Standing in Public Places:
An Ethno-Zenic Experiment Aimed at Developing the Sociological Imagination and More Besides …

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Abstract: This article describes and analyses an ethno-Zenic experiment consisting of standing motionless in public places (for example, at the entrance to a shopping mall, in front of a petrol station, a bank or a shop, or on a street corner). The research was inspired by an ethnomethodological approach to lived order and psychological knowledge—derived from Buddhism—on how the mind works. Some inspiration was also drawn from symbolic interactionism. The experiment was aimed first at discovering the basic assumptions underlying our everyday activities. A second and more important goal was to deconstruct the work of the mind, especially with respect to the process of the looking-glass self and 'producing' emotions. The article also discusses the use of the self-study method (ethno-Zenic experiments) to deconstruct the mind as part of a lived order in a certain location and, in the wake of that, mindfulness.
Keywords: qualitative methods, Zen Buddhism, public places, lived order, contemplative sociology, ethnomethodology

> *Everyone's going somewhere; I'm the only one standing still.*
> (from the report of one participant in the ethno-Zenic experiment)

Introduction

Standing is an activity that has certain common-sense mental associations in particular spaces and situations that give it meaning. Generally, when we are standing, we are waiting for something or to do something (e.g. queuing) [Schwartz 1975]. Standing in a specific place is interpreted in reference to certain socially defined motives that justify this activity [Mills 1940]. We are standing *in order to* or *because of* [Schütz 1962: 18]. In the study discussed in this article, the researcher required participants to stand still as part of an experiment. The motive for standing

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was unknown to the random audience. The audience in this experiment was *accidental*, although it temporarily 'belonged' to the given place, which in a sense then became a kind of landmark, and the space and the actions occurring in it (and the motives for them) could thus be defined in a variety of ways. The public generally interprets certain actions by reference to a vocabulary of motives included in their stock of knowledge, which among other things offers cognisance on standing still in some places (in front of a mall or a bank or in a park). It is, however, unlikely that this stock of knowledge would include a motive for standing that is justified by the need to conduct an ethnomethodological experiment. Thus, standing still in some public places may be seen as breaking social rules [Garfinkel 1963: 1967] about what is acceptable there. Standing in public places is an unfocused interaction [Goffman 1963], not one aimed at opening exchanges in an interaction—here there are no observable gestures that invite someone to establish an interaction or stabilise the interactional space [Mondada 2009: 1991–1992].

These considerations formed the basis for conceiving an experiment that, to some extent, resembles Garfinkel's [1967] experiments and more specifically the ideas of Bernard McGrane [1993a], who suggested that his students (attending his Introduction to Sociology course) take part in an experiment consisting of standing and doing nothing for the purpose of observing the reactions of others to this kind of *inactivity*. 'This experiment is ideally suited to helping students move beyond their common-sense explanations.' [McGrane 1993a: 81] His students described their impressions after standing in several different public places. Generally, they referred to people's 'natural' engagement in some kind of activity. They also reflected on the frustration that they experienced from doing nothing. Some kind of 'employment' thus underpins how one defines oneself [McGrane 1993a: 83]. However, from the Buddhist point of view, the experiment showed the participants what happens when one leaves behind common-sense classifications and becomes 'unclassified' [McGrane 1993a: 82; see also other ethno-Zenic experiments, e.g. McGrane 1993b; or Zenic experiments, e.g. Schipper 2012; and contemplation practice in the classroom, e.g. Grace and Simmer-Brown 2011]. We are not often aware of this in everyday life. When we experiment, we use and observe typifications and their effects on our activities [Bentz and Shapiro 1998: 59]. The experiment helps the subjects to reconstruct the experience of public places and understand the nature of a specific place [cf. Seamon 1979, 2000: 161–162] and to analyse the existential theme of 'doing nothing' in the living world, in this case in a particular public place.

Garfinkel's [1967] breaching experiments were aimed at elucidating the process of achieving the normality and justifiability of the basic interpretation scheme—within the context of certain situations, places, or social institutions. The search for normal forms within the framework of a given situation is a process of creation, where examining the sense and verifying the interpretation of utterances exemplify the practical use of the documentary method. Utterances or activities constitute a document for the underlying scheme of interpretation. 'Not only is the underlying pattern derived from its individual documentary evi-

dences, but the individual documentary evidences, in their turn, are interpreted on the basis of "what is known" about the underlying pattern. Each is used to elaborate the other.' [Garfinkel 1967: 78] Standing in public places is a routine activity (it is a document) that has underlying assumptions embedded in a pattern of interpretation. Motionless standing can be seen as *normal activity in a public place* as long as it is possible to reconstruct its aim and the action does not last for a long time, which can disrupt the assumed patterns of interpretation.

