



CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IN CULTURAL THEORY  
VIII ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**LIVE THEORY AND LIVED CULTURE:  
BETWEEN CONCEPTS AND IMAGINATIONS**

PROGRAM AND ABSTRACTS

TARTU  
22–24 APRIL, 2015



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Tallinn University

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## CONFERENCE PROGRAM

### LIVE THEORY AND LIVED CULTURE: BETWEEN CONCEPTS AND IMAGINATIONS

#### April 22 (Wednesday)

11:30 Registration opens – Ülikooli 16, 2nd floor

12:00 Opening words – Ülikooli 16-212

Prof **Valter Lang** (University of Tartu), head of CECT

Prof **Anne Kull** (University of Tartu), main organiser of the conference

12:15–13:45 **Plenary lecture** – Ülikooli 16-212

**Eileen Barker** (London School of Economics / INFORM)

Who and what belongs where – and when and why? Boundary construction, maintenance and change in new religious movements

*Chair: Ringo Ringvee (Institute of Theology of the EELC)*

13:45–15:00 Lunch – University Café, Ülikooli 20 (for registered participants)

15:00–17:00 Panel sessions

Session 1: Lived culture: Delimitations and interpretations – Ülikooli 16-212

*Chair: Katre Pärn (University of Tartu)*

**Peeter Torop** (University of Tartu)

Cultural science and the chronotopical analysis of culture

**Pikne Kama, Valter Lang, Maarja Olli, Katre Pärn, Tiit Remm, Maria Smirnova**

(University of Tartu)

Constructing and deconstructing the boundaries of past cultures

**Kurmo Kansa** (University of Tartu)

Definition of cultural heritage: Official and idiosyncratic discourse

Session 2: Estonian cultural history: Epochs and discourses – Ülikooli 16-214

*Chair: Toomas Schvak (University of Tartu)*

**Roosmarii Kurvits** (University of Tartu)

The multidimensional periodisation model, based on Estonian journalism

**Asko Tamme** (Tallinn University)

Estonian library discourse as part of nation-building (discourse)

**Egge Kulbok-Lattik** (University of Jyväskylä)

Power relations in Soviet cultural policy and institutionalised resistance based on the example of Estonian community houses (*rahvamaja*)

18:00 Welcome reception – Tartu Art Museum, Raekoja plats 18 (requires prior registration)  
The reception includes a presentation of the CECT's special issue of cultural journal *Akadeemia* and a short introduction of CECT's book series *Approaches to Culture Theory*.

**April 23 (Thursday)**

9:30–10:00 Morning coffee

10:00–12:00 Panel sessions

Session 3: Geographies of spacetime: Making, knowing and understanding – Ülikooli 16-212  
*Chair: Anu Printsman (Tallinn University)*

**Jussi S. Jauhiainen** (University of Turku)  
Spacetime: Towards an understanding of knowledge creation processes

**Franz Krause** (Tallinn University)  
Waters, woods and visitors: Making time and space in an Estonian National Park

**Jyrki Pöysä** (University of Jyväskylä)  
Landscapes of work in a Karelian village

**Anu Masso, Ene Selart** (University of Tartu)  
The mediation of lived time: Estonian travelogues written about Japan

Session 4: Breaking and maintaining cultural borders – Ülikooli 16-214  
*Chair: Maarja Olli (University of Tartu)*

**Dmitriy Antonov** (Russian State University for the Humanities)  
To depict and to kill: Old Russian iconography and 'sacred vandalism'

**Maica Gugolati** (EHESS)  
The performance work *Blue Soap*: An example of creation on the borders

**Kaie Kotov** (University of Tartu)  
How can semiotic resilience foster discovery and innovation?

**Tarmo Pikner** (Tallinn University)  
Lived tensions between urban commons and enclosures

12:00–13:30 Lunch – University Café, Ülikooli 20 (for registered participants)

13:30–15:00 **Plenary lecture** – Ülikooli 16-212  
**Hayden Lorimer** (University of Glasgow)  
Crafting cultural theory at the Gates of Heaven  
*Chair: Helen Sooväli-Sepping (Tallinn University)*

CECT VIII annual conference

15:00–15:30 Coffee break

15:30–17:30 Panel sessions

Session 5: Spatialities: Lived realities and mediated imageries – Jakobi 2-114, 15:30–18:00

*Chair: Hannes Palang (Tallinn University)*

**Antti Vallius, Kaisa Ahvenjärvi, Kaisa Hiltunen, Saara Jäntti, Tuuli Lähdesmäki, Nina Sääskilahti, Tuija Saresma** (University of Jyväskylä)

Landscapes, imageries and belonging

**Svetlana Tsonkova** (Central European University / University of Pécs)

Rivers as geography and culture among the Banat Bulgarians in Bulgaria

**Maarja Kaaristo** (University of Tartu)

The lived materiality of tourist experience

**Maris Sõrmus** (Tallinn University)

Toward post-anthropocentrism: Our naturalcultural future as en fleshed in contemporary British and Estonian literature

