

50. Mobile Localities and Knowledge

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The workshop examines how people *know themselves and anthropologists know them* by probing how they relate to or conceptualise locality. It considers how understandings of self and other change or transcend locality where the movement of people also allows for ‘mobile locality.’ Papers are invited to consider how anthropologists become part of this knowledge production and in turn, produce their forms of knowledge as academic. Further, papers may consider how people understand their distant and their face-to-face relationships in various forms of exchange and ownership, including migrant gifting, use of food, and interactions with media. Discussions will consider how ‘mobile locality’ engages with ‘keeping and giving’ where these ‘gift relationships’ can explicate notions of belonging and home. What demonstrates the interconnections between families, global movements and home where people ‘gift’ themselves to maintain family bonds by travelling elsewhere? How do gifts produce home and at the same time speak to the incompleteness of belonging? How is the idea of home less about ‘face-to-face’ connections and more reliant on movement of people, which then has to be linked to different localities through various forms of exchange? How do media flows allow people to move in and out of ethnic and national identities, and thus change the meaning of locality? How do these movements address centre-periphery relations and influence knowledge construction? These issues will inform a discussion of how knowledge is produced in relation to the movements of people, of their possessions and of their relationships and how this transforms the meaning of locality.

Mobile localities in a transnational context: The case of Mathrakians in Mathraki and New York City

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This paper looks at ways in which people who move between Mathraki, a small island of the north-western part of Greece and New York City, construct, reproduce, and maintain albeit through tensions and ambiguities notions of locality. The idiom of *spiti* (house)/family is crucial for Mathrakians because it is the means by which they construct, reproduce and maintain their imaginings of locality. Although Mathrakian relations and practices are translocal they are, nevertheless, embedded with and mediated through various institutional modes, the household, workplace or the state. In this paper I will focus on one such mode, *spiti* (house)/family. For Mathrakians it is this mode that allows connections and relations to be simultaneously based upon ‘face-to-face’ interrelations whilst at the same time being continuously constructed, reproduced and maintained through movement and across different places: Mathraki,

New York, Corfu. As such, the notions of locality and home are not static/fixed but rather mobile and transferable, continuously mediated through the idiom of *spiti* (house)/family. By constantly evoking a 'drifting away' metaphor, which loosely means being blown off course, getting lost, they reaffirm their locatedness both as territoriality, a social space where people's interactions occur and as a territory, a physical space and location.

Being there: Non-places, home and rituals of leave-taking

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This paper probes the landscapelessness of airports to consider how these sites both produce and mark the absence of home. The Cheddi Jagan International airport in Guyana and JFK in New York reveal different categories of the outside and inside in the Guyanese outward migration movement. The screening of people and suitcases extend leave-taking ceremonies at both airports which illustrate a violent dis-embodiment of the person, as a citizen who is elsewhere. Further, 'home' is on display through the scrutiny and control of the comings and goings of people and objects

The violence finds expression through a physical barrier in the Guyanese airport. Residents watch departing relatives in the check-in areas through glass windows. Travellers return to this manned police barrier for emotional farewells. The violence is further expressed through the scanning and searching of people and suitcases to unveil 'safe passengers', food items and all manner of gifts at both ends of the journey. People watch each other and are in turn 'known' by security as necessary processes of observing and being part of the outside. Systems of control become or express symbolic markers of ownership: both persons and institutions engage in the rituals of leave-taking as ways of 'being there.'

Defining – Defending Localities: Processes of forming new knowledge repertoires in rural Ghana

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The paper examines the changing constitution of a locality with the specific focus on the social order and organisation of knowledge. Methodologically, a locality is conceptualised through its geographical spatiality and its contextuality consisting of different layers of meanings and dimensions (symbols, representation, imagination). The paper probes face-to-face interaction among female networks within and across locality to consider how old and new knowledge elements are negotiated in order to react and act on a changing social world. I will show how communication and self-organisation within networks contribute to create social identities in reference to the past but in order to change the present. The constitution of a new identity (*aberewa nyansafo*) forms a common "we"-relation and a legitimisation for actions, locally and regionally.

This considers negative consequences of modernities to allow for a reflection on and a transformation of the structures of "traditional" political institutions. Researching a locality demands multi-sited fieldwork to understand the dynamics of cross-border

interactions and the connections between different sources of knowledge production. The phenomenological approach of intersubjective understanding (Schütz, 1965) creates a mutual observation between self-other and a switching relationship which is simultaneously subject and object of knowledge production.

Biomigration and the making of place

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This paper explores the ways in which non-human species are involved in the social and cultural reproduction of place. More precisely, it focuses on the ambiguous role of mobility in these achievements, either as something that is actively facilitated, or as something that is prevented. The ethnographic focus is contemporary Tasmania, an Australian island state where visions and reconstructions of nature have served as prisms for shifting interpretations of Tasmanian (or Australian) identity for more than a century. Tracing these interpretations and the various engagements they inspire, I seek to illuminate the interaction of mobility and landscapes in the ongoing making of place.

