

Transcript, In Conversation (John Clarke, Rachael Dobson, Anne-Marie Fortier, Hanna Hilbrandt, Shona Hunter, Tess Lea, kylie valentine), Policy Ontologies; Working Across Theory and Practice, 16.03.22

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Rachael Dobson 00:00

You can obviously no pressure, given the timings at your range. And so I just want to sort of continue, I guess, with the format that we've been used to, I suppose with these events, which is, can we just start off trying to have a conversation? Maybe some of us about the themes that we feel are coming out? And then let's kind of go from there. Okay. So I don't know. I know, obviously, I've got various thoughts. But Shona, John, Anne Marie have you got any kind of thoughts that you'd like to start off with? Shona? now, I can't hear you. Yeah, you're

Shona Hunter 00:51

muted, muted. unmuted. I don't know. I mean, I can kick off if you want. Was that where you were? Let's just do it. Because we'll be here for half an hour when we otherwise. Yeah, I don't know. 'cause I've got I've got so many different thoughts. And despite some of the themes that we've been thinking about, you know, over the last few events, but that also, you know, I was reflecting the richness, I sometimes find overwhelming. But I think I also, there's something about the way conversations in relation to policy and even policy ontologies I think shift. And so, I think some of what I wanted some of what I was reflecting as you were all speaking, so and kind of, you know, listening to all of those papers together was a shift. And I think, also, to contextualise that a bit in terms of some of the stuff that I have been thinking about in terms of the different spaces that I move across as somebody who does this sort of work, but who isn't necessarily understood in that way. Because I was thinking about the relationship between the different papers and the positionings of the subject in a way that we were that were being engaged with, but also in the positionings of the scholars and the scholarship, if that makes sense. And so I think this is some of the overwhelm. But I think it's also important, maybe, I don't know, whether it speaks to somebody bought in something about language, but I don't know whether it might speak to that in a different sort of way. But I suppose, in essence, I was wondering about between practices, and categories. And one of the things that I feel like and I was when I was I was listening to the papers, and as I was listening to I know, part of what we've been doing over the last while and definitely test started off in a really nice way, thinking methodologically but I wonder when we think and speak methodologically whether we almost have a tendency to lose the categories that we are interested in the methodologies prising open or helping us to think about differently, if that makes sense. So for me, thinking about issues of racialization gendering kind of intersectional enactments of dominance, really, which I suppose is one way of thinking about what I'm what I'm interested in. I was thinking, Where is that in this? And then, of course, it comes in and out, doesn't it and kylie's piece. really interestingly, this the situating really importantly, in terms of complexities and vulnerabilities, and I was thinking again, you know, so these are other ways of thinking about power, and where does power come in and disappear in that conversation. And then moving on to Anne-Marie's, you know, work just totally for me on them transported to starting to think about how we become a category in a way through the citizenization process. So I'm not actually

going to say anything else, because I did have four questions that I thought related to that, but I'm mindful of time as well. But I think that feels important. And it feels important, I think, at the wall, it always feels important for me, because I'm always grappling with the relationship between categorization practices, and our lived experiences of them, and where that attaches us and hat to in the world and how that actually produces the world. So it's about the intimacy, you know, what happens when our conversations become more or less abstract? Because I think there's something about the relationship between process and categorizations that that works there. And I think this is all bound up in the ontologies of kind of project so I'm just going to put that out there that probably wasn't that helpful. But that was just what I that's the set of things that I was thinking about. And there's something about ethics and politics in there that, again, we've all like, everybody who's spoken today is spoken about really explicitly. And I did make some notes in particular about some of the stuff he was saying, kylie, but a lot, I say too many pages. Okay, so there you go.

Rachael Dobson 05:24

Yeah. Okay, then then I thank you Shona. Now, I also have many pages. And John have noted your question as well in the chat. But let's start there, because we have to start somewhere. Anne-Marie, can I come to you first and just sort of see if you have any reflections in response to Shona's thoughts? There are?

Anne-Marie Fortier 05:44

So many, thank you for that it was really an it's a really important question. I think, you know, we don't want to lose sight of categories. And the kinds of intersectional dominant forms of documents that you're you're thinking about. And this is something that I was certainly taught and that I'm certainly tried trying to be attentive to, in terms of specifically in terms of citizenship for and how it works in these particular ways. But I was also very conscious that sometimes, you know, there's something about you know, and I'm thinking about what you were saying at the beginning Tess, about how, you know, the date and the, the challenges of engaging with policies and trying to track them and track the, the ontological effects, which is what I was interested in, that the risk of them reproducing them, so reproducing this idea of citizenship as something that is unmarked, right. So there's always constantly trying to remind ourselves of how it never is unmarked. And it produces and produces categories. But these categories also share shift and move and change, you know, and they're mobilised in different ways at different moments. So they, there's, there's a, there's their operative in the way policies, think about this subject of policy, but they also will, different things will come to the fore in different moments. And if you think about the intersectional forms of so, you know, race or gender or sexuality will come to the fore or move to the background at different times. That's a challenge of intersectional analysis, as well. of, you know, how do you capture those intersectionalities? I don't have much more to say about that. I mean, I have much more, but I don't want to take over too much time. This is the first thoughts that come to my mind. And I'm sure I want to say something more after two minutes. But I'll let the others

