



Academic Day, 11 July 2014

Programme

09:30 – 10:00 Intro Session (aims, structure) (everyone)

10:15 – 11:45 First Session (5 groups, please let us know which group you would like to join)

12:00 – 12:30 Summary of Working Groups (everyone)

12:30 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 15:45 Second Session and PI Meeting

16:00 – 16:30 Summary of Second Session (everyone)

16:30 Garden Party

10:15– 11:45 First Session

Group I – “Spacialise” your research!

Chair: Nora Lafi

contact: Nursem Keskin Aksay, Nicola Verderame

In this panel we would focus on discussions about the concept of “Space” and its relevance in our research. On a theoretical level, should we identify it as a material entity, or rather as a practice?

How meaningful is it to consider materiality and practices as intertwined categories?

Most of the research projects carried out in our Graduate School is based on urban contexts, and we see that the city has gained a huge popularity in recent scholarship. However, what is the importance of non-urban settings in our knowledge? How do migration and demographic transformations influence our understanding of space?

On a more practical level, we are interested in sharing our experiences in integrating “Space” in our research. In particular, how do you conceptualise space in your research? What is the analytical

power of it in your work? In which way it is explanatory? What are the shortcomings of using the category of space in your analysis?

Core Reading:

Withers, Charles W.J. Place and the “Spatial Turn” in Geography and in History, 2009.

Additional Reading:

Torre, Angelo; Calafat, Guillaume and Giulia Puma. Un “tournan spatial” en historie? Paysages, regards, ressources, 2008.

Low, Setha M. and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga. The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture, 2003.

Group II – Aesthetics and Politics

Chair: Schirin Amir-Moazami

Moderation: Hanan Toukan

contact: Max Kramer

In this panel, we look at the intersections of aesthetics and politics in contemporary theory. Concomitantly, we explore new forms of artistic activism and aesthetic expression which have appeared in recent years in many of the societies studied at the BGSMS.

What is the link between aesthetic expression and new forms of political practice? Can artistic practice and/or the use of new media contribute to the emergence of new publics and/or a new public sphere?

Core Reading:

Rancière, Jacques. The Janus-Face of Politicized Art. In *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, 2004.

<http://selforganizedseminar.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/rancic3a8re-jacques-politics-aesthetics-distribution-sensible-new-scan.pdf>

Group III – Religious Authority

Chair: Gudrun Krämer

Contact: Sarah Holz

Throughout times individuals, intellectual collectives, state bodies, political parties, and social organisations have striven for religious authority through cooperation and competition. They negotiate their place in the religious and social fabric of a society or state through interaction with each other and engagement with the public. Over time new actors have emerged and have “acquired” religious authority.

In this panel we will analyse how religious authority is constituted and maintained through the entanglement of various actors. Which aspects of the debate’s content and rhetoric have changed over time, where can we identify continuity? How has the emergence of collectives and institutions changed the way religious authority is formed and lived? How can we reflect the complexity and fluidity of the concept in our research?

Core Reading:

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. Consensus and Religious Authority in Modern Islam: the Discourses of the ‘ulama in Krämer Gudrun and Sabine Schmidtke: Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies, 2006.

Available online via Freie Universität Library:

http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/docserver/9789004149496_webready_content_text.pdf?expires=1404294808&id=id&accname=sbid022834&checksum=F710C3A8221CF88A1660FFC625AFBA23

Additional Reading:

Ahmad, Sadaf. Al-Huda and Women’s Religious Authority in Urban Pakistan, 2013.

Hatina, Meir. Historical Legacy and the Challenge of Modernity in the Middle East: The Case of al-Azhar in Egypt, 2003.

Group IV – Going Public

Chair: Hannes Grandits

Contact: Antonia Bosanquet, Josephine Gehlhar

Explaining highly sophisticated research projects and results to a non-specialist audience is the difficult task each scholar has to face sooner or later. The main challenge here is the process of “translating” scientific language into a common, widely understandable language.

In the Session “Going Public” we will reflect on the challenges scholars of humanities and social sciences will encounter while engaging with discussion partners who are not in academia or have a different academic background. Starting with ourselves, we will address the general question how our research contributes to society, without shifting to an apologetic tone. Furthermore we will address methods of translating highly specialised language into widely used language: Are generalisations permissible, and to what extent? Do we need to scale down our argument, or is it possible to explain without omitting delicate matters? Communication with the media and the wider public will also be discussed.

Core Reading:

Kristof, Nicholas. Professors, We Need You! NYT, 2014.

Additional Reading:

Lazlo, Pierre. Communicating Science: A Practical Guide, 2006.

Group V – Fieldwork in unpredictable circumstances

Chair: Ingeborg Baldauf, Rosa Cordillera Castillo

Many of us do research in highly politicized, fast-changing and unpredictable environments where we have to circumvent various predicaments: political constraints, suspicion, security concerns for ourselves and our interlocutors or inaccessibility of material. Apart from sharing strategies to solve such issues this panel looks at ethical considerations we have to take into account when researching in difficult contexts. What are our personal and scholarly responsibilities in these instances? How can we report on violence and highly polarised situations?

Core Reading:

Kovats-Bernat, J. Christopher. *Negotiating Dangerous Fields: Pragmatic Strategies for Fieldwork Amid Violence and Terror*, 2002.

Additional Reading:

Bourgois, Philippe. *Confronting Anthropological Ethics: Ethnographic Lessons from Central America*, 1990.

Theidon, Kimberly. *Terror's Talk: Fieldwork and War*, 2001.

Afternoon Session - Open Discussion (two groups)

Pursuing an Academic Career in Times of neo-liberal 'Excellence' – The 'Entrepreneurial University', Area Studies and new professional identities

Chair: Gabriele vom Bruck, Katharina Mühlbeyer, Ruth Streicher

In recent decades universities almost all over the world have been subject to major structural changes that some have called 'the neo-liberal assault on academia' (Barkawi, 2013). Opponents of the higher education reforms argue that the implementation of neo-liberal technologies to guarantee and measure 'excellent performance' has promoted an 'audit culture' with damaging effects on both the professionalism of university staff and academic freedom (for the British case: Shore and Wright, 1999). Others criticize that the re-invented 'excellent' universities run the risk of re-producing inequalities on different levels, especially when it comes to the so-called Area Studies (for the German case: Boatcă, 2012). However, university staff and intellectuals resistant to the on-going university reforms have also pointed to 'space for manoeuvre' including e.g. critical and empowering perspectives coming from anthropology, subaltern/post-colonial studies and social movements (Shore & Wright, 1999, Boatcă 2013, Giroux 2013).

In this afternoon session we invite open and critical discussion and (self-) reflection on the academic structures and dynamics that make up our current and potential future working environments – namely the university and other research/teaching institutions. We therefore suggest as shared readings the two articles by Shore & Wright and Boatcă. **Please choose and prepare at least one of them as a starting point for the discussion. We will discuss both texts separately in two groups and also give an input related to the issues discussed in the articles.** Since the session is still open for your contributions we are particularly looking forward to further ideas from members and fellows of the Graduate School. Please refer to Katharina Mühlbeyer (kmuehlbeyer@gmail.com).

Core Reading:

Boatca, Manuela. Catching Up with the (New) West: The German “Excellence Initiative”, Area Studies, and the Re-Production of Inequality, 2012.

Shore, Cris and Susan Wright. Audit Culture and Anthropology: Neo-Liberalism in British Higher Education, 1999.

Additional Reading:

Barakawi, Tarak. The Neoliberal Assault on Academia, 2013.

Giroux, Henry A. Public Intellectuals against the neoliberal university, 2013.