Travelling Through Liminal Non-places: Gozitan Buses as a Non-Place for Socializing

by Jane Davies

SUMMARY

Transportation systems are often seen as networks for mobility; both physical and social. They permit the user to become part of momentary communities of individuals all set on the goal of reaching a destination. Through an ethnographic case study of the bus system on Gozo, Malta, this paper aims to demonstrate the interactions that took place on public transport during the summer of 2015. Using Arnold van Gennep's theory of liminality, and Marc Augé's theory of non-place, the Gozitan bus is discussed in order to demonstrate comfort within liminality there. The findings of this research, as recorded by observational methods, include the three factors of the liminal space: the social individuals, the mechanics of the bus, and temporality. Though there are few ethnographies on touristic, rural island bus systems, this subject/paper presents significant/interesting interactions/behaviours that classify the Gozo bus, and bus station, as liminal.

Introduction

As referenced in both public space and mobility ethnographies, early 21st century public transit systems often create collectives with participants who are alien, and/or hostile to one another. It has been noted, specifically, that this hostility exists on buses; "aisle seats [on the Birmingham bus system] are occupied to restrict access to available window seats, and a quick glance may be met by a dead-eye and taken as indication of hostility" (Wilson 2011: 639). With the rise of portable electronic devices individuals, moreover, have more reason to avoid conversation, eye contact, and other social elements through their unwavering attention to their devices (Bissell 2010: 271). Though there is reference to anti-social behaviour and hostility in bus and public transit systems in metropolises, this cannot be generalized to all bus system. As marked by my fieldwork in Gozo in June 2015, the bus system there provides a place of comfort and social activity.

Gozo is part of the Maltese archipelago and is situated off the South West coast of the main island of Malta. It has been inhabited from 5000 BC and has a rich history, with

Scan of a drawing of the motion of the 323 Bus, June 25th, 2015

monuments dating back to the megalithic era. Though the island itself has a total land area of 67 square kilometres, making it small enough to easily navigate by foot, the bus system is used by many of its residents and visitors.

Throughout this ethnography I will discuss the mechanical, the social, and the temporal as different elements of the liminal space that was the Gozitan bus. Through the discussion of the social individuals, bus mechanics, and time spent in the liminal space, I will demonstrate how the bus on Gozo produced unique micro-communities. In this study I draw on specific observations and interpretations in my fieldwork on and off the bus on Gozo between the 10th and the 29th of June 2015. I will reference several travel and liminal space ethnographies written about other travel locations from around the world. Namely this literature is geared towards metropolises, marking a gap in research on rural, touristic travel communities. I hope to demonstrate the importance of studying small rural bus systems by remarking on the closeness of the communities and the ability for strangers to socialize in liminal transit locations.

Methods

My fieldwork in Gozo, Malta, consisted of three weeks of participant observation throughout June, 2015. The research took place while studying on the Off the Beaten Track summer school, wherein I observed hours of different temporal communities on the bus. By temporal communities I refer to the distinct communities that came to fruition because of the scheduled bus. As a result of the island's culture, marked by a population existing in close quarters with one another combined with the friendly reputation of the Gozitans, individuals formed bonds and communicated within the gyrating walls of the bus.

From many interviews with locals I conducted while in the field, it was clear that there was a strong sense of pride between Gozitans about their island. My very first interaction with a native Gozitan was on a bus ride to the Gigantija Temples (a complex from the Megalithic period). Within only a few exchanges, she informed me on the distinct sense of pride that many Gozitans feel for their island and their wish to share it with others, she mentioned that this was due in part to the need for tourists to keep the local economy afloat. This first interaction marked the beginning of my fieldwork. I conducted my research by riding the bus every day for hours at a time, observing the interactions that took place and involving myself in the bus community. Interviews were largely informal, wherein I asked mostly open-ended questions and let the informants lead the conversation. Generally I began these conversations with remarks on the bus or the route; the elements I had in common with the travellers. I made the informants aware of my study after primary exchanges of pleasantries and would receive verbal consent to interview them. The bus drivers, who largely viewed their jobs as mundane, were the only members of the community that seemed confused about my interest in their workplace and research, yet were often familiar with the field school from transporting around students each summer.

