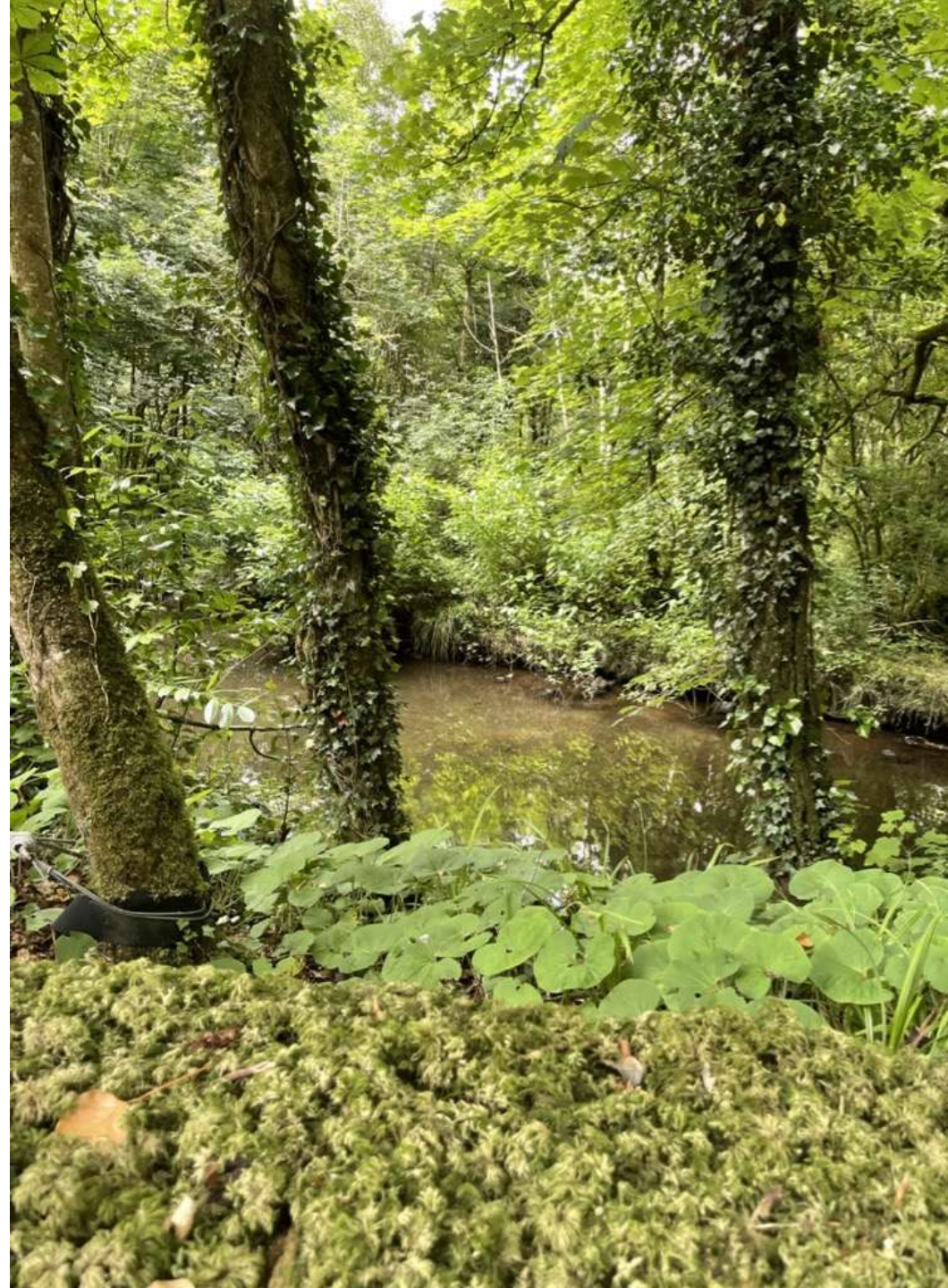


Walking Interview as Biographical Method – actioning Ethno-mimesis

- Ethno-mimesis is my term for the theory, method and practice of the intersection of arts-based practice, ethnographic and biographical research - capturing how arts practice can convey "sensuous knowing" about lived experience that text-based methods can struggle to articulate.
- **The WIBM becomes another modality for accessing embodied and sensory knowledge *biographically* in time and through space and place –often using mapping, counter mapping and photography.**
- WIBM also intersects with the field of mobilities and applied mobilities (Sheller and Urry 2006; Urry 2007; Edensor 2008, 2010), connecting the mobilities paradigm to cultural/critical theory. In "Walking borders, risk and belonging" (O'Neill 2024), the WIBM is defined as a route to doing "**mobility justice**" — a relational, cultural, and socio-spatial analysis of lived lives in geo-political and cultural contexts, moving mobilities research from abstract, top-down movement-patterns toward embodied, bottom-up biographical accounts of borders, risk, and belonging.
- In this sense I make a case for using walking as a biographical interview method (WIBM) that facilitates '**conjunctural analysis**' (Stuart Hall 1987) on the move (See O'Neill and Einashe 2018)

WIBM surfaces ‘Conjunctural Analysis’ (Stuart Hall after Gramsci) and systems analysis

- Friends of the Dromore, Coohey Nature Reserve and Irish Wildlife Trust (Monaghan branch)
- WIBM (x3) - Critical knowledge and understanding; lived experience connected to place, space and the land; and praxis:
 - **‘Ground truthed’ the river catchment**
 - **Fragmented cross-border catchment governance**
 - “the single most needed policy change is a catchment-based approach, since no river catchment respects "local, regional and international borders," yet north and south each split responsibility across a "multiplicity of agencies none of whom has all of the power.” -B, R and S
 - **Herbicide regulation failure as a hidden cross-border hazard**
“Near-total absence of glyphosate/herbicide enforcement (two inspectors for the whole state); domestic and roadside spraying with no legal basis” -B
 - **The Mansholt Plan and the decline of small dairy farming**
- Nature, landscape and borderlessness — a systems-level articulation captures lived experience of the impact border and bordering as a ‘national trauma’ –D