**Ott Puumeister** (University of Tartu)

Freedom through nature: The healthy body and the autonomous subject

Session 6: The rhythms and non-places of everyday life and beyond – Ülikooli 16-212

*Chair: Ester Bardone (University of Tartu)*

**Susanne Österlund-Pötzsch** (The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland)

“Now this is very profound, what rhythm is...”: Rhythm in linking movement, place and memory

**Minna-Liina Ojala** (University of Turku)

Everyday rhythms defining a place and manifesting social global inequalities

**Daniel Briggs** (Universidad Europea de Madrid)

An attempt to tell the story of everything at the moment

**Reet Hiimäe** (University of Tartu)

Non-places as temporary sacred places

Session 7: Everyday struggles – against domination – Ülikooli 16-214

*Chair: Aimar Ventsel (University of Tartu)*

**Francisco Martinez** (Tallinn University)

Troiked living – everyday life in Lisbon under the financial crisis

**Marta Ferri** (University of Bologna)

“Power is a word”. Discursive practices and symbolic imaginary in action: The path of Rifiuti Zero

**Suzana Marjanić** (Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Zagreb)  
Representation of evil in documentary films on rights i.e. the liberation of animals, or slaughtering of nature by culture

**Elizabeth Guerrero Molina** (University of Tartu)  
Mexican narco-culture between dominants and alternatives

18:30 Conference dinner – History Museum’s White Hall (Lossi 25) (requires prior registration)

### **April 24 (Friday)**

9:30–10:00 Morning coffee

10:00–12:00 Panel sessions

Session 8: Live theory: Drawing borders and exploring concepts – Ülikooli 16-212  
*Chair: Anne Kull (University of Tartu)*

**Franz Krause, Tarmo Pikner, Maaris Raudsepp, Kadri Kasemets, Anne Kull** (Tallinn University, University of Tartu)  
The unnatural: Policing boundaries, articulating claims, and positioning the human

**Viivian Jõemets** (INALCO)  
The human voice – innate or acquired?

**Indrek Peedu** (University of Tartu)  
The choice of conceptual tools as the primary methodological act in the humanities

**Indrek Tart** (Tallinn University)  
Basic human values as cultural borders

Session 9: Vernacular communication as a form of resistance – Ülikooli 16-214  
*Chair: Elo-Hanna Seljamaa (University of Tartu)*

**Alexandra Arkhipova** (Russian State University for the Humanities)  
“Ten days that shook the world”: Putin’s disappearance as a trigger for the construction of a myth

**Anastasiya Astapova** (University of Tartu)  
Naming the president: Silence, euphemisms, and humor in Belarus

**Anna Sokolova** (Russian Academy of Sciences)

CECT VIII annual conference

The Antichrist is between us: The new Orthodox discourse and the anxiety in modern Russian society

**Natalia Komelina** (Russian Academy of Sciences)  
Prohibited folklore in the history of Soviet scholarship

12:00–13:30 Lunch – University Café, Ülikooli 20 (for registered participants)

13:30–15:00 **Plenary lecture** – Ülikooli 16-212

**Charles L. Briggs** (University of California, Berkeley)  
Of bats, viruses, humans, trees, and chickens: Multispecies relations and the limits of knowledge  
*Chair: Ülo Valk (University of Tartu)*

15:00–15:30 Coffee break

15:30–17:30 Panel sessions

Session 10: Vernacular discourse contesting authority – Ülikooli 16-212

*Chair: Ergo-Hart Västriik (University of Tartu)*

**Kristel Kivari** (University of Tartu)  
Borders of the credibility: Ideological dynamics in research on the natural and the supernatural

**Aleytina Solovyova** (Russian State University for the Humanities)  
An immured soul: Demonological narratives as a reflection of contesting ritual traditions (a case from Mongolian culture)

**Ülo Valk** (University of Tartu)  
Vernacular discourse and professional authority: Magic in the narrative tradition of rural Assam

**Margaret Lyngdoh** (University of Tartu)  
Christian conversions among the Khasis of North Eastern India: Converting belief?

Session 11: Borders in landscapes and minds – Ülikooli 16-214

*Chair: Pikne Kama (University of Tartu)*

**Marina Baiduzh** (Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration)  
Imagining *Another Tyumen*: The city centre and its borders in mythological and historical local narratives

**Ragnar Saage** (University of Tartu)  
The rise and fall of metalworkers' guilds and the effect on rural smiths



**Dmitry Doronin** (Russian State University for the Humanities)

“Burhan” or “Byrkan”? Practices of categorisation and demarcation in the Altai religious groups

**Elena Iugai** (Vologda Business Institute)

The border between the world of living beings and the underworld in Russian funeral lamentations

18:00–19:00 Concluding reception – Vilde Restaurant (Vallikraavi 4)

## PLENARY LECTURES

### **Who and what belongs where – and when and why? Boundary construction, maintenance and change in new religious movements**

Eileen Barker

*London School of Economics/INFORM, United Kingdom*

Both the physical and the social world may suggest, but neither dictates the boundaries that people draw to distinguish different phenomena. Drawing on the work of Mary Douglas, it is assumed that, while categories are necessary for cultural life, where they are drawn is arbitrary, or at least relative to those who draw and/or recognise them. Boundaries may be strong or weak; they may be precise, or fuzzy; they may be more or less permeable and more or less negotiable; and they will always be more or less changing. No two people perceive the world in the same way, but systematic differences are observable according to the beliefs, practices and interests of different groups.

