



Ethnographies of Mobility – International Seminar

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Abstracts:

Elites or Underdogs? The Tuareg, Modern “Vagabonds” in the Sahara

Ines Kohl

Institute for Social Anthropology, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, Austria

ines.kohl@oeaw.ac.at

The Tuareg traditional lifeways of nomadism and pastoralism have been facing vigorous challenges during the recent decades. A large part of the Tuareg society is no longer moving in traditional cycles, but irregularly, adapting to various situations and according to individual choice or preference between Niger (or Mali), Algeria and Libya. Always in search of making a fast buck they are working a couple of weeks or month before moving to another place. Board and lodging they get from relatives and friends, spread all over the Sahara. A small bag of personal things and a mobile phone with beloved modern Tuareg guitar music rounds up their appearance. Their lifestyle may be characterized with the term vagabonds. But can those people also seen as a certain elite of their society because of their mobile strategies?

In my case study of Nigerien Tuareg moving between Niger, Algeria and Libya I shall illustrate their transnational strategies in dealing with the borders of the Saharan nation states: Desert knowledge and know-how, the use of kinship affiliations and the benefit of multiple identities. I will clarify (1) that vagabonds and elites are not inevitably mutually excluding denominations, (2) that certain forms of modern mobility are hardly put into categories of trans-migrants / refugees / displaced persons / exiles /etc., and that (3) moving may not be an exception of “normal” life, but can be the rule: As a strategy of impoverished nomads to escape the harsh economic and political circumstances and the ecological crises in the Central Sahara and the Sahel.

Liveboards in Mediterranean: Ethnographic Reflection on Maritime Mobile Lifestyles

Nataša Rogelja

Slovenian Migration Institute, SRC SASA, Ljubljana, Slovenia

natasa.rogelja@zrc-sazu.si

As a result of opening of internal borders within the EU and rapid development of affordable navigation technology, there is a constantly increasing number of people in the Mediterranean coming from Western Europe, who have adopted a lifestyle that revolves around living working and traveling on boats. Already in the year 1980 it was estimated that there were four thousand such boats in the Mediterranean (Copper 1994:7). While no up- to- date estimates of the current situation exists, undoubtedly the phenomenon is at present widely present not only in the Mediterranean but also in the West Indies, the Bahamas and the South Pacific. Liveboard maritime lifestyle is a highly diversified phenomenon, touching on several migration forms such as IRM (International Retirement Migration), long term sabbatical travel and marginal mobility migration.



Through ethnography we will reflect on 1) different forms of maritime mobile lifestyles; and 2) will argue that existing accounts of labor migration and tourism are inappropriate to fully understand the phenomenon of liveaboards' mobile lifestyles which can be best presented as a tension between wishes, choices, necessities, urges and expectations realized through maritime mobility in the period of late capitalism. Maritime liveaboard mobility disrupts the definition of tourism as a temporary break from the norm does not fit in residential tourism patterns and, by adopting mobility as a way of life, it also disagrees with classical migration patterns. As such it calls for novel theoretical and methodological approaches as well as for fresh comparison with other liminal cases.

Going Nomad: New Mobile Lifestyles among Westerners

Špela Kalčič

Slovenian Migration Institute, SRC SASA, Ljubljana, Slovenia

spela.kalcic@zrc-sazu.si

In the last two decades Western Africa with its Atlantic coast, Sahara and other remote places became a harbour for many Westerners, who adopted mobility as a way of life. Majority among them travel and live in various converted vehicles, but there are also individuals who back pack. As such they can be hardly distinguished from Western tourists and travellers who drive or backpack criss-cross the African continent. Their lifestyles share many traits with (bohemian) lifestyle migrants (Bousiou 2008; Korpela 2009) and expressive expatriates (D'Andrea 2006, 2007), but also New age English travellers (Hetherington 2000; Martin 1998, 2002) and traditional peripatetic nomads (Berland & Salo 1986; Berland & Rao 2004). They share the following common characteristics: they left the mainstream sedentary life while still in working age; their income depends on mobile economic strategies; they move in circular or chaotic patterns; they are more or less invisible in public space; they tend to bypass sedentary norms regulated by state bureaucracies; they often feel marginalised and/or deceived by their background society; and although they like to state that their lifestyle is a result of a free choice, situations in their everyday lives reveal, that their freedom is actually viced by unfortunate or unsatisfactory life situations. The presentation will test the listed criteria on case of Westerners who adopted nomadic lifestyle in order to explore the possibility of conceptualisation of "marginal mobility" as a new type of contemporary mobility.

Drifting Transnationally: Marginal Moroccan Mobilities

Marko Juntunen

University of Tampere, Tampere, Finland

marko.juntunen@uta.fi

This paper observes the mobile life worlds of socially and economically marginalized Moroccans who occupy a transnational space reaching from Northern Morocco to Spain and wider South-Western Europe. Based on an extended translocal fieldwork, it will construct a socioeconomic contextualization of Moroccan marginal mobility.