Rachael Dobson 08:02

Thank you. I mean, do you mind if I come to Tess just because I know that that Shona, you were referencing aspects of what you were talking about at the start, and Anne-Marie, you've

done some connecting work to sort of Tess's thoughts as well. But so I was just wondering if you had any, anything you wanted to come in on that? Oh, but volume might from No, still can't. Yeah, I'm just trying

Tess Lea 08:44

to plug it out and plug in. It's very technical, you know, I'll share with you sophisticated technical manoeuvre, plug out plug back in. Alright. So I feel like we're grappling with very similar things like the shape shifting qualities of the phenomena that we're looking at. Understanding these that that policy can't be stripped of it's highly, highly consequential ramifications in lives. So whilst we might want to show it, how it how it's actually conjured, it's a conflict. It doesn't have a natural a priori entity other than a humanly created one. Therein lies its optimistic unveiling. You know, we might want to emphasise that but at the same time, we've all got these illustrations, evidences of how highly consequential it is nonetheless, and I think that's why it holds us that's why, you know, despite They're really diverse kinds of concerns where we've all got this shared fascination, confusion, frustration, and coming back being magnetised by this, are you hearing this aircraft sort of sound?

kylie valentine 10:21

It's not you, it's the technology

Tess Lea 10:26

what that was, but the categorization shifts and how they've pull things, different things intervene based on intersectional dissections. My paraphrase of your comments, your responses Anne-Marie, I just feel like that also gets to stuck. They're simultaneously elusive, mobile, and then sometimes highly concrete, dissecting, cutting, carving, shaping consequences of policy. And I'm, I'm starting to lose my own sense of how to, you know, I came up with a heuristic to try to have different lenses on it, not as categories to answer some to answer is Hilda's. No, there was a chat. Yeah. Hanna's question, which was, you know, are these three different things? Do they overlap No, no, no, they can Yes, simultaneously, all be in operation. That simply a means to describe different vectors or different violences that you might sort of choose to describe or or in fact, is becoming the most profoundly manifesting in front of you? Or is somebody experiencing it or for yourself? So it can be all at once? As well as one or the other? They're not actually containers? A more descriptors trying to capture something. Yeah.

Rachael Dobson 12:17

Yeah. And I guess that was that was kind of my understanding of the policy ecologies concept as well, and the related concepts of ambience and hauntology as well. And kylie if you've got anything that you want to come in on in relation to this, that particular starting point.

kylie valentine 12:41

Not in relation to that starting point, but just on the question of categories, to say, Absolutely. Yes, it's a really important, I think, manoeuvre in, in the kind of targeting of policy. So sort of different, different angles are the same question. And one of the things that, that occurs as successive policies fail to do, what they're meant to do, is clients get recategorized. So it was,

for a while there was a there was a language of social exclusion, and then it became complex needs. Trauma, as I said, is emergent. These are ways of describing but they are also ways of turning people into policy objects, and quite often in a way to explain policy failures in terms of the characteristics of the client, which I think as I tried to say in the talk is, is sort of dishonest in two ways. One is that it's describing something that is it is in fact creating. If you set up systems of immiseration and failure, people are gone, and then people end up traumatising [inaudible]. It's not the case that that's what they bought to it. It's a case that's what you that's what the policy has done. And second, it is why I think of it does have experiential effects. So the trauma thing is a thing and and I've talked and others have points to this very eloquently, is both a kind of call to social justice and a really silencing kind of manoeuvre. So, when somebody is named as traumatised, they are kind of named as people who are abject who have all these kinds of maladaptive behaviours whose behaviour is explicable but nonetheless pathological and needs to be corrected and you will in the alternatives, such as behaviour that's called criminogenic, or behaviour that's called, you know, in the article as deviant alternatives to that kind of trauma death narrative. But it, it is, I think, because it does have that experiential violence as well as a kind of divisiveness. It's something that emerged from a particular vantage point that has been co opted by policy, and is now while I'm kind of, you know, explaining, again, why there's something wrong with people, and why they are not experts in their own lives, and why there is something wrong with them that needs fixing. So in that sense, I think categories are really active ways, you know, of weaponizing you know, why? policy failures? I'm not sure what Shona is that addresses at all the kind of category question that you are asking. And, and yeah, just to say that, I, I completely love what Anne-Marie and Tess did as well, I

Rachael Dobson 16:13

didn't I didn't add anything to it. Well, actually, I'm just gonna come back to task because Tess's got a hand up and then show no, I'm gonna come back to you if that's okay, um, tests? Well, this