This paper will consider the construction, characteristics and consequences of some of the boundaries utilised both within new religious movements (NRMs) and to distinguish them from the rest of the society in which they exist.

Boundaries constructed by *new* NRMs tend to be strong, clear and non-negotiable, defining unambiguous distinctions between, for example, Godly and Satanic, good and bad, right and wrong, before and after, and, perhaps most significantly, them and us. As such, they function both to control and to protect the membership. In so far as they challenge pre-existing boundaries, they are frequently seen as a threat by different sections of the wider society. ‘Counter cultists’, who object to the movements’ heretical beliefs, see the redrawing of what, for example, is considered Christianity as threatening their conception of ‘real Christianity’; ‘anti-cultists’, who object to the movements’ deviant practices, protest against what the NRMs consider to be permissible (or non-permissible) behaviour.

However, NRMs tend to change more rapidly and radically than older, more established religious movements, and – if they survive – will frequently ‘denominationalise’ with boundaries becoming weaker and more negotiable. This may be due to internal factors, such as failures of prophecy or inevitable shifts in demographic profile, or to external factors, such as the arrival of the Internet, which has facilitated both the strengthening and the undermining of authority structures and communication networks.

## **Crafting cultural theory at the Gates of Heaven**

Hayden Lorimer

*University of Glasgow, United Kingdom*

In this lecture, I ask what it means to craft cultural theories that are ‘site-specific’ and ‘localist’, as opposed to ‘imported’ or ‘parachuted’. I will consider the merits of theory building through thick description, and ways to traffic theory that do not break faith with the provincial texture of a place. In essence, I want to know what happens to academic norms and standards when we try to find ways of writing that *really* value the streets of *that* town (the way it smells... and those muted colours... in just that light... and how people speak of it in soft voices). To give these questions some traction, I will talk about one exercise in place-portraiture that has been preoccupying me of late. The audience will join me on a site-visit: to a pet cemetery like no other, and its striking setting on the edge of a Scottish seaside village. Faced with 1001 human tales of animal loss, I will describe doing discovery and exploration in a miniaturised landscape dedicated to faithful companions: touring the cemetery’s paths and plots; studying pet paraphernalia and commemorative gravestones; striking up conversation with grieving owners, old and new; listening to stories of afterlives and underworlds. “How appropriate is it to trade in cultural theory”, I ask, “when the cemetery already seems to contain the truths of life and death?”

**Of bats, viruses, humans, trees, and chickens: Multispecies relations and the limits of knowledge**

Charles L. Briggs

*University of California, Berkeley, USA*

Social scientists and (post-)humanists have recently located knowledge production beyond the limits of the human in thinking about how insects, dogs, forest animals, plants, and other creatures produce ways of knowing that significantly affect social and material relations. Research with indigenous peoples in South America has been the focus of many of these formulations, including Philippe Descola's return to animism, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's perspectivism, and, recently, Eduardo Kohn's extension of semiotics and relationality beyond the human. This presentation traces a complex interaction between vampire bats, viruses, trees, cows, chickens, and dolphins that proved fatal to some 38 residents of a rainforest in eastern Venezuela and defied diagnosis for over a year in 2007–2008. Rather than tracing an opposition between an indigenous cosmopolitics versus a 'Western' naturalist or biomedical perspective, I examine how two indigenous leaders recruited a healer, a nurse, a non-indigenous doctor, and the author – along with animals, viruses, and media technologies – to unravel these complex multispecies relations, diagnose the cause of the epidemic, and deliver a report to national officials and journalists. Here the 'ontological turn' itself takes a number of turns in exploring how knowledge moves along the borders of ethnic inequalities, social movements, forms of state power, and amalgamations of professional logics even as it travels across species.

