

AMBIGUITY

C1 Ambiguity and Dilemma of Uniformity in Migration

Convenors: Dana Bittnerová and Luděk Jirka

Nothing is more ambiguous than migration. One can even argue that ambiguity is a prerequisite for migration. Migrant is a human being whose identity is changing all the time according to the context of migrant's life, migrant is on the move, migrant may evoke various associations, migrant decides and acts flexibly when some internalized patterns become useless, reality becomes ambiguous when people of different background and origin start to live together. However, ambiguity itself is not acceptable for categorizers, it is necessary to be unambiguous, classifiable or definable.

Dilemma of ambiguity versus uniformity is associated with migration flows and post-migration processes. Sometimes, agents (individuals, groups, organizations) have to give up their constitutive ambiguity. Indeed, ambiguity is constitutive in many respects but migrants face the necessity to become uniform. The disappearance of ambiguity could happen in two ways: by choice or negotiation with shared uniformity – which depends on values, ideas, rules of action etc., or by re-definition of ambiguity as uniformity.

The reality of transnational identities, hybridization or creolization of cultures depends on the negotiation of ambiguity as unambiguous standpoints of live. In this view, ambiguity may be seen as an advantage. It enables humans to belong to multiple groups and generates social, cultural or existential profit from membership. This profit could be also mediated. Nevertheless, the way to negotiate ambiguity is not fully straightforward; it impinges on existence of institutions focused on shared uniformity in the form of belonging, e.g. state or church, which assert reproduction of shared unambiguity. Migrants also impinge on the idea of unambiguity required by some groups.

On the one hand, we would like to talk about transnational migration, hybridization and creolization of cultures and, on the other hand, about the necessity to classify into institutionally or nationally shared uniformity. We are interested in migrant strategies to negotiate their own ambiguity. We are interested in benefits from this ambiguity as well as challenges raised by these benefits. Also, we would like to speak about the roles of institutions founded on uniformity. Since ambiguity is dangerous for these institutions, they are trying to negotiate unambiguity in the ambiguous world of migration. In addition, we are interested in specific national groups and their feeling (and acting) to have the right to demand unambiguity.

Friday, September 30, 2016

Room C (Nr. 209) 11:30 AM – 1 PM

Chair: Luděk Jirka

Labelling or ambiguity of migrants? Paradigm in social sciences and advantage of multiple belonging

Luděk Jirka

Faculty of Humanities, Charles University in Prague

Categories are based on labelling and term of „migrant“ is not an exception. Migrants are generally included into certain categories in spite of their individuality and there is widespread persuasion that current localization has got main influence on their current social behaviour. In addition, for immigration scholars, rejecting of pre-migration ties and accepting of post-migration ties is seen as a constitutive way. However, in modern global age, both post-migration and pre-migration ties could be an advantage because of profit from belonging to multiple ties. Above that, views, perspectives and opportunities as well as social networks are raising by mobility. Maintaining contacts with more cultures and with people from different background could be benefit. Labelling of migrants of certain category is confined which means attributed decrease of possibilities. It is needed to decentralize migrants, their localization shouldn't be presumption for labelling, and be careful about inclusion, when accepting of new social ties and skills shouldn't be necessary seen as constitutive. In fact, multiple ties are more constitutive.

Selling Care and Workers. How transnational care job agencies in Slovakia commodify care work

Eva-Maria Walther

Social Anthropology Department, Stockholm University

Hiring women from Central Eastern Europe as live-in care workers for aging family members has become a widely established alternative to private care within the family in Western Europe. An increasingly developed infrastructure enables this kind of circular labor mobility, and the number of market actors matching potential care workers and families is growing. These transnational job agencies are confronted with the task to turn care into a sellable commodity while maintaining its status as an individualized, heartfelt service. Liability towards their customers obliges them to make the care workers with their diverse motivations and qualifications commensurable - by homogenizing them in some respects and categorizing them in others. Building upon participant observation in two Slovak job agencies implementing care workers into German and Austrian families, I look at their recruitment strategies, training, contractual relationships and measures of monitoring and support towards the care workers. The findings suggest that a big part of agencies' activities consists of ruling out ambiguity: They need to establish measurements in order to sort individuals into price categories; and they need to make their activity in the household across the border predictable and controllable for them. They do so by promoting and occasionally enforcing an ideal type for care workers which features domesticity, femininity and full emotional exposure as its key factors. The paper exemplifies the understudied, but crucial impact of agencies on migrants' life trajectories and contributes to existing literature on domestic care migration by adding a top-down perspective.

Ambiguity of Law and Migrant Deportability in Daily Life: Refugees and Low-Level Bureaucrats in Polish Asylum Centres

Michal Sipos

Goldsmiths, University of London

My presentation concerns relation between ambiguity of sovereignty and processes that characterise contemporary bordering of Europe. I explore, by focusing on practices of low-level bureaucrats and Chechen refugees who, between 2007 and 2009, lived and worked in one particular asylum centre in Eastern Poland, how political violence that produces refugee deportability saturates daily life. In my presentation, I follow a document called 'Temporary Certificate of Foreigner's Identity' (Pl. *Tymczasowe zaświadczenie tożsamości*

cudzoziemca). My ethnography describes what the low-level bureaucrats and refugees said and did in relation to the document. I argue that, in the asylum centres at the outskirts of the European Union, sovereignty takes ambiguous form; and that this ambiguity of the law facilitates the political violence through which European citizenship is being reorganised.

Room C (Nr. 209) 3:30 - 5 PM

Chair: Dana Bittnerová

Beyond the Café/Pub Split: Vernacular Narrative Practice Concerning "Refugee Crisis" in the Czech Republic

Petr Janeček

Institute of Ethnology, Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague

Contemporary mass media coverage of so-called European "refugee crisis" changed dynamics of public discussions of the Czech society also on vernacular level. Already polarized along lines of so-called *Café/Pub Split*, imagined division between the urban and rural population currently augmented by the pro-Western liberal sentiments and nationalist conservative-leftist attitudes correspondingly ascribed to these two groups in today's Czech society, the issue of refugees seems now to be one of the most crucial dividing themes, empowered by public debates, vernacular imagination and policy-making. Based on fieldwork on the Internet and media content analysis, the paper tries to interpret some argumentation strategies used by both "sides" of this ideological conflict, including re-interpretation of older folk representations, stereotypes and narrative motifs connected with wider "contemporary mythologies" consisting of conspiracy theories, contemporary legends and rumours.

The importance of language acquisition by a young migrant in the ambiguous contexts of a new social environment

Marija Ťulkina

Faculty of Humanities, Charles University in Prague

People are living in the contexts of specific social and cultural environment. It might be easier to find a place in this world and a way of living when you know only patterns of a culture you are born into. However, modern society and globalization bring about intensive migration processes. Migrants coming to a new country have to adapt and learn a completely unknown system of social and cultural rules. Thus, they might come across a lot of confusing and ambiguous situations during their socialization. One of the crucial aspects of migrant's integration is acquisition of the language of the majority.

In this paper, I argue that the process of learning the language of the target country is very individual often influenced by the settings migrants are disposed in a new society. The way how migrants adapt and learn the language depend on various factors such as the reason of language acquisition, individual determination, family support and status, their age or the target country's social environment they contribute to. All these circumstances have a great impact on how migrant will be able to socialise and function in a new environment.

The aim of this paper is to present the results of the research focused on the importance of language acquisition under various family and social settings on migrants' integration.

Codeswitching and codemixing of Czech-English speaking children in the Czech Republic

Zuzana Terry

Faculty of Humanities, Charles University in Prague

In my paper I aim to find out how bilingualism influences social competences of children who are brought up in families with two “mother tongues” Czech and English in Czech Republic. I focus on preschool and early school children who have one or both parents speaking different language than that of the majority of the country they are living in.

The research has been in progress for a year and a half. First half a year I observed preschool children in their daily activities in minority language with some of the parents also present. Then I looked at afterschool activities of first-graders and this time there were no parents present and the activity was stricter and school like. Initially there were 11 children but in the school year there were only five children continuing in the English language program.

I argue that bilingual children with very similar ability in both languages are at this young age of preschool and early school codemixing very rarely; their use of the codeswitch is almost exclusively connected to children’s games and specific cultural foods as is “chlebíček” and “kobliha”. On the other hand codeswitching can be almost unconscious and is switched according to a person they speak to or to ease the communication.