Tess Lea 16:26

reminds me that I'm that, oh, all the organisations that are responsible for producing a lot of the things that then go out in the world as named policies. Because, you know, again, policies themselves occupy multiple spaces, not just governmental ones. I mean, the moment that, you know, a little, a little anarchist organisation needs to organise who does the lunch. But, you know, you've kind of micro policy wired, but but just sort of reflecting it back to, you know, sites where things can become mobilised because they're resource because there's an arsenal because behind there's a, you know, a system of battens and guns, let's think about their apparatus, I guess, and policy being deployed in those spaces. Then what was interesting to me when I was able to do ethnography is inside bureaucracies, which is really hard to do was how metabolising those organisations are. So how they can, you know, they're very adaptive and agile, in terms of updating the language by which they do this co opting of the latest terms, or the more humane terms to do what they were planning to do anyway. Whether that is to deny or it's to now capture or it's to come up with a new, like Anne-Marie's description of how an eligibility might also be a means of exclusion and power. You said, an eligibility might also be a recipe for an ineligibility for something else, like all of that stuff. But the people in there

don't, you know, I found very few people who could, you could imagine swinging their legs over the side of the bed and say, swing their legs over the edge of the bed and say, Today, I am going to be a master manipulator I am, you know, I'm basically going to cruel people's lives. So part of the language is, is so people can lie straight with themselves. Like, I think some really quite humble, we kind of can really get dramatic about what's going on with the rhetorical shifts, but but there's an there's an ego and a psycho psychological need being met. Because the desiring self inside bureaucracy is also one that sees themselves as making a difference, you know, doing something for with, yes, codesign offers that, blah, blah, blah, you know, there's a, there's a anyway, main point is the metabolising power of the organisations that we're talking about all these organisational settings cannot be underestimated, and I think all or goodness or get, I'm not trying to say organic concepts really help us here rather than mechanical ones. And I love the idea of a system not being a system, or you know, a complex, a complex system not being a complex system. And in actuality, this thing that has been named, you know, should be renamed. Yeah, I love that so much. So metabolism, I think metabolising capacities and consumption capacities, to, to update the lexicon to do very similar things over time. So when you go back back into the archives you think oh, okay, so they used to call these, you know, tribes, and they used to call them settlements and blah, blah, blah, but take the language out. And oh my god, how horrifying that the 1950s is to 2020. In a logics in the meta logics.

Rachael Dobson 20:25

And I've got some thoughts in relation to that. But Shona, can I come back to you, because I'm your starting point on categorization. Like, I feel like you have more, I don't know, reading your face, like what what is the face you're thinking do you want?

Shona Hunter 20:45

Well, I think we've come nearer to the question that I wanted to that I was really trying to prise open that I had so many different ways to do it, it got a bit kind of lost. And I kind of feel a bit ridiculous, saying this to the group of people that we are, but we get our analytics and what we do and what we're trying to prise apart. But I almost felt like we were moving to the state and other things. And it's that that I think is central - people bodies affects you know. So I think for me, the issue is always around the relations that we've tried, that we are all trying to grapple with. And that the three kind of papers that we're talking to and Tess your book speaks to and Anne-Marie your new one, and your other ones, indeed them for me, you know, have been a really helped me to think about the relations between processes that we imagine are devoid of categorical, and therefore ethical meaning. And when I say we there, I'm talking about mainstream imaginings of the state and we could debate that for as long as the hills you know, what, but but, but if we can say that there is kind of some sort of mainstream language that the state is using about itself, that we often as people in it, experiencing it, policy scholars, often, you know, people involved in the state are using about it, there is something about the separation that is fundamental to the self imaginings and the way in which power works in via our relationalities that we understand as part of the state that reinforces this mechanism of the object of the state. And I think for me, there is something about the ways in which so cards on the table the discussions that I've been having with a number of different student groups over the last couple of weeks in relation to the work we've been doing on the MA in race, education

and decoloniality, in relation to the kind of doctoral students work around a set of readings on disability theory is a shift constantly between what what is important about definitions and about how that and about how we are understanding disability race, how we are positioned, for example, those categories, and the set of processes, practices, imaginings that are being kind of brought to the table today in order to, to kind of break apart that understanding of, of social categorization as a thing. And the categorization relates to the people, but it also relates to this thing that we imagine is the state and we're abstracting differently in our conversations. I mean, me and the students in our discussions rather than us together here. And I think that's what I'm trying to realise I've gone off on to kind of it's so layered, it gets really difficult to prise apart. But one of the things I was thinking about, and John, I'm gonna mangle this terribly. And I don't even know if you ever published this. This is John Clark, rather than John in the in the book Tess. But when he wrote this paper years ago on context as constitutive, I don't know, I think it was like a little discussion paper for something we were involved in. And it doesn't say everything about that. But I think for me, it speaks to the question that you you're raising here, and some of what I'm thinking in, I suppose I'm talking about what happens when we take away the language of the context of what we're talking about. And I felt it was in an out of our conversations in different in different ways. Does that make more sense? Sorry, it was very long. I don't know whether it does. And I won't say anything else. No, but I don't know.