Ethnomethodological experiments allow the reconstruction of such patterns. Garfinkel's experiments were focused on everyday life interactions, where the interlocutors' dialogue was important for establishing the sense of utterances (taking into consideration what had already been said and what would be said next). This way of thinking was adopted in the experiment discussed in this article; here, however, it was contextualised within the frame of interactions exemplifying imagined conversations between *I* and *Me* [Mead 1934; see also Blumer 1969; Strauss 1997]. This dialogue is generally about interpreting and working out the meaning of a given activity. It constitutes the added value (drawing from symbolic interactionism) of an ethnomethodological way of deconstructing the assumptions of common-sense knowledge underlying any kinds of activities. Thus, establishing the sense of actions and utterances is a 'quasi-subjective' process, 'quasi' because the dialogue taking place in one's mind is inter-subjective— the volitional element of the individual meets the socialised and normalised interactional-space-material social order.

> In the so-called flight of ideas, I often recognize thousands of interlocutors, thousands of people whom I need to bring around to my arguments, which, in fact, are not mine, but how should I know these are not mine alone? Analyzing the flight of ideas, I can distinguish external influences, hundreds of influences that are beyond my agency due to time constraints. … The question arises: Who is discussing? Who (inside me) is having this conversation? Is it possible that there is one fundamental *I* at the bottom if there are so many internalized 'others' who become my 'positions', 'stakes', and opinions? Maybe some place deep down there is one generalized *I*? *I* that reacts, that when caught in the act of the mindfulness becomes *Me*—eluding the time stream, imperceptible *I*. But maybe such an assumption that there is some kind of *I* is wrong? [Konecki 2010: 332–333]

'How should I know these are not my reasons?' This is a question that opens up space for considering and researching the process of 'internal conversation' [Konecki 2010: 332], which has been forgotten and is underestimated by many sociologists. Research provides insight into the process that defines the adequacy of the actions (including thinking and feelings) that take place within a specific space to achieve a sense of normality, which, on the individual level, constitutes 'the experienced proof' that a social order exists in adequately, geographically, and socially defined places. Here, the identities, feelings, emotions, activities, thoughts, and features of the perceived space are seen as adequate to verify the *normal-*

ity of actions undertaken by *I*. It is a process of reflecting on the internal dialogue. Moreover, it is a study on *anamnesis*—the process of bringing back the dialogical structure of the self, where the *other* passes unnoticed and is hardly perceived as other in the internal dialogue. Rediscovering the dialogical dimension of the self casts doubt on the rules of a social order and/or shows its illusory/constructive character. It can help to uncover diverse forms of internal conversations (toxic inner speech, self-humiliation, self-accusation, defensive speech, self-reference, etc.) that create the social order of some places [Konecki 2010: 333–334]. *Anamnesis* serves to remind one of the internal dialogue, which can be a difficult experience, and sometimes traumatic (which leads to the cessation of the action—in this case, the experiment, which generated fear and a feeling of inappropriateness), or, on the contrary, liberating, creative, and even pleasant, when one discovers, thanks to a mindful insight, that thinking and internal dialogue impact upon the construction of interpretations of places and identities here and now.

That is how a person can reach *this place* and the time of reasoning—a subject of Zenic interest (derived from Zen Buddhism)—when the activity of the mind is observed and *anamnesis* becomes the individual experience of embodiment. Here, one gains insight into the work of the mind, its traps, interpretive illusions, and insistence on thinking (internal dialogue) when a person is mentally active.

'If we really want to get to the bottom of life, we must abandon our cherished syllogisms, we must acquire a new way of observation whereby we can escape the tyranny of logic and the one-sidedness of our phraseology.' [Suzuki 1964: 39] The logic of the mind can often be broken by employing paradoxical formulas, such as those adopted by Zen novices. These formulas/questions (often called *koans*) may be as follows:

> Empty-handed I go, and behold the spade is in my hands ... It is pouring now; how would you stop it? ... When the hands are clapped a sound is produced: listen to the sound of one hand clapping ... If you have heard the sound of one hand, can you make me to hear it too? [Suzuki 1964: 28–29]

We may find such formulas absurd, but if we think of them as of a form of experiment—in which the mind transforms the meaning through internal dialogue accompanied by meaningful participation in the self-consciousness of the act—the aim of the project becomes acceptable. 'The meaning of proposition "A is A" is realized only when "A is not-A." To be itself is not to be itself—this is the logic of Zen, and satisfies all our aspirations. … Zen thinks that we are too much of slaves to words and logic.' [Suzuki 1964: 30–31] It may be added that if we are 'slaves to words and logic', we also are the slaves of the mind. [1]

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[1] It is interesting to note that there are many similarities, but also fundamental differences in the methods of psychoanalysis used by the Frankfurt school and sociology inspired by Zen Buddhism. Psychoanalysis as used by both the Frankfurt school and Zen Buddhism

Natural logic (using the mind) is a mere illusion; it is 'produced' by the work of the mind, that is, the internal dialogue between *I* and *Me*, which is always underpinned by the external definition of *normal form*. Challenging the logic and observing the work of the mind, being aware of the process at hand, is the goal of, the Zenic experiment.

The experiment in motionless standing was conceived as an attempt to understand (the process of) communication with others. Motionlessness, stillness, and doing nothing (in public places) may offer insight into the work of the mind, thoughts, and associations, or into how different concepts collapse in the mind of the individual. This part of the experiment was a Zenic one, where the nature of the mind could have been observed, although it was not always the subject of reflection, as we shall see below in the description of individual cases.

