Mapping the Margins of Small Places

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ABSTRACT

With inspiration from Crenshaw´s paper, "Mapping the Margins" (1991), this paper attempts a theoretical rethinking of intersectionality specifically applied to small-scale settings. The theoretical question addressed is: how may we rethink intersectionality as a theory, if the social processes of inclusion and exclusion we wish to investigate take place in small-scale settings? Crenshaw´s original aim was to "advance the telling" (1991, p.1242) of those places peopled by persons not usually at the centre of attention. But what if one lives in a place where it is literally difficult to escape notice? Do small-scale settings throw up particular conditions for expressing one´s gender or other (intersecting) identities? While Crenshaw was concerned about (legal) practices that "relegate the identity of women of color to a location that resists telling" (1991, p. 1242), the concern raised here is whether some locations relegate identities to positions that resist retelling or reinterpretation? The paper discusses both geographic and metaphorical small-scale settings in the form of islands and close-knit communities. One characteristic of such settings is that they are typically places where people know each other in different capacities, leading to compulsory intimacy (Hayfield & Schug, 2019). This means that identities need to be negotiated in constellations where people often already have pre-existing ideas about and experiences with each other.

KEY WORDS

INTERSECTIONALITY, FEMINIST GEOGRAPHY, IDENTITY NEGOTIATIONS, ISLANDED COMMUNITIES, ISLANDNESS, SMALL-SCALE SETTINGS, COMPULSORY INTIMACY

PRE-REFLECTIONS

Whenever I visit Tórshavn, the small capital (approx. 19,000 inhabitants) of the Faroes, I do one of two things: work or walk. Crisscrossing town by foot in rain, snow, and an occasional ray of sunshine, there is one house downtown which I cannot help but notice: a small house in the oldest part of town. I think most "Havnarfolk" (locals) will know which one I am thinking of: It is the one with rainbow flags and rainbow art in the windows, and a mock street sign which says, "Gay Street". Passing this house has always made me smile, but also wonder about what it would be like to so strongly express identification with a particular social category in a place where most people know (or think they know) each other. Does this mean that whenever the owner walks out their front door, they will always be perceived as "that gay person"? Maybe even *only* as "that gay person", rather than say, "a colleague", "a piano player" or whatever other skills and identities this person may associate with?

This reflection partially ties in with an experience I had many years ago, when one of my sons started school, and all the parents were crammed in the back of the room, while the teacher started introductions and called out all the kids' names. Calling out one particular name, a snicker went through the crowd of parents, as someone started whispering "isn´t he the one with two mothers?". Well, yes, but as it turned out, he was also a kid with a great sense of humour, a good playmate, and - as they got older - a brilliant collaborator in group project work, because he actually pulled his part of the weight.

I do not know which one of the parents started the commotion at the back of the room, but probably it was someone who "knew" this kid already from his or her own child attending the same kindergarten. Coming to the school from at least four different kindergartens across town, the kids themselves were starting afresh on new social relations with each other. Yet, clearly some adults in the room already associated luggage with many of them, some kids being more visible and attracting more attention than others. As I later learned, many of the parents themselves were in fact old schoolmates, and coming from a much larger setting myself, the amount of "inside knowledge" they all had about each other, the school and other aspects of local life never ceased astounding me.

In this paper, I aspire to revisit the concept of intersectionality in settings where people presume they already "know" each other, in this way bringing out nuances and adding to Crenshaw´s original conceptualisation. I ask how we may rethink intersectionality as a theory, if the social processes of inclusion and exclusion we wish to investigate take place in small-scale settings. By small-scale settings I refer both to literal island places such as the Faroes, which refer to geographic locations, but also to metaphorical small-scale settings such as schools, classrooms or workplaces, which I argue sometimes also function as delimited settings for social interaction.

Crenshaw´s original aim was to "advance the telling" of those places peopled by persons not usually at the centre of attention (Crenshaw, 1991, p.1242) and therefore deprived of adequate legal protection (Crenshaw, 1989; Carastathis, 2013). But what if one lives in a place where it is literally difficult to escape notice, due to small population size? Do small-scale settings throw up particular conditions for expressing one´s gender, sexuality or other (intersecting) identities? Examining Crenshaw´s original metaphors at some depth, I explore what happens to the theory of intersectionality when it is conceptualised in the context of 'small places'. While Crenshaw was concerned about (legal) practices that "relegate the identity of women of color to *a location that resists telling*" (1991, p. 1242, my emphasis), the concern I am attempting to raise is *whether some locations may relegate identities to positions that resist retelling or reinterpretation*.