The Spanish-Moroccan transnational space is a setting for various mobilities —irregular migration, labor migration, tourism and transnational trade —which at times interact and interrelate but may also challenge and conflict with each other. It is also a site for multiple enclosures, which generate unofficial economic spheres and reshape social formations and interpersonal relations. Thousands of Moroccans find their livelihoods within fluid networks transporting both people and goods, by arranging official and forged



documents for actual and prospective migrants caught in bureaucratic red tape, and by serving as vehicles of information.

The most visible entrepreneurs of the marginal mobility are Moroccan men, women, and unaccompanied children of urban and rural lower middle strata of the population. For the majority, mobility is largely detached from the destinations and the logic of movement of earlier generations of Moroccans in Western Europe. The new entrees arrived in Spain in the mid-1990s as irregular migrants and were later introduced in the circuits of transnational movement. Institutional marginalization and deeply rooted Islamophobia, escalating in the post 9/11 security climate, surrounds their experience in Spain. Neither the patterns of their mobility, nor the methods of survival result from rational career choices with several failed attempts to enter Europe as common features of their personal histories. The ones fortunate to legalize their status in Europe construct a highly mobile and circular lifestyle revolving around flexible economic strategies. They drift between petty commercial activities and occasional “degraded” work in deregulated employment niches: in (transborder) commerce, agriculture, construction, industrial and domestic work and tourism.

Travellers, Gens du Voyage, Gypsies/Roma: People Who Travel?

Alenka Janko Spreizer
University of Koper, Koper, Slovenia
alenka.janko.spreizer@fhs.upr.si

All the world seems to be in motion: different people live highly mobile lives and it seems that some are living on travel. Yet on the other hand, there are people known as Travellers or Gens du Voyage, Gypsies or Roma (the list on names for these people is not exhausted) who are in people's imagination considered as nomads but during the history their movement as travel tends to be highly controlled not to say restricted in European territories and latter in nation states and local communities.

In Gypsy studies the issue on movement is theorised as nomadism or as migration. Following a mobility turn or the new mobilities paradigm (Sheller and Urry 2006) I will look at studies on legal aspect on the movement and moorings (Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006) and on spatial ordering of Travellers or Gens du Voyage, Gypsies or Roma in Great Britain, France and Slovenia, and at the consequences these legal aspects may have for other mobile people. The intention of this paper is to trigger the discussion on legal aspects of marginal mobilities of people who live in their mobile homes that is on boards, in caravans, campers and in house trucks, which hopefully may have refreshing contribution to anthropology and nevertheless to Gypsy studies.

Displacement, Roots and Return Mobility: the Case of Slovene Diasporic Community in Argentina

Jaka Repič
University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia
jaka.repic@ff.uni-lj.si

In the presentation I intend to explore causal interconnections between experiences and social memories of exile and displacement, the emic notions of roots and cultural deterritorialisation, and various forms of return mobilities to ancestral or parental homeland, in the context of Slovene diasporic community in Argentina. In general, the issue of return mobilities have been in anthropology and migration studies



primarily focused on the return of 'first generation' migrants, whereas various forms of return mobilities among their descendants have deserved relatively little attention.

Traumatic social memories of exile from Slovenia after the WWII have been essential in the construction of Slovene community in Argentina, specific diasporic and ambivalent identity, mythology on roots, and even aspirations of eventual return to parental homeland. After the Slovene independence in 1991 various forms of transnational connections and return mobilities started emerging, undertaken both by original migrants, but mostly by their descendants.

Return mobilities to homeland, such as travel and tourism to Slovenia, reconnecting with relatives, building social, economic and political transnational links, and even return migration, are not merely instrumental, but gained deeper importance on individual level as well as level of diasporic community. 'Tracing roots' or search for regrounding and belonging is a temporal and spatial movement that not only entails individual identifications, but also nets relations between places and times (places of residence, places of origin and concepts of home-places; past as evoked in social memories and in imaginary of homeland, present in experiences, and future in aspirations and anticipations).

Gendering Return: Repatriation Programs and Gendered Families in Bosnian Diaspora

Laura Huttunen
University of Tampere, Tampere, Finland
laura.huttunen@uta.fi

Material Flows of Women Migrants from Dhërmi/Drimades, Southern Albania

Nataša Gregorič Bon
Institute of Anthropological and Spatial Studies, SRC SASA, Ljubljana, Slovenia
ngregoric@zrc-sazu.si

This presentation explores the process of movement through the material and financial sources which the women migrants sporadically send or bring to their husbands who stayed behind in the village of Dhërmi/Drimades, southern Albania. Material and financial sources are defined as material flows that connect various geopolitical borders, reassure, recreate and reshape relationships between women migrants who live in Greece and their husbands who stay behind. Material flows are not only emblems but also agents of migrant worlds as they contribute to the formation of transnational marriages that are necessary for the construction of material flows. Material flows form a part of reciprocal relations as they preserve and reconstruct marriage and social relationships in general. They act as insurance policies and reassure dwelling and dynamic presence of absent women migrants. The ethnographic material presented in this paper is based on a long-term anthropological research carried out in Dhërmi/Drimades between 2004 and 2011.