**PRESENTATIONS**

**Session 1**

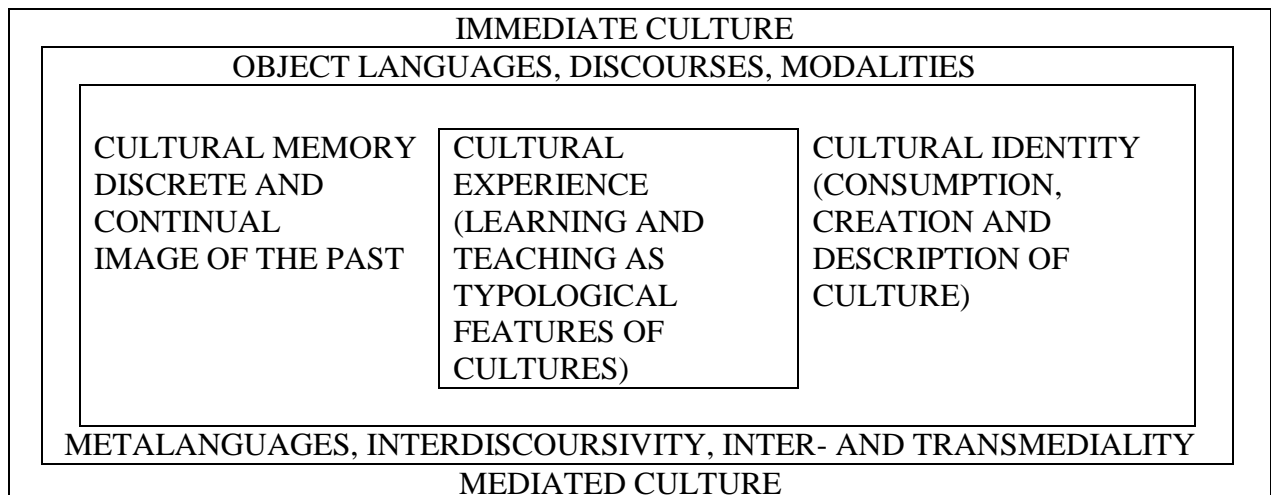
*Lived culture: Delimitations and interpretations*

**Cultural science and the chronotopical analysis of culture**

Peeter Torop

*University of Tartu, Estonia*

1. Culture-studying disciplines interweave on the level of methods and the language of description; the boundaries between cultural philosophy, cultural sociology, cultural studies and their sub-disciplines have become blurred. As a result, we can interpret the same problems in terms of the diversity of disciplines and methods, aspects of the object of study, or the opinions of scholars.
  
2. Every culture functions as a whole with the basis for the parameter of the whole lying in each culture’s auto-communicativity, which is a cultural universal, together with the understanding of culture as a system of education. Methodologically, this is related to the understanding of the orientation of cultural mechanisms. One and the same culture can be understood as the culture of a (nation) state or of smaller interest groups who control and direct textual processes by controlling politics, ideology, marketing, the school system and mass media.
  
3. Cultural experience is directly related to the way cultural languages are cultivated in a given society during a given historical period, as the richness of cultural languages is related to the growth in multiplicity and richness of the cultural self-descriptive processes.



Cultural experience exists in the cultural environment and cultural processes that are the main research objects of cultural disciplines. Time and space are two main analytical parameters of culture and cultural research, chronotope is a synthetical parameter. The chronotopical view makes it possible to understand culture as a whole within the context of the general science of culture.

## **Constructing and deconstructing the boundaries of past cultures**

Pikne Kama, Valter Lang, Maarja Olli, Katre Pärn, Tiit Remm, Maria Smirnova  
*University of Tartu, Estonia*

The first step in any research project is the construction and delimitation of the object of study. When the object of study is a culture or cultural phenomenon, the borders of the object can be delimited on three levels: spatial, temporal and substantial. These boundaries depend on each other and on many other aspects, some of which lay outside the scope of the research. As a result, any delimitation is more or less conditional and depends mainly on the dominant paradigm. Therefore cultural theory is not relevant only when interpreting the results of research but also in constructing the research object.

In the paper we study the cultures of *tarand* graves and long barrows. We discuss the grounds on which archaeological cultures have been defined and delimited in the past and enquire how we should interpret the boundaries of these cultures today. Through the semiotic model of culture we try to redefine the notion of boundary in archaeological studies, to move from delimitation on the basis of the spatial and temporal spread of material culture to a boundary as a semiotic mechanism of culture. Instead of focusing on the temporal and spatial boundaries of the distribution of the grave type, the semiotic approach emphasises the internal structure of distribution as a possible indicator of internal boundaries as mechanisms of the translation and self-description of the culture, thus taking us closer to the internal perspective of the given cultural community.

We start our analysis at the micro level of a gravesite and model it as a text to interpret the meaning and function it had within its culture. By means of the comparison of these ‘texts’ of neighbouring territories/temporalities, we try to reveal the process of translation that might have occurred between these communities, as well as what it could indicate about the ways they delimited what is one’s own from what is alien – and thus about internal boundaries that existed between communities of the given archaeological culture. Through this kind of analysis we move from the micro level to the macro level of archaeological culture in an attempt to establish a more complex picture of the internal structure of the culture. At the same time we analyse the specific insights that gravesites and burial customs can offer about the spatial and temporal boundaries of a culture – the status of a particular archaeological object as an object marking the boundary, or a ‘boundary sign’.

Conceptualising something as an object of cultural boundary does not necessarily mean that the members of the community knowingly perceived it as such, but rather that it functioned as such on the level of the self-model of a culture, thus revealing something about the culture when analysed as a mechanism of cultural boundary. Boundaries as objects of perception are tools of spatial cognition; archaeological study is concerned with the ways archaeological finds could be interpreted as expressions of cultural boundaries. These found objects were part of a cultural reality, used as cognitive and expressive tools by cultural subjects. Since the cultural reality of the subjects is not accessible to the researcher, the correlation between the boundaries of the cultural reality and the boundaries of the spatio-temporal distribution of the finds is always questionable. Semiotic modelling of culture and of archaeological finds is cognitive; expressive tools of that culture could further access to the cultural reality of the subjects, and particularly help to ask questions about the role of found objects as mechanisms of cultural boundaries.