THE ORIGINS OF INTERSECTIONALITY

The concept of intersectionality is often accredited to American scholar and feminist activist Kimberley

Crenshaw (Phoenix, 2006; Pristed Nielsen, 2013; Davis, 2014; Hvenegård-Lassen et al., 2020). She first wrote about intersectionality in an analysis of Black women's employment experiences in the US (Crenshaw, 1989). The word *intersectionality* refers to a metaphor in this paper, which explains how discrimination of Black women in the US labour market is analogous to traffic in an intersection. It comes from multiple directions, and it can be hard to establish beyond reasonable doubt – and therefore impossible to receive legal redress – which type of discrimination caused the injury. It is thus important to understand about this metaphor that the intersection is not between identities (*positions*) but between forms of discrimination (*effects*) (Rodó-Zárate & Jorba 2020, p. 28).

There is another, often overlooked, metaphor in Crenshaw´s 1989 paper, namely the basement metaphor. As pointed out by Carastathis (2013, p. 698), this metaphor is significant for its account of the socio-legal production of *hierarchical* power. While the intersection is a two-dimensional model, the basement model introduces a third, vertical dimension of how discrimination is played out. As this metaphor is rarely discussed, allow me to quote it in full:

> Imagine a basement which contains all people who are disadvantaged on the basis of race, sex, class, sexual preference, age and/or physical ability. These people are stacked - feet standing on shoulders - with those on the bottom being disadvantaged by the full array of factors, up to the very top, where the heads of all those disadvantaged by a singular factor brush up against the ceiling. Their ceiling is actually the floor above which only those who are *not* disadvantaged in any way reside. In efforts to correct some aspects of domination, those above the ceiling admit from the basement only those who can say that "but for" the ceiling, they too would be in the upper room. A hatch is developed through which those placed immediately below can crawl. Yet this hatch is generally available only to those who - due to the singularity of their burden and their otherwise privileged position relative to those below - are in the position to crawl through. Those who are multiply-burdened are generally left below unless they can somehow pull themselves into the groups that are permitted to squeeze through the hatch (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 151-152).

While the intersection represents a flat geography of power (Carastathis, 2013, p. 712), the basement metaphor introduces a vertical as well as a temporal or diachronic element (Carastathis, 2013, p. 710), as it opens up for change over time, represented through the hope or prospect of eventually being able to "squeeze through" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 152). I shall return to this notion of temporality and prospect for change below, as I introduce arguments by feminist geographers about negotiating identities in space.

Crenshaw´s empirical observations, which sparked her theoretical arguments, came out of concerns with lived experiences of real people expressing different types of identities. As such, her observations were not new, although her usage of the term *intersectionality* was. The Combahee River Collective, a Black feminist organisation active in Boston between the years 1974-1980, had already more than a decade earlier called attention to the lived realities of Black women experiencing multiple simultaneous forms of oppression. As their 1977 statement says, "we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking" (Combahee River Collective, 1977, p. 1). That their viewpoints and ideas correspond rather precisely to subsequent conceptions of *intersectionality* is also evident from a quote later in the statement: "We also often find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously. We know that there is such a thing as racial-sexual oppression which is neither solely racial nor solely sexual" (Combahee River Collective, 1977, p. 4).

While the Combahee River Collective initiated attention to what they termed "interlocking systems of oppression", it was Crenshaw´s publication of her paper "Mapping the Margins" in *Stanford Law Review* (Crenshaw, 1991) which initiated usage of the term "intersectionality" among – in the first instance – feminist researchers. Based on observations of practices at battered women´s shelters in the Los Angeles area in the late 1980s, Crenshaw concluded that women of colour did not receive appropriate attention, treatment and support. Not even from the feminists and antiracists whose support and attention could perhaps have been assumed: "The failure of feminism to interrogate race means that resistance strategies of feminism will often replicate and reinforce the subordination of people of color, and the failure of antiracism to interrogate patriarchy means that antiracism will frequently reproduce the subordination of women" (1991, p. 1252).

Similarly, the Combahee River Collective also spoke about the inability or unwillingness of other liberation movements to consider the specific prerogatives of Black (lesbian) women; "it is apparent that no other ostensibly progressive movement has ever considered our specific oppression as a priority or worked seriously for the ending of that oppression" (Combahee River Collective, 1977, p. 3). Directly addressing their connections to the Black liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the Combahee River Collective pointed out how "It was our experience and disillusionment within these liberation movements, as well as experience on the periphery of the white male left, that led to the need to develop a politics that was anti-racist, unlike those of white women, and anti-sexist, unlike those of Black and white men" (Combahee River Collective, 1977, p. 2).