Against the National Order of Things? Children of Bohemian Lifestyle Migrants in Goa, India

Mari Korpela
University of Tampere, Tampere, Finland
mari.korpela@uta.fi



An increasing number of western families are engaged in a lifestyle where they spend half of the year in Goa, India, and the rest of the year in western countries (usually in the parents' countries of origin). Such people can be called bohemian lifestyle migrants: they live abroad in order to find a more relaxed and more meaningful life there and they embrace artistic, creative and spiritual motivations. In many ways, such a lifestyle challenges the national order of things – those people refuse to stay put in their countries of origin but neither do they settle permanently in India, or elsewhere. At the same, the lifestyle clearly benefits from the current global political and economic order where some people are privileged to move and earn money (almost) wherever they wish. Their children who have been born to this mobile lifestyle have never spent long periods of time in the country from which they have a passport and they are not necessarily very familiar with its culture and habits. For many, the main link to their parents' country of origin is the language that they speak with the parent (although some parents prefer to speak English with their children). Yet, even when in their personal lives, nationalities may be rather insignificant, the children are constantly forced to negotiate their place within the national order of things: strangers ask for their national origins and in the school, they get assignments related to their countries of origin. In this paper, I discuss the contradictions in regard to the national order of things that the Western children in Goa experience. I use various examples from my ethnographic data in order to illustrate the everyday situations where the Western children in Goa face (or not) the national order of things.

Movement: Spatial and Temporal Implications

Nataša Gregorič Bon

Institute of Anthropological and Spatial Studies, SRC SASA, Ljubljana, Slovenia

ngregoric@zrc-sazu.si

Jaka Repič

University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia

jaka.repic@ff.uni-lj.si

In this joint paper, which will stand as an introductory chapter in the forthcoming special issue, we are going to present some theoretical considerations about movement and its spatial implications. Numerous scholars have stressed that we live in a world of flux, flows, shifts and changes. Movement and its various spatial and temporal dimensions, for example migration, displacement, return mobility, tourism, nomadism, deterritorialisation, (un)boundedness, space-time compression, etc. have been of increasing importance in shaping both the world and our knowledge of it. Sociologists, geographers and anthropologists in particular have stressed importance of studying fluidity of people, things, ideas and culture (Urry, Hannerz, Massey, Appadurai, to name just few).

In this paper we depart from studies of various forms of movement and mobility and question not only how people experience movement and what are social, cultural, economical and political consequences of human mobility, but also what spatial implications movements generate. Based on the presumption that movement not only entails mobility but also evolves stability which often spawns into spatial locations and place-making processes and thus evokes feelings of locality, belonging, nostalgia and/or autochthony, we aim to explore various ways and modes in which people, bodies, things, ideas, stories, images, etc. are set into time and place. Besides people, places also move – their meanings and positions continuously shift in space and time and generate relative locations and entail power geographies and unevenly bounded territories.



We seek to conceptualise movement through its spatial and temporal dimensions where places are not seen as fixed points of the geopolitical maps but as restless configurations continuously reconstructed through particular social, political, historical, and economic contingencies.

Implications of Transnational Mobility for the Intimate Lives across Poland and Finland: Merging Networks, Multiple Anchorages

Anna Matyska
University of Tampere, Tampere, Finland
anna.matyska@uta.fi

The paper looks at the process of transnational encounters and social and cultural merging engendered by the transnational family mobility across Poland and Finland from the Cold War period to date. It is based on the ethnographic fieldwork conducted among Polish people and their children living in Finland and their family members in Poland, between the end of 2006 and the first half of 2009.

The paper indicates that transnational mobility of my Polish interlocutors entailed inclusion of affiliations with people and places in Finland into their transnational practices, making Finns themselves the mobile subjects. First, as well as second, generation of Polish transnational family members stretched the family boundaries into new social and cultural terrain and transformed it in the process. Thus, transnational mobility rather than being unidirectionally directed towards Poland or Finland, ensued a multiple anchored transnational space, where various strands of social networks intersected and merged with each other, exchanging cultural knowledge and building affiliations across ethnic boundaries.

Simultaneously, this transnational space was structured hierarchically and contingent upon changes in the political economy conditions. Post-communist transformation in Poland not only enabled more unrestrained mobility for Polish people, but also culturally and economically empowered them towards the Finns, introducing difference into the hierarchies of transnational encounters and power consequences of mobility thereof.