After each interview I sat at Victoria bus station (the starting and ending point for routes) and took notes on the interactions I had. I noted the date, time, and route number at the head of the page, followed by a brief summary of the experience. When I was participant observing the communities, I sat at the back of the bus where I had the best vantage point. I had my notebook on my lap, and scribbled notes with uncharacteristic handwriting as it was subjected to the vibrations of the bus and the bumps in the road. Photos were also an integral part of my research, always taken from a vantage point where individuals' faces were not discernible. On occasion I hand drew the interactions on the bus, for example rough outlines of the back of patrons' heads, and other times I put my pen down on the paper and allowed the movement of the bus to move my pen around on the page. This became a representation of the bus experience.

I also recorded soundscapes of the interior of the bus in order to create a complete Gozitan bus experience for myself to take away from the island. Though I conducted much of my analysis post fieldwork, an integral part of the field school was discussing field notes with the other researchers on the program. By mentioning the important moments or the ones that resonated with me, I noticed patterns in the interactions and observations and collected key themes.
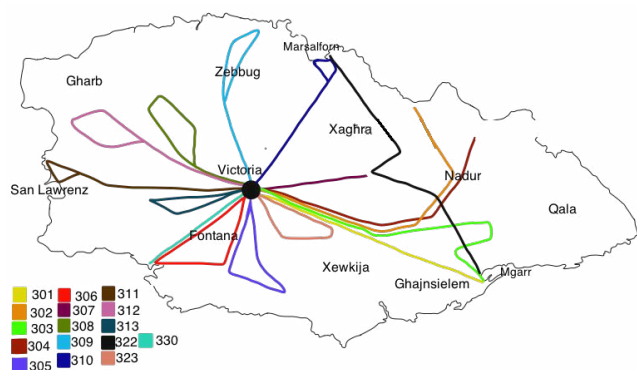
The Bus System

My fieldwork in 2015 was marked by changes in the bus system, still in the aftermath of a significant shift in 2011, when multinational a transport corporation Arriva took over the system. Preceding the Arriva takeover, the bus system on Malta had been known for its buses with iconic designs. These buses were typically decorated and personalized by bus drivers, or as the result of local mechanics' maintenance on them.

Classic Malta Bus (Flickr Commons image 2008)

301	306	311	
302	307	312	
303	308	313	
304	309	322	330
305	310	323	

The bus routes on Gozo, Malta

These iconic buses were retired and replaced with some new and second hand buses (King Long and Mercedes-Benz respectively). In 2014, Malta Public Transport (MPT) nationalized the bus system. Following this, in 2015 MPT was privatized again through Autobuses Urbanos de León who, confusingly, continued operating under the MPT title. During the course of my research in June 2015, the new MPT system was being implemented, which involved new schedules, fares, and vehicles. A fleet of second hand Mercedes-Benz vehicles from London replaced the old King Long vehicles. At the beginning of my research, unlimited 7 day passes were offered at €6.50. However, as of June 22nd 2015, the bus system switched to a pay-per-journey system, wherein "trips" had specific guidelines with according fares. For example, a passenger would pay €2.00 to get to one destination within 2 hours (with permitted interchanging buses) during the summer season. Alternative options were 12 trip passes for €15, or reloadable travel cards for locals wherein trips cost 75 cents; up to €26 for a month. This was a significant change in system as it became geared to a pay-as-you-go system rather than an affordable weekly pass.

Like the old bus system, the new one followed a principally circular route; each bus route cycled around dropping and picking up patrons, ultimately returning to the dispatching station, Victoria. The only exception to this rule being the 322 bus route, which traveled between Mgarr and Marsalforn.

Liminality and Non-place

Before discussing how the social and technological elements are specific sites of liminal practice, I will first refer to the concept of liminality and its significance within this ethnography. Arnold van Gennep's theory of liminality, outlined in his Rites de Passage (1909) was originally referred to as a threshold in culture; "the axis where ruptures in time or space create new kinds of places" (Thomassen 2010: 333). When there is change or evolution in society there is a period where the old has not yet been overtaken by the new. The concept is important to the study of culture as it draws attention to fissure points in society, which permit individuals' social mobility and a new social landscape to exist within them (Thomassen 2010: 334).