**Definition of cultural heritage: Official and idiosyncratic discourse**

Kurmo Konsa

*University of Tartu, Estonia*

Along with the extremely rapid development of the scientific, technological and social systems of society, the 20th and 21st centuries are also definitely characterised by a desire to preserve one's past and present day for future generations. Society is organised as levels that encompass each other – starting from the family and ending with the world as a whole. In addition to their personal heritage, people also perceive another level of heritage, although this is mainly through their own identities, cultures and experiences. Every person interprets his or her own heritage, regardless of whether it is a personal, community, nationality/state or world heritage. Giving meaning to heritage is always personal. Heritage participates in the development of people as individuals, and people, in turn, influence heritage. In this sense, heritage is a complicated and complex concept, being both personal and close, and political and distant. Everyone has his or her own idiosyncratic approach to heritage, which is not limited to one's own personal heritage but also embraces heritage from other levels. Everyone defines the heritage and the objects and phenomena it embodies by themselves. Naturally, this takes place in a specific historical and cultural context. Therefore, heritage is perceived differently depending on nationality, gender and socio-economic class, age, education, religion, political preferences, prior experiences, beliefs and fundamental life convictions. On the one hand, heritage is more personal and local, while on the other hand, considerably more global. The heritage discourses at the individual (personal) and higher levels are closely related, although a certain tension also exist between them. People often create their personal heritage discourse in contrast to the collective discourse, while, in some part, it still coincides with the collective heritage discourse. Collective and individual heritage discourses exist simultaneously and function reciprocally, as do the community and state heritage discourses. In this presentation I would like to address the study of Estonian student discourses of heritage. For the study we used quantitative and qualitative methods.

## **Session 2**

### *Estonian cultural history: Epochs and discourses*

#### **The multidimensional periodisation model, based on Estonian journalism**

Roosmari Kurvits

*University of Tartu, Estonia*

The periodisation principles of Estonian journalism have not been analysed by academia, although the periods have been used as an organising tool for research into longer periods. The periods of Estonian journalism have been determined by the transformation of Estonian society, primarily by political and ideological changes and their impact on journalism.

The aim of the current presentation is to create a universal multidimensional model with which to construct the epochs of the history of the press. This model is based on empirical data and considers economic, cultural and political factors (including censorship).

According to the model, journalistic epochs are defined by five key parameters: (1) social development, as reflected in the average volume of the core newspapers; (2) the presence of economic competition; (3) the development of journalistic genres, primarily the role of news in the press; (4) the role of journalists (ideologist vs mediator of news); (5) reading practice, i.e. the way in which people read and which is reflected in the structure of the newspaper page. These factors are interdependent. On the borders of epochs, society transforms rapidly, and accordingly the average volume of newspapers increases or decreases as well. Societal changes, in turn, directly influence journalistic practices: the economic competitive situation changes; the professional role of journalists changes; and the role of the news as a core text-type changes. Together, these factors change the structure of the page and this leads to different reading practices.

Based on these key factors, we can define five major epochs in the development of Estonian journalism (the names are provisional).

1. The epoch of the bookish press (from 1766 to the 1870s).
2. The epoch of the educational press (from the 1870s to the 1910s).
3. The epoch of the news press (from the 1920s to 1940).
4. The epoch of the Soviet press (from 1940 to the 1980s).
5. The epoch of the designed press (from the 1990s to the present).

Key parameters that define the epochs are universal and can provide the basis on which to periodise, analyse and compare the evolution of press in different cultures and societies.



## **Estonian library discourse as part of nation-building (discourse)**

Asko Tamme

*Tallinn University, Estonia*

1. Society is always discursively constructed, always in the process of making, always avoiding permanent definitions, always 'impossible'. The multiple discourses that construct society do it by giving meanings to terms and re-signifying these terms in the process.
2. A discourse in its temporality and contingency builds itself around certain terms that act as nodal points (Laclau & Mouffe 1985). Different discourses share some points, but in each case the actual meaning needs to be 'checked'.
3. A society is never constructed around a single discourse, analogically to the growth and loss of significance of nodal points in a discourse, discourses 'lose' or 'gain' impact in the overall discursive texture of a society.
4. Discourses can be divided into dominant and subordinate, although this is not a 'genetic' or hierarchical definition: in this theoretical framework it rather reflects the perceived importance, the significance, of this or that at a given moment.
5. Estonian library discourse, starting in about the middle of the 19th century, was one, albeit minor, constituent in Estonians' nation-building discourse.
6. My aim here is to analyse some of the essential nodal points of library discourse from the perspective of nation-building discourse(s) from three generally defined historical periods (1860–1890, 1905–1920, 1934–1935) that were formative both for the nation and the libraries.
7. As nation-building changed and developed, library discourse changed, acquiring different characteristics and positioning itself differently.
8. My analysis draws on public texts (newspapers, calendars, the professional press, literary periodicals, yearbooks).
9. The analysis will, in the first place, demonstrate the instability, the contingency, of the discourses, the unstoppable transfer of meanings inside single terms. This will be done within the limits of single discourses and in the wider framework of society at large. Additionally the aim will be to test the applicability of this type of discourse analysis – finding its strength and analytical power in the constructivity, contingency, temporality and volatility of significances in the society – to a definite historical institution, the public library.

