Post-structuralist philosophies: Towards an etho-politics of everyday leisure practices

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Abstract

This article draws upon Foucault's (1988; 1990; 1997) later work on ethics and subjectivity to consider Socrate's timeless question 'how are we to live?'. In this way philosophy and leisure practices can be brought together to problematise and open up different ways of thinking about the nature of everyday freedom. Specifically, a case study of an Australian community garden project (Northey Street City Farm) outlines the transformative potential of leisure practices that are produced through emerging political formations and urban public spaces. Drawing upon a governmentality perspective (Dean, 1999; Rose, 1999) leisure is conceptualised as an etho-political practice of freedom that constitutes the self, and is constituted through, the complex discursive formations of advanced liberalism. As a public space Northey Street invites, and incites, participants to constitute themselves in particular ways as ethical subjects through leisure practices and power relations. This article adopts a deconstructive approach as it reconsiders certain assumptions about subjectivity and freedom that have informed leisure theory through a focus on the parameters of 'activity, time, space and experience'. An etho-politics of leisure can open up alternate ways of thinking about the particular relationships between power and freedom that shape contemporary forms of subjectivity and social engagement.

Keywords: post-structuralism, governmentality, ethics, leisure politics, community gardens

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What is philosophy after all? If not a means of reflecting on not so much on what is true or false but on our relations to truth?...The displacement and transformation of frameworks for thinking, the changing of received values and all the work that has been done to think otherwise, to do something else, to become other than what one is – that, too, is philosophy... it is a way of interrogating ourselves: If this is the relationship we have with truth, how must we behave? Michel Foucault (1997, p. 327)

Foucault's comment on philosophy as a transformative knowledge practice is also remi-

niscent of historical references to ancient Greek notions of leisure as contemplation on the relations of truth that guided the conduct of (exclusively) free citizens within the city (de Grazia, 1962). For example, the Epicureans and Stoics believed in the care of the self, or soul, as a philosophical and practical means of creating an ordered life in common. Practices of reflection and care for self participated in the creation a form of leisure that linked private and public freedom (freedom from becoming a slave to one's own desires and hence failing to contribute to the political life of the city). As Foucault (1997, p. 232) states, 'Pliny advises a friend to set aside a few moments a day, or several weeks

or months, for a retreat into himself. This was an active leisure – to study, to read, to prepare for misfortune or death'. Today the practices of leisure and philosophy appear to be poles apart in the context of conspicuous consumption and normalised desires for instant self-transformation (body make-overs, fitness regimes, lifestyle coaching etc) (Hamilton, 2003; Hancock et al., 2000). Yet, there are compelling philosophical and political concerns that remain with us, particularly Socrates question, how are we to live? What constitutes the good life? And, in Foucault's terms, what formations of truth now shape our individual and social experience of freedom through leisure?

In taking up these questions this article aims to develop a post-structuralist approach to theorising leisure by situating a case study analysis of community garden practices within a governmentality perspective on the politics of everyday life (Dean, 1999; Rose, 1999). Foucault's work on ethics can be 'read' in many ways in relation to leisure, hence, this article offers one particular interpretation that foregrounds the politics of freedom, rather than offering an extensive critique of the approach itself or an exploration of other political formations. Rather than provide a history of community gardens or a broad analysis of their social significance (Bartolomei, 2003), the case study illustrates a method of bringing together theory/ philosophy and leisure/texts of everyday life as a practice of cultural analysis (see Game, 1991). As a means of introducing readers who are unfamiliar with key post-structuralist arguments, or the governmentality literature, a critical discussion is presented to set out a theoretical terrain for the case study. Philosophical practice of this kind enables us to rethink some of the dominant epistemological assumptions that have informed leisure studies debates in relation to the oppositions of freedom/constraint, structure/ agency and self/society. It is also a method of putting philosophies or theories 'to work' (beyond a conventional theoretical/methodological divide) through a post-structuralist approach to knowledge that emphasises what ideas can 'do', in terms of the effects they bring to bear on thinking about leisure and the possibilities of social transformation (Game, 1991; Game & Metcalfe, 1996).

Everyday philosophies

In his later work Foucault (1988, 1990) pursued questions about the relations between truth and power through a reading of ancient philosophies in terms of how they might assist with rethinking the ethical nature of subjectivity in the modern world. In this 'history of the present' he points toward the renewal of epistemological connections between leisure and philosophy by urging us to consider how we come to know the truths that govern our lives and hence the formation of our selves. This post-structuralist turn prompts us to rethink the historical nature of freedom itself as constituted through certain kinds of leisure practices, sites and discourses. The kind of philosophical practice that Foucault has in mind involves a departure from what has conventionally been thought of as knowledge or truth. The very authority of Western 'reason' (opposed to the otherness of emotion, the body, women, slaves, nature) underpinning philosophy as a representation of universal truth, has come under extensive critique by a range of post-structuralist writers from Foucault (1980), Deleuze and Guattari (1983), Derrida (1978), to feminists such as Cixous and Clement (1986), Grosz (1994) and Irigaray (1993).

The masculine, white, elitist assumptions that have historically informed philosophical knowledge, and much social theory, have also been critically engaged with by leisure scholars interested in pursuing the post-structuralist turn in relation to everyday leisure (Aitchison, 2003; Fullagar, 2002b, 2003; Rojek, 2000; Wearing, 1998). In contrast to some approaches this article does not offer an 'overview' of post-structuralist philosophy, constructed as either a coherent theory 'of' leisure or as a set of concepts that can be 'applied' in a straight forward manner to leisure or society as reified objects. Rather, it acknowledges the value of post-structuralism in that it can generate different engagements with, and particular readings of, leisure practices within the politics of everyday life. Such an approach draws specifically upon a Foucauldian (1991) led historical-philosophical analytics of the empirical workings of power, known as governmentality (Rose, 1996, 1999; Dean, 1999). This is a genealogical method that asks questions of how our 'conduct' (ways of thinking and acting towards ourselves and

others) as a population of 'free' individuals within neo-liberal societies is 'governed', and hence constituted, through particular regimes of truth, discursive formations of subjectivity and multiple technologies that give shape to what we have come to 'know' as leisure.

Over several decades Foucault's investigations of power moved through the emerging French structuralist/post-structuralist debates of the late 1960s to embrace an understanding of the operation of power relations through a triangle of sovereignty-discipline-governmentality (Foucault, 1991). In other words, Foucault was interested in the multiple technologies through which power worked as a productive, rather than simply a repressive force or an inevitable state of domination. In his later work he focused on the changing nature of the subject's relation to itself (as a relation of truth) in terms of the historical shift from ancient ethics (as a practice of care for oneself as the means of knowing oneself in relation to the world), to Christianity where an ethics of self-renunciation became codified through a moral imperative to know thyself under the authority of god. Foucault's interest in ethics came after he had traced the decline of sovereign power and the emergence of a disciplinary society with its institutionalised practices (prisons, schools, medicine) and subtle coercive techniques of self-other regulation.

With the rise of liberalism Foucault was also interested in the nature of the modern relation to self as a problematic of government (how to govern the conduct of the free self and the population of free subjects) (Rabinow, 1997). It is this very liberal tradition that has also informed Western psychological and sociological assumptions about leisure as the exercise of freedom through individual choice and agency. Leisure has been thought of as a domain through which the individual subject struggles to achieve and express a self-actualised meaning or truth in the face of constraining and repressive external forces. Power is often conceptualised as an external force (barrier) that acts upon a pre-existent self to constrain or enable choice via the process of socialisation into positions circumscribed by class, gender, race and the like. There have been few attempts to problematise the relationship between leisure and the constitution of subjectivity. We need to bring into question the asocial, individualised assumptions that inform psychological notions of intrinsic motivation, needs, satisfaction, as well as determinist sociological assumptions about leisure based on socialisation models, an existentialist self or ideological notions of false consciousness that presume a true or alienated self exists beneath culture. Exploring instead the mutually constitutive relationship between the self or subject of leisure and the social world shifts our attention towards understanding the discursive (rather than constructionist) nature of power-knowledge relations. Leisure is neither simply a liberal domain of freedom nor a site of totalising social forces, rather it is importantly a set of practices through which we can understand the everyday processes of subjectification (power exercised over the self by the self) and subjugation (a relation of domination exercised over the self by others). Subjectification refers to enfolding of the external world into the interior self through our thoughts and actions, that Foucault refers to as specific technologies or practices of self (Deleuze, 1988). To understand the nature of our freedom we need to understand how we are urged to think about ourselves in certain ways (autonomous, competitive, seeking truth in oneself) and how leisure has been 'invented' as the domain through which particular kinds technologies of freedom are practiced (Rose, 1990; 1996).

Importantly, Wearing (1998) introduced Foucault's notion of the subject's active capacity for resistance in relation to power, yet there is a also danger that resistance may become reified within leisure studies at the expense of other readings of Foucault's broader project. Resistance through leisure is too easily reduced to a notion of the subject as the source of an existential or essential meaning (the liberal self-present subject), rather than understood as an effect of a complex set of discursive practices (within which resistance is enacted against normalising and disciplining forces). Within leisure studies the focus on defining the parameters of leisure as an object of disciplinary knowledge and as a social category (time, space, activity and experience) has occurred at the expense of a more critical theorisation of the subject of leisure and the processes of subjectification that constitute particular ways of living and acting in the name of freedom. However, Aitchison (2003), Wearing (1998) and

Rojek (2000) have significantly contributed to an active conceptualisation of the subject of leisure as it exists within a complex web of power relations, and particularly in terms of gender, states of domination. Philosophical practice of this kind enables us to rethink some of the dominant epistemological assumptions that have informed leisure studies debates in relation to the oppositions of freedom/constraint, structure/agency and self/ society. It is also a method of putting philosophies or theories 'to work' (beyond a conventional theoretical/ methodological divide) through a post-structuralist approach to knowledge that emphases what ideas can 'do', in terms of the effects they bring to bear on thinking about leisure and the possibilities of social transformation (Game, 1991; Game & Metcalfe, 1996). Community gardens offer a particularly interesting leisure site for this kind of analysis of power within a practical domain where ethical concerns about environmental sustainability and different formations of selfhood and social relations are enacted and organised within the context of an emerging community identity. A governmentality perspective does not simply celebrate community gardens as a libratory movement or ideal community, rather it investigates the relations between freedom and power that inform ethical negotiations and involve dangers of moralism and exclusivity (Dean, 1999).

The turn towards ethics

While Foucault (1997) very clearly acknowledged the existence of domination (where power relations are blocked and subjects are objectified and subjugated) his later work moved towards an exploration of the relations that make up the field of governmental practices in which there exists the possibility for thinking and acting otherwise. He says,

...l am now interested in how the subject constitutes itself in an active fashion through practices of the self, these practices are nevertheless not something invented by the individual himself (sic). They are models that he finds in his culture and are proposed, suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society and his social group. (1997:291).

In understanding the operation of modern power Foucault was less interested in the inner

meanings that individuals might ascribe to their leisure or existence, than he was in understanding the discursive practices shaping the very relations of truth that define the self as a free subject (and hence circumscribe those very meanings). The everyday practices of the self, such as those connected with the eating, exercise and sexual practices of the ancient Greeks, were of interest to Foucault because they provided a way of analysing the profoundly cultural and political 'relationship of the self to itself' (technologies of self) as the substance of ethics (Foucault 1991, p.102). In this way Foucault was highly suspicious of the modern political discourse of oppression and liberation as he felt it was insufficient 'to define the practices of freedom that will still be needed if this people, this society, and these individuals are to be able to define admissible and acceptable forms of existence or political society' (1997, p.283). He was more interested in pursing the question, 'how can one practice freedom?' (Foucault 1997, p.284).

To rethink leisure as an everyday, embodied practice requires an analysis of the technologies (techniques, rules and processes) of self that work through particular ethical relations (of care, of renunciation, of truth) that constitute freedom. For example, the increasing emphasis on promoting leisure in terms of physical activity within health policies in Western countries has been produced through particular discourses that create a 'calculative' relation of truth to the embodied self (Fullagar, 2002a, 2003). Rather than a relation of care that emphases pleasure and sociability through active embodiment, we see the emergence of instrumental and economic relations that calculate energy expenditure and time ('30 minutes per day everyday'). Within the context of advanced capitalism the subject's experience of freedom is governed by a relation of truth that positions leisure as a site of self improvement and competitive advantage. We live in the era permeated by popular lifestyle and reality television with tips to improve everything from your garden to your sex life. Leisure consumption is positioned as the means to express one's lifestyle choice (the gym, entertainment, sport, home, car & holiday commodities) and relation to self as a successful self-governing individual (Bennett, Emmison, & Frow, 1999). This calculative leisure ethic is steeped in

neo-liberal notions of the self as an autonomous, free choosing, productive, individualistic and competitive actor (Hamilton, 2003). Everyday issues of wellbeing and stress, health and illness are problematised as ethical dilemmas within the narrow domain of individual responsibility - how much should I exercise, how do I fit more into my own and my children's lives, how do I maximise work and leisure opportunities? This discursive field, Rose (1999) argues, is guided by an ethics of 'lifestyle maximisation' where the subject's relation to the social world and the cultural codes that guide behaviour, choices and thinking about one's leisure is unquestioned. An etho-politics of leisure would engage in further interdisciplinary explorations of how leisure is caught up and articulated in relation to the discursive domains of paid work, health, home, public policy, market forces, popular culture and the environment. It also calls for an analysis of the gaps, discursive contradictions and silences where counter forces, ethical relations and other ways of valuing social engagement emerge and erupt the codified practices or technologies of self governing leisure.

Leisure, ethics and community gardens

A new ethical politics has taken shape – of the environment, of animal rights, of reproduction, of health, of everyday life itself – which refuses the idea that politics is a matter of state, parliament, election and party programme... it opens up the possibility of freedom as neither a state of being nor a constitutional form but as a politics of life. Rose (1999, p.2, 94)

Rose (1999) proposes a reformulation of the notion of politics through his concern with examining the ethical relations that govern practices of freedom within the contemporary terrain of advanced liberalism. In leisure studies there has been ongoing interest in exploring the relationship between leisure and ethics (Fain, 1995; Henderson, 2000; McNamee, 2000). Rojek (2000), and more recently Aitchison (2003), have called for further analysis of leisure policy and practices in terms of an ethics of 'engaged freedom'. However, the distinction between morality (codified norms about right and wrong) and ethics defined as a practice of freedom often remains unexamined. In Foucault's (1997)

writing ethics is distinguished from the domain of morality as that which works through the normalising practices of augsi-juridical institutions such as the church, the school, the workplace. and the law. Foucault was interested in exploring the transformative and transgressive possibilities of rupturing, refusal and disjunction within the social as we live it through the ethical relations that give form to particular kinds of subjectivities and social relations (Foucault, 1990; O'Leary, 2002). Refusing who we are, in order to become something other than who we have been told we can be, was central to Foucault's (1997, p.271) articulation of freedom as pushing against the normalising imperatives that work to form our identities, tastes and relationships. For example, he argued strongly that the new age 'Californian cult of the self', with its emphasis on discovering one's true self through hedonistic or holistic forms of leisure, was not about the practice of freedom, but actually its opposite. This mode of ethics has the inner self as its 'substance' and hence it is a relation of self-attachment or self-fascination that seeks to decipher, largely through pop psychology, what one's truth is. In contrast, Foucault argued that in ancient Greece an ethical relation involved a form of asceticism, 'a sort of work, an activity; it implies attention, knowledge, technique' (1997, p. 269). Rather than the self being the substance of ethics, the Greeks emphasised ethics as concrete practices, the 'care of the self', that embraced the living of one's individual and collective freedom in the present via an 'arts of existence'. Foucault distinguished this ethical and aesthetic relation to self from a Christian concern with practices of self renunciation that were necessary to reconcile the self with God in the desire for life after death.

A variety of ethical modes of relating to the self are evident today in many practices of 'serious leisure' or volunteering that involve particular modes of working on the self, relations of care and concerns with social and environmental issues. Rose's earlier comment about the emergence of politics organised around life, rather than 'the state' or political parties, is suggestive for thinking about the interconnections between leisure as a practice of freedom and new formations of subjectivity. The example I want to focus on relates to the emergence of an urban commu-

nity garden movement that is undergoing somewhat of a revival through connections made between environmental, organic living, social justice and community renewal discourses that question the ethics of consumer culture and neo-liberal individualism (Bartolomei, 2003; Patel, 1991).

In Australia there has been a proliferation of all kinds of community garden projects since the first garden within this discursive shift was established in the late 1970's (on the history of community gardens see Twiss, 2003). There are currently an estimated 174 gardens that range from those located within institutional settings of schools, public housing estates, prisons, to those that have emerged out of participatory community involvement (www.communityfoods.com.au, 13/12/2003). I want to focus on a particularly unique garden (the Northey Street City Farm in Brisbane, the capital city of Queensland) established on four hectares in 1996 that works as a non-profit organisation with a community membership and management committee. When I moved to the city I joined Northey Street as a volunteer/ member and began to observe how this particular community garden was an active site of etho-political activity organised around leisure practices, volunteering, sustainable enterprises and work skills programs. The growing literature on community gardens tends to focus on health, ecological sustainability and community building benefits (Francis, 1990; Hancock, 2001; Twiss, 2003), or the contested nature of gardens as a social and leisure space (Bouvier-Daclon, 2001; Glover, 2003; Shmelzkopf, 1995). There has been some analysis of how different types of gardens work (or don't work) to produce different social relations through leisure practices that 'make up' new forms of community engagement. However, there has been little exploration of gardens as etho-political leisure spaces that disrupts the binary oppositions that conventionally structure relations between work/ leisure, self/society, pleasure/ascetics, nature/ culture. The last part of this article develops a reading of one particular community garden through Foucault's (1997, p. 262) genealogy of ethics with four main aspects of the relationship to self examined.

Northey Street's mission statement articulates the diverse and interconnected ethical domains of people and environment, 'To create a

working model of a cooperative, community based urban permaculture farm which demonstrates, promotes, educates and advocates for environmental and economic sustainability in a healthy, diverse and supportive community' (www.northeystreetcityfarm.org.au, 13/12/2003). Members and non-members are invited to participate in various activities, from volunteering (about 40 people every week) in the various food gardens, café or weekly market, to undertaking outdoor education and leisure related courses (from organic and permaculture garden design, vegetarian cooking, mosaic tile making, yoga, sustainable building, indigenous bush foods etc) or participating in one of the Government funded job training schemes (a less voluntary option for the unemployed). Participants are positioned as open, ethically responsive subjects who identify with the principle of caring about and through their own living connection with the garden and surrounding environment. This is central to Foucault's first point about 'ethical substance' as the way that the individual has to constitute a certain part of themselves as the prime material of their moral conduct (O'Leary, 2002). In this way the ethical substance of self is constituted not as an inner truth to be found, but rather as a set of interconnected relationships that are felt through the body, emotions and hence the affective domain of subjectivity. The garden is a place of sensory engagement, of listening, tasting, smelling and seeing change. It is also invokes an ethos of pleasurable participation and embodied learning as practices of care that are circulated via the website and newsletter, 'The farm has been developed for people to enjoy and participate using the principles of permaculture' (www.northeystreetcityfarm.org.au, 13/12/2003). Participation is not simply about individuals purchasing or undertaking activities voluntarily, rather participants are invited to identify with the garden as a cultivated, creative space through which they can experience a difference sense of community. The 'value' or meaning of participating cannot be easily calculated through an individualised discourse of lifestyle improvement, nor does it fit easily into a conventional volunteering discourse where giving one's time is deemed to have moral worth (although these two discourses may well be taken up by participants). The Northey Street garden works to problematise one's relation to self by opening up the implicit question about how are we to live sustainably in our everyday lives? Such a question necessarily involves a questioning, confrontation or rejection of part of the self's ethical substance (the habits and desires for consumption, instant gratification and accumulation).