"Non-places," a term coined by Marc Augé (1995), are those places which are in-between others. Most are meticulously designed with the goal to create a calm, orderly place for people to occupy and travel through, yet never being considered as a permanent space. An airport, for instance, is a space where people pass through in order to take a flight to travel somewhere else; a shopping mall forms a larger space to provide shopping locations. In this way, a bus exists as a mode of transport within which a passenger can sit or stand in, without considering the bus as a location but as a means to get to a destination.

Bearing close attention to the type of interactions that take place in non-places, allows us to observe keyholes of the larger society they exist within (Dalakoglou and Harvey 2012: 463). As non-places are spaces that exist at the tipping points of human physical mobility, one can apply liminal principles to the space. This makes a clear connection between the theory of non-places and liminality. Additionally the time dedicated to travel is an intermediate state, neither productive nor unproductive, but rather suspended in between moments dedicated to personhood (Lloyd 2003: 98). Liminal spaces or non-places are thus a conspicuous lack of place, in which individuals and culture are able to navigate into new territory and ways of existing.

In accordance with the above, I propose that the bus in Gozo is a liminal non-place. With each stop the bus is a non-place, as patrons board in order to travel elsewhere, or alight at their intended destination. At the moment the bus moves, however the bus roles forward and is no longer at the place it began, nor is it the place it ends. The bus exists in a chasm of time and place, thus marking it as liminal.

In what follows I will explore how the bus on Gozo functions as a liminal non-place, creating dynamic communities. Due to the nature of liminality on the bus, there are perceivably idiosyncratic social engagements that blossom therein. On Gozo there is comfort within liminality.

Factor 1: The Social Individual

As a result of the close proximity to others undertaking actions that would typically be considered antisocial, they become normalized. This includes overhearing and listening to private conversations, even joining said conversations. The non-place-ness of the bus on Gozo, allowed for moments and interaction between individuals on a personal level within cramped spaces. Throughout these interactions and experiences, humans connect in the space. By sparking conversation about the outside world and one another, passengers created a sort of community. As noted by David Bissell: "[i]n the process of travel, we

Older King Long Bus Layout

driver's seat   luggage storage   stairs to higher rear of the bus

front   doors to entrance   poles   seating   rear

Scan of a sketch of the bus layout June 18th 2015

temporarily submit ourselves to become part of a mobile collective. To become a passenger always involves a 'being with'" (Bissell 2010: 270). Likewise, patrons on the bus became part of a "mobile collective," either passively or actively by "being with" other passengers.

On Gozo, passengers would often associate with others who were strangers to them. Tourists would interact with locals, and locals would interact with other locals. Many conversations revolved around the human relationship to the world outside the bus walls. Whether by country of origin, their village area, present or remote family or friends; individuals tended to relate to others in the space of the bus, by identifying themselves with the world outside. Topics of conversation could be one's destination, where they were coming from, or, especially among expatriates and tourists, where they were originally from. On one account I witnessed an individual pass his phone to a stranger to show a picture of his family in Australia. The sharing of narratives and information allowed for close connections on this moving non-place.

On several occasions I observed local elderly individuals or school children enter the bus and bounce their gaze left to right, in search of familiarity amid the faces of the concurrent passengers. Specifically among these demographics, gossip was an integral part of the journey. The elderly women often grouped together at the front of the bus along with their shopping (carefully stowed on the little gated platform), while the children and elderly men sat in grid formation at the back. Each of these demographics would spend every moment of the bus ride deeply engaged in conversation.

