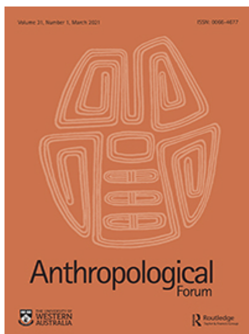

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The Instability of Values: Tradition, Autonomy and the Dynamics of Sociality in the Philippine Highlands

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ABSTRACT
What can we learn about values and how they shape sociality by looking at a murder? In this article, I look closer at the different and conflicting values involved in the social events leading up to an accidental killing of an outside visitor to a village in the northern highlands of the Philippines. I examine how these values were inherently instable and how this instability contributed to the precarious unfolding of sociality that took place before, during and after the murder. I situate the murder within a dynamic sociality that includes both humans and spirits and which operates as a continuously shifting form of relational configurations. This sociality, I argue, is given shape, although not necessarily order, by context-specific heterogeneous actualisations of values, including tradition and autonomy. Against claims that values exist most forcefully and tangibly in social life when they are realised in full, I argue that events such as the murder case, show us that values shape sociality just as forcefully, if not more, when they are actualised in practice and then run up against other differently actualised values.

KEYWORDS
Values; sociality; animism; autonomy; tradition

Introduction

In 2007,[1] a volunteer foreign aid worker travelled to the mountains of the northern Philippine highlands to hike and enjoy the spectacular views of the UNESCO World Heritage rice terraces. As she rounded a corner on the narrow trail leading down to a certain village, she accidentally collided with José, a young villager, causing him to drop the bundle of cloths he was carrying.[2] In what initially seemed like an explicable rage, José picked up a rock and knocked her repeatedly over the head. Realising that he had killed her, he hid the body in a dried-up creek bed, went home, but soon fled to Baguio, the regional big town, where he went into hiding.

The killing soon drew the attention of both national and international media, and when these began speculating about both rape and robbery as motives, José, a father of three, decided to give himself up and confess. As reported in the media,[3] he admitted to the murder, but added: ‘I did not do whatever other people are thinking I did … I did not plan to kill [her], or harm her … My mind went blank. I didn’t know who she was or

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what she was'. The Regional Trial Court later sentenced José to 40 years in prison for murder and ordered him to pay the victim's family 40 million pesos.

Returning for my second fieldwork period shortly after the event,[4] it soon became clear that the murder was the unhappy result of a series of conflicts and tensions between some of my former village friends. On the surface, the conflicts were seemingly about access to land and resources, but when I talked to people about what happened before, during and after the murder, it transpired that the tensions were also about values regarding how to behave and maintain relations between humans, land and ancestors.

We are used to thinking that cultural values, what people hold as good, virtuous, legitimate, beautiful or normatively desirable (see Sillander's introduction to this issue; Graeber 2001, 3) contribute to give some sort order or predictable direction to how social life unfolds. How, then, could we possibly learn anything about how values shape sociality by looking at such a disorderly, unpredictable and normatively undesirable event as an accidental murder?

Judging from what Joel Robbins (2018) claims in the article 'Where in the world are values?', we should not expect much. Values exist, he argues (2018, 180) 'most forcefully and tangibly' in social life when they are embodied in exemplars, which can be persons or events that instantiate a full realisation of an important value. In such a perspective, murders and other sorts of moral breakdowns (Zigon 2007) would perhaps not come first to mind when looking for ways in which to understand how values exist in the world and how they are connected with social action. Nevertheless, in this article, I will argue that murders and other non-exemplary instances of social action actually may tell us quite a lot about values and how they contribute to the dynamics of social life.