Methodology

The main goal of the experiment was to generate data on how the mind works when a person is standing still in a public place. Zen methods here serve merely as the inspiration for the experiment and the basis for generating the data (the

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propagates reflexive thinking as a way of dealing with fears, emotional obstacles, and the repression of feelings. The roots of the obstacles of the mind can be found in our perception of social reality and the social conditioning that we construct in our mind or receive from external channels of communication (from media, education, and social networks). The unconscious level of our mind and our repressed feelings and thoughts have a social origin [Marcus 1955]. The critical theory of the Frankfurt school and psychoanalysis give hope for the radical change of the individual. This hope comes from the rationalistic tradition and philosophy of Enlightenment [Suzuki, Fromm and De Martino 1960]. A similar hope exists concerning social change; however, the change is usually so fundamental that on the social level it constitutes a revolution [Castoriadis 1991]. Psychoanalysis treats the conceptual and categorical constructions of our mind as defence mechanisms, protecting us against openly expressed aggressiveness [Lacan 1966]. Psychoanalytic inspiration led J. Habermas [1984, 1998] to formulate a concept of *reconstruction* as different from *auto-reflection*. Reconstruction is about the social system and the ideology that keeps it alive. Reconstruction shows what is behind the ideology. The concept of auto-reflection is close to the traditional ideas of psychoanalysis, whereby the individual subject can understand his utterances by intellectual analysis. However, the observation of the mind entailed in the act of Zen mindfulness leads to a deeper liberation of the human being. By meditation and mindfulness, he or she sees that all concepts are illusionary in nature and society is not only a construction but also an illusion created by the mind, language, and the other to whom communication is directed. The concept of 'I' is an illusion, just as much as the concept of ego. There is no id, no super-ego. Zen is also a way of proceeding from the individual to the social level; this way is non-theoretical and non-conceptual and consists of the actual experiencing, action, and social engagement of individuals in individual and social change, based on compassion and empathy. No revolution or radical social change is acceptable if it is based on violence and the use of force.

transcription of thoughts) from observing the mind as it produces thoughts and from observing the personal experience and feelings that are the natural effects of immobility of the body.

Like in McGrane's research, the participants were inactive during the experiments, with the only difference being that they observed themselves and the world around them. The mind produces thoughts that are supposedly representations of the world. Our activities and even our 'in-activities' are based on this assumption. So the observation of thoughts is at the same time observation of the world around us. In the present case, the observation thus had a 'double' nature.

The research was performed in January 2015. The participants in the experiment were students, who had to stand in a public place and prepare reports describing the objects and people they observed, their feelings at the time, their sense of self-observation, and the imagined or real actions of others. The students stood in various locations, in front of a shopping mall, at a petrol station, in front of a store, and on a street corner (Table 1). They had different experiences of social pressure, sometimes imagined, sometimes real. The weather had in impact on the experiences of the participants, who often reported being cold (see Table 1). One of the aims of the experiment was interpretive (reflective), defined as understanding the strength and validity of the common-sense knowledge assumptions inherent in the attitudes underpinning activities as perceived by others.

The second objective of the experiment was to *reconstruct the work of the mind* in a situation of standing motionless (doing nothing) in a public place. This reconstruction was possible thanks to participants' observation and insight into their internal dialogue (and accompanying emotions).

The author instructed the participants: 'The goal of the experiment is to do nothing, to be "idle". Do not wait, do not solve any problem, do not plan anything. Choose a public place where you will stand still for 10 minutes. This may be a space in front of a store, in a mall, on a street corner. The choice is yours. Try to stay in that position even if others try to approach you. If you need to answer a question, please do so. But remember that the general rule is *no reaction*. Monitor yourself and the surrounding area. Try to maintain this awareness until the end of the experiment (10 minutes of standing still). You can set an alarm on your phone/smartphone. Good luck! After completing the task, write down all your observations and impressions immediately.'

The participants were self-selected students enrolled in an MA course in sociology. The sites they chose (in a city of 660 000 inhabitants) had to have the status of a public place and be generally accessible to anyone (including the experimenter). Locations in the city were the ones most suited to the research because they allowed participants to be exposed to large numbers of the public. There are many places that are full of activity and are socially labelled objects, but each of them has a certain specific character or quality, which is the *specificity of the place*. This is what determines the context of the interactions, including those that form part of a person's inner dialogue, which the participants were required

