Valuing in practice
Notes on the complex good of ‘clean’

If you shower, you clean your body, but you dirty the water. Your body, once showered, does not stay clean: at some point you may want to wash it again. Clean, then, is a relational and an ephemeral good. It also comes in versions: hygienically clean does not equal aesthetically clean; and both of these may be in tension with ecologically clean – take face-masks that may keep virus out of airways, but pollute environments. Starting from such mundane cases, in this talk I will ask questions about valuing. This, or so I will argue, does not just include the qualification of particular entities (bodies, water) as clean or unclean, but also the situated, practical doing and undoing of this-or-that version of cleanliness. How to best attend to such valuing appraisals and activities; how to include the non-neutrality of the realities we study in our social science and humanities research?

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