The pleasurable relation to working on the gardens and one's own ethical formation of self, stands in stark contrast to the renunciation or indulgence of self, and illustrates Foucault's second point about the 'mode of subjectivation' concerning how individuals are 'invited or incited to recognise their moral obligations' (1997, p. 264). Obligation is not construed as a 'heavy' responsibility or duty, rather it is linked to the conduct of self across a range of tasks that carry equal importance within a permaculture system in which all parts of an ecosystem rely on others - from feeding the chickens, preparing the garden beds, turning the compost, harvesting vegetables, cooking produce and making decisions on the management committee. In contrast to neo-liberal discourses about individual responsibility for health and wellbeing, the emphasis here is placed upon social responsibility as collective action. Rituals of collectivity establish a sense of community through ethical identification. For example all volunteers stop to enjoy lunch together that is prepared from a daily harvest of the gardens and in this way the divisions between work/leisure, care for self/care for others, pleasure/duty, growing/eating are put into question. Each task or activity fosters a relation of responsibility towards self and others that recognises an ethos of living well through respect for difference. It is a mode of subjectivation that is not a relation of self-mastery or the mastery of nature/others, but rather a relation that promotes the wellbeing of self as intimately connected to the wellbeing of human and non-human others. The self is 'in and of' the natural and social world, in contrast to a dominant Western mode of self that stands apart from the world in order to control or consume it through an object relation (Plumwood, 1993). The effect of this subject position is one of gratitude and appreciation for the harvest (that one has helped to produce but was not the origin of), rather than blasé detachment or arrogant possession. Although there is potential for different

eco-discourses to come into ethical conflict here as permaculture principles allow for the eating of animals (eg, chooks, goats) while vegetarian discourses do not.

Foucault's third point concerns the nature of 'ethical work' as the means by which we can change ourselves in order to become ethical subjects. The ascetic nature of freedom is emphasised by Foucault here in terms of self-forming activities that assist us to decipher what we are or to moderate our acts. Rather than adopt a highly moralising position on 'our responsibility for the environment' Northey Street offers a range of activities through which individuals can begin to engage 'seriously' (through enjoyment or passion) with other ways of doing things. For example, learning about organic gardening by working with the seasons and climatic changes helps to develop habits of attentiveness (or mindfulness) that counters the urge to reach for the quick fix of insecticide or artificial fertiliser. There is a nursery where non-hybrid varieties of vegetables are grown from seed to encourage biological and culinary diversity - the non-standard, non-uniform varieties that supermarkets do not produce because they do not transport efficiently. Yet, there is always the danger that ethics will be usurped by discourses of environmental moralism within the collective processes organised around the common identity of the Northey Street community (Hawkins, 2001). This is where Foucault warns of the dangers of settling upon a set of truths that guide ethical conduct for they may then become the instrument of subjugation where power relations become blocked and the exclusion of different practices and people can occur.

The range of courses offered by Northey Street creates a unique repertoire of leisure practices that articulate principles of self-sufficiency, sharing knowledge of cultivation techniques, creativity and resourcefulness. Such practices require pedagogical and aesthetic work on the self (learning about oneself in the world and developing a different sense of the arts of existence) that are distinct from our equation of freedom with the consumption of commodities that mirror normalised ideals of beauty, status hierarchies and object accumulation. In this way conspicuous consumption and wastefulness are problematised, positioned as objects of critical eco-community thought and

practices that aim to transform and make visible other kinds of freedom - freedom to create an 'arts of existence' that is sustainable. The farm is not closed in by tall fences, it blends into the surrounding parklands, bike paths and houses by offering a space in which one can experience time differently. A sign in the kitchen garden says 'please walk slow, plant growth in progress'. On the weekends the gardens are full of different kinds of people who have come to purchase their vegetables from the organic market and just wish to wander in a relaxed mode or to enjoy the sociability of the bustling organic café and children's play area. There is a strong leisure ethos that informs the ethical work of the gardens that is evident in the community celebrations, workshops and festivals that are held regularly to mark the solstice, a project's completion or harvest time. A range of organic growers, permaculture and community groups is connected to Northey Street so that it acts as a hub for knowledge exchange and community building through a broad ethical identification.

Foucault's (1997, p.265) final point about ethical relations relates to the 'telos' of one's life - what kind of being do we aspire to be when we act in a moral way? Do we aspire to immortality or purity, self-mastery or freedom? Northey Street incites a range of ethical relations that perhaps also include conventional moral positions aspiring to purity through the delineation of good and bad ways to live. Yet, the philosophy of permaculture promotes diversity and innovative responses, and as a largely voluntary agency, it promotes different ways of thinking and engaging with this question of how to live well. It requires an ethical inventiveness, rather than a reliance on the moral codes of the church, judiciary or medicine. If there is one particularly strong telos it would be the aspiration to live 'in relation' with the human and non-human world as a practice of freedom that recognised interdependence. It is a relation that requires both a detachment from, and a care for the self, in order to be continually thinking 'otherwise' about the effects of our actions on the world and the effect of the garden upon our ways of understanding ourselves. In contrast to the modern imperative to constantly 'calculate' time, money and the value of relationships in terms of success and failure, there is quite a different spatial and temporal relation to self that is invoked by

community gardens. The process of growing cannot be rushed nor can the pleasure of its cultivation be calculated in commodity terms.

Concluding remarks

Rather than conceiving of our present as an epoch or a state of affairs, it is more useful, in my own view, to view the present as an array of problems and questions, an actuality to be acted upon and within by genealogical investigation, to be made amenable to action by the action of thought... It encourages an attention to the humble, the mundane, the little shifts in our ways of thinking and understanding, the small and contingent struggles, tensions and negotiations that give rise to something new and unexpected. Rose (1999, p.11)

Rose presents a different way of approaching the philosophy of leisure beyond conventional epistemological claims to truth or conventional notions of the political sphere. Through Foucault's genealogical method he can be read as suggesting that we reframe the 'problem of knowing leisure' by problematising the way that leisure is practised, organised and discursively produced in our everyday lives. This article has endeavoured to work through ideas about ethics, power and freedom to conceptualise how leisure practices are implicated in the politics of everyday life. A post-structuralist approach to governmentality opens up the possibility of exploring social transformation within neo-liberalism through the leisure sites, margins and relations. By specifically examining the etho-politics of a community garden project Foucault's later work can be seen to have relevance for understanding how leisure practices can work to produce particular ethical relations to self and formations of freedom. The Northey Street garden opens up a transformative leisure space in which participants can experience themselves as ethical subjects situated at within a range of social relations that require ongoing negotiation with respect to pleasure, responsibility, care and sustainability. This case study demonstrates that leisure is one of the most complex moral domains of freedom through which we can explore the changing discursive formations of subjectivity and the implications for how we individually and collectively 'live well'.

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