**Power relations in Soviet cultural policy and institutionalised resistance based on the example of Estonian community houses (*rahvamaja*)**

Egge Kulbok-Lattik

*University of Jyväskylä, Finland*

This paper aims to map the general logic of the dynamics of official and alternative discourses in the power relations during the sovietisation process of community houses<sup>1</sup>. The focus is on how the cultural organizations of the former Republic of Estonia (1918–40), with its roots in the 19th century civil society, were subjected to the institutionalised governance of Soviet cultural administration (1940–91).

Western modern social structure gained ground in Estonia during the two decades of the first independency (1918–40), when the network of community houses was set up by the liberal state. By 1938 there were more than 400 community houses all over Estonia, operating as local cultural centres and the expression of the socio-economic vitality of Estonia's rural regions.

When the Soviet Union seized power in Estonia in 1940, Soviet state practices and principles were applied in the reorganisation of culture. Sovietisation in respect of community houses meant the import of Soviet cultural canon (norms, values) and cultural policy model with a bureaucratic administration of cultural institutions. Bottom-up initiatives by societies were prohibited (in 1940) and their property was expropriated. Community houses were turned into centres of political education. Cultural practices and leisure time became guided, controlled and censored by inspectors from different institutions that related to community houses.

In this paper we analyse state interference in the leisure time of the Estonian populace with the aims to control and construct a new Socialist reality. To do this, we examine: (1) how the administrative bureaucracy, and other instruments of Soviet cultural policy that mediated the voice of official discourse, were implemented on Estonian community houses; (2) what kind of dialectics existed inside the official discourse of Soviet cultural policy and what kind of dynamics, tension and power relations existed between alternative and official discourse; and (3) can we distinguish alternative discourses from public and dominant discourses and speak about institutionalised resistance using the example of Estonian community houses (*rahvamaja*)?

The method of this paper is historical sociological analysis with a focus on cultural policy research. In order to contextualise the empirical data we use the concept of sovietisation and neo-institutional theories.

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<sup>1</sup> Estonian community houses, built by ordinary people who joined cultural or other societies, became the pillars of the emerging Estonian civil society and public sphere, by offering Estonians space for new cultural practices, such as singing in choirs, playing music in brass bands, acting in plays, establishing local libraries, organising lectures and hosting the public festivities of local communities.

### **Session 3**

#### *Geographies of spacetime: Making, knowing and understanding*

#### **Spacetime: Towards an understanding of knowledge creation processes**

Jussi S. Jauhiainen

*University of Turku, Finland*

This presentation discusses the ways in which space and time have been treated in research about knowledge creation and what opportunities the perspective of spacetime – the intertwining of space and time in the knowledge creation process – offers as regards the earlier perspectives.

Knowledge creation combines people and objects according to specific cultural practices. There is a growing interest in studying the creation of knowledge from a processual perspective. Instead of seeing knowledge as something spatially and temporally fixed and transferable as such, the processual viewpoint considers its development through interpretation in spacetime – bundling of existing knowledge with new ideas, materialities, intuitions and other types of knowledge in particular combinations of moments and places. Knowledge is always ‘becoming’ and changing.

Previously space and time were treated separately or reduced to a ‘passive background’, such as immutable absolute space and objective linear time. Subsequent research has picked up more relational understandings of space and time emphasising their subjective, networked and socially constructed notions. There have been attempts to bring the concepts nearer to each other by spatialising time or temporalising space. However, the bulk of research still treats space and time separately as space-time or time-space, privileging one or another.

The presentation discusses conceptually how one can treat the combinations of space and time. The focus is on knowledge creation, although the conceptual part is applicable to other research themes as well. The presentation is illustrated with empirical examples deriving from previous and on-going research in the KREPRO (Knowledge Creation Processes, see <http://www.utu.fi/en/sites/krepro/Pages/home.aspx>) working group, which is conducting research into academy, art, business and communities and the knowledge creation processes related to them.

**Waters, woods and visitors: Making time and space in an Estonian National Park**

Franz Krause

*Tallinn University, Estonia*

This presentation investigates the interplay of hydrological and social rhythms in the making and remaking of Soomaa National Park in Estonia, focusing especially on its present role as a tourism destination. It is mostly based on multiple visits, walks and interviews with park inhabitants in 2013 and 2014. The presentation begins by describing the social and hydrological dynamics in this area, and notes how both of these display markedly rhythmic patterns. It illustrates how some of these patterns are made to correspond with each other through active attending to the environment, combining various forecasting and broadcasting techniques, and physically modifying the Park itself.