Rachael Dobson 24:42

But when you just to clarify when you talk about what happens when you take away the context of what we're talking about, are you talking about that in the sense of like, you know, just leaping back round to where we started and you know, Tess In your talk you were talking about, to me anyway, there was a conversation there about the notion of context and what it does in terms of enabling or not policy learning and thinking. And I suppose my new kind of interest there, which I don't know, got mangled maybe by the microphone was how useful and enabling and productive I find Wild Policy in terms of how it health through its engagement with the material stuff of decay and decomposition and building materials and the material stuff of John and his experiences. That for me, is context. But it's just not context as it's kind of traditionally kind of understood. So Shona, is that the sort of thing that you're gesturing towards? Or?

Shona Hunter 25:53

I think it might be Yeah, and maybe that's what I'm struggling with in terms of the abstraction, because it's how we deal with the issue of context, isn't it? In a way, all of what we're talking about whether something is good or bad, included, excluded, whether we are situated as somebody who's enacting a particular position of dominance in a particular situation depends on the situation and the relationships that are producing whatever is going on. So I suppose it's another way of getting out. My interest is in the relationships, because I think that's the thing, if that makes sense, rather than the things. And I think when I think more, I'm starting to come to that sort of position, but I think I have a political issue with that.

Rachael Dobson 26:39

Oh, no, actually, it's 1132. Do you need to go on Anne-Marie?

Anne-Marie Fortier 26:48

I'm trying to absorb what you're saying Shona? Because there's so many layers in what you're saying so many directions we could go to with because when I think of context, yes, I think, of course. And I try to address that, you know, in terms of the materiality of not only objects, but also bodies, you know, how bodies are read, you know, a body walks into a room, and the registrar reads, an Asian woman on a spousal visa. Right. And here's, I mean, there's also, you know, that one of the things that I've really been going back to categories, but how categories, when we think of categories, we think about what's visible, but what about what's audible, and that's, that's what I'm interested in very much in the moment in terms of the racial linguistics, if you want of, of citizenship, but we can think more broadly about, you know, the whole regime of seeing regimes of hearing, coexist and intersect in reproducing categories, and are contextual, in that sense, are part of the context. And there was one thing that I didn't write about in the book, which I wanted to talk about, as write about as the sounds of citizenship, you know, the sitting in that room. Not only, you know, the citizenship ceremony in terms of the music is chosen apart from the National Anthem, of course, but, you know, in Liverpool, it's, you know, the Beatles is one of the things that was, you know, what music is chosen, but words are said, but also the sounds of citizenship in that room of checker of the checking service. Were at some point, I was struck by the noise of, you know, the stapler, the whirring of the copy machine, the shuffling of papers, and are and how all that was also an integral part of the literal making, you know, of making someone become a citizen and come out at the end with their, you know, their their reassurance that the application is complete, it's sent off and you know, and it's, it sounds trivial, and I didn't know how to write about it without making it trivial, but for me, there's there's an element that we are, I suppose, the element of those less palpable dimensions, sensual dimensions of feeling and embodying these different categories and taking this in a very different direction. But you know, the hearing is something that I was interested in, particularly with regards to language, but we can think of, you know, the different embodied experiences and sensual experiences, through smell, taste, touch, as well as sight. So sorry, it's fine. I've gone off on a very, very different direction.

Rachael Dobson 30:13

I do think Sorry, I was like I think it is, I think it's really important. And also for me, sorry, I am aware, I'll come to you next. But me, I guess this is why. I don't know if it's maybe been made clear, but I am the number one fan of bleeding hearts and bureaucrats. I don't know if I've talked about already, but like, this is why for me, I find it quite interesting Tess because it was interesting hearing about you say, Okay, well, you know, it came from a particular kind of anthropological tradition because for me the the utility of that work, the way I always use it is thinking about the the enactment of institutional space, you know, the passages where you, you know, recalling the passage on shame, you know, the the the construct the constituting the the shameful kind of or ashamed practitioner, I'm thinking about another thing I've got her down here, which I doubt we'll have time to get into is the erotics of institutional space, you know, the, which I think kind of emerged in so many different ways. And definitely, thread through kylie, the, so much of what I was kind of seeing in some of those maps was just the pleasures, like the pleasures involved in constructing these maps, sort of by institutional entities, I know that's slightly kind of sideways. But that for me, is what what I always find kind of very sustaining about the book because it is doing that that work that Anne-Marie, you're

talking about, like the sensuality, the smells, the sounds, the looks the bodies, the you know, and that is. And that is a way of thinking about sort of this, this word context, perhaps that is not commonly kind of understood. And it's a way of prising open for me, and I use it a lot in my teaching a lot of the ideas that we're talking about today, but I mean, I don't know if you've got any reflections on that, but also in tests in relation to just anything that's been said on this the set of ideas that you wanted to come back on.

