

WS 25

**The end of interdisciplinary negotiations? Placing psychological anthropology in context
(Roundtable)**

AG Psychologische Anthropologie

02.10.2019, 9:30-11:00 Uhr, Raum A704

Organisiert von / organized by:

Anita von Poser (FU Berlin)

Psychological Anthropology has been at the forefront of interdisciplinary collaborations since the very beginning of its formation as a sub-strand of our discipline. Indeed, across various academic times and spaces, anthropologists and scholars of related disciplines have discussed the ends as well as the continuations of such interdisciplinary collaborations. Our workshop will tackle the question of the “to and fro” within this interdisciplinary enterprise in light of recent theoretical, methodological and analytical innovations that have surfaced, in particular, in the last 10 to 15 years within German-speaking Psychological Anthropology.

We invite anthropologists, therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, pedagogues and global health scholars (to mention only a few) to our roundtable to discuss the limits and the opportunities of interdisciplinary negotiations. Also, scholars and practitioners are invited to explore the feasibility of Psychological Anthropology as a political community that challenges and changes current pathologizing practices of diagnosing and medicalizing ‘patients’ by linking interdisciplinary scholarship and its negotiations to the explicit commitment of influencing public perspectives on (mental) health and ‘illness’.

Anita von Poser holds a teaching and research position at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Freie Universität Berlin. She is co-founder of the AG Psychologische Anthropologie, DGSKA, and project leader within the CRC 1171 Affective Societies. She has conducted ethnographic research both in Papua New Guinea and in Vietnamese life-worlds of Berlin, and she has a long-term experience in interdisciplinary collaborations. Her major interests pertain to the fields of psychological anthropology, the anthropology of foodways, as well as the anthropology of aging, care, and the life-course

Vortragende / Speakers:

Giuseppe Bolotta (University of Milano-Bicocca)

‘Statistical psyches’ – an epistemological challenge for psychological anthropologists

Since its emergence, psychological anthropology has grown at the crossroad of different branches of knowledge, significantly benefiting from scientific negotiations around the ‘psyche-culture’ nexus. During the last decades of the 20th century, however, these negotiations have increasingly turned into epistemological and political confrontations, particularly in applied contexts. While (post-colonial) anthropology has embraced interpretative, post-structuralist, and historically situated critical perspectives in the socio-cultural analysis of ‘psychological phenomena’ – thereby refashioning itself as closer to the humanities field –, psychology is always more concerned with universalistic explanations of statistics, and more distant than ever from the ‘psyche’, as classically defined by philosophers. Today, ‘uncomfortable collaborations’ between anthropologists and ‘psy-professionals’ abound especially in development and humanitarian arenas. ‘Objectivist’ psychology’s actuarial and psycho-metric diagnostic data serve here as fundamental techno-political

tools in regulating cross-cultural development operations within transnational humanitarian regimes. On the other hand, anthropologists engaged in interdisciplinary development work are often expected to provide discrete, de-politicised and operationalizable descriptions of aid recipients' 'culture', generating significant tensions. In this context, psychological anthropologists' scientific and political efforts should be partly directed towards 're-psychologising' psychology so as to restore a fruitful epistemological conversation on individuals' lived experience, including the historical and political-economic dimensions of 'illness'.

Giuseppe Bolotta is a socio-cultural anthropologist and psychologist. He has conducted research in Thailand and Sierra Leone on marginalised childhoods, (religious) NGOs, and the cultural politics of child-focused humanitarianism. He is currently a Contract Professor of Cultural Anthropology at the University of Milano-Bicocca's Department of Sociology and Social Research and Research Associate of the National University of Singapore's Asia Research Institute.