Through an ingenious combining of local knowledge, Internet information, social media and personal networks, tourism entrepreneurs create and manage some of the Park's main attractions, including bog walks and canoe trips through flooded forests. The main argument is that it is only out of the practices of corresponding – of continually putting the Park's dynamics into correspondence with those of its potential visitors or other users – that both the Park as a destination, and its various touristic seasons emerge.

## **Landscapes of work in a Karelian village**

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The transition from socialism to capitalism in the former Soviet republic of Karelia changed the physical landscape in many ways. Some of the changes were quite rapid and visible: closed forest companies, sovhozes and other sites of work were closed without any warning. Some of the changes took more time, did not stop at one moment or were more invisible (the use of the surrounding nature as a resource, for example). At the same time many physical and mental connections to the past remained in these places, in the middle of the new landscape. Identities and cultural values do not usually change as quickly as the economic environment, the sources of livelihood, nature or work.

In my research the processes of change have been documented in the remote Karelian village of Jyskyjärvi (Jushkozero). In my paper I will be discussing the changing landscapes of work on the basis of my own fieldwork in the village of Jyskyjärvi and in some other villages in the same area. Three kinds of sources are compared: 1) visual documentation of the present time and the changes between my visits (1999–2007), 2) local photo albums (at the local administration, cultural house and villagers' homes), and 3) oral history interviews among villagers and officials. The main focus is on forest work and its derivatives (floating, cutting, saw mills, wood as energy, wood as a raw material for handicrafts and domestic craftsmen, wood as building material, transportation). Theories of landscape as a visual, material and mental phenomenon with a strong time dimension are used as a framework for interpretation of the observations or 'traces' of work at different time levels.

## **The mediation of lived time: Estonian travelogues written about Japan**

Anu Masso, Ene Selart  
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In the presentation we conceptualise time and space as two intermingling categories originating from the interdisciplinary approach of media and communication geography (Adams 2011; Falkheimer & Jansson 2006). In this paper we concentrate on analysing the experiences of spatial mobility narrated in the historical newspaper texts as being one of the media and communication geographical issues. We rely on suggestions (Rosental 2006) to include the temporal dimension in the study of mobility, instead of previous spatially focused analyses of representations (see for example Tavares 2008) since it enables us to overcome individual idiosyncrasies and thereby concentrate on mediation of lived experiences and the means of mediation. Time is realised through the reception and uses of media in everyday life and recognition of the plurality of temporal experiences that this involves (Keightley 2013). The mediation of lived time will be illustrated in the presentation using the empirical data of travelogues written about Japan that were published in Estonian newspapers up to the end of the first Estonian Republic, in 1940. The study is based on travelogues written by Estonian seamen (during the 19th century: Jüri Jürison, Mihkel Michelson, seaman from the ‘Dmitry Donskoy’) and Estonian writers (during the first Republic of Estonia: Bernhard Linde, Andres Saal, Karl Ast-Rumor). The text analysed in the presentation amounts to total 150 pages. We analyse the textual and linguistic tools the travelogue writers used when mediating their lived experience. The more particular research questions handled in the presentation are: do the travelogue writers encounter various accelerations (for example, what kinds of change evolved in the content of travelogues)? How did they live with these various accelerations (for example, what influences can be traced in the travelogues, such as other sources that were read by authors or stereotypes loaned)? How did the linguistic and textual tools used by the narrators develop in the course of time?

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**Session 4***Breaking and maintaining cultural borders***To depict and to kill: Old Russian iconography and ‘sacred vandalism’**

Dmitriy Antonov

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Christian iconography was the core of Medieval visual tradition. It initiated rules and introduced patterns of visual perception of the sacred and the invisible. However, there were many Christians who were not afraid to attack iconographic images and destroy the artists’ laborious work. One can find holes, scratches and other signs of deliberate spoilage in multiple medieval manuscripts as well as on some icons and frescos. Christian art was the object of such aggression both in the east and the west of the Christian world, and most often it is not possible to say definitely who attacked the specific images, or when. The delineated practice (or, rather, these practices) functioned on the border of depiction and perception, stating and neglecting the image. It also marked the borders of what was supposed to be normative or inadmissible, sacred or evil in different societies and in different epochs.

The phenomenon of iconoclasm has to be studied with the help of a complex semiotic analysis. To clarify the pragmatics and the logic of perception that provoked aggression, research should start from analysis of the semantics of the damaged images, their morphology and the syntax of the whole iconographic program. Such research should, on the one hand, focus on the spatial position of an image that contains damaged figures and the spatial position of damaged figures themselves. Both semantic and geometric syntaxes (terms applied by Boris Uspenskiy) are important here. On the other hand, it should focus on ritual, magical practices spread among the viewers. The logic of ‘reading’ visual figures and practices of their veneration used to be closely linked in Medieval and Early Modern culture.