Tess Lea 32:29

So it's interesting, because the moment Anne-Marie you were talking about the sounds and the thing, I was thinking, oh, yeah, no, I was that that, to me was really important. No, it's not trivial. I just want to say that categorically. But I did see that as being absolutely me, to pull in the sensory to pull in the scrapes. And so right at the end of bureaucrats and bleeding hearts, I described the hum of the air conditioning, the fact that you know, in this stupid workshop, yet another workshop, producing yet another one of those charts actually. And having word tussles over the most accurate sort of, you know, is it codesign? Are is that cooperative? You know, we're having these incredibly deep and meaningful things, and all the things that are excluded from analysis and from return profound part of it. So the hum of, the air conditioning, was actually a problem they had people had to keep reporting it because it kept getting too sticky. And, you know, then, you know, someone would come in and the poor facilitator would apologise. And then other people would barge into the room, finding the wrong meet that they're in the wrong meeting room, and then they'd back back out and I'm saying, this is a whole, this life that's happening all around these places are constitutive of these spaces, and we write them out of our analyses, what is going on rewrite the very thing that we're in even trying to describe out because it's not seen as pertinent to constituting these spaces. And I thought, that is us being bureaucrats. We have already in our analytical kind of habits become administrators of the century as well, in order to sort of say this is more pertinent than that. And, you know, we have our own categorising and so I started calling academics Bureau academics as a neologism. You know, that we inhabit we inhabit institutionalised cells, even to the point of disavowing the full sensory nature of thing and I think it's really interesting, that the only way that the erotic and the the you know, the desiring self which is clearly such a key part of why people work themselves to beyond the limits of wits and energy, long, long hours. In institutional spaces, is also the libidinal is completely missing from our analysis and what the hell what's going on? And we acknowledged bodies now we're allowed to do that, but we've still got this missing, except when it's dysfunctional, because I Oh, you know, that sexual harassment, it's not okay. And, you know, we should have more women in, like, you know, we do this very normative, corrective sort of analysis if it comes into being but we're not. Anyway, Oh, get off? It says, Yes, I was very taken by those missing dimensions to analysis and interested in what was happening that, that our, our analysing selves, just falls into that habit. So immediately, and what is that doing to our capacity to understand the things that we're analysing and how they're constituted and data? So yeah, I think it's far from trivial

Rachael Dobson 36:00

just to Yeah, and I think it's interesting as well, but just picking up on sharing, and that is how Shona said, that is how we're now back to the experience or the practice or the relation that is what works between the category and the material, it's the thing. But also, I'm thinking like for

me, and obviously, I've done the sort of working paper that I've shared with Tess and shown this is what I'm also starting to think about. I think it's interesting that Shona your starting point for this is thinking about your teaching practice. So you know, at some point, when we're talking about this, we're talking about this about how do we understand this stuff ourselves? How do we share these ideas with each other? How do we talk about these ideas with each other? But many of us are most of us are engaged in teaching practice. So how do we work through and share these ideas with people who are coming to them in a formalised institutionalised sense for the first time? Because the traditional modes or the bureau modes, you could say, are not particularly effective. In my experience, I want to come to kylie and Hanna as you've had hands up, I'm also aware of John in that question, I haven't forgotten about it, but I'll just pick up on Okay, John's gesturing, then we move on, we move on? Well, we'll say okay, kylie,

kylie valentine 37:27

I'll let her talk because I've done a lot of talking. And I'd like to hear okay, yeah.

Hanna Hilbrandt 37:39

I guess, my perspective as a geographer, who comes to social policy from this kind of material and spatial world. And I think this is one dimension we've now been talking about, which was across the three talks really interesting to me, the ways in which the spaces of the waiting room or the spaces of, well, this hotel room that people in kylie's talk were put into kind of really shapes the social policy, and how it plays out. So to me, this is necessarily part of the relation in which we think about what constitutes social policy, and where does social policy take place, it's kind of not an extra dimension, we can separate out. And there was wondering if, if there isn't a really like fruitful conversation to be had between kind of the material geography, literature kind of spaces that people like Jane Jacobs, the geographies of buildings, the affective dimensions of how actually the state takes place in and through infrastructure, and the social policy literature. Because regarding Tess what you just said, we don't we don't take account of these affective dimensions, we don't take account of kind of this embodied longings through which policy takes place. I think that literature actually does that to some extent by starting from the material point of view. And by bringing that to an analysis of social policy, what it doesn't do so well, of course, is to think about kind of the ontologies of policy and the complexity of where social policy takes place. So I think there's a really like, interesting link to be had. And I'm wondering, like, from a policy ontological perspective, and from this question of policy ecologies and the different spaces in which we actually map out policy, if there isn't also a lot to be learned about. Like, if we let me say differently, like, if we start from thinking about policy through the ecologies in which policy takes place, it takes us obviously to different places, when we think about the state, it doesn't take us to the courtroom, it doesn't take us to kind of Parliament, it takes us to the very processes in which it gets played out implemented in the everyday right. So that, like adds how we need to make a material analysis of the state or changes how we need to make a material analysis of the state because it says we need to analyse the state materiality from different places from different moments in which policies play out. So this is just some some reflections that I think play across the three talks and some ideas on how to kind of also take this policy ontology project into kind of a

more material dimension. I think it's already there no?, but I think there's some, like possibilities to maybe extend in that direction.