Figure 1. Taking a stroll in a public place: *Un dimanche après-midi à l'Île de la Grande Jatte*, **Georges Seurat, 1884**
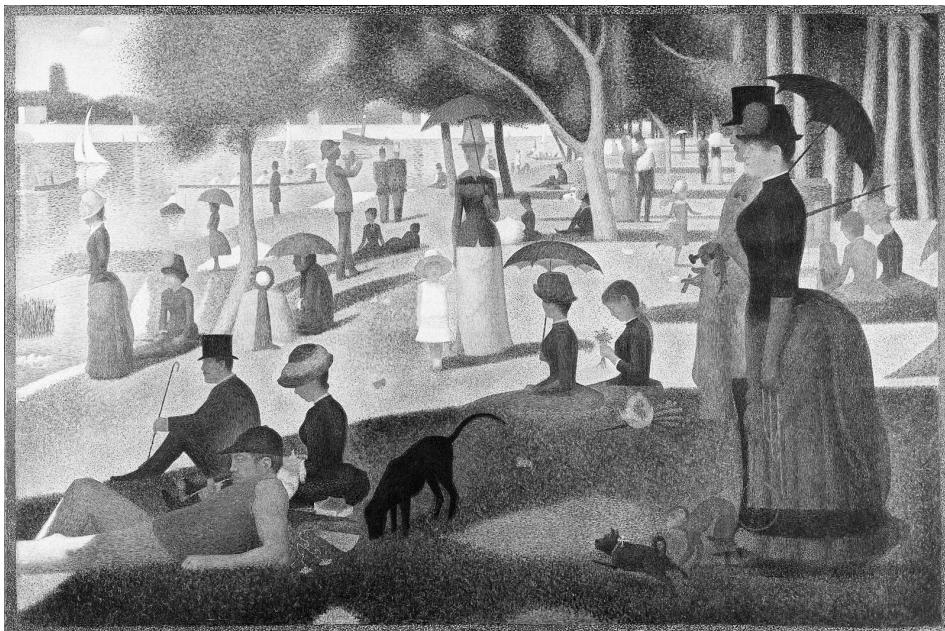
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Georges_Seurat_-_A_Sunday_on_La_Grande_Jatte_--_1884_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg. Retrieved 29 August 2015.

to observe. Each place has socially defined characteristics that determine the significance of the objects that users employ (e.g. a park 'gives clues' on how to use its paths, playgrounds, or fields) or has specific meanings for users (e.g. 'a stroller belongs in a place called a park', 'this is where a walker goes').

Public spaces therefore allow participants to define the activities in the given area and also the identity of others there (e.g. people taking a stroll in the park; see Figure 1). Walking around a Catholic church during mass is not socially accepted. However, standing motionless may be socially fitting in a certain space and may thus be a socially legitimate activity (e.g. a soldier on guard duty; see Photo 1).

All of this occurs within the context of 'thinking in-place', a process that facilitates association with specific locations and establishes the relevance of certain 'sentiments' in relation to them (or in some locations renders them inappropriate). The same applies to '"what everyone knows", which is an integral part of the behaviors of normal form' [Cicourel 1970: 139]; if there are any contradictions, then there is a need to normalise them. Competent participants use 'nor-

**Photo 1. Legitimate standing motionless in public places: guarding the Tomb of
the Unknown Soldier, Warsaw, Poland**

Source: Photo by the author.

mal forms' in everyday interactions on the assumption that all communication
is based on 'what everyone knows' [Cicourel 1970: 148–149]. Hence, we know
whether certain behaviour displayed in a given location is appropriate or not
(normal vs abnormal form). The process of 'thinking in-place', which occurs dur-
ing the internal dialogue between *I* and *Me*, involves exploring and achieving the
'normal form' of an activity or interaction, or of a socially defined 'anti-action',
such as becoming motionless in a public place. Any social behaviour assuming
the 'normal form' corresponds to what are called acceptable verbal interactional
utterances. Standing motionless in public places performed by 'unauthorised'
people may be in breach of the norm (although it is, for example, acceptable in
the case of guard soldiers on duty). Seeking a justification for a 'normal form of
motionless standing' in a public place, for example in a park, where people nor-
mally go for a walk, is extremely difficult (almost impossible considering 'what
everyone knows' about such situations) and can often generate negative emo-
tions among people performing such an activity, as well as among the audience.

Table 1. Characteristics attributed to some public places—based on the experiment 'Standing Motionless in a Public Place'—part one

Public place	The features of the public place			
	Common features, inter-subjectively available and verifiable	Special facilities the space provides (for public use)	Features 'subjectively' ascribed that belong to a 'legitimate participant'	The feeling of appropriateness or inappropriateness (auto-definitions) attached to performing the given activity in the given location (achieving a normal form)
Park	General open access, 'people walk there', observability	Alleys, trees, benches, playground, playing fields, etc.	'Comfortable feelings'	*A feeling of inappropriateness:* 'I felt like a moron'
Street corner	General open access, heavy traffic at a specific time, general observability	Many people at a specific time, moving cars, city centre	Free movement of traffic, the possibility to observe others, others watching	*A feeling of discomfort / a feeling of comfort: psychological and / or physical, e.g. leg pains; The feeling of engaging in natural/unnatural behaviour*
Entrance to a petrol station	General open access, observability	Customers, weather (temperature, gusty wind)	Customers' movements, clients with 'burgers in their hands'	*Feelings of inappropriateness:* a feeling of strangeness, hunger
Entrance to a mall/shop	General open access, observability	Consumers, ATMs, pavement, table, bench, signboard, umbrella, tree, kiosk, roadway, tram, people, weather (temperature), heavy traffic	Fast-moving, rushing, not perceiving the noise	*A feeling of inappropriateness:* 'looking-glass self', 'you look strange', a feeling of being uninterested

