

Workshop 11

Between Beer and Bureaucracy: The Anthropology of Clubs and Voluntary Associations

Convenors:

Anna-Kathrin Warner, University of Bremen

anna-kathrin.warner@freenet.de

Cordula Weissköppel, University of Bremen

cweisskoeppel@uni-bremen.de

In anthropology you find at least two kinds of inquiry on clubs and voluntary associations: Either they function mainly as background or by-product of the research on a different topic because for example they are used to get access to the people of interest; or they become the central object of ethnography. However, clubs and associations are important and interesting sites to observe processes of community-building and of social inclusion and exclusion on a face-to-face level, especially in complex, so to speak “modern” nation-states in which most of the essential aspects of life are organised by official institutions. Sport clubs as well as quite exclusive associations like the Rotary-club serve as social networks and reference point for performing individual identities. At the same time members have to fulfil bureaucratic obligations to gain the status of an association, and they learn how to use bureaucracy for their own interests, which seems to be the case for migrant communities in Germany.

In our workshop we would like to discuss case studies from throughout the world which will focus especially on these points of intersection between individual agency (subject positions), shared systems of self-organisation (common sense building) and following bureaucratic necessities (structural character) concerning clubs and voluntary associations. How do people perceive their action within associations? To what extent do they (consciously) instrumentalise the structural character of their associations and its function within society? By this we intend to highlight the still open question how the transformation from “agency” into “structure” and vice versa can be theorised adequately.

Voluntary Associations: General Characters and Anthropological Perspectives

Anna-Kathrin Warner, University of Bremen

anna-kathrin.warner@freenet.de

The anthropology of clubs and voluntary associations is a field which still has to be explored. Normally clubs are part of fieldwork but a systematic and analytically grounded investigation of clubs is still missing. The endeavour to fill this gap is worth it. Because clubs and voluntary associations are a form of social enterprise (group-building) that seems to be crucial for the understanding of identity management in the modern world.

This paper will give an overview over some questions of interest. First it will explore the features of voluntary associations in contrast to other social groups. Then it will outline some characteristics concerning structure, organisation, and social life. Further it will ask for possible similarities and differences. Last not least it will sketch out some directions the inquiry of clubs and voluntary associations could take. The contribution is focussed on sport clubs and serves as an introduction which also may be a guideline for discussion during the following presentation of papers. It will state some theses and arguments to fix the subject.

More Beer for Women! Competing Male Singing Clubs in a German Village

Gertrud Hüwelmeier, Free University of Berlin

gertrud.huewelmeier@rz.hu-berlin.de

Germany is, at least in the eyes of people from other countries, a singing nation. The cultural and political impact of German club life was, in a historical perspective, constitutive for the founding process of the German nation state. On the regional and local level, contemporary club life is still very important in the construction of belonging and in the production of collective identities.

Based on my fieldwork in a German village, my paper focuses on rivalries between two male singing clubs in a German village. Since more than one hundred years the dual organisation has an important impact on kinship, marriage, party politics and economic ties. Although tensions between the two groups are the structuring principle of everyday-life, new conflicts came up when women started founding an all women's singing club in the 1990ies. There was a threat of abolishing the opposition of the male dominated public sphere. In my paper I will focus on agency, while concentrating on gender issues and processes of the negotiation of gender conflicts.

The Field of Heritage Clubs in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Magdalena Tellenbach Uttman, University of Wales Swansea

magdalena.tellenbach@uttman.com

During field research in Milwaukee regarding ethnic identity and perceptions of Germanness, heritage clubs were contacted for informants. Milwaukee, today a city with a 1 _ million population including the suburbs, attracted European immigrants during the second half of the 19th century. To a great extent the immigrants were Germans, so that Milwaukeeans today claim German heritage to around 50 per cent. A differentiation by ethnic identity is to a large extent noticed in the many active heritage clubs in Milwaukee; there are for example over 30 German clubs. Claiming and expressing ethnic identity in Milwaukee has changed back and forth over the last 100 years, with events such as the world wars and developments such as multiculturalism. This has influenced the activities and continuity of the clubs, which in

their turn have influenced their members. The heritage clubs in Milwaukee, independent of which ethnic or cultural association, provide a social network for its members, sometimes continuing over generations.