It is evident that purposes of people who attacked different figures (from angels and saints to demons, or depicted objects such as tables, books, etc.), injuring them in different ways (‘blinding’, scratching, erasing, crossing or cutting out) were diverse. Some of them wanted to kill a figure symbolically, some intended to neutralize certain people, others collected the erased colour to make use of it, etc. Quite often such practices mark the borders of different traditions and appear as a result of the ‘war of images’, in which the aim of destruction was a visual representation of the Other’s faith and beliefs. The *space of images* is an important ‘meeting place of ideas’, and often a battlefield.

In my presentation I will dwell upon Old Russian iconography in order to study the intricate phenomenon of ‘visual vandalism’.

**The performance work *Blue Soap*: An example of creation on the borders**

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*EHESS, France*

Contemporary art has the capacity to go beyond the borders of the positivistic analysis of society, challenging the static status quo produced by ‘central’ decisional positions. Interpreting the performance work of Christopher Cozier, an artist from Trinidad and Tobago, I will examine the symbolic representation of identity borders in a Caribbean context. Moreover, grounding my anthropological analysis in an artistic register, I will try to use the unpredictable border capacity of the artistic expression in order to understand the Caribbean changeability of belonging to a specific fictional identity.

Cozier, through his *Blue Soap* performance, seeks to join the creative social borders imposed by the colonial heritage and the post-colonial nationalism of the Caribbean islands. In a cultural system in which art is considered to be only painting flowers and palm trees for tourists, the performer, Cozier, is himself at the border of the national recognition of his artistic status as he finds appreciation only from abroad.

Cozier’s performance questions the ambiguity embodied by the phenotypic multiethnicity of the islands from the perspective of a body on the boundary of the dualistic black versus white structure.

I will adapt his performance artwork to initiate a critical analysis of a post-colonial embodied identity that moves in the creative fluid space of boundaries forged by socially accepted identities.

In conclusion I argue that performance art can help the anthropological method to approach the unstable levels of codification and standardisation present in the limits of borders.



## **How can semiotic resilience foster discovery and innovation?**

Kaie Kotov

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Between 2007 and 2010 I visited different communities around the world as a filmmaker, listening to stories of how people experience and cope with impending change and a sense of crisis. What in fact is a crisis? What drives communities into crisis? Is there a way to build a resistance to crisis?

I have come up with the notion of semiotic resilience to describe the capacity of a community or any other semiotic (communicative) system “to change and yet maintain its identity” (I have borrowed this phrase from Juri Lotman’s *Culture and Explosion*). Meaning always appears in contexts. Semiotic resilience is thus related to multiple contexts – the richer the community is in certain contexts the richer are its sources of meaning making. If some contexts fail, others can be drawn upon to maintain a meaningful and appropriate sense of the world and one self (I owe gratitude to Kalevi Kull for enabling me to see this connection).

I have been looking for tools and strategies that would help communities to foster discovery and change, not for the sake of change and innovation but for the sake of community and people. Until now I have dealt mainly with the question, why do we keep up with contexts that no longer support or foster our sense of identity, livelihood or even lives?

My thinking has been informed by the semiotic notion of habit that derives from the theories of C. S. Peirce and John Dewey. According to Peirce, all life is essentially characterised by a tendency to form habits, sign proper itself being a habit. According to Peirce and Dewey, habit also mediates semiotic and non-semiotic realms and provides means to address the balance of discovery (change and innovation, or abduction in Peircean terms) and inertia in any given semiotic system.

I have also found that the notion of habit provides a way to approach the ‘cultural subconscious’ or aspects of cultural identity that are not conscious and manifest in cultural self-descriptions. For this purpose, I have divided habits into four main groups: concepts (mental habits, or ‘habits of belief’, according to Peirce), emotions, physical skills and infrastructure.

Very simply, habits are learned and then the fact that they were learned is forgotten, i.e. they have fallen out of conscious identity and self-description. They are mediated and remediated across community and though unquestioned they form the core of communal identity. This may be a reason why deeply embedded habits are so difficult to change – it is not only a question of effort and convenience but also of lived and experienced identity. Habits are also built into the infrastructure.

Habits are thus at the core of communal identity. However, when circumstances change rapidly, attachment to old habits may weaken the community to the point that it will break down and devastate people’s lives. It is thus important to ask: how can we diagnose habits within a community? How should we work not just with the individual but also with shared and mediated communal habits to form new contexts? How should we build semiotic resilience within a community? I will share my reflections based on my conversations with people in Tonle Sap fishing villages in Cambodia, the city of Hasankeyf in southern Anatolia,

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Turkey, reindeer herders in Sapmi lands, Norway, and my own experience as social innovation facilitator to discuss these points.

## **Lived tensions between urban commons and enclosures**

Tarmo Pikner

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Cultures are continually co-produced through tensions that generate spheres of being-together in cities. The dynamics of shared matter(s) and of borders are two related sides of urban commons and include humans and non-humans. Thus, commons appear as generative spacing that precede, