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Migration: Emotions and Human Mobility

Summary

The workshop series Migration: Emotions and Human Mobility will examine the dynamics of emotional processes which underly migration and the formation of diasporic identities. The workshops will explore three major themes, namely

- (1) emotions and belonging in transnational families,
- (2) emotional interaction between migrants and members of local communities, (3) emotional dimensions of migrant art and artefacts.

Outline

Although numerous studies of human mobility and diasporas have referred to migrants' and migrant-receiving communities' hopes, fears, jealousy, or hatred, only few scholars have explicitly incorporated 'emotions' in their theoretical perspective of migration. This is surprising, because emotion studies is a rapidly growing interdisciplinary field, which has produced a considerable number of theoretical perspectives that are highly relevant to the study of migration. The workshops will demonstrate that the study of migration and diaspora *needs* a focus on emotions to unravel and understand the social, economic, political and experiential complexities of human mobility and belonging in transnational temporal settings.

Objectives

The main aim is to examine emotional aspects of human mobility and stimulate interdisciplinary debate about this issue.

Related objectives are to examine

- (1) emotional attachment/non-attachment within transnational families
- (2) emotional interaction between migrants and members of local communities
- (3) emotional expression, reception and efficacy of migrant art and artefacts

Approach

The workshops will explore theoretical approaches to the study of 'emotions', allowing scholars from different disciplines to exchange research findings and to brainstorm about ways in which to conceptualise emotional interaction in relation to migration. In the past, emotions have been defined as forms of biologically-grounded cross-cultural universal behaviour, as personal, inner processes, as forms of appraisal, as functional realms of action, as socially constructed cultural categories, as learning processes, as evaluative

judgements, as identity claims, as ideological discourses which may reinforce or criticise power relations, and as processes of embodiment. Contributors to the workshops will discuss the usefulness of these and other approaches to the analysis of migration, the formation of diasporic communities and related identification processes. Theories of migrant 'belonging' and 'non-belonging' will also be discussed, in particular theories which dissociate notions of 'home' and 'locality' and acknowledge that migrants (and other people) are engaged in multiple identification processes, many of which are not necessarily rooted in genealogical or territorial assumptions. Feelings of (non)belonging may be experienced not only by being in particular localities, but also by taking part in certain activities, by socialising with certain people, by speaking specific languages, by interacting with particular artefacts, and through other forms of behaviour.

Outcomes

May 2006, Workshop 1

Transnational families: emotions and belonging

The speakers will explore relations of love, care and other emotional attachments/detachments within transnational families. Presenting their own empirical research on migration and belonging in various socio-historical contexts, they will compare their findings and explore how emotions can be conceptualised as an inherent part in transnational relationships.

Oct 2006, Workshop 2

Emotional interaction: migrants and local communities

The speakers will examine various forms of emotional interaction between migrants and members of local communities, in particular focusing on the social and political dimensions of emotional processes. They will present empirical research on migration and emotional interaction, and theorize 'emotions' as a helpful theoretical tool in migration studies.

Feb 2007, Workshop 3

Migrant art, artefacts and emotional agency

The speakers will present analyses of the emotional dimensions of migrant art production/reception, and will discuss about the usefulness of the concept of 'emotional agency' to the study of migrant art/efacts.

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One edited volume

One special Issue