There are thus very many similarities between the arguments in the "Combahee River Collective Statement" and especially Crenshaw´s 1991 paper on "Mapping the Margins", and both texts could be assessed as "activist" in the sense of attempting to call attention to what was perceived as social injustices. Crenshaw herself explicitly developed her theory of intersectionality with the aim to "advance the telling" of the locations where the consequences of the failures of different equal rights movements made themselves felt (1991, p. 1242). This is why she was concerned with "mapping the margins", so that those people whose needs often escape notice in policies and practices ostensibly designed to alleviate the consequences of processes of social exclusion might be included.

A whole host of feminist scholars have since debated, expanded and further developed the concept of intersectionality in different directions. While some primarily engage in debate over the concept´s theoretical usefulness (e.g. Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011; Staunæs, 2003; Staunæs & Søndergaard, 2006), others argue that its most significant contribution lies in the ability to develop more refined empirical analysis of social interactions (McCall, 2005; Jensen, 2006; Christensen & Jensen, 2012; Davis, 2014). The number of scholarly publications either debating or applying the concept is ever increasing.

Indeed, the publication of the present special issue of *Women, Gender & Research,* and the fact that this is the second special issue on intersectionality in the journal's history (Christiansen et al., 2006), attests to the continued academic preoccupation with the concept. While the generalisability of the theory of intersectionality beyond the lived experiences of Black women in the US has at times been a hotly debated issue (Carastathis, 2013; Hvenegård-Lassen, 2020), the sheer volume of academic publications debating and applying the concept attests to its continued wide intellectual appeal. One recurring debate, which can be traced back at least to the Combahee River Collective statement (1977), pertains to which differences matter.

WHICH DIFFERENCES MATTER?

Crenshaw´s original concern was primarily with intersections of race and gender (Crenshaw 1989), although she explicitly acknowledged the relevance of other types of social differentiation in creating

experiences of marginalisation: "The struggle over which differences matter and which do not is neither an abstract nor an insignificant debate among women" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1265). Several subsequent feminist scholars building on Crenshaw have, through various contributions, reflected on which differences besides gender and race matter – age, class, sexuality often being among distinctions appearing at the top of such lists. Returning to use predating Crenshaw, The Combahee River Collective Statement is quite specific about the order of the Collective´s attention to systems of oppression: "A combined anti-racist and anti-sexist position drew us together initially, and as we developed politically we addressed ourselves to heterosexism and economic oppression under capitalism" (Combahee River Collective, 1977, p. 3).

Other researchers have also debated which differences to include in intersectional analyses. One general trend is that priorities tend to differ among researchers working in respectively the US and EU (Christensen & Siim, 2006; Davis, 2009; Elg et al., 2010; Pristed Nielsen, 2013; Hvenegård-Lassen et al., 2020). As argued by Davis, "the trajectories of reception have been different" (Davis, 2009, n.p.) in the US and the EU. Davis argues that in a US context, the concept of intersectionality is most frequently associated with critical race studies and the politics of anti-racism, whereas this issue is less salient in the EU, where "ethnicity" is a more frequently applied term. One explanation for this may be that while Europe was certainly highly complicit in slavery, there were relatively few slaves actually residing in Europe. This may well have occluded the sense of urgency in foregrounding questions of race and racism. Furthermore, in scholarly work from the US, focus is mostly on the triad gender-race-class (e.g. Hancock, 2007), whereas "European scholars seem more reluctant to prioritize, and sometimes bring in potentially endless lists" (Pristed Nielsen, 2013, p. 279). Nevertheless, as I have argued elsewhere, gender tends to take priority as category among European researchers and policy makers alike: "[A]ppeals to gender equality historically precede appeals to anti-racism in most European countries […] This makes the EU context for debating anti-discrimination discursively different from that of the USA" (Pristed Nielsen, 2013, p. 280, see also Christensen & Siim, 2006, p. 35). Intersectionality has thus gained traction in Europe especially among feminist scholars – also among those not necessarily preoccupied with racism and racialisation. While race and racialisation have thus in some cases left the centre of attention in European academic publications on intersectionality, other types of identities have been brought to attention, one of them being place belonging.