Rachael Dobson 40:13

Thanks, Hanna.

Anne-Marie Fortier 40:14

I'm very sorry, I have to go. I cannot delay any more. So I'm sorry. Because I know the conversation. Thank you so much, everyone, and hope to meet again, really great.

Rachael Dobson 40:31

But we've been delighted. Honestly, yeah. Okay,

kylie valentine 40:36

bye. Thank you.

Anne-Marie Fortier 40:39

Thank you all.

Rachael Dobson 40:41

I'll be in touch Anne-Marie. Um, okay, um, where did we get to? So, um, anybody wants to come in on those thoughts from kind of kylie?

kylie valentine 40:55

Oh, I'll set up a quick bit on I hate it when people say that, and then they go on and on. So I'm not sure how much control I have over my material. But I'll just say that I really wanted to bring in Tesla's great construction of the carpet worlds of the bureaucracy. But I couldn't find a way to sort of smuggle it in. And one of the things that resonates with me thinking about this, and I think one reason why people like me who have an interest in gender, and mothers and violence often end up talking about housing as well as because it is such a way of talking about the the kind of embodiment of it and the the affective investment of it. And one of the things that is that, I think is a kind of real mismatch between the the kind of worlds of policy and public imaginings. And the lived reality of it is women who are leaving domestic violence and looking for shelter. And there is, I think, a real expectation that there's this kind of emergency and that people want to get out, and they'll just take anything, and that if there is anything, sort of blocking them, then it's really not that big a deal, or there's something wrong with them. And yet, when you speak to women who have little kids, there is just no way that they're going to move into some of those boarding houses, caravan parks, they're not going to sleep, they're not going to put their two year old on a mattress that looks like somebody died on it. That is a real, that's not something that's convected or made up or that in any way kind of affects the experience that they're going through. But it absolutely affects the kind of way that that policy is played out. And equally. When you work in policy practice, at least in in Australia these days, quite often, you'll be speaking to little kids from Deloitte, who work in, you know, massive kind of towers and have the kind of kids and, you know, policies often made in the private sector these days because of various contracting things. At the same time, as you're

talking to 20 year old Social Work graduates who grew up on a housing estate wanted to make a difference. And this is not what they signed up for. There is no way that they signed up to deal with a 50 year old. You know, somebody who's just got out of prison and, and has no, you know, been wanting to get into treatment for methamphetamines in part. So it's it's absolutely not the case that this is all being done by, you know, white men in, in suits, sitting in in Canberra, the way that policies often imagined today. And the offices in which transactions are carried out both in terms of services delivered, and often therapeutic encounters happen, are often revolting. You know, like, that's why I think that the trauma informed thing is so interesting, because it does emphasise the importance of the built environment and an environment that doesn't re-traumatise or doesn't make things worse. And even if people think that they're doing the right thing, it's quite easy to point to the fact that they're failing in this because the buildings that they're in or not up to standard and these are the buildings, not that the housing people in, but that they're working in. And so the kind of punitive attitudes that policy people often have towards clients make some kind of sense when you look at the kind of environment that they're working in and the constraints that they're under and the fact that as I say, if I if I evict this person who's causing me trouble, I've got 5000 People who want this placed as well. So So again, that's a kind of point about, about rationing. And so that is absolutely a story about policy artefacts in terms of categories and exclusions and rationing and budgets. But it's also very much a kind of relational thing that's played out between people, none of whom had that much power. But really, when you think that, like doing policy practitioners, they're not, they're not the kind of states as we would like to imagine. So that's just kind of random bullet points. But, but as I said, it reminds me of it and I agree absolutely, with with John and with kind of Anne-Marie's point about the mundane, you know, like, you cannot take the mundane out of this stuff. And if you call it the mundane, then what you're sort of saying is on board with them, I'm not going to pay any attention to

Rachael Dobson 45:57

it. I'm just, I'm bringing up he reminded me of something, and I'm just trying to search for it. So really want to come back on that, kylie, but it's anybody got Oh, I am going to voice John. John, I'm going to be your I'm going to be you. Yeah. Interesting. I remember a social friend, social work friend in the 1980s talking about the offices, yeah, that they're working. It's wholly embodying what the state thought of their clients. And then I suppose it's interesting, though, because I think, no, I'm not I'm gonna wait till I find the document that wants to find me. Does anybody else have anything that they want to come back in on? At this moment Tess?