Table 1. Characteristics attributed to some public places—based on the experiment 'Standing Motionless in a Public Place'—part two

Public place	The features of the public place			
	Common features, intersubjectively available and verifiable	Special facilities the space provides (for public use)	Features 'subjectively' ascribed that belong to a 'legitimate participant'	The feeling of appropriateness or inappropriateness (auto-definitions) attached to performing the given activity in the given location (achieving a normal form)
Entrance to a shopping mall	General open access, noise	Consumers, shops, escalator	Heavy traffic, rush, new people	Questioning the *appropriateness* of one's own position, *a feeling of inappropriateness* (embarrassment)
Entrance to the bank	General open access, observability	Entrance door, street, buildings, streets and cars, clients, employees, city centre	Traffic and clients' movements, bank employees' movements	*A feeling of inappropriateness:* 'I felt strange', discomfort, boredom
Car park in front of a shopping mall	General open access	Consumers, cars, weather (temperature)	Consumers' movements and traffic	*A feeling of appropriateness:* a good feeling – 'I'm always very busy, it is nice to stand and do nothing'; a lack of embarrassment

Note: The words in italics indicate how the experiment participants felt when breaking the rules of 'normal behaviour' in a particular place.

The search for such justification is carried out using an interpretative procedure (which, according to Garfinkel, is a feature of practical reasoning)—a 'retrospective-prospective sense of occurrence'. Normally, in order to make sense of what has happened, one waits for subsequent events to take place (in the case of an interaction, the utterances) [Garfinkel 1963: 149]. However, in the case of standing motionless in a public place, the sense of the event does not reveal itself through what happens next. In this situation, it can only be justified on the grounds that it is a scientific experiment.

An analysis of auto-reports

1. Standing activity

An ordinary person standing motionless in a specific location, occupying a certain place in people's 'movement maps' (e.g. the space in front of a shopping mall), always occurs in relation to the other occupants of the space and is, in a way, structured by the very movement of people and by their assumptions and expectations of how movement should occur. A shopping mall is a place where the participants' movement is intense: 'People entering and leaving the mall move fast, rush, as if they were late. I was doing the opposite.' (from the report of JW)

The participant contrasts (compares) his or her position and 'action' with what was happening in the participant's location at the time of the experiment. *Stillness* versus *movement* was perceived to cause a feeling of inappropriateness, since the place implied (in the participant's mind) that *it was a space of action and fast movement*. Slow traffic, even the absence of traffic, does not belong in this place; the social order indicates a crucial characteristic of the place—'motion and/or doing something in motion'. The common-sense assumptions about the movement that corresponds to the given place are thus different from those of the experiment's participants, who have broken the logic of the traffic at this location and the logic ascribed to consistent assumptions about 'how a normal person should behave here'.

2. Thinking

The experiment's participants often worried about how they were perceived by others. It was possible to observe the mechanism of the 'looking-glass self' in this unusual situation [Cooley 1922: 184]. Emotions were generated, especially *anxiety* and *fear*, as exemplified in the case of X, who felt embarrassment and fear that standing motionless could be defined as 'strange', and that this description would be assigned to him/her, which caused even greater anxiety, perhaps a form of hidden shame [Scheff 1990]. It even evoked in the participant a desire to

stop the experiment before 10 minutes had passed, a feeling that occurred in the case of most participants.

One participant labelled the following part of the observation and auto-observation 'the attack of thoughts', reflecting the feeling that there were too many thoughts to cope with. The person engages in a dialogue, an internal conversation [Konecki 2010], and is strongly absorbed in the imagined assessment of him/herself (not the action performed) by others (the effect of the looking-glass self):

> I was standing a short distance from the ATM. One person withdrew money. I could feel his eyes on me the whole time. I was sure he was watching me and would approach me and ask why I was standing there without moving. I began to worry terribly about what he thought of me. I felt as if this person was just about to approach me and say, 'Lady, you are strange….' I looked at the man. He tucked some notes into his wallet, and then went into the mall. He seemed to be somehow thoughtful, busy, not even looking at me. (from the report of JW)

During motionless standing and as the mechanism of the looking-glass self is forming, strong emotions and a sense of 'protracted duration' emerge [cf. Flaherty 1987, 1991]:[2]

> Why the petrol station? It seemed to me that it was easy 'to blend into the crowd there'. People come to fill up their cars and then leave after a while. No one would pay any attention to me. And there was something to that, because in fact nobody did pay any attention to my behaviour. On the other hand, it felt like an awful experience to me. I had this impression that people were watching me, first of all, because I was standing in front of the entrance, where thousands of clients were going in and out (and certainly not standing in one spot). Of course, some people would probably think that I was waiting for someone. Mainly those who were there at the time. But, in my mind, this 'moment' lasted for a really long time. (from the report of MM)

