24. Environmental and Ecological Issues in Cities: An Anthropological Approach

Convenors:
Eveline Dürr, Auckland University of Technology
Eveline.Duerr@aut.ac.nz

Rivke Jaffe, Leiden University
R.K.Jaffe@let.leidenuniv.nl

In an increasingly urbanizing world, ecological and environmental issues are crucial to the development of cities. Especially in non-Western societies and metropolises, these topics have a strong impact on city dwellers' everyday life as well as on future planning decisions. Air quality, garbage, noise, stench, and other forms of pollution shape human habits and social behavior. The anthropological approach concerning these topics focuses on the cultural perceptions, meanings, and values attached to clean and dirty, purity and impurity, healthy and unhealthy environments, and on the consequences of pollution in terms of expression of discrimination, class, urban poverty, social hierarchies, and ethnic segregation in cities.

Papers presented in this workshop draw on fieldwork conducted in Africa, Latin America, Europe, Asia Minor and the Caribbean. Topics explored range from culturally varied definitions or social construction of nature, purity, cleanliness and pollution, to the relationship between local communities, NGOs and the state; it is evident that globalization processes influence environmental discourse and politics at both the civil society and the government level. Some papers focus on underprivileged or stigmatized communities and how these deal with solid waste management issues, highlighting for instance including scavenging, composting and other forms of recycling. Others study the dynamics of urban fragmentation and social capital in relation to environmental management.

Comparative and reflective anthropological research based on fieldwork, as presented in the papers in this workshop, will contribute to the understanding of essential environmental and social challenges facing cities today.

Management of Economy, Ecology and Sanitation through Recycling of Waste in Urban Ethiopia
Almaz Terrefe, ECOSAN project Ethiopia, Addis Ababa
sudea@telecom.net.et
The purpose of this paper is to highlight some aspects of the Ethiopian ECOSAN project, which aims to address practical problems related to lack of sanitation in urban areas. The project is structured on the principles of recycling all organic substances that are found in household refuse. This includes biodegradable substances such as urine, faeces, kitchen refuse, garden and agricultural refuse - all of which are mainly handled by the women of the households. Instead of discarding these substances, they can be sorted, composted and recycled and used as fertiliser in home gardening or urban agriculture. Thus, through ECOSAN, three problems can be managed at a household level, namely food shortage, environmental degradation and sanitation, or in other words economy, ecology and sanitation.

The paper describes how people in impoverished urban areas handle their waste, including faeces and urine, and their reactions to recycling. It highlights how basic

knowledge of recycling of household refuse can contribute to empowerment of men and women in the household as well as to new understanding of natural resource management, while increasing food production for the household.

The Choice of 'Clean' and 'Dirty': Acceptance and Rejection of Renovated Bars and Cafés among Asmara's Young Adults

Magnus Treiber, University of Munich
griasna@hotmail.com

A decade after Eritrean independence and four years after a devastating war with neighbouring Ethiopia, renovation works boom in the Eritrean capital Asmara. Despite concerted efforts by the governmental Cultural Assets Rehabilitation Project (CARP) to preserve the Italian modernist style of the 1920s and 1930s for which Asmara is internationally renowned, a rush to open new cafés, bars and restaurants is generally ignoring this precious heritage. Nevertheless, these places prove to be prosperous and well attended. When asked why such places are so popular, Mussa, a 25 years old regular guest to such establishments, responded: 'It is clean there.'
In a poor and war-torn country like Eritrea, 'clean' assumes a meaning beyond neat and tidy. The notion of 'cleanliness' extends to comprise safety, comfort, modernity and social exclusivity. The desire for cleanliness' reflects a specific perception of life-quality. In Asmara, two different social milieus have emerged among young urban and mostly impecunious adults: one group attempts inclusion into an exclusive society frequenting newly renovated and expensive bars and cafés, considered 'clean', whereas the other group patronizes cheaper hidden places, considered 'dirty' and dangerous. This presentation examines the social implications of 'clean' and 'dirty' and their usage to describe oneself and others in a post-war capital.

The Blurred Distance: The Emergence of 'Impure Warsaw'

Wlodzimierz Karol Pessel, University of Warsaw
scandic@pnet.pl

As far as various perceptions of and meanings attached to purity are concerned, the Polish city of Warsaw still seems to be non-Western rather than a genuine European metropolis. In the capital of Poland, which one might expect to connect with the EU's drive towards full integration, waste management modernization is not taking place and most of the city's inhabitants display a low level of environmental consciousness. Both poverty and sumptuosity exert an influence on the conditions of proximity: 'threshold people' (such as dustbin rummagers and sewer inhabitants) encroach on non-suburban streets, resulting in the bringing together of people who previously lived at a distance from each other.
In this paper I also consider whether older concepts of dirt (adapted taboo theory) adhere to Warsaw sanitary realities; this reveals what will be crucial to future planning in Poland. Previous politics and history are reflected strongly in Warsaw's everyday life: Polish society has always had more urgent things to do than improve sanitation and garbage disposal.

Los Jarochos Verdes: Environmental Protection, Politics and Power in the State of Veracruz, Mexico

Philip Malmgren, University of Stockholm
philip.malmgren@socant.su.se

Like several other Latin American countries, Mexico has experienced a gradual transition from one-party rule to a democracy marked by neo-liberalism. Through this political and economical transition, there has been an opening for civil society and the development and proliferation of environmental organizations. Through an ethnographic study of environmental activism, this report aims at analyzing emerging forms of political agency within the field of environmentalism in Veracruz, and further, how this agency relates to continuing processes of environmental institutionalization and globalization. The analytic focus of the study is, more precisely, on representations and articulations of power-relations within the field of environmental protection. The analysis is based on empirical material collected through participant observation in a network of environmental activists based in Xalapa, Veracruz. It will be shown how environmental protection policy has come to permeate and structure state policy and polity as well as civil society organization, shaping highly contested regional arenas where state politics and environmental concerns become fully intertwined.

From Subculture to Movement: Transitions of the Hungarian Green Movement
Szabina Kerenyi, Masarykova Univerzita, Brno
szkerenyi@freemail.hu
How does group identity affect the establishment of an influential social movement? What circumstances facilitate the development of movement subcultures? How can the shifts between movement subculture and social movement be defined? After the changes in '89 in post-communist Hungary different groups and civil organisations were formed, even encouraged (and controlled) by the nation-state. In this context, the Hungarian green movement went through a special process of development: instead of growing out of homogeneous subcultures with strong feelings of belonging, it was created from 'above', and 'movement identity' followed after the establishment of the movements themselves. In movement research it is crucial to seek definitions of the movement and its borders, as well as to focus on the identity and self-definitions of the actors. This task is not as easy as it seems, since the actors themselves have different concepts of belonging, as it is not evident which groups are inside and which remain external to the movement's social borders. Nevertheless, based on field experience and interviews, it is possible to list factors outlining the movement's boundaries: solidarity between the members; common memory and historical reference points (Assmann 1999, Eliade 1991); common language; common rites; common experience of time and space. My research conducted in Hungary focuses on the (sub)cultural aspects of the green movement, and its effect on the movement cycle and the efficiency of the environmental movement on the social and political macrostructures.

Interrupting Knowledge: Bureaucratic and 'Ordinary' Concerns in the Construction of a Bridge
Aimilia Voulvouli, University College London
ucsaevo@ucl.ac.uk
Based on work in progress and four months of anthropological fieldwork in a Bosphorus neighbourhood of Istanbul, this paper investigates the conflict between neighbourhood residents and the state, over the construction of a bridge which will connect European and Asian sides of the city. This choice is based on the premise that this location could provide an opportunity to study the ways in which local perceptions as well as global views of the environment held by Environmental NGOs

are articulated with bureaucratic, not less global, environmental understandings. On the one hand the residents of the neighbourhood, in co-operation with Environmental NGOs, have launched an anti-bridge campaign claiming that such a construction will destroy the natural and cultural heritage of their place. On the other hand, the government claims that traffic problems in Istanbul demand immediate action and this is what the construction of the bridge aims at. Criticising the traditional nature/culture dichotomy and combining theories of environmental anthropology with theories of social movements, I argue that the concept of 'nature' is as cultural as the concept of 'culture' and that these two concepts should be examined as a hybrid nature/culture concept. Such an approach would stress not only the difference between nature and culture but also the difference between natures and thus cultures; the culture of bureaucracy and that of ordinary people.

Fragmented Cities: Social Capital, Violence and Environmental Management
Rivke Jaffe, University of Leiden
R.K.Jaffe@let.leidenuniv.nl
This paper aims to describe the socio-spatial fragmentation of two Caribbean cities - Willemstad, Curaçao (Netherlands Antilles) and Kingston, Jamaica - and how this relates to both environmental management and violent crime. The relevance of social capital for solving environmental problems, especially at the local level, has been demonstrated effectively. Furthermore, various studies have explored the relation between poverty and violence, studying among other things social capital; it would appear that the type of social capital present in the cities under study - both of which experience high rates of violent crime - is of the 'bonding' rather than the 'bridging' variety. Ethnographic fieldwork in two low-income neighborhoods in respectively Willemstad and Kingston reveals that while internal cohesion can be quite strong at the community level, cohesion at the inter-community or city level is much scarcer. Both cities are fragmented by ethnicity and/or color, which correspond with income level, while Kingston is split into political factions, as is to a far lesser extent Willemstad. In addition, both cultures display high levels of fear, suspicion and distrust. Empirical data and theory are melded in attempt to describe the dynamics of urban fragmentation and intra-urban social cohesion, demonstrating how these phenomena relate to environmental management and violent crime.

Perceptual Content of the Social Footprint: A Social Constructionist View of Meaning and Consequence
David L. Iaquinta, Nebraska Wesleyan University
dli@nebrwesleyan.edu
Jana Gerold, University of Freiburg
JanaGerold@web.de
Every person leaves social and environmental footprints and every activity leaves an impact. The meaning and significance of these footprints and impacts exist on multiple levels. From an individualistic perspective, the footprints and impacts often go unnoticed. At an aggregate level, they too often manifest as a social trap or tragedy of the commons. The root of this distinction lies primarily in nature of differing groups' perceptions of the phenomenon itself.
In this paper, the authors explore the meaning participants place on various phenomena, with a focus on ideas held by urban farmers, scavengers and squatters. Generally living at the margins of social acceptability, these apparent "fringe"

populations range from disenfranchised, disorganized aggregates to highly stable and organized communities. The former is often exaggerated and the latter grossly under-recognized and underappreciated; yet, both types of groups experience varying degrees of shared perception about solid waste, human and animal excrement, pollution, vacant land, and resources. Sometimes fraught with internal conflict, they usually find themselves at odds with broader social perceptions of such phenomena and more importantly at odds with official perceptions.

This paper uses case-study examples based on fieldwork, related to urban and peri-urban agriculture and waste management and drawn from both developed and developing nations. The main goals of this paper are to elaborate the concept of "social footprint" and to suggest a new framework for linking participant perceptions and social construction to existing geo-institutional typologies for human settlement and livelihood strategies.