Tess Lea 46:44

I find I did find it interesting to talk about. Because my so my ethnographic habits have been very much to try not to exclude Parliaments and backrooms and CEO offices, as well, as, you know, the nasty flea bitten kinds of settings where, what what kylie is describing as, as all of them different manifestations of that, you know, so he can, you can do an anti tracing, to go back to my methods thing and sort of come at these things and see that this policy is all of these things, and then inhabits all those spaces, and it becomes different things in all of those spaces. And the stakes are different in all those spaces. So but the, the elite ones are actually very hard to get into, again, ethnographically, I had to be a ministerial adviser, I had to be a person who wrote legislation in order to get into those spaces in the first place, and then come

back into the [inaudible], and I don't know how common that is to be, you know, how much lead time people get as researchers to even do that, anyway. But what that shows you is that these are all different translation and brokerage points and passage points to use the STS language and they can become, you know, this, they, they are themselves quite consequential. So, these passage points and people will be fighting various fights, even at those. So, you know, you might have committees, also trying to prise open a nasty bit of legislation as it's coming across their books to try and push some means of flexibility or interpretation. So that that street level discretion has some oxygen, you know, they they're quite conscious of, you know, they've got some, you know, they've got Scott Morrison, they've got John Howard, they've got Boris, it, as you know, the person who's kind of introducing this latest precarity, whatever austerity driven thing, and in the work in the word, sorry, the wording in the wordsmithing in these fine little calibrations that are going into the adjectives and the clauses, there are a whole lot of tiny little interventions being done even there by people sort of seeing they can, you know, create a little window that they know other translators and other brokers and folk on the ground who will will have some discretion, even in the most meagre of circumstances, they have some discretion and the kindness the care the attention the relationality that although in your in sorry, in wild policy, I also say but we cannot rely on that for God's sake, we cannot rely on kindness and care at that level for people who are completely exhausted and under equipped and burnt out as the means by which we rectify this. It's important and it has to be honoured and we proclaimed and blah, blah, blah, but my God, it is it is the wrong end anyway. It's female, blah, blah, blah, you know, things. But also, I

Rachael Dobson 50:27

think the problem with I mean, I, it's interesting because this issue of kindness came up in. And I'm just picking up on a strand of what you're saying this the test, but it's this issue of kindness and care as it relates to social change and resistance and kind of hope is a really interesting one to me that came up in, there's a parallel event series to this call critical conversations. And there was a discussion with Fiona Williams on her book, Social Policy An Intersectional Analysis was great conversation, but I mean, I think it was interesting, you know, because, you know, Fiona quoted, you know, quoted Emily Dickinson talking on hope, as part of her, you know, insistence on the role of care. And obviously, that comes from a kind of politicised perspective as well. It's not just kind of like sentimental. And yet there's something for me that I still find just so difficult about conversations about care and kindness within the context of policy and policymaking, which is that it just seems to, it seems to invisibilise, you know, or desire to invisibilise, the kind of grinding institutional kind of material realities. And I find that very, I find that kind of interesting the way that that, you know, so if we just care, you know, it's fine. It's like, that's sort of how things function. Yeah. So I suppose it's thinking about what is that conception of care, in the service of, for one, have a way of phrasing it. And then there was something else that I wanted to say about think about in relation to our in the loosest of terms, conceptions of how people come to policymaking or kind of practice roles. And there's been kind of like smatterings of this, I think at different points. And I'm thinking here, John, your comment, then there's a question about what the those involved in policy in various ways knowing think about the thing that they are doing, they can be trying to do good, but they can also think, think that they are implicated. I'm looking out the corner of my eye, a policy document on complex needs. This was published about five years ago. And it's a green paper

and written with a kind of ministerial foreword that starts by saying homelessness is still too common. You kind of want to say, you know, no shit, you know what to do? It's so these these these capacities, I suppose you know, and then it goes on to say, you know, the hardest to reach clients can still slip through the net, this is not a new problem. These are some of society's most vulnerable people. So I suppose, what I find interesting about this stuff, and what I find productive about this stuff, what do I think about my civil servant friend, or whether I think about this policy document is that insists upon? Well, it stops me from seeing the state as something else where it all is sort of it prohibits that, because it, you know, a this, this is the stuff that kind of, you know, these are the folks that kind of embody the say, I suppose, in one way. But actually, there's this constant sense of constituting of institutional space, I guess, via experience and via people kind of seemingly coming to this stuff for the first time. Anyway, so. Shona, you've got your hand up? Well,

Shona Hunter 56:28

I think I just wanted to say, as he as soon as you read out that document, for me, I was kind of screaming homelessness isn't common, its constitutive. It is totally. And to me, that was basically that's the issue that I'm trying to grapple with, analytically, in relation to, to category process, ontology, whatever, you know. So if homelessness is constitutive, just say right, rather than common, then where does that leave, for example, the student so the students I was talking about this week, both sets are many of them higher level, you know, the sorts of people we're now talking about your bureaucrats and bleeding hearts? Or is this bureau professional or whatever, you know, we can position ourselves and them in all sorts of ways in that, but, but but this really, you know, for me, I feel the tensions of this so much at the moment, because things a bifurcated. You know, when I think why I started off with this, sorry, it was going to be a comment. But when I swear, I started off at the beginning, I was so kind of what is it that's going on, it is literally I can be in one space, and the conversation will be so far away from the one that we're having. Around, you know, what can we do? What is it, you know, kind of a real what works thing, and this is all great, and we love what you're saying? And it's teaching us loads of stuff, but what the heck, you know, what does that mean? And what do we do? And we can have those conversations for as long as we want about, well, we can do things differently, if we, you know, anyway, so I think that's why use the example of teaching, but I won't go on, but I know I'm going to be in another space in two days. And there's going to be another set of conversations, which that's with the utopian folks, you know, we're talking about failure. You know, we're talking about failure, and I'll be talking about policy failure, but the whole time, it could be another, you know, so maybe it's all about me, of course, it's all about me.

Rachael Dobson 58:31

but does that relate to so when you're saying you know, homelessness is constitutive, you know, you wanted to kind of make that particular point? I mean, does that relate to the particular thing that I am we are grappling with, which is this issue of the reactive versus the kind of productive? Are you off, John? Hanna? Oh, Hanna is off. Oh, sorry. I can't see, Hanna. Oh, Hanna's going? Yeah, sorry. I've just seen the comment. Hanna, lovely to see you be in touch.

kylie valentine 59:02

Thank you.

Rachael Dobson 59:09

So as opposed to Yeah. Does this relate to the kind of reactive productive thing?

Shona Hunter 59:20

I don't know, really sorry. I don't know. I think I'm taken back again to Gail Lewis. And just thinking about there is something about what Gail talks about when she talks about how the state you know, in her analysis is totally unashamedly psychosocial. I don't know why I said unashamedly there, but, but I think in a way our our analyses when I would say this wouldn't have to be that but partly why my sort of analyses isn't read like that is because it's read as little or trivial or whatever, you know, all of the discussions that we've that we've talked about all the names that we kind of use today around experience but so so I don't think obvious meaning my I'll actually I was meaning something particular about the notion of the home actually, because it does relate to the global colonial cities that we're in. Really, I think if we think about possession home fixedness, but I don't think that's quite where I was going with it, I was just meaning I was talking about the constitutive outside, you know, it's not much more complicated than that, really. But of course, when we recognise that we're grappling with, with internal external, which is not helpful in the sense, which is what we're trying to get out of, you know, so I don't know, I feel like I'm not helping again. So I'm just going to stop.

Rachael Dobson 1:00:37

Suppose I was just picking up on Tess on containers, I was just picking up on that. That true challenge of yeah, the reactive versus productive. So when we are constantly which I don't know if that is what you're talking about, but that sense of when, when things are constantly positioned as something that we are reacting to, to homelessness is a problem that we react to. Right, ostensibly, or that's how the articulation here is something that's happening, sort of as, as if it just sort of is there, rather than something that is constituted as you say, rather than something that is that there is a whole kind of productive set of kind of relations going on? I don't know if that's is what you were talking about. But that, for me, is also a link back to Wild Policy. Actually, I think there are passages in the book Tess where you talk really explicitly about the smoothing out of that, that enables the reactive mode to continue, or that in various forms, whether it's sort of in a teaching practice, or in this kind of societal conversation sense or whatever. What were you thinking Tess?

Tess Lea 1:01:55

Oh, I think that I think what we're describing is not dissimilar to how we, you know, have to reckon with our co-implication with the very drivers of a dead, dying climate, you know, are escalating climate. So we, you have, we have to start from the position of deep invocation, we have to start from position that we can't disavow the thing that we are in, even though we want to try and think of it differently. Because with because what is the alternative? And so, but at the same time, I mean, kylie's had to listen to parts of what I talked about tonight, another topic, but in the other talk that I go, which I happened to have [inaudible] the policy ecology part, which Rachael asked for, it's like, great, because in the middle of moving boxes, blah,

blah, blah, that's great. Regardless, in that other talk I was describing how nonetheless, we have to ask ourselves the question of, nonetheless, nonetheless, and even so here we are, what to do right here right now, can I pull something better out of this shitty thing that we're in can this can this be made better for now for the now, but not as a full stop? Not as this is, the only thing we can hope for this is the only thing we can imagine that we can't transcend this, but perhaps as an act of prefiguring what we might carry forward and fight for in, in in alternative ways of being in the world. You know, because caring, and having systems of care will continue to matter, whatever worlds we're in. So that's how I reconcile Shona that move between thinking in hyper practical terms, and I do oh my gosh, do I right down to you know, having railing about the use of PVC over stainless steel or stainless steel over PVC, when that's the issue or depends on what I'm railing about. I've spent my life there's many graveyards from my railings, schooling, you know, even the unequal inequalities of the university sector da bla bla bla bla, to get hyper practical about those things is also a means of saying even so here and now what, what could be better and fighting for those things and never under estimating the dimensions of those fights either, which is but the brain also needs to say, Why is this so hard? And, you know, what does that suggest about the thing that we're in the things we need to change? You know, but is there a better organising apparatus then? Outside government don't know because that is too hard for me to imagine. Imagine outside of, you know, I do read the anarchist literature data but you know the idea of everything being a commons also horrifies me I don't belong to you know community gardens for that very reason you know, fights over who pull up the fucking rocket would drive me nuts. So So I think we are, we are so this is this is a very anthropological problem because anthropologists try very hard to use the otherwise radical alterity to look back, reflect back at the things that they are