Around a Pint. The Past, Present and Future of European Clubs in the Congo after Independence

Benjamin Rubbers, Free University of Brussels
rubbersbe@yahoo.fr

At the times of the Belgian Congo, in clubs were produced the racial insularity of the white population as well as its internal divisions, be they built on the company, the occupation or the degree. How this central institution during the colonial period was transformed in independence aftermath, subsequently to the exodus of most Europeans and the abolishment of their privileges? From data collected in 2003 in Katanga, this paper analyses how, while employees in administration and enterprises were leaving the country, clubs were taken up by the Belgian, Greek and Italian settlers who stayed. Consequently, new forms of social distinction were introduced and performed, belonging to a cultural universe more characteristic of a merchant class with pioneer origins, while their isolation from the Congolese population was perpetuated. In this way, clubs reflect the structure in movement of European society in the Congo after Independence and by the agency of their members, shape its future.

'It's not all beer and skittles!' An Ethnography of Older Migrants' Club Life

Caroline Oliver, University of Newcastle upon Tyne
Caroline.Oliver@newcastle.ac.uk

This paper explores the ways in which older people's clubs and associations restructure lives in the context of older people's retirement migration from Northern Europe to the South of Spain. The paper examines how migrants' social clubs temporally and socially routinise the otherwise 'free' lives of migrants, imparting structure through responsibilities and activities. Yet the paper also explores how authority in the clubs is subject to constant undermining, fragmentation and disintegration. The transience of the population (constant arrivals and departures, the presence of tourists and illness and death) make it difficult to 'keep things going' or ensure that vacant posts are filled. Furthermore, the individualist orientation of many migrants provokes power contests over legitimacy of authority, questions of social responsibility and others' authenticity/right to belong. As a result, club life is indicative of wider concerns of migrant lives: of balancing their desire for personal freedom with a need for others to make those lives meaningful.

Individual Emancipation Versus Expressing Collective Identity

in Brussels

Marc Verlot, University of Ghent

marc.verlot@uGent.be

‘They put the wolf amongst the sheep’ shouted Ahmed, a French-speaking Moroccan community worker when Lea, a new (and bilingual) member on the board of the French speaking neighbourhood association in Brussels asked him how he managed to work with Moroccan youngsters and woman without even mentioning the word cultural identity in his work. For Ahmed community work is all about the social and economic emancipation of individuals in the neighbourhood whereas Lea believes associations should focus on the Moroccan ‘community’ and the expression of its collective cultural identity. Ahmed’s and Lea’s views highlight the difference between French-speaking and Flemish associations working with ethnic minorities in Brussels. In this paper I ethnographically explore how (explicit differences in) the self-perception of the French-speaking and Flemish majorities in Brussels influences the way associations for ethnic minorities operate and how individual community workers (often from minority background) incorporate their views in their professional and personal lives.

Economic Altruism? The Symbolic Economy of the Berlin Trotting Course Association

Ina Dietzsch, Humboldt University of Berlin

ina.dietzsch@rz.hu-berlin.de

Already two years after its foundation in 1911 one can read in the association’s chronicle that its economic failure seemed to have “completely ruined the young district of Mariendorf”. “Only at the last minute a small group of enthusiastic men around Bruno Cassirer took over the lead to daringly ban the catastrophe (even ready to make financial sacrifices).” The financial difficulties as well as the figure of the ‘altruistic saviour’ are not only part of the founding myth of trotting racing in Berlin. In my paper I want to discuss the question, to what extent they determine the culture of communication about and in the association, and which functions they have.

I will argue that private interest and possibilities can only be realised and guaranteed via communal or public institutions and membership in non-profit organisations can be seen as resource: the association/club is creating a public and is setting the ground for “altruistic” acts to achieve the expected social acknowledgement. It sets the floor for the rescuer in need. On top of it, the club membership or the charity work in its managing committee gives business man or woman the chance to participate in informal networking that provides financial benefits for each of them.

Taekwondo on the Move: Intersecting Stories of a Martial Art, a Club, a Working-Class Neighbourhood and Migrant Lives

Sally Anderson, University of Copenhagen
sally.anderson@anthro.ku.dk

A modernised version of the ancient Korean martial art of taekwondo was brought to Denmark in the late 1960s through the efforts of Dutch instructors offering training at campgrounds along the western coast. From this provincial start, small taekwondo clubs sprang up across the country and less than a decade later the Danish Taekwondo Union was organised under the auspices of the National Sports Confederation of Denmark. The largest Danish taekwondo club, under the Korean expatriot subanim Ko Tae Jeong, is presently located in an old Copenhagen working-class neighbourhood, increasingly inhabited by immigrant families from third world countries. Drawing members from a variety of social and ethnic backgrounds, the club shares facilities in a renovated bread factory with a Centre for Elderly People, catering to the leisure activities of elderly working-class Danes.

The paper discusses meetings of cultural forms and people, analysing how they come to represent 'sites of otherness', even as they create 'community' in a local neighbourhood facility. The paper analyses various understandings of 'ancestors' and belonging and conflicts surrounding controlling cultural pasts, social presents and senses of future.