ADDING PLACE TO DEBATES ABOUT INTERSECTIONALITY

While intersectionality as a concept has travelled through both space and time (Christensen & Siim, 2006; Phoenix, 2006; Davis, 2009; Pristed Nielsen, 2013; Hvenegård-Lassen et al., 2020), and still is a concept heavily debated on each side and across the Atlantic, contextual readings of intersectionality have also emerged in quite a different sense. Feminist geographers, from the 1970s forward, started theorising place and space as fraught with social relations enabling and disabling exertions of power (whether economic, political, or social) (Massey, 1994, 2005; McDowell, 1999; Nelson & Seager, 2005). They also started theorising space and place as interconnected with gendered and classed identities (e.g. Massey, 1994, 2005; Forsberg, 1998, 2001; Fenster, 2005), arguing that "spaces and places are experienced differently by different people, and come to be associated with presence or absence of different groups of people" (Nelson & Seager, 2005, p. 15). These points are epitomised in Massey´s warning against romanticising public space as "an emptiness which enables free and equal speech" (Massey, 2005, p. 152). Rather, space - in Massey's view - should be conceptualised as "throwntogetherness" (p. 141), as a continual process of negotiating the terms of social co-existence between differently situated and identified bodies. Massey's views on space thus have some semblance with the views on temporality and prospects for

negotiating positions, which Carastathis (2013) identifies in Crenshaw's basement metaphor.

One geographer who has been concerned with negotiated embodied presence in place is Tim Cresswell, who in his book *In Place/Out of Place* (1996) points out how dominant ideas exist about what is acceptable (in place) or not (out of place) in a given place and context and performed by a given body. Hence, "rules" for social acceptability apply to specific places and for specific bodies. Such bodily specificity often relates to gender, but other socially differentiating factors such as age, class, bodily abilities, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. may also carry salience in specific settings. Furthermore, Cresswell makes the important point that moving between different places frequently alters conditions for acceptability and perceptions of bodily displays, *inter alia* altering the individual's social standing. This phenomenon is documented by Mills (1996, 2005) in her studies of female British travellers in the colonies during the heyday of British rule in India and Africa. Mills shows how these women were sometimes travelling as "honorary men" with different possibilities for mobility and agency compared to when they were travelling at home in Britain (Mills, 1996, p. 140). The overall argument is that we frequently have expectations about behaviour which relate particular social positions to possibilities for particular actions in particular places, but movement through space or between places can alter both social position and expectations about/possibilities for behaviour.

Returning to Crenshaw´s basement metaphor, we may capture this idea by arguing that it matters which "house" we are in the basement of. The hatch works differently in different legal and social contexts, different arguments are accepted as the "but for" which allows one to "squeeze through" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 152). Place is therefore a factor to be reckoned with in intersectional analyses. Feminist geographers argue that adding place to analyses of intersectional positionalities implies a contextual understanding of the relative ascendancy of different identities in different places. Island studies scholars, in turn, have argued that islands constitute such special settings that they warrant research "on their own terms" (Baldacchino, 2008). This argument leads to the theoretical question: if islands are, indeed, such special settings, does this mean that they throw up particular conditions for negotiating one´s embodied presence in space?

INTERSECTIONALITY IN ISLAND SETTINGS

Most prominently, it is the Greek *cum* Hawai'ian scholar Marina Karides (2017, 2020) who has argued that island places throw up specific parameters for identity expressions. She proposes that *islandness* is a factor which requires attention in feminist intersectional analyses of island life. But what is islandness? According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, an island is defined as "a piece of land completely surrounded by water" (2018). "Island Studies" as an academic field is centred on the argument that the fact of being "completely surrounded by water" shapes both social, economic and political possibilities on islands. Islandness is therefore a term referring to this fact. The term is coined by Maltese scholar Godfrey Baldacchino, who argues that islandness should be seen as "an intervening variable that does not determine, but contours and conditions physical and social events in distinct, and distinctly relevant, ways" (Baldacchino, 2004, p. 278).

Karides has proposed "island feminism" as a theoretical orientation which approaches island studies while drawing from feminisms of intersectionality, geography, (post)coloniality and queer theory (Karides, 2017, p. 31). Reminiscent of Crenshaw´s point about the lacunae of respectively feminist and anti-racist struggles, Karides argues that:

> Although places and spaces are gendered, oriented by sexuality regimes, class and racial hierarchies, and sculpted by coloniality and national status, Island Studies scholarship barely has considered how life and opportunities on islands and between islands are shaped by these factors (Karides, 2017, p.30).

In response to this absence, "Island feminism is offered as a synergistic perspective to enable critical analysis of the social inequalities and sexuality regimes within and across islands" (Karides, 2017, p.30).