Jörg-Christian Lanca (FU Berlin):

Synergy, complicity, feedback - the challenges of negotiations

My contribution addresses the question, if and how through interdisciplinary negotiations psychological anthropologists can respond to practices in our research settings, which may appear questionable from our own perspective while entirely unremarkable from a clinical one. Humiliating cross-examination of psychiatric patients in medical case presentations, emotional detachment from patients as a professional requirement or high performance pressure on clinicians are some observed examples from my interdisciplinary work in a university hospital. Both, medicine and anthropology have developed distinct ethical standards, with different outcomes according to their disciplines respective necessities and responsibilities. An anthropologist's idea of their research partners' individual autonomy and a clinician's requirement to grant efficient health care service for a large population can lead to conflicting perspectives. Meanwhile, close collaboration makes clinicians part of anthropologists' work and vice versa. This raises questions that need to be reflected upon, both inter- and intradisciplinarily: How do we as psychological anthropologists deal with lopsided hierarchies, biologisms, generalizations, othering, or disregard for marginalized perspectives when we encounter them in a collaborative setting? Do cooperating anthropologists in hospitals become complicit in the reproduction of power structures and institutional dynamics, which they might not wish support? Can they counterbalance them? How flexible can and should both sides be in their disciplinary mindsets for the sake of interdisciplinarity? And: How can we best reconcile criticism with cooperation?

Jörg-Christian Lanca is a doctoral researcher in an interdisciplinary project at the Berlin-based Collaborative Research Center Affective Societies. He studied in Berlin and in Hanoi, and he graduated with an M.A. degree in South East Asian Studies and Gender Studies at the Humboldt Universität zu Berlin. He spent several mid- and long term stays in Vietnam for studies and research purposes. His current work is part of a research project at the intersection of socio-cultural anthropology, psychiatry and psychology. In his PhD thesis, Lanca examines the affectivities of former Vietnamese contract workers in Berlin, a community of labor migrants, who came from Vietnam to the GDR during the 1980s. His special interests lie in the gendered aspects of aging in migration, embodied belonging, and the nexus of bodies, labor and affects.

Lauren Cubellis (Washington University, St. Louis)

Dialogic practice: interdisciplinary negotiations as object and method

As a psychological anthropologist my research has focused on the translation and adaptation of the Open Dialogue model for psychiatric crisis in Germany. Originally developed in Western Lapland, the model is currently being used in small-scale implementation projects across Europe. Open Dialogue is, itself, a negotiating practice: it takes a reflexive, open-ended, nonhierarchical approach to care, suspending clinical expertise to give treatment decisions back to the person in crisis and his or her network. In the broader context of research funding and insurance reimbursement, the demand for evidence-based practices situates a need-adapted model like Open Dialogue in a precarious position: for many practitioners, the demands of evidence-based research risk compromising what is unique about the intervention. For others, evidence-based research confers the legitimacy necessary for broader accessibility and application. As an anthropologist in this context, I have found myself regularly advocating for a different kind of research: a more qualitative and ethnographic consideration of dialogic practice. What makes Open Dialogue work across contexts cannot be measured quantitatively. Rather, a complex assemblage of social and institutional factors creates the environment in which the practice must negotiate its own existence. In understanding and advocating for this – the way research itself must make space for dialogic perspectives and different ways of knowing – the careful attunement offered by psychological anthropology is essential across disciplinary boundaries.

Lauren Cubellis, MPH, is a PhD candidate in anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis. Her research focuses on the implementation of alternative treatment models for psychosis, most notably the Open Dialogue model from Finland. Cubellis considers how demands for efficacy and fidelity constrain possibilities for research and knowledge production, and she argues that an approach to “evidence” informed by psychological anthropology is necessary for making sense of implementation cross-culturally. She works in the US and Germany.

Hanna Grauert (FU Berlin)

To understand and to be understood: the constitution of a case in a psychotherapeutic treatment field of refugees

To understand and to be understood - Based on an ethnographic case study, the constitution of a case in the field of psychotherapeutic treatment of refugees can be reconstructed as a form of negotiation between therapists and their clients. Although therapists use standardized procedures (e.g. screening, initial interview, reports) each case in a psychotherapy follows an inherent logic and must be renegotiated constantly through direct communication with the clients. It is usually essential for the constitution of a “case” to find a common, unquestioned knowledge base and a joint expectation towards the procedure of the therapy. By using the example of a psychotherapy with refugees, it can be emphasized that ideas of a (psycho)therapy can differ notably if they are not jointly negotiated and explicitly addressed. In order not to assume cultural reasons as the main problem prematurely, an ethnomethodological approach can help to elucidate the reasons for misunderstanding which is often based on routinized actions and institutionalized interactions in psychotherapy.

