

Gossip (Geographies of Sustainability, Society, Inequalities and Possibilities)

Why 'Gossip' (in both senses implied by this question); why take this name and promote this practice?

Gossip is a pejorative term predominately, habitually associated with casual or idle conversation about other people's private lives. It is often associated with rumour or trivia, not serious endeavour or objective analysis and is frequently seen as intellectually unproductive. However, in the tradition of feminist and radical scholarship, we problematize taken for granted meanings, invert established logic and un-pack conventional binaries. We see as significant that dictionary definitions frequently use gendered language and examples to illustrate gossip's negative connotation. That historically and at present, in both the global north and south, it is common that women, and other marginalised groups are chastised and silenced by the interdiction that they should not gossip with each other undermining and delegitimising their political organising, often in private spaces. We reject the normative logic that debate and discourse should be reserved for other more serious agents and public arenas. We embrace the way post-structural thinking destabilises the antonyms of gossip (e.g. fact, truth, certainty) and build on decades of scholarship in human geography and other social sciences that illustrates that the 'trivial', 'everyday' and 'private' spaces and relations are centrally important to social life and therefore academic analysis. We take interdisciplinary insight from the suggestion that gossip may have an evolutionary function as a mechanism for gaining and sharing information and building alliances and networks of thinking and action. Finally, we seek the sustainability of our community by embracing gossip's original meaning as a community of confidants and neighbours who give support during pregnancy and childbirth: In and through 'Gossip', we seek to support and encourage critical thinking and the gestation of novel ideas and alternative action so as to (re)produce the world anew.