The most notable soundscape on the bus was the wild chattering and laughter. Laughter occurred in many different pitches and frequencies, from croaky elderly laughs, to young high pitched giggles. The laughter often became a contagion throughout the entire bus as demonstrated by one of my written accounts of an observed bus ride:

A woman hobbled down the aisle towards me, holding each pole on her way with an knobbly iron grip. She made eye contact with me, then glanced at the empty seat beside me, and then right back to my eyes with a small smile. As she sat down with a long and slow exhale she turned to me and murmured a few chosen words in Maltese. Not speaking the language myself, I returned a smile and a nervous chuckle. She turned to face the front of the bus, the

bus rolled forward. After a couple of stops, at which a few other elderly women took their seats, a hum of chatter began as the ladies began different conversations amongst themselves. An elderly woman outside on the street waiting in the shade, flagged down the bus. The bus rolled up to her and she made her way to a seat near the front, perching beside a middle-aged woman.

The bus rolled forward once again, and the woman who had entered the bus turned to her left and spoke to the slightly younger woman beside her. The younger woman replied, and suddenly, the elderly woman's eyes grew wide with surprise. She yelled to the bus driver, and the whole bus of ladies began to roar with laughter. She stood, indignant yet amused (judging by the smile on her face and the tone of her voice). The bus pulled up at the next stop and the woman alighted cackling back at the other ladies seated doubled up with laughter. The woman beside me made a comment to the bus at large and they all laughed even louder as the doors shut behind the old woman who had clearly boarded the wrong bus. (Field note excerpt: June 15th 2015, 10am, 313 bus route)

This moment in particular demonstrated the way in which the bus in Gozo created an inherently relaxed and social space. As the woman announced to the other passengers that she was on the wrong route, the bus driver pulled over and the entire bus experienced her mistake with her, and laughed together. For a moment, the ladies were no longer gossiping in their separate conversations. Rather, they laughed in union at the error their fellow passenger had made.

Generally, in my own experience of moving through the densely populated cities of Vancouver and Montreal, in Canada; and in London, England; when an individual found themselves on the wrong bus there was a specific protocol. The passenger firmly realized, then consulted their phone or whispered to a fellow passenger (for the truly brave), then disappeared from the scene in the most covert way possible. In this circumstance, however, the woman asked a fellow passenger and then shouted to check with the driver, then laughed loudly to herself. It contrasted to my expectation of possible discretion and embarrassment; this event followed a more performative script resulting in the cheers of the audience when the main attraction exited.
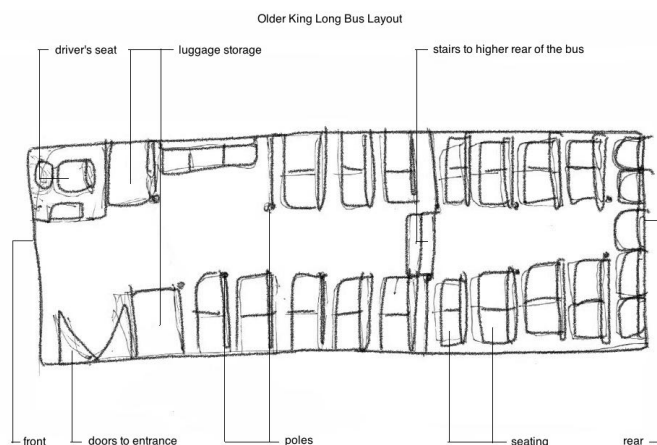
I remark on this interaction not only to note the collective response, but also to note the disruption in the liminal space that made the woman stand out in an otherwise anonymous landscape. Though passengers were generally socially active within the bus on Gozo, a passenger needed no more qualification to enter the vessel other than payment and 'appropriate' behaviour (reasons that an individual could be denied entry might for instance be demonstrating violent behaviour, being inebriated, or eating messy foods). In this way, an individual could seamlessly enter and leave the non-place without attention. On this occasion however, the woman entered, caused a fissure within the non-place, and exited; she had mistaken the route and the bus was no longer a liminal space, rather, she designated it as a space (i.e. the wrong place), as she had found herself on a bus she had not intended. By being in the wrong place, the bus gained meaning as a place. The collective, hurtled into a place rather than a non-place, laughed together to mark the discomfort. As Bissell notes,

"These infectious affects might be complemented by excitable speech and chatter, perhaps punctuated with bursts of laughter. The sensing of a particular euphoric atmosphere here therefore emerges through the eruption and circulation of these dynamic affects and the impressions that they leave on the body." (2010: 275)

Due to the enclosed nature of the in-between space (existing between stops), when this particular woman found herself in the incorrect non-place, a social tension was created, broken by the laughter and the spectacle of the event. The actions created by this one individual, united the entire bus in a brief community of laughter.

Though many passengers chose to be social within this space, it was also remarkable to observe the seamless transition to the private sphere of some individuals on the bus. The bus was often a site for grooming and self-maintenance. Typically on near empty buses, when passengers were not focused on conversation, they would revert to their basic instincts and proceed to primp themselves. This involved picking their nose and teeth, brushing their hair, biting their nails and picking at peeling sunburns. These typically private rituals would take place when the individual assumed they were alone.

"Such patterning is the way in which a public space is domesticated, not only as a social map of the possible and the permissible, but also as an experience of freedom through the neutralization of antipathies of demarcation

A packed bus on Gozo, June 2015

and division— from gating to surveillance— by naturalizations of repetition." (Amin 2008: 12)

In this way, the passengers domesticated the space, and became their private selves and in the same motion privatized the liminal space. Due to the liminal nature of the bus, this transition is made easy because of the freedom within the walls. Although individuals were in a socially surveilled space, by CCTV as well as fellow passengers, they would throw out social norms and customs to pass the time in this social space by self-grooming.

Factor 2: Mechanical

Curiously, the liminal space made itself known as a part of the community, and drew attention to itself rather than passively allowing the patrons to flow in and out without attention to the non-place. The bus often exerted its own agency on individuals, which would facilitate further interactions between people. Some of these were side effects of the design of the bus, such as leaking air conditioners, or the roughness of the old worn roads. The bus created space for many social encounters, these encapsulated from knowing eye contact to entire conversations. I propose, therefore, that the Gozitan bus also caused a series of interactions that were facilitated through its physical mechanisms.

Firstly, the bus united passengers in motion as it hurtled over well-worn roads it united the passengers in motion. As passengers were on the same bus, their momentum became unified with the motions of the bus. Whether it was a perpetual bouncing up and down as the bus covered rougher terrain, or when thrown as the bus stopped abruptly, the passengers experienced these motions as a collective. Especially when the bus made jerkier movements and standing passengers stumbled, which often resulted in small exchanges of thanks or pardons. The bus acted as a vessel which agitated the passengers into interacting with one another like salt particles in a saltshaker

The second way in which the bus caused interactions was through the air conditioning unit built into the structure. The air conditioning, although essential in the small, often cramped buses, occasionally dropped to a temperature unsuitable for the passengers. In these cases, women would drape shawls across their faces, some would block the vents with their phones, while others would move seats to avoid the icy blow of the air conditioning. Throughout these situations, the passengers would make eye contact and laugh about the situation. On occasion,

the air conditioning dripped water from the vents, which lined the edges on the bus. The drips streamed down on the seats at the edge of the windows, and onto the heads and laps of the passengers;

An older man chose the seat one over from the window in order to avoid the dribble of air conditioning runoff. As the bus filled up at the following stops, the man turned to each person who made an indication of choosing the moist seat, and explained that their choice was unwise due to the air conditioner raining from above. As a result of the dripping air conditioner, the man was involved in several interactions in order to save face and not to appear selfish for blocking an apparently open seat. (Field note excerpt: June 26th 2015, 11:00am, 303 bus route)

From this observation, I suggest that the bus was an agent itself in the conversations between individuals; it caused both frustration and laughter among the others who consistently made efforts to sit in the rainy seat. Due to the consistent dripping, and the formation of the seats, the bus itself took a spot on the limited seating and forced interactions between the other passengers.

The air conditioning played a social role again when I spoke to one of the bus drivers:

While conversing with the driver, the bus came to a halt at a stop, and a spout of water streamed out of a drain beside the front windshield. The bus driver, similarly halted in his conversation and exclaimed "Naughty girl!" (Field note excerpt: June 18th 2015 3pm, 303 bus route)

As the driver said this, he jokingly insinuated that the bus had urinated in public. This moment united the driver, the bus and myself into a conversation. The bus, previously an unacknowledged entity, joined in the conversation for that moment as its air conditioner spouted. The function on the air conditioning unit permitted the driver to make conversation.

Before these incidents, the bus had been the unnamed subject with which passengers travelled. The communities therefore, if not brought together by the basic movement on the bus, would be coerced to interact through the comical and awkward outputs of the air conditioning on the bus. These points of contact are noteworthy as the mechanical functions of the non-place, in other words the agency of the space, were asserted as a member of the community. The bus was therefore not only a vessel for conversations and interactions, but also facilitated some of these interactions. The social and the mechanical interact and created new types of communication, as the bus became an object of conversation. Without the agency of the bus air conditioning, the space went otherwise unnoticed, yet through it, the liminal space covertly entered into the conversation as it took a seat.

Factor 3: Temporality

As is implicit in many travel ethnographies, time is a key element within transportation interactions. This ethnography will not deviate from that trend. During my fieldwork, the bus on Gozo ran like clockwork. The bus left the station promptly, completed its designated route, and arrived back at Victoria no later than five minutes behind schedule.

The time spent inside the bus is noted by Jain and Lyons; "time is an inherent and unavoidable gift to co-presence from which we expect some reciprocation through the benefits associated with belonging to, and participating in, a social network" (2008:2). In this way, multiple bodies are gifting their time to the temporal communities in motion. By taking the bus, and complying with specific timetables, the bus drivers and passengers domesticated time throughout the Gozo bus system. The time that existed within the bus was 'lost', and thus could be used guilt-free.

Liminal time not only contributes to specific forms of socialization, it also provides structure in the liminal space. By marking when routine was interrupted, or how processes changed with the coming of new bus schedules, I was able to observe how individuals used time as a point of access to the bus-space and its social landscape. On June 22nd 2015, time became an integral point of conversation for individuals using the public transport system on Gozo. It marked the first day of a new bus system, and most importantly to the passengers, a change in the bus timetables. As a result of the new bus system, travel times and bus schedules were shifted, causing many locals to be late, or in some cases transportation-less, as a result of their everyday schedules being altered. Time, therefore, was a poignant topic of conversation among the passengers-to-be on the day.

Victoria station was chaotic. Older women were waddling around holding their purses with iron grips, leaving their husbands on the periphery of the

Ladies lined up at the office confronting the staff about delays, June 22nd 2015

station. The women systematically lined up at the head office to complain about the time confusion and the new system. It was not until I got on a bus to a church that I realized the circumstance: all these ladies were not going to be on schedule for their morning prayers, and were furious about it. Many husbands held their wives' shopping, looking sheepish while their wives gestured and raised their voices at the dispatchers and drivers, who then pointed them to the main office line.

An older man who I often saw waiting at Victoria station, hunched, toothless and walking on a wobbly cane, sat beside me. He yelled in a raspy voice to a man who was looking at the times on the bus stop schedule. The younger man replied. This same exchange happened several times over the course of the hour; people standing would share the information to those sitting. It was difficult to tell whether individuals knew each other, or whether they were united by the system change, and time. Many people looked down at their watch and back at the schedule sheet, waiting impatiently for their bus to arrive. (Field note excerpt: June 22nd 2015, 8am, Victoria station)

As many passengers often had overlapping journeys, those who regularly shared company on the bus spent the extra time at the station together, chatting and complaining about the bus system and the time they had sacrificed. While others joined the growing line of elderly to middle-aged women, the dispatcher of the day, tasked with making sure buses were leaving on time, approached me in an effort to appear busy while old ladies tailed every member of the bus system. He explained that the situation was "no good," and continually gestured ladies towards the line outside the office, where others left with freshly printed time sheets in hand. As Bissell notes, "in the event of the delay, the comfort associated with anticipated schedules and sequences of events are brutally scrambled and the routines and habits which enable regular passengers to travel without much reflective thought are ruptured" (2010: 275). In this way, many experienced a rupture in their usually smooth travel and daily schedule.

Though typically a non-place in its own right (as it exists for the purpose of travel), Victoria station is not a place-in-motion; the station provides the end or beginning of the journey, it is therefore pre-liminal, and post-liminal. On this day, however, Victoria station was liminal. The old system was not yet gone, but the new system had not taken effect. The potential travellers, thrust into this threshold became flustered and concerned. As the routes, location, and drivers had not changed, the only thing that made the change in the system notable was the delays and schedule modification.

On any other day, time was only briefly discussed at the bus stops by most people (with the exception of the dispatcher, who only ever spoke about time). This rupture in the schedule however marked the importance of time within the system. In this case the in-between-time, usually accounted for, was expanded at the station, and had produced a community that had not intended upon existing there, in an uncomfortable state of liminality. This happened not only by bringing people together for a more extended period, but also by providing a common experience and topic of conversation upon which individuals connected.

At the fissure in the system, the buses became the point of conversation and the non-place (both Victoria station and the bus) was given attention. Despite having reinforced or created a sense of community, the shift of the daily workings of the non-place also caused discomfort among the potential passengers and workers. By changing the routine of the daily commute, individuals felt that their social space (the bus) had been tampered with. Arguably, therefore, time was one of the main points of contention within the Gozitan bus, and Victoria station. Once passengers boarded a late buses, they were transported back into the comfortable liminal place of the bus, and away from the chaotic liminality of Victoria station.

Contrary to my argument throughout this ethnography, the space on the Gozo bus, was a "place" for me, as opposed to a non-place. Rather than a liminal space, which designates it as an in-between space, the bus was always the destination for me. The interactions, which I encountered and participated in, were an intended social setting for myself. Time therefore, was not liminal for me, but rather, designated as research time and place. This also created a series of interactions, wherein individuals interacted with me, out of their curiosity of my placement within their liminal non-place. One of the social rules that I came to understand was that the only purpose for being on the bus was if you were traveling "somewhere." By being on the bus for the sake of being there, I thus broke this rule. This aligned me with another actor in the bus, for whom it is a concrete space: the driver. Consequently, the dimension of time for them worked differently than

for the passengers, as time spent on the bus for the drivers was labour time. As the bus was the site of their work, drivers were always in the workspace. They often took note that I was present and would invite me to ride with them on their routes as they knew I was not going to any particular destination.

Conclusion and Remarks

The public non-place of the Gozitan bus catalyzed social interactions between individuals, the bus, and time. The meeting of these dimensions created interactions between strangers in a small space. The liminal space often provided moments and place for specific ways of socializing with strangers. Though I have remarked that there are few resources in travel ethnographies on small rural tourist island communities, it is worth commenting that liminal spaces still exist. The bus displayed small temporal communities, which were very social due to the social individuals on Gozo, the interactions with the bus's technology and the strict time schedule being disrupted.

While writing this ethnography I came to realize there are several limitations to my research. Due to my concentrated focus on the bus system on Gozo, I had little experience with the Island's culture as a whole. Though I note the nature of the "friendly Gozitans", this is due in part to my experience with interviewing locals, and tourists on the bus. Additionally, the ratio of commuters may have been in favour of travellers from abroad rather than locals as a result of conducting my research over a summer month (one of the busiest months of the year for tourists). These parameters influenced my experience on the bus and cannot therefore be generalized to the entire bus system on Gozo, nor be indicative of the culture of the island. However they are small observations, which record the bus system on Gozo, at one time, to have been a friendly liminal site for socializing.

The bus was a liminal zone in motion where the social and the technological meet to create a place-in-motion. This place-in-motion allowed individuals to create momentary collectives. These momentary collectives were created through three factors intersecting in the liminal space. Firstly, the open nature of the social individuals on the bus (whether local or foreign), made way for open communication between commuters. Secondly, the technology of the bus facilitated specific conversations through its temperamental air conditioning system. Thirdly, the dimension of time, notably when interrupted, sparked communication. Additionally, when contrasted against the liminal Victoria station on the day of the schedule shift, the liminal bus marked itself as a comfort and haven. The specific non-place of the bus allowed for individuals to share private and public moments, which brought them together as they navigated a constantly changing space and orientation. Through the factors I have examined throughout this ethnography, one may note that the summer public transit on Gozo, Malta during June 2015, was a comfortable liminal space, which facilitated temporal mobile collectives with each bus stop.

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