> After a while I stopped watching people and looked at my surroundings. I noticed the tenement building that was across the street, and the display in the store window. Then I watched the cars. I really felt that the time was dragging. (from the report of NO)

The participants often considered terminating the experiment early. Given that 'the time was dragging' as they stood on one spot and that they were unable to

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[2] The achieving of normal forms also refers to a 'normal' perception of time: 'Thus, in ordinary conditions, the individual's subjective experience of lived time is synchronized approximately with that inter-subjective time which is measured by clocks. The normal adult under normal circumstances can estimate with fair accuracy the elapsed time of an interval by reflecting on the amount of experience he or she has processed during that interval.' [Flaherty 1991: 84]

determine how much time was left until the 10 minutes was up, they began to feel uncomfortable:

> I was curious to see how many more vehicles would pass by during the experiment. I was hoping there would not be too many. I usually listen to music when I'm waiting at the bus stop; now I really missed it. I was bored. For a moment I thought about giving up early. ... Towards the end, I began to wonder how much longer it would take, and I had this great desire to check the time. My thoughts wandered. (from the report of NO)

The internal dialogues connected with the looking-glass self were very intense. The participants described how they believed they were perceived (imagined evaluation) by the 'audience':

> People probably think that I'm waiting for someone. But it bothered them that I was standing there without moving, without headphones or a phone. When the lady who saw me before came back, she started staring at me quite oddly. There always were people looking at me, commenting on why I was standing there doing nothing. (from the report of MS)

3. The strength of the mind and thinking—the battle of thoughts

The principal leitmotif that usually ran through people's thinking was: 'what others are thinking of me'. As already noted, the mechanism of the looking-glass self was often 'turned on'. The fear of embarrassment was extremely strong. The extract below, describing the participant's recollections of the thoughts she had while standing, was titled 'Thoughts Are the Winners':

> My thoughts, however, kept coming back to: 'everybody is doing something, and you are just standing there', 'everyone is rushing somewhere, and you're standing as still as a statue', 'you stand out from the crowd too much; sooner or later somebody will come up to you and call you a freak'. I so much wanted to keep on observing, feeling, just stay on the spot, but my thoughts prevailed. I started worrying about the fact that somebody might actually approach me and mock me for standing there doing nothing. So I cut short the experiment after eight minutes. (from the report of JW)

A desire to curtail the experiment arose in the minds of many participants. Motionless standing was then perceived as an exceptionally unpleasant experience. The attempts they made to blend into the crowd were not always successful, at least from their point of view.

In the case mentioned above, the participant focused on negative thinking and, as she described it, 'I flowed along with my thoughts'. This kind of reaction

represents an attempt to escape from one's self-awareness and is underpinned by a perception of what is appropriate, based on the assumed definition of what is a 'normal' activity that may be undertaken in a certain place. It is thus an attempt to escape from *anamnesis*, from consciousness of the internal dialogue going on, which is actually a dialogue based on interacting with the imaginary other (both social and constructed by the mind).

4. Mindfulness appears

At a certain point, a kind of awareness (mindfulness) appears automatically, and one starts noticing different 'micro-events', objects, movements *here and now*. The 'setting' is now meticulously observed. However, such mindfulness is frequently disrupted by the accumulation of approaching ideas, where a person's critical perspective is strongly filtered by assumptions regarding their image in the eyes of the 'audience':

> When my thoughts proved to be far removed from reality, and dreadfully stressful into the bargain, I decided to change my *tactic*. I just started looking around. Pavement, table, bench, sign, umbrella, tree, newsstand, road, tram, people. I started noticing how much stuff was around me, how many things were going on. But whenever someone passed me, intrusive thoughts returned: 'He thinks something is wrong, I'm weird.' I was tired of them, so I tried to fend them off, and deal with the person by observing how they were dressed, what their jacket was like, how they were moving, the expression on their face, the colour of their hair. Also, I started listening to what was happening around me: people talking, the opening and closing of doors, people moving, a passing car. I started noticing that the sound of passing cars is different from the sound of passing trams. It had always seemed to me before as if it was one noise. Now I could hear the difference. (from the report of JW)

Standing still, with no engagement in the 'normal' activities of daily life, leads to a greater focus on the sensations of the body and how these are perceived (e.g. feeling cold, hungry):

> I was alone with my thoughts. Suddenly, I felt the chill (because there was a strong, gusty wind). Also, seeing some people coming out of the station with hot dogs made me feel hungry. (from the report of MM)

Here, a fully conscious feeling of being 'here and now' appears, a meta-reflection on what such 'here and now-consciousness' is:

> I had pleasant feelings during my observations. I felt the place where I was standing, its diversity and richness. A pleasant feeling. I think I discovered what it means to be 'here and now'. (from the report of JW)

I started paying attention not only to people and the environment but also to the sounds I was hearing. I focused on a conversation between two women at the bus stop. I heard ambulance sirens some distance away. I was surrounded by the buzz of people and passing cars. (from the report of MO)

I closed my eyes and listened to the sounds of the city. Screeching tyres, engine sounds, human voices, horns, all mixed up together, not very pleasant. Time ceased to exist. [It's] amazing how much happened when I stopped thinking about it; amazing how much information and how many stimuli came to me. How much I was able to see, hear, feel; hundreds, no, thousands of moments. ... And I am fully aware of the here and now. (from the report of MW)

5. The reactions of 'normal others'

Because standing motionless sometimes breaks the rules of conversation, what may potentially happen is that 'the participant with a hidden identity' decides not to act in accordance with the rules appropriate to a given space and situation (e.g. turn-taking [Sacks 1995: 523–534] or responding to a question [Sacks 1995: 49–56]).