Karides (2020) suggests that feminist analyses are particularly important when attempting to understand processes of social differentiation and emergence of new economic and social opportunities in island locations. The added emphasis on island locations entails that islandness "becomes a facet of intersectional analysis" (Karides, 2017, p. 34). This means that we need to pay specific attention to the fact of islands being "completely surrounded by water" and therefore being clearly delimited. For one thing, this means that it requires resources to leave (either access to a boat or other means of transportation and/or money to pay for transportation); and secondly – unless the island is large – you are likely to bump into people again. If we return here to Cresswell's insight about how moving between different locations can make new bodies or new behaviour be in or out of place, this means that living on islands (or in other close-knit communities where mobility is difficult) could impede attempts to alter one´s social position. It may simply be impossible to move into "a new place" (literally or metaphorically) and negotiate the conditions for oneself to acquire a new social position or new expectations or possibilities for new types of behaviour.

Overall, my argument is that place matters in intersectional analyses, and further that islands are a special kind of place, which in turn matter in special kinds of ways. This is related to Shields' ideas about space as being "causative".

> Rather than "a cause" the spatial is *causative*. Spatialisation has a mediating effect because it represents the contingent juxtaposition of social and economic forces, forms of social organisation, and constraints of the natural world and so on. But as "a cause", in and of itself, it plays no role for it is not a locus of causal forces. Human agents have causal power (Shields, 1991, p. 57, emphasis in original).

Developing Shield's argument further, islands are causative spaces in particular ways, because their boundaries are clearly marked by natural borders at the water's edge. The constraints of their natural world are intuitively identifiable. In such places, the arrival and departure of new people contribute to new juxtapositions of human agents, and therefore new constellations of social and economic forces. Obviously, *any* location and its attendant social relations will be marked by the arrival and departure of new persons. But the argument about islandness as an intervening variable is that islandness calls for heightened attention to the geographic boundaries of the location, and that the mobility efforts involved in crossing such boundaries should enhance our attention to the causative effects of spatial co-constellations of human agents. Conceivably, the "throwntogetherness" (Massey, 2005) of social relations in island spaces is intensified by the "settingapartness" of the islandness. There may literally be less wiggle room to negotiate the terms of being thrown together in a small-scale setting.

While the parallel to metaphorical islands such as work-related, educational or religious communities may seem to fade here, I would suggest that the arguments about mobility efforts and the inherent costs of attempting to move still apply. One´s presence in the social space or geographical place of a literal or metaphorical islanded community still requires negotiation.

NEGOTIATING ONE´S PRESENCE IN PLACE AND SPACE

Tying in Crenshaw´s arguments about the hatch in the basement ceiling (1989, p. 152) with those of feminist geographers' about being in or out of place (Cresswell, 1996) and negotiating a "throwntogetherness" (Massey, 2005), questions of power and resources are brought to the table. Not everybody has the same possibilities for simply moving elsewhere,

calling out a "but for" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 151) or negotiating their social position with new constellations of people. Furthermore, when living in a small place, perhaps the feeling of "being in the same boat" or already "knowing each other" limits one´s ability to negotiate (or perhaps conceal) certain aspects of one´s identity?

One researcher, who has addressed such questions, is the Faroese gender researcher Erika Hayfield. Having lived experience of doing research in Faroese society, she has published a paper in which she discusses "how islanders navigate multiple relations and how this might impact research ethics" (Hayfield, 2022, p. 233). While primarily concerned with a research ethics perspective, I argue that Hayfield's insights also carry theoretical relevance for any close-knit community. Hayfield herself uses the term "islanded community", which refers to communities characterised by interconnectedness, interdependency and intimacy (Hayfield, 2022, p. 237). She discusses these in terms of "the intensity of multiple relations" (Hayfield, 2022, p. 234), where public and private spheres often blend and overlap through meeting each other in different formal and informal roles. Hayfield fleshes out three different dimensions of how and why such intense and multiple relations matter through the concepts *interconnectedness*, *interdependency* and *intimacy*.

Interconnectedness refers to dual or multiple relationships between people who are connected through networks, socially and/or professionally. "They know and engage with the same people in overlapping social networks and there are high levels of familiarity amongst people, making anonymity impossible" (Hayfield, 2022, p. 237). She also speaks about this as "layers of relations, entailing that people gain insight into many facets of others' lives. Thus, multiple relations lead to social transparency and extensive knowledge about others" (Hayfield, 2022, p. 237).

Interdependency is, according to Hayfield, a result of social ties becoming complex and overlapping, "meaning that people rely on each other and navigate accordingly by anticipating future situations" (2022, p. 237). This, in turn, impacts power dynamics, which oftentimes will become (or be perceived to potentially become) circular rather than straightforward.

