

Biennalen 2009: “Work, Life-Project and Globalisation: Understanding security, identity and morality in a world of movement”.

Biennalen 2009 will be held at Dragvoll 26. - 28. okt.

Guests: Proff Nigel Rapport, St Andresws University, Skottland Prof Andrew Dawson, University of Melbourne, Australia Prof Jonathan Skinner, Belfast University, Nord-Irland Prof Marietta Baba, Michigan State University.

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“Work, Life-Project and Globalisation: Understanding security, identity and morality in a world of movement”

The world of work is in the process of complex transformation that is not well understood. The transformation process is global, and anthropologists have been centrally involved in empirical observation and discourse pertaining to what is happening “on the ground” and at other scales. One of the dimensions of the transformation is the demand for workers and firms to move geographically and across borders, and this affects all sectors of the workforce. These processes are taking place in all parts of the world, and within countries, as well as across countries. In this respect, transnational work migration raises questions concerning the role of work as an orientation point for identity construction. Work migration is one aspect of the trend towards a linear career trajectories and short-term employment relations, which has lead for example Bauman (2001) to conclude that work no longer offers the secure axis around which to wrap and fix self-definitions, identities and life-projects. It is argued that the work place is to a much lesser degree an arena for personal development today, because this requires long-term relations (Sennett 1998). Rather than encouraging trust, loyalty and commitment, temporary relations often share the characteristics of a transaction or an encounter, where people remain strangers. Our specific interest at this conference will be to understand these processes of work in motion and how they influence human experiences such as economic and social security, morality and ethics, and individual and cultural identity.

Illustrative topics could include the following:

- Does work in a world in motion offer an opportunity to 'displace' oneself towards the fulfilment of a personal life-project?
- If work is more about short-term contract rather than a long term relationship then is work also about escaping fixity or of regularly having the opportunity to change? If so, what are the implications?
- Can work be seen as a medium towards equality and freedom: this 'global citizenship'? Can work do the work of a levelling device and a means of breaking down classificatory (cultural) boundaries between individual human beings?
- How do individuals, families and households strategize, negotiate, and/or improvise their paths to work through complex and possibly conflicting institutional forces that attempt to structure and regulate the categorization, flows, and placement of people?
- How do diverse institutional elements—regulatory, normative, cognitive/cultural—interact to influence work mobility in a world of motion?

Date for title of paper and short abstract: October 10th, 2009.

More detailed programme will be available after October 10th, 2009.

Date of conference: October 26-28th, 2009.

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