One lady told me to go into the store and not stand on the pavement. As I didn't reply, she said that I was rude and uncivil and had no respect for my elders. (from the report of SM)

The anonymity people have within public spaces may give the participants a sense of 'invisibility'. This changes, however, when a person is recognised (their private identity is revealed), in which case social relations no longer remain anonymous, but become personal. Then, the need arises to 'explain oneself' (what the person is doing there, why he/she is standing still). Also, the fear of being 'discovered' triggers a fear of being ridiculed (the feeling of shame):

I felt invisible, no one paid any attention to me until my friends, who were starting work at this time, 3 pm, appeared. Some greeted me with the usual 'hello' and hurried on by, others paused for a moment and greeted me, asking whether I had already finished work or was about to start. I tried not to get into a discussion. Some of them even pretended not to see me. I was afraid that they would ask what I was doing there and why I was just standing. I did not want to explain that it was an experiment; I might have actually been afraid of being ridiculed. (from the report of AA)

6. Reflections after the experiment

Some participants expressed ethical reflections on the experiment. The situation of standing motionless in a public place is a difficult one and may lead a person to interpret the social environment, but all such interpretations are made from the viewpoint of a particular person and are often based on specific feelings associated with the experiment:

> The end of the experiment was associated with great relief. Now I feel proud of myself, because I was able to go through with it, even though I felt embarrassed. One thing is certain—I would never repeat it.
>
> This leads us to conclude that social 'insensitivity' is increasing; people are so busy with their own affairs that they do not notice other people's (glaringly obvious) problems. (from the report of MM)

In addition to frequently experiencing anxiety and discomfort—mostly psychological—the participants felt satisfaction with themselves if they lasted until the end of the experiment:

> I was able to stick it out until the end of the experiment, and I felt very pleased and satisfied that I did it. (from the report of MO)

There were also reflections on the anticipated effects of the experiment. The participant cited below was surprised, when she compared notes with other participants, not to have experienced anything to support her expectations—certain sensations, feelings, and mental states that might occur during the experiment.[3] She felt pleasure in 'doing nothing'. She felt appropriate because she is usually very busy and during the experiment she could just stand and do nothing. Such a feeling of pleasure is here a way of achieving a *normal form*, the form that other participants identified as a 'situation of psycho-emotional discomfort'. Both the place and the situation meet a standard of *appropriateness* ('I can stand still because I am performing an experiment'). The situation of the experiment thus becomes a 'normal form' for those participants who accepted the established feeling rules, emotional rules, and the rules of behaviour-normal-in-this-type-of-experiment:

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[3] A 'retrospective-prospective sense of occurrence' emerged. Normally, a person awaits subsequent events or refers to the past to make sense of what has happened [Cicourel 1970: 149]. However, such a situation had not happened before; hence, the experiment participant was surprised. We may recall here the idea of Alfred Schütz—that a person's biography and pragmatic interest in the 'here and now' determine whether the situation is recognised as a problem or taken for granted [Heeren 1970: 45–47], and in the case of the experiment's participants and others being 'here and now' does not mean that the present is 'the shared vivid present of the We-relation' [Schütz 1945].

I don't feel stupid. I just stand there. Maybe I shouldn't have listened to the accounts of other people in the group. I expected specific thoughts, feelings; and here, except from feeling slightly cold, nothing. ... It is pleasant. I do not have to do anything. On the contrary, it is advisable that I do not do anything. I'm just in this place and I stand here. I thought I would want to walk away because I don't like standing without moving. But, no, I do not want to walk away. It's good to be standing. And a reflection: perhaps this comes from the fact that we live at such a mad pace that we need just that—to stand and do nothing, stand and do not have to do anything, stand and not have any guilt about standing still and doing nothing. (from the report of AG)

Such reflections also pertain to the sense of time and its ontological quality. Time is subjectively determined; it can be 'turned off' as a dimension of existence. Coming back to 'normality' is about returning to the time of everyday life:

Time is an illusion; we try to measure it by seconds, minutes, hours. ... How many moments can happen within one second, or minute? Out of curiosity, I looked at my watch. I thought my experiment was over; it was 2:21 pm. I don't know why, but I hid the phone in my pocket, convinced that I still had a few more minutes. I was expecting something amazing, or perhaps more someone. ... Some dozens of blinks later, I realised that the experiment had been going on for more than 17 minutes! Success! I looked at people, smiled, and took a step, then another, and returned to ... something that most would call normality. (from the report of MW)

Conclusion

In general, any form of unproductive standing is not acceptable in our culture (which confirms the findings of Bernard McGrane [1993a]). Moreover, the activity of standing seems abnormal. This was particularly noticeable among the students conducting the experiment. The assumptions underlying an 'action' like standing motionless are usually built from the answers that may be given to the question, 'What am I standing here for?' Explaining that this is an experiment is usually not a sufficient justification for performing it, especially in the light of the way in which others would see it.