Finally, *intimacy* refers to closeness both physically and cognitively. Intimacy is to be understood in the sense that people are "compelled to have dealings with one another in multiple roles" (Hayfield, 2022, p. 237), even in cases of conflict. In a previous publication analysing the experiences of "strangers" in Faroese society, Hayfield and Schug find that "Familiarity is compulsory and it is impossible to remain unfamiliar given the extensive networks and the intimacy of place" (Hayfield & Schug, 2019, p. 395). A further point about intimacy in small places is that people will be able to observe each other's multiplicity of roles, potentially revealing perceived inconsistencies in identity performance (Hayfield, 2022, p. 238).

I argue that also metaphorical islands, such as close-knit work communities or communities of interest – for example religious or lifestyle communities – are often characterised by interconnectedness, interdependency and intimacy in precisely the types of ways described by Hayfield.

Tying together the threads of Hayfields arguments about islanded communities with the ideas presented above, it seems possible to suggest that "throwntogetherness" in island settings takes the form of being interconnected, interdependent and intimate because island space is "causative" (Shields, 1991) in this way. The "throwntogetherness" becomes more intimate (even with people one potentially disagrees with) and more interdependent (including in currently unpredictable future power relations) with people you are caused to be interconnected with in either social space or geographical place. Negotiating such types of "throwntogetherness" may even entail a sense of being thrown - not together but - *against* each other, leading to risks of ethical harm (Hayfield, 2022), or bruised identities and intersectional misrecognition. Below, I unfold this theoretical proposition through a few empirical examples meant to illuminate how

islandness (whether literal or metaphorical) can impact possibilities for negotiating intersectional identities at the margins of small places. The examples are deliberately disparate, drawing both on extended analyses of other researchers' cases and my own field work notes. Jointly, they are selected to represent a span illuminating the extent and relevance of my conceptual argument. Thus, examples span from research in a literal island place in Thailand (Malam, 2008); to research in the (relatively large) city places of Copenhagen and Berlin (Schröder, 2025), which nevertheless contain sub-communities that seem metaphorically islanded; to my own field work in the Danish Armed Forces, which turned out to be islanded in ways I had not foreseen. All three examples illuminate how people may negotiate their presence in the social space and/or geographical place of respectively literal and metaphorical islanded communities.

A FEW EMPIRICAL EXAMPLES TO EXPLORE IMPLICATIONS

My initial empirical inspiration for this paper came from having frequently passed by that little house with the strong identity statement in Tórshavn during my work-related visits to the Faroes, where I have always only been a visitor and never a resident. Co-considering intersectionality and islandness, I have elsewhere argued that especially island tourism (as a phenomenon which brings new human agents and bodies into contact with each other in interconnected communities) "fundamentally alters the mixture of 'throwntogetherness', and therefore calls for new intersectional analyses of negotiations of power in place" (Pristed Nielsen, 2023, p. 32).

One author, whom I would argue explores such "throwntogetherness" to enlightening effect (however, without using that term), is Malam (2008). Researching how in-migrating male Thai bar workers on Pha-ngan Island in Southern Thailand negotiate their position both *vis-à-vis* female and male tourists, local island residents, and transgender sex workers in the neighbouring bar, Malam´s analysis showcases intersectionality at work in an islanded community fraught with structures of power and identity in a place where access to mobility alters one´s positionality as being in or out of place.

Situating her work within feminist geography, but not referencing literature on intersectionality, Malam manages to execute what I would argue is an intersectional analysis, because it takes account of diverse social and spatial identities, including gender, sexuality, class, islander/non-islander, migrant and tourist positionalities. Arguably, islandness further becomes an intersecting variable in Malam's analysis at the point where she explains how access to a boat for some of her research subjects entail access to negotiate their positionality and potentially empower them beyond what is attainable behind the counter of the bar during working hours.

> Bar workers could also mobilise resources outside of the bar space in order to seduce potential girlfriends or support existing ones. Some examples of this in-kind support include taking women on free trips to nearby deserted beaches in boats belonging to their employers […] Mastery of space for bar workers was an expression of their creativity in applying strategic knowledge about the kinds of resources they could covertly acquire and the best times to do this (Malam, 2008, p. 588).

Malam argues about the site of her field work that it is "a site of intense encounters which can bring boundaries between identity categories into sharp focus" (Malam, 2008, p. 584). Although Malam limits herself to making claims about the particular island in which she did research, I would argue with reference to the work of Hayfield (2022) that many islands may be conceptualised as "sites of intense encounters" (Malam, 2008, p.584) or characterised by compulsory intimacy (Hayfield & Schug, 2019), perhaps especially for the resident population, certainly if they face material restraints in being able to leave.