Hanna Grauert is currently a Master Student of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the Freie Universität Berlin where she has been studying since October 2018. Hanna started to study Sociology and Political Sciences in 2014 at the University of Konstanz. During her studies she quickly got

interested in the research field of anthropology. In addition to her academic experience she personally engaged in social and sociopolitical issues and worked for various governmental institutions.

Birgitt Röttger-Rössler (FU Berlin)

Why psychological anthropologists should care for global Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programs

Global organizations like UNICEF and WHO launch several parenting intervention programs, that aim at teaching parents how to become psychologically sensitive and responsive caregivers. These programs are mostly based on the attachment theory, which rests on assumptions of Western middle-class (WEIRD) psychology about optimal forms of parenting. Only recently the attachment theory with its claim to universal validity has become subject to anthropological criticism. However, the anthropological confrontation of the attachment paradigm is mainly restricted to academic debates and ignores the socio-political implications of these globally operating intervention programs. I shall argue that psychological anthropologists should pay more attention to the significant increase of such “psychological missions” and the power relations that enable them.

Birgitt Röttger-Rössler is a full Professor of Social and Cultural Anthropology and Director of the Collaborative Research Center “Affective Societies: Dynamics of Social Coexistence in Mobile Worlds” at Freie Universität Berlin. Her current research projects deal with the socialization of emotions in cross-cultural comparison and with the formation of feeling in transnational social fields. Her regional focus is on Southeast Asian societies.

Gabriel Scheidecker (FU Berlin)

A case for intensified negotiations with developmental psychology

Since its formation, Psychological Anthropology has repeatedly demonstrated its critical potential, most notably in regard to major tenets of neighboring disciplines such as psychology. However, the anthropological vetoes have rarely reached their addressees. Based on the example of attachment theory, I make a case for intensifying negotiations with developmental psychology on multiple levels. First, it is important to engage with those psychological theories that have tremendous normative and practical implications. Attachment theory is defining child-rearing practices and legitimizing parenting interventions around the world, yet critical voices from anthropology are rare. Among the existing ones most are ignored by attachment theorists, not least because they are usually published in outlets with an almost exclusive anthropological audience. Thus, secondly Psychological Anthropology needs to make sure that its critiques actually reach the criticized by choosing appropriate forums and publication outlets. Finally, collaborations with scholars from subdisciplines that share similar interests, for example cultural psychology, are crucial to convey one's points.

Gabriel Scheidecker is a Postdoctoral Researcher in the project “The Formation of Feelings in Vietnamese Berlin” at the CRC “Affective Societies”, Freie Universität Berlin. His ethnographic research in Madagascar, Vietnam, and Germany focusses on the topics of childhood, emotion, and migration.

Thomas Stodulka (FU Berlin)

**Disputing ‘happy childhoods’ and ‘appropriate education’:
learning from Asian alter-pedagogies**

Primary school education and learning is subject to governmental, entrepreneurial and parental activism. The ‘education business’ thrives as politically, economically, culturally and socially valorized yet contested project. Education calls parental, societal and political attention to diversified hierarchies of social, economic, cultural, spiritual or emotional values, tasks and skills. Transnational discourses on rights to ‘appropriate education’ and ‘happy childhood’ based on cosmopolitanized notions of age-related skilling curricula create globalized skillsets that children are expected to learn in order to be able to compete in imagined cosmopolitanized future job markets. This paper highlights Asian alter-pedagogies that resist the commodification of education and its related ‘FOMO’-regime in favor of producing alternative curricula of ecological subject formation and cultural resistance. It draws on the example of Timor Leste’s national curriculum of primary school education, which combines local horticulture with transnational permaculture practices and discusses its implications in terms of shaping children’s interspecific prosociality, empathy and conviviality with nature.

Thomas Stodulka is Junior Professor of Social & Cultural Anthropology (focus on Psychological Anthropology) at FU Berlin. His work focuses on affect, emotion, youth, childhood, well-being, stigmatization, and critical epistemologies. He conducted long-term fieldwork with street-related youth in Indonesia and he has co-directed various interdisciplinary research projects. He is co-founder of the AG Psychologische Anthropologie, DGSKA, and co-convenor of the European Network for Psychological Anthropology (ENPA), EASA.