

Abstract

Building upon my long-term ethnographic research at an informal auto salvage yard in Central Bohemia, this dissertation attempts to reveal that there are places that—albeit sustaining capitalism—correct the damage this globally prevailing politico-economic system causes, as these relatively marginalized places can reveal the hidden corners of one's own society. In addition to presenting and describing the everyday life of the workers at the auto salvage yard, wrapped in the context of the omnipresent mis/trust related to friendship, hostility, and knowledge “battles,” I discuss the meaning of various greenwashing eco-slogans, which in reality seem more like a tired marketing ploy than a real solution to current environmental problems. I build on the theory of containers and combine it with the idea of the ecology and economy as non-mutually exclusive parts of originally one concept (*oikonomia*) to touch upon the idea of responsiveness concerning wasting and its shift towards the individual level and morality, and consequently, feelings of personal guilt. Based on the experience of salvage yard workers' creativity and skills, I attempt to reveal through the lens of the “quiet sustainability” concept—complemented with recent ideas on the practices of repair, maintenance, and care—that “greening” can also be achieved quietly by the grey economy of breaking cars. The case of auto salvage yards shows that sustainability arises even through the yearning for profit. At auto salvage yards, eco-nomic meets eco-logic; therefore, the unintentional sustainability reached by auto salvage yard workers opens space for debate on sustainability reached through the profit motive. The world of auto salvage yards is about a strong interconnection of humans and things; therefore, I focus on the analogy between human bodies and car bodies. Sometimes, these bodies—as assemblages—share a similar fate; their organs and spare parts can be disassembled and used in different contexts. Cars and humans are divisible individuals comprising a complex of separable parts that can be dismantled. The organs of humans who died during a car accident or later in the hospital can be commodified in the same way as the parts of the car they were driving. Based on this experience, I intend to emphasize the close dynamic relationship not only between cars—as material objects—and humans or non-humans inside cars but also between that whole assemblage and the material world and humans or non-humans outside, and therefore I propose the “person-car” concept. I present the car as a human's second body to demonstrate the flexibility of human bodily boundaries; the human body can include lots of incorporated objects—in this case, the car.