Generally, modern cities are designed in such a way as to encourage people to move, and this movement is programmed for consumption and for doing something. This can be demonstrated with a phenomenological explication of the life-world phenomenon of 'urban *motion*':

In urban life and language the existential self searching for identity is determined and constituted by urban *motion.* This motion is the true content of one's 'way' of life. Streets and areas of 'slow motion' (squares, plazas etc.) are the fundamental aspects of urban life. This is even called something like 'pedestrian culture' and was

already exploited by an all watching engineers of consuming systems, who purpose-
ly constructed shopping environment for these pedestrians—simulated streets, co-
lonnades and etc. (for instance, the biggest shopping mall in Vilnius—'Akropolis').
I want to remind you that 'promenade' was a method and sometimes purpose of
educational process in ancient Greece. Today this feature of urban life ensures slow
but steady buying. [Briedis 2009: 25]

Standing still in such environment could look bizarre and suspiciously unprofit-
able.

Interpreting the act of standing is usually framed by reference to where it
takes place. The mind adjusts to the imposed patterns of interpretation. If the
mind has no specific goal, then it would most likely use a 'tool' (a reflexive action
that supports one's specific vision of reality) commonly called 'killing boredom'
(see the following auto-report excerpt: 'In addition, it may turn out to be vital
here. It appeared that I could not stand without moving. But perhaps this is due
to the fact that when I am waiting for the bus, I talk on the phone to "kill bore-
dom."'). Usually, people wants to be doing something, to give some constructive
meaning to the act of standing still, so they undertake an additional action that is
culturally and rationally defined. This calms the mind, since they are performing
some socially accepted activity. Talking on the phone does not arouse interest,
and the looking-glass self does not disturb the mind that is doing nothing.

Although most of the experiments ended before the time allotted for it had
elapsed (10 minutes) and the participants reported that they had not succeeded
in their task, from my point of view they were all successful. Many valuable re-
ports—exemplifying, among other things, that an individually established but
socially learned emphasis on achieving the normal forms of activities undertaken
in public places can cause enormous discomfort and generate disturbing emo-
tions—were collected. Acting contrary to existing norms is extremely difficult.
Still, in the experiments, no standards were violated: the participants acted along-
side the standards, not breaking the *rules* in a way that would violate somebody's
welfare, interests, or private space. However, even such a slight deviation from
the 'normal forms' of acts performed in public places is not possible if one wants
to maintain a peaceful state of mind, since doing so evokes strong emotions and
a sense of uncertainty about how others see us.

From the Zenic point of view, a state of mindfulness can be induced by
refraining from 'doing activities'. This is usually not possible in public places,
where focused and usually rapid movement are usually an inherent part of the
social order. Observing this phenomenon leads to ethical reflection. It turns out
that places are 'designed' according to socially assigned characteristics, which
adequately respond to 'the mind' and thinking by generating the mechanism of
the looking-glass self. The participants' behaviours are supposed to adapt to the
socially defined and (later) subjectively perceived characteristics of public places.
Thinking also belongs to these places. Only mindfulness, an awareness in the mind

in the form of an internal dialogue between *I* and *Me* (*anamnesis*), reveals to the participants the constructivist nature of the mental work that produces social order. The 'social disorder' created by the experiment was mainly about confronting, primarily in the minds of individuals, 'normal' and 'abnormal' behaviours exhibited within the context of the public space (in specific locations). In Zen terms, social order is created in the minds of interacting actors while they are performing 'not very significant', seemingly everyday activities, such as walking, standing, smiling, dressing in a certain way, straightening or bending the body, making faces or kneeling, and then embedding these activities within the context of specific places that have socially defined characteristics that convey 'normality'. This is how we create social order, and not always the one that we would want. Usually, we do it unconsciously. The body apprehends places pre-reflectively [Merleau-Ponty 2005]. Therefore, mindfulness, which reveals how a process used 'here and now' is constructed, may give rise to conscious reflection (which happened in the case of the participants in the experiment) and may thus be liberating and transforming [see Rehoric and Bentz 2008; Simpson 2008]. It is done by the direct and mindful experiencing of the public space.

The experiment also shows the usefulness of the introspective method of self-reporting on the living experience (cf. the auto-ethnography method [Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011]) and of a concept of *mindful inquiry* [Bentz and Shapiro 1998]. It can be seen as a method of deconstructing the constructive character of everyday life activities and the taken-for-granted life-world. Mindfulness and contemplation are the effect of the experiment, but they are also a tool for 'triggering' data and deconstructing the processes under scrutiny. Being mindful in public places helps to introduce *epoché* into our everyday lives, helping us understand it better and actually *feel* how it is experienced.

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