Engagements with the question of how social action relates to cultural values, ethics and morality have been central to anthropology for a long time (*e.g.* Kluckhohn 1951; Edel and Edel 1959; Munn 1986; Howell 1997; Dumont 2004), and have also recently regained increased momentum (Graeber 2001; Robbins 2004; Lambek 2010; Fassin 2012; Otto and Willerslev 2013). Basically, two major approaches seem to have developed, one working on the assumption that values consist primarily in some sort of social structure and another starting from individual motivation and action. The former, primarily inspired by Dumont's (2004) structuralist approach where values operate in hierarchically arranged relations of encompassment, sees values as existing as ideals through which action is ordered, evaluated and adjusted. Robbins's argument aligns closely with Dumont as he too sees particular instantiations of values as either partial or full realisations of some sort of abstract ideals, or as Dumont would have it, idea-values (2013, 301). It is when such value realisations come most closely to these idea-values that people experience the existence of values most forcefully, Robbins claims (2018, 190), and it is to these we must look in order to get an understanding of how values relate to the *emergence of order* in social life (2018, 177, my emphasis).[5] In Robbins's perspective, there seems to be a more or less shared understanding of what a full realisation of a value looks like and that actions are then judged on the basis of their closeness to or distance from this ideal.

The latter approach advocates a quite different view on the relation between action and values and grows primarily out of Munn's (1986) work on value in Gawa, Papua New Guinea. In Gawa, an island that is part of the Kula exchange circle, Munn sees

values as generated by human acts of spatial and temporal extensions of self-other relationships. While others (for instance Graeber 2001; Turner 2008) have seen value actions as occurring in other social actions, these action-oriented value theories share the idea of action coming before valuation. In this perspective, the whole idea of value being either fully or partially realisable in practice (or in exemplars) becomes irrelevant since actions are not evaluated up against abstract idea-values, but rather emerge through actions.

Acknowledging, as the first approach indicates, that values may exist as idealised norms for relational action, I draw here also on the latter approach and argue that it is through becoming actualised in relational practices that values shape sociality most forcefully. However, when they do so, they do not necessarily lead to the emergence of the social order Robbins refers to. Rather than seeing relation between values and action as one in which the latter is more or less in accordance with the former, I approach values as existing as more or less abstract and undetermined ideas. As I will show, references to values such as tradition and autonomy were frequent in the village. The exact meaning of and interrelations between these values were, however, highly open and undetermined. As many others working in the region have underlined (Rosaldo 1980; Gibson 1986; Guinness 1986; Gibson and Sillander 2011), several and often opposing values often co-exist, and the exact interrelations between them are far from as settled as Dumont's structuralist approach might indicate.[6] Rather, they are negotiated and re-arranged, not always conclusively and coherently, in practice. The abstract and undetermined values become thus actualised in practice, and their meaning and their relations to other values are then highly variable and relative to the interests, interpretations and emotional perspectives of the people involved (Martin 2013; Bratrud, forthcoming) as well as to the particularities of the situations in which they are actualised.[7] Investigating values as they emerged as heterogeneous and shifting in situated practices, I take my cue from Gluckman's situational analysis (1940) and the view that values are in continuous processes of construction and situated differentiation (Kapferer and Gold 2018). I suggest, then, that the heterogeneous character they thus gain in practical actualisations means that they push and pull on relations in a way that gives sociality an inherent dynamic instability and unpredictable character.

I will explore the instability and heterogeneity of values by looking at the conflicts in which the murder became a part. I should emphasise from the start that I by no means intend to explain why the murder happened. As mentioned, I see it as an accidental and unfortunate result of ongoing conflicts in the village. Similar to Shore's (1982) use of a murder case to explore the paradoxes and indeterminacies of Samoan aesthetics of social relationships, I use the murder as a frame for investigating the relations between the fluidity of sociality and the heterogeneity of values and eschew providing a solution to the mystery of why José killed the victim.[8]

Although nearly everyone in the village considered the killing itself hideous, opinions about the persons involved were more ambivalent.[9] The events leading up to the murder suggest that a range of different, and to a certain extent incompatible, values and value interpretations were contributing to the unfolding of social relations that included both humans and ancestors. I suggest that looking at how values operated in these dynamic and unpredictable processes gives us a quite different picture of how values relate to sociality than when looking at them as fully realised in exemplars. Is it really

the case, I ask, that values most forcefully or tangibly exist in and shape social life when they are embodied in exemplars? Cannot people experience the existence of values just as much, or even more forcefully, through instances when heterogeneous actualisations of values run up against each other and emerge in processes of situated differentiations? In the following, I first describe sociality as a fluid and dynamic relationality before I focus on two values, which I term ‘tradition’ and ‘autonomy’, and their involvement in these dynamics. I argue that the multiple and diverse actualisations of the values in the events before, during and after the murder demonstrate that they by no means always give sociality a predictable social order, but can rather instigate instability and unpredictability.

The Dynamics of Sociality

Surrounded by the steep, forest covered hills of the Cordillera Mountains, the village lies amidst a gigantic system of irrigated rice terraces. A majority of the about 1000 villagers are farmers cultivating wet rice in these terraces. Some, particularly young people, travel outside the village to take up temporary wage work in local road construction or go further away to study or work (McKay 2005, 2010). Hence, while the village is often portrayed in tourism promotions as a somewhat traditional and isolated village where people engage in close relations with ancestors and spirits, sociality in the village is continually changing and extends potentially far beyond village boundaries.

Although most villagers consider themselves Catholics, maintaining relations with ancestors and spirits is for most of them highly important. Thousands of spirits combine with ancestors to make up a spirit world that people relate with through sacrificial rituals, singing of epics and through respecting tradition in their everyday lives (Barton 1946; Stanyukovich 2013). For the most part, humans and spirits belong to two separate domains, but humans, along with animals, plants, spirits and ancestors, all share a form of life force, *lennawa*, that easily traverses the boundaries between the domains.

Maintaining the right balance between distance and connection to spirits is vital to ensure good health and well-being, as well as agricultural success. To ensure that spirits are satisfied, the villagers need to show respect for the ancestors through conducting agriculture as they did in the past, and through giving them what they ask for by inviting them to sacrificial rituals. Too close connection with spirits is, however, potentially dangerous as spirits may steal the *lennawa* of humans. However, too much distance is also dangerous, since spirits will then feel neglected and retaliate by causing illness and bad harvests. Relations between humans and spirits operate therefore as a continually shifting dynamic between different degrees of relatedness and alterity (Sillander 2016). This gives human-spirit sociality a chronically unstable (see Remme 2016) and plastic character where the relational scope of sociality continuously expands and contracts.[10]

Interhuman relations are similarly dynamic. Consanguine kin-relations are important, but they need to be actualised through specific ‘kinning’ (Howell 2003) practices, the most important being exchange of meat from sacrificed pigs. Pigs are expensive, however, and potential kin relations go wide, so in practice it is nearly impossible to actualise all of one’s blood relations at the same time. In my conversations with people

in the village, they often expressed how this required them to manage kin relations by giving meat to some and not others, thus attempting to control the extensive scope of their kin-based socialities. A form of ranking is part of this too. Distinction of rank is based on ownership of rice terraces, antique rice wine jars and metal gongs. In practice, however, ranking is more performative and contingent on the numbers of pigs people sacrifice at rituals. A person rich in terrace land should sacrifice more pigs than others, but nowadays pigs are increasingly bought with money. For people who do not often engage in wage labour, the need to provide appropriate sacrifices can therefore be quite demanding. People with less terrace land often have more time available for wage labour, and many of those of lesser terrace-based rank attempt to convert their money into rank by sacrificing more pigs than they are entitled to. Though rice terraces rarely change hands (but see below), the performative contingency of rank entails that the ranking system is in practice quite unstable.

The extensions and contractions of sociality are not confined to relations within the village. People move in and out of the village, temporarily or permanently, and go in and out of each other's lives. They take up work in lowland towns, and abroad, but remain nevertheless closely entangled in socialities back home (McKay 2010). Thousands of tourists visit the region every year and stay at the many family-owned lodges. Money from these enters into the dynamics of social ranking in the village, but tourism also reaches into human-spirit relations in a variety of ways. Some tourists come to see traditional dances and mock-rituals, which have become important factors in recruiting ritual experts and thus maintaining spirit-related practices. On the other hand, when an old man known for dressing up in traditional outfits for tourists died in the village, many people voiced their concern that he had shown disrespect for tradition and that the ancestors had punished him accordingly.

The way these socialities play out is also influenced by governmental authorities. For instance, several government-initiated agricultural campaigns have significantly changed cultivation practices (see Acabado and Martin 2015) to the extent that working in accordance with the ancestors' ways of cultivating has become difficult. National legislation on land transactions has similarly opened for accessing terrace lands in new ways, while at the same time, the government agency National Commission on Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines protects the rights of indigenous people in the region to maintain their traditional ways of living, including traditional land transaction forms.

Although people engage in relations with spirits, each other, tourists and government agencies at times quite strategically, the dynamics of sociality are in practice not easily controlled. Many extensions and contractions of sociality happen quite accidentally. Spirits may intrude at any time, even when people deliberately try to keep distance. One may suddenly encounter them in dreams, they may take shape of a bird, and they even appear as suitors coming to give marriage gifts to potential parents-in-laws. Spirits demand attention in this way, and one must follow up such encounters with a sacrifice. Spirits may thus draw people, often involuntarily, into their own extensions of sociality. The dynamics of inter-human sociality are similarly hard to control. When people attempt to extend their relational matrixes by actualising kin relations or by attempting to gain higher rank, they risk provoking feelings of envy. Envy is closely connected to a form of witchcraft called *paliw*, the effect of which is inability to produce social relations with other humans.[11] For the most part, *paliw* is considered a

dangerous force that moves on its own even when the 'perpetrator' does not know it. By infusing ordinary enactment of social relations with an inherent potential for its alterity (Kapferer 2003; Bubandt 2014), *paliw* adds another uncontrollable dimension to sociality that augments its inherent plasticity. Unpredictability in extra-local relations plays out in terms of shifting demands for wage labour, sudden changes in global tourist traffic due to political or environmental issues and the vagaries of local and regional government officials.

What this all means, then, is that sociality in the village unfolds as a rather unstable and plastic relational matrix. Relations between villagers, spirits, tourists and government agencies extend and contract as they variously move in and out of each other's relational purviews. The question then becomes, what role do values play in these dynamics? Do they contribute to creating a sense of order or at least a certain predictable direction for the unfolding of this more-than-human, plastic sociality? As I now turn to outlining some of the central values at work within these relational dynamics, I argue that values actually contribute to this destabilised sociality. I focus here on two values, tradition and autonomy, that impinge significantly on how sociality unfolds in the village. As general ideas, these values are relatively open to interpretation and their interrelationships are undetermined. When they become actualised in particular relational actions, these values gain heterogenous meanings which feed into the dynamics of sociality.

Configurations of Tradition and Autonomy

Tradition, locally termed *ugalin* or often referred to in English as 'culture', is a term with obvious temporal dimensions. It refers back towards how things were done in the past, but is also tied to the present through certain ways of doing things. In some sense, respect for tradition is a composite of various other values, such as seniority, hierarchy, reciprocity and kinship obligations, that operate together.

A context in which the invocation of the value of tradition is particularly salient is the maintenance of rice terraces. Terraces are complicated constructions of mud, soil, water, irrigation channels and stone walls. Insects, snails and fish live in them, all of which both contribute to and potentially threaten their integration (Conklin 1980). Without continuous maintenance, terraces quickly disintegrate. Maintenance work is important also because it represents a way in which people show respect towards the ancestors and the mythical figures who once created them. The terraces should be kept tidy and in good shape, and the owners of the terraces should perform the required rituals at specific moments during the agricultural cycle. Respecting the ancestors in this way is closely tied to the values of seniority and reciprocity.

I would like to stress here that the value of respecting tradition has consequences also for the value of land. This is a crucial point for understanding the conflict that led up to the murder. Terrace and other land forms are valuated differently according the expected yields they generate and this depends on where they are located, their vicinity to water sources and how prone they are to rats, insects and landslides. However, an important factor in their valuation is also the actions of their owners. If they show disrespect towards the ancestors by neglecting them and traditional ways of cultivation, this will impact negatively on the value of the field by yielding considerably less rice. The value of the terraces relies thus on the ways in which human-spirit relationships are

handled. This just goes to show that value as what is considered proper and desirable and values in an 'economic' sense are tightly interrelated (Graeber 2001, 1), and also accounts for how the conflict was about access to land and cultural values at the same time

The value of tradition is also expressed in the prescriptions for how terraces change hands. Access to terrace lands takes place primarily through primogeniture inheritance. Terraces can also be bought, but one needs to follow prescribed procedures which people refer to as 'the traditional way' to do so authoritatively. Even though terraces are individually owned, the relatives of the owner have rights to the land. When terrace land is sold outside this kin group, relatives should be consulted and given a compensation, *lagbu*, for forfeiting their rights.

Tradition itself seems lately to have become objectified as a thing in itself. Many people in the village contrasted 'tradition' with what they described as 'modern ways' which could involve for instance television, karaoke, electricity (the village was off grid at the time), strong liquor and young people's laziness. Tradition was also valued by many as something worth protecting against Pentecostal converts who they felt attacked their ways of living. Furthermore, tradition had a value-adding capacity by serving the tourist industry in the area quite well.

While respecting tradition is a highly regarded value, in practice pragmatic concerns often lead people to tweak 'traditional' ways of doing things, such as skipping agricultural rituals if they have no time or money for offerings, or purchasing terraces while avoiding *lagbu*. In addition, the valuing of tradition is highly contextual, in the sense that people will emphasise it in some situations, while disregarding it in others. Moreover, it operates often in tandem – sometimes, but not always in tension – with another value, namely autonomy, which is not always easily reconciled with the value of tradition. Tradition was important, many emphasised, but often added that no one could really tell others what to do, and when someone suggested to others what they should do, a final 'anyway, it's up to you' very often closed the conversation.

Autonomy as a value particularly influences the way ranking and leadership operate. While high rank, if performed according to tradition, entails great prestige, it does not translate easily into political power. Prestigious persons are often looked up to and in some cases envied, and they are often listened to. They are, however, not in any way entitled to order people around.

Tradition and autonomy were both central values that fed into the dynamics of sociality in the village, although very rarely did they operate in isolation. They were often combined in social actions, and the resulting shape of sociality emerged as a continuously changing interrelation between them. As Sillander (2011, 161) points out for the Bentian, 'people are not fully free to do what they want, and certainly not uninfluenced in their actions, but they remain autonomous enough to act at odds with dominant social values at times'. These two central values coalesce with a host of other values in actual situations to make specific value configurations. People sometimes tried to adhere to one value more than another, or they would try to find a balance between them. In addition, in many situations, people involved interpreted, evaluated and negotiated these value configurations in different ways, resulting in heterogeneous constellations of situationally and practically actualised values.

This brings us back to the murder case, for the events leading up the murder demonstrate that the villagers actualised different configurations of values, and that these

together contributed to the unstable and uncontrollable dynamics of sociality that unfortunately ended up in a murder no one ever wanted.

Before the Murder

When José eventually gave himself up and admitted to the murder, he traced his rage to a particular source. 'My mind went wild', other villagers reported him saying and added that it had to do with a dispute José had with a neighbour. His reference to the wildness of his mind is interesting as it clearly has similarities to the unrestrained passion of anger that neighbouring Ilongot people term *liget* which they contrast to knowledge and reasoned action, *beya* (Rosaldo 1980, 44). The most appropriate vernacular term for anger in this case could have been *bungot*, but according to people I talked to, Jośe actually used the English term 'wild' here. It is therefore hard to judge exactly what José referred to by the term, but it was clear that he was really uncertain about what had happened. He thought that perhaps he took the person who collided with him to be his neighbour, whom I will call Wigan, and that this was why he lost his mind with anger, but he was not sure.

José and Wigan had been in conflict for quite some time, and the dispute had eventually become so hardened that many in the village held that it was only Wigan's good fortune that it was not he who had collided with José that day. Wigan had lots of friends in the village, but the way he handled things, particularly the way he tried to manoeuvre his way into a more prestigious position by what his enemies saw as compromising traditional values, provoked many.

Wigan was originally from another part of the province. He was known in the village for being a strong supporter of maintaining traditional ways, but also for being quite determined in doing want he wanted. Many years ago, he had managed to get hold of some land in the village where he set up a small, but quite successful guesthouse where he also had a woodcarving workshop. In addition, Wigan had purchased several prestigious antique jars and metal gongs. Such valuable objects are held to belong to specific rice terraces and should only be used in ritual occasions by the owners of these terraces. Wigan owned few terraces in the village, and many people, therefore, claimed that he was not entitled to own the valuable jars and gongs. His access to money also meant that he could buy more pigs than many of the more prestigious terrace owners. In fact, he had done so quite recently before the murder took place. Claiming to follow the tradition, he had sacrificed pigs to the ancestors for them to authorise his ownership over the prestigious objects despite his lack of terrace land. Others in the village claimed on the contrary that Wigan thereby showed little respect for tradition. 'He has no right using his money to buy those things', one villager told me. 'He doesn't own enough rice terraces to do that. He disrespects our tradition'.

Wigan understood that his claims to prestige were questionable, and he attempted to do something about it. Some weeks before the fatal incident, Wigan had managed to buy a larger terrace field in the village. Instead of following the traditional way of purchasing the field, with *lagbu* payments, he made use of national property law and signed a contract with two witnesses at the municipal hall. Wigan claimed legal ownership to the land, and in an attempt to authorise the transaction by traditional standards as well, he gave the seller some extra money as *lagbu*.

His rivals were outraged and disputed the transaction, blaming Wigan for disregarding traditional land transaction practices. When expressing their views, many added that he should be a little humbler, as he was, after all, not originally from the village, and that it was not his terraces tourists came to admire when they stayed at his guesthouse and bought his woodcarvings. What made Wigan's purchase of the field even more provoking was that the field was located right next to one of the main trails leading into the village. This would give Wigan a major advantage over others within the woodcarving industry since he could then set up a stall next to the trail and thus more easily access tourists.

The conflicts generated by Wigan's actions were clearly about access to land and resources. However, as mentioned, the value of land and the value of tradition are closely interlinked and the distinction between them is blurry. When talking to people in the village, it was apparent that it was not only Wigan's land purchase that people had an issue with. What troubled them was the way he handled these purchases, and his understanding of what actions tradition could legitimately incorporate.

José too had moved into the village, and he too tried to make a living as a woodcarver. Already competitors in the tourist industry, their tense relation was exacerbated by José marrying into Wigan's arch enemy's family. Some weeks before the murder took place, José and Wigan happened to be drinking and gambling at the same place. José confronted Wigan and told him that he should respect the tradition in the village and stop doing what he did. They were both from outside, José had said, and should act respectfully towards the villagers and their ancestors. Of course, however, it was all up to him. According to those present, Wigan got offended, and soon he and José were accusing each other of all kinds of wrongdoings. Eventually, they ended up challenging each other to a duel. The duel never materialised, however, but the conflict had now escalated into a quite serious feud.

The same day as the murder, José had lost quite a bit of money while playing cards. That was what he was thinking of, he told friends, when he walked along the trail. When the foreign aid worker happened to crash into him from behind, José reasoned later, he might have thought it was Wigan who attacked him, and he tried to defend himself as best as he could. He couldn't know for sure, of course, since his mind had been 'wild'.

During the events leading up to what was for everyone a most unwanted and unpredictable event, values were definitely giving shape to the actions of José, Wigan and others. The specific ways in which José and Wigan instantiated different configurations of tradition and autonomy, contributed to destabilising relational matrixes in the village. Moreover, José and Wigan's referrals to values were neither unambiguous nor stable. It was not a case of José emphasising tradition and Wigan claiming his right to do as he pleased. Both of them drew on both values and easily shifted between them. In addition, the values looked different from each person's point of view. What Wigan saw as his own attempt at following tradition by gaining prestige through owning terraces, jars and gongs, José saw as autonomous ways of acting, and while Wigan saw autonomy and tradition as complementary, Jose saw Wigan's autonomy as different from his own view on what autonomy and tradition should mean and how it should combine with tradition.

Friends, enemies, family, kin and spirits moved in and out of and shifted positions within the relational matrixes of those involved in the event. While José enjoyed support from many when he emphasised tradition, his deeds towards the victim made

many of them turn their backs towards him and his family, only to later reconnect with them when José later, according to his allies, showed courage by giving himself up to the police. Although Wigan provoked many in the village, his attempts at combining autonomy and tradition, along with his increasing prestige through access to money and valuable items, drew many people into his relational network as well. The presence of tourists and not least the money José, Wigan and other villagers generated from them, as well as the possibility of resorting to government authority, added further dimensions of unpredictability to these relational dynamics.

Along the way and most definitely after the murder itself, many people in the village talked about and discussed the events. Condemnations of José's action combined with acclaims for his courage, and people clearly acknowledged Wigan's right to do as he pleased and that although what he did was not really following the tradition, he did at least give *lagbu* compensation and attempted to have the ancestors authorise his prestige items.

The murder and the conflict leading up to it thus represented events through which the villagers encountered and experienced values in very forceful and tangible ways. They did so, however, not through their full realisation of clearly defined idea-values (Robbins 2018), but rather through the shifting and heterogeneous configurations of value actualisations that emerged in and through the different actor's relational actions.

Conclusion

As Dumont (1977, 211) made clear, values never stand alone, but always operate with other values, including their contraries, and dominant values relate to other values by encompassing them. At first glance, the value of tradition might seem to encompass the value of autonomy since letting other people do as they want is in some instantiations part of respecting tradition. However, the value of autonomy also entails the possibility of disregarding tradition, thus a case could be made for the possible reversal of the dominance relation between the two values. While Dumont's perspective has been criticised as too static and bounded, he notes that such reversals of the relations between superior and inferior values may occur (2004, 244) and thus allows for a more dynamic view of value hierarchies than what is often recognised.[12] Similarly, Willerslev (2013, 143) argues that the encompassment of higher values of their contraries can be understood as a way in which values actually contain their own contrary values within. Willerslev calls these contrary values 'shadow' values and argues that they operate as flip sides of each other. Not only are they contraries, but they may easily change places in what seem like figure-ground reversals. While both Dumont and Willerslev thus allow for quite a lot of dynamism in the interrelations between values, they both retain a rather static view of these values. Their interrelations may change from complementary to contradictory, or from being superior or inferior to each other, but the content of the values seem relatively stable. What I have attempted to show here is a more dynamic approach to values and their interrelations. By seeing them as heterogeneously actualised in situated practices, I emphasise that they shift content and form as they are moulded according to the interests, interpretations and emotional perspectives of people involved in particular situations. Values are thus not stable and homogenous ideas that are more or

less realised in actions or exemplars, but emerge through and become transformed into a variety of situationally and positionally relative actualisations of values.

By constantly shifting between referring to autonomy and tradition and combining them in various ways, Wigan and José both exemplified different and shifting value actualisations through the course of events leading up to the murder. While both of them may have emphasised autonomy and tradition at various points, they easily adapted their valuations of them and how they related to each other, and they did so in a way which engendered social instability. Values were, then, contributing to sociality's instability by being in themselves unstable.

What implications does this have for how we perceive the relations between values and sociality? First of all, I would argue that the dynamics of value configurations and their social outcomes must be studied empirically. If any value actualisation may be haunted by its shadow values, we need to look carefully at how sociality is shaped by the continuous remoulding of values rather than by their hierarchical structuration. Secondly, contrary to Robbins' claims about exemplars as the prime way of encountering values, I argue that since these dynamic value configurations are major driving forces of social interaction, it is through these that people in lived social lives actually mainly encounter values. Values may thus be understood to work just as forcefully in their heterogeneous actualisation as they do in the rare case of exemplars. They contribute thus to social life's continuously unfolding shape, pushing it hither and thither as people draw on, retract from or actualise different values in various ways. Unfortunately, the unpredictability that this dynamic creates sometimes results in most unfortunate and sad outcomes where people unwillingly become drawn into social dynamics which for some might have most devastating consequences.

Notes

1. This article grew out of the workshop Valences of Sociality: Unpacking Sociality Through Values organised by Kenneth Sillander at the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth Annual Conference in Oxford, September 2018. I am grateful for comments by Kenneth Sillander, Isabell Herrmans and Anu Lounela on the draft and for interesting discussions with the other panel members including Thomas Gibson, Monica Heintz, Sally Anderson and Harry Walker. I would also extend my thanks to the two anonymous reviewers whose comments where very helpful and editor Katie Glaskin for useful advice.
2. Due to the sensitivity of the event discussed in this article, I have taken extra precautions in order to ensure the anonymity of the people involved. The name of the village is therefore omitted as are other potentially identifying information. Names of all persons mentioned are also anonymised.
3. Also here the reference to the citation has been omitted to ensure anonymity.
4. Fieldwork was conducted for a total of 24 months in 2003–2004 and 2007–2008.
5. The background of Robbins' argument is a broader anthropological tendency of rejecting notions of cultures as systematically coherent and bounded units and embracing views on social life as continuously malleable and consisting of a multitude of shifting relational forms. As Sillander outlines in the introduction to this special issue, the term 'sociality' was adopted in anthropology in the 1980s because of the same tendency.
6. See Conclusion for a discussion of the differences between my argument and the dynamic notion of reversal included in Dumont's perspective.

7. Although not drawing explicitly on Deleuze and Guattari (1994) in this article, the perspective I propose here has evident parallels to their distinction between the virtual and the actual, where values could be said to exists in a virtual plane of chaos, indetermination and unlimited potentiality from which actualisation of values emerge, but which due to the excessiveness of the virtual, there will never be a one-to-one relationship between the two. See Kapferer (2010) for an attempt at aligning Dumont with Deleuze and Guattari.
8. See Long (2009) for a deliberation on related ethnographic tactics and see Krohn-Hansen (1994), Accomazzo (2012) and Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004) for useful overviews of the anthropology of violence and murder.
9. One could argue that the hideousness of the murder makes it a negative example, and thus a way in which people encounter the possibility of full realisation of a value through its full negation. However, the ambivalence the villagers showed to José by condemning the act itself, but at the same time applauding his bravery for giving himself up, complicates such an argument.
10. As such I see the human-spirit relations as more akin to what Mikkelsen (2016) describes as ‘chaosmology’ than the more systematic and structured cosmology we find in classical descriptions of the spirit world from the region (e.g. Barton 1946).
11. For men, one of the most common effects of *paliw* is impotence.
12. See Kapferer (2010) and Rio and Smedal (2008) for attempts at demonstrating the less static applications of Dumont.

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