Beyond Borders Nature, Landscape, Repair and "Borderlessness"

- *"Whenever you approach the river... it tends to dissolve an awful lot of the identity border stuff, because everybody's trying to figure out how to protect the water."* — B & R
 - *"These roads that were kind of either closed off or blocked... have become quite nature rich."* BA
 - *"Water and nature doesn't recognise political borders"* — B
1. The Dromore River Catchment 3D model — built by a GIS consultant who physically walked and "ground-truthed" the land rather than relying on satellite imagery — corrected an online map that had been missing the river system's northern, cross-border reach: **"so wrong shape... rivers know no borders"** -S
 2. A connected chain of border-straddling lakes Dummy's Lough, Drumard Lough, Drumlaney Lough and the now-vanished, overgrown "blind lough" that D frames as "all part of that... on both sides of the border, but obviously all connected at one stage"

Landscape as Counter-Narrative to Borders and Control

1. As WIBM with M in Derry moves across bridges, roads, and into Donegal to The Grianán of Aileach/Grennan Fort, **the narrative tone shifts.**
2. This spatial movement operates analytically as a **counter-map**: where militarised checkpoints and housing segregation once defined the participant's life-world, open landscapes offer a form of symbolic repair. **Place as Memory Infrastructure** -- Locations function as **mnemonic anchors**: Rivers, bridges, bogs and roads as Border crossings experienced bodily rather than administratively- an example of 'the sacred ordinary'.

Conclusion – Flourishing, Care and Reflexive Governance

- Applying Joyeeta Gupta – ‘**glocal water governance**’ approach to cross border issues – ‘water system justice’-Water governance is highly fragmented – no supranational oversight
 - - River catchment as a ‘shared ecological corridor’ vs ‘regulatory vacuum’
 - - ‘Prioritising the floor’ vs coercive cooperation and Good Friday agreement
 - Transboundary/Cross border resource sharing must cause ‘no significant harm’ but also governance should prioritise needs of local communities and the environment – inter species justice.
 - The rivers, connected Loughs and Carlingford Lough as an example here are single ecosystems.
 - *“The water, the waterways are threads, connects everything. And maybe that's it..that's the the overall policy. You look for threads that are non-sectional, non-sectarian, non-divisive, you know” -B*

Image Carlingford Lough by Colm Mc 2014