Another empirical study, which brings out some interesting parallels, is Schröder's work (2025) concerning

the presence of LGBTIQ+ migrants in Europe. She describes how LGBTIQ+ identified migrants, who are dependent on receiving asylum status in the EU, experience their possibilities for negotiating their intersectional identities through time and space. Because some of these people may achieve asylum status based on their declared sexuality, such status acquisition may hinder or hamper further negotiation of their positionality and identity expressions. Furthermore, being an asylum seeker or a person with asylum status in this context may also hinder access to mobility, resulting in a "differential mobility" (Saleh & Tschalaer, 2023) for LGBTIQ+ identified persons with or without migrant background.

Schröder's research is based on fieldwork in the cities of Copenhagen and Berlin, which are not islands. Yet, her research is grounded in the LGBTIQ+ communities in each of these cities. More precisely, in LGBTIQ+ communities that take part in migrant support networks, a characteristic which arguably *does* make them interconnected, interdependent, intimate – and therefore islanded - communities. Having accessed these networks based on an identity as LGBTIQ+ identified (and possibly having acquired refugee status on this background), entail that Schröder´s research subjects have been involved in compulsory intimacy (Hayfield & Schug, 2019) in the sense that they have been compelled to share information about their sexual preferences. Furthermore, they are equipped with a differential access to mobility in a spatial context where mobility may be necessary to achieve the freedom to make choices about one´s expressed identity. Their lived intersectional identity expression is stifled, and further alteration of expression hampered through the smallness or islanded character of the LGBTIQ+ migrant network communities in Copenhagen and Berlin. Jasbir Puar speaks about "circulating points of exchange and contact within a biopolitical control economy" in the context of intimacy for queerly racialised populations (Puar, 2007, p.xxvi). Puar thus rearticulates intimacy as a register which hinges on both spatial and representational public and private domains. Combining Puar´s point with Hayfield's notions of "islanded communities" brings forward the suggestion that the spatial and representational circulation (in some cases) takes place in very small circles with an exceedingly high number of "points of exchange and contact" – thus increasing the (sensation of) biopolitical control.

The examples above relate respectively to the literal island place of Pha-ngan Island in Thailand, and the physical places but metaphorical "islanded communities" of LGBTIQ+ migrant networks in Berlin and Copenhagen. However, it has increasingly dawned on me how other – not place-based - types of "islanded communities" may also be subject to some of the same intersectional dynamics and identity negotiations as described above. A case in point would be women in the Danish Armed Forces, who could arguably be understood as an islanded community in the "sea of men" and male dominated norms historically characterising this workplace (Sløk-Andersen & Persson, 2021; KVINFO 2025).

Just how interconnected, interdependent and intimate this community can be, was brought out to me several times while working on a research project for the Danish Veterans' Centre (Pristed Nielsen, 2024). Although interviewing female veterans all over the country, who had between less than three and up to more than 30 years of experience as soldiers, it was apparent during interviews that some of the stories they told referred to the same superiors and the same military camps, although not having actually been in the same place at the same time. Yet they knew (of) each other. This became particularly apparent during one interview, in which I inadvertently broke standards of confidentiality and ethical behaviour. During our conversation, my interviewee described how you get better equipment and quicker access to spare parts during deployment. I responded that I had heard someone complain about a specific type of equipment. My interviewee promptly said: "Oh, you´ve spoken to XX!". These two women, I found out, had been on several deployments of six months' duration together, living *very* close to each other under very stressful circumstances. But because they

lived far apart, worked at different bases and specialised in different fields, I would have never guessed the connection. They were precisely intimate, interdependent and interconnected - at least for the duration of their deployments. And as they both foresaw a lifelong commitment to their workplace, they also engaged in a potential future "thrown*together*ness" via my intervention, I realised after the fact.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: NEGOTIATING MARGINS AND HATCHES

While the empirical examples and discussions emanating from the points above may seem arbitrary and disconnected, the point I am trying to make is hopefully consistent: intersectional analyses of processes of social inclusion and exclusion need to take place and space into account. Not just as yet another aspect of individual people´s social position (another part of "the endless list"), but as a contextual setting for any negotiation over social positions. This argument constitutes a deepening of the concept of intersectionality. The social power that comes with skin colour, gender expression, sexuality, family relations, nationality, etc. alters depending both on space as a *causative* phenomenon and on the particular "thrown*together*ness" in which one finds oneself.

Furthermore, I have argued that the *size* of the place matters in terms of how many individuals are engaged in negotiations, and whether one is likely to meet them again (perhaps in different capacities). Bringing together Crenshaw´s notion of intersectionality (1989) and ambition to shed light on the margins (1991), Shield's ideas about the causative nature of space (1991), Massey´s notion of "thrown*together*ness" (2005), Cresswell´s concept of being in or out of place (1996), and Karides' (2017, 2020) ideas about island intersectional analyses with Hayfield´s (2022) points about navigating in "islanded communities" leads to me to the following theoretical point: A small space is causative in a special way, because the number of persons "thrown" into the "together*ness*" shrinks, causing a potential inability to hide in the crowd and/or negotiate wide-ranging changes to one's identity expression over time. Living in islanded communities can impede attempts to alter one´s social position or identity. When trying to "map the margins" of small places, we may discover that there is perhaps already too much spotlight on those people living at the margins of such places, causing inability to produce new intersectional readings of their identity expressions and embodied positions. In the figurative language of the basement metaphor, it matters which house we are in the basement of, as both ceiling height and how the hatch clasp works are context specific.

Engaging further with Crenshaw´s foundational work, my arguments in this paper could be conceptualised as an attempt to explore the nature of "the hatch" in the basement metaphor (1989, p. 151-152). Crenshaw describes the hatch as "generally available only to those who - due to the singularity of their burden and their otherwise privileged position relative to those below - are in the position to crawl through" (1989, p. 152). My argument is that the hatch works differently in different legal and social contexts, and that different arguments are accepted (or not) as the "but for" which will allow access through the hatch. For Crenshaw, the hatch represents possibilities for receiving legal redress for unjustices due to discrimination. She describes how people in the basement are "stacked - feet standing on shoulders" (1989, p. 151), and only those at the top, whose heads brush up against the ceiling and who are able to call out a "but for", will be able to squeeze through. Those who are multiply disadvantaged, by contrast, are metaphorically left in darkness at the bottom of the basement, where the light of legal, social and political intervention does not shine.

In contrast, small-scale settings are characterised by both physical and cognitive intimacy (Hayfield, 2022; Hayfield & Schug, 2019). Squeezing up and out through a claim of "but for" may thus be more difficult, as islanded communities are characterised by interconnectedness and interdependency, entailing that it is wise to navigate through social space in anticipation of future encounters. Social networks

are overlapping, anonymity impossible, and layers of relations multiple (Hayfield, 2022, p. 237). Staying with the basement metaphor, one might argue that it is harder to hide certain aspects of one´s positionality in darkness in small-scale settings, and thus the cry of "but for" may become less credible. Furthermore, a claim of "but for" may prove an impediment in future social encounters, given the cognitive intimacy of islanded communities.

A high level of social transparency may thus impede any claim to crawl through the metaphorical hatch via a repositioning or negotiation of one´s identity. Expanding on Cresswell´s (1996) position, a particular place lends added or reduced valence to certain aspects of one´s identity. Living in a (geographically or metaphorically) small community entails that the ability to trade in different aspects of one's positionality is limited by the interconnectedness, interdependency and intimacy of the islanded community.

While Crenshaw is concerned about (legal) practices that "relegate the identity of women of color to *a location that resists telling*" (1991, p.1242, my emphasis) at the bottom rungs of the metaphorical basement, the point I am attempting to raise is that *some locations may relegate identities to positions that resist retelling or reinterpretation.*

Negotiating positionality in both literal and metaphorical islanded communities requires resources. In literal islands, such resources may be represented through physical objects such as boats, tunnels, bridges or plane tickets. These may in some cases represent avenues for telling a different story about one´s social positionality, and as such, the hatch may be temporarily opened by the migrant bar workers in Pha-ngan Island through borrowing a boat. Likewise, the hatch to achieve asylum status may be more or less permanently opened for migrants coming to Berlin or Copenhagen, but the permanence of having squeezed through the hatch needs to be continually negotiated through being seen to demonstrate LGBTIQ+ identification. In both examples, the settings in which individuals may attempt to reinterpret or negotiate their identities, due to their smallness, seem to throw up obstacles for such a retelling or reinterpretation of positionality.

Finally, I would like to return to my opening reflections on crisscrossing on foot through the old town centre of Tórshavn. As anyone who has done so will appreciate, it is hilly, there are many dead ends, steep stairs and one-way streets, and the probability that you end up walking around in circles is high. If you have met someone walking up one hill, there is a high probability that you may meet them again walking down another. Intersections in Tórshavn do not represent a "flat geography of power" (Carastathis, 2013, p. 712). The vertical dimension is always already potentially inherent in any encounter.

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