

Call for a new boundary-crossing EASA network

Anthropology and Mobility

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Mobility captures the common impression that our life-world is in constant flux, with not only people (including anthropologists), but also cultures, objects, capital, businesses, services, diseases, media, images, information, and ideas circulating across (and even beyond) the planet. Among anthropologists, it is fashionable these days to study tourism, migration, diaspora, and exile; cosmopolitanism and transnationalism; global markets and commodity chains; and global information and communication technologies, media, and popular culture. The literature is replete with metaphorical conceptualizations attempting to describe perceived altered spatial and temporal movements: deterritorialization, reterritorialization, and scapes; time-space compression, distantiation, or punctuation; the network society and its space of flows; the death of distance and the acceleration of modern life; and nomadology. The upsurge of interest in mobility goes hand in hand with new theoretical approaches that reject a sedentarist metaphysics in favour of a nomadic one and an increase in empirical studies on diverse mobilities, questioning earlier taken-for-granted correspondences between peoples, places, and cultures.

While previously anthropologists tended to ignore or regard border-crossing movements as deviations from normative place-bound communities, cultural homogeneity, and social integration, discourses of globalization and cosmopolitanism seem to have shifted the pendulum in the opposite direction, mobility often being promoted as normality, and (too much) place attachment a digression or resistance against globalizing forces. At the same time, critically engaged anthropologists were among the first to point out that not all mobilities are valued equally positively and that the very processes that produce trans-border movements also result in geographical immobility and social exclusion.

This new scholarly EASA network aims to facilitate an open theoretical and methodological exchange on the so-called "mobility turn" in the social sciences. What is the analytical purchase of (im)mobility as a conceptual framework to study and understand the current human condition? What are the most adequate methods to research objects of study "on the move"? The network will not only foster intellectually stimulating debates among anthropologists working on mobility along various thematic and conceptual lines, but will also create exciting opportunities for collaborative research and publications.

We kindly invite everyone interested to attend our first network meeting, which will be held during the 11th EASA Biennial Conference in Maynooth, Ireland (24-27th August 2010). The meeting will take place on Wednesday 25 August from 20.00 until 21.30. The exact location will be announced at the EASA meeting through flyers.

Those who already want to express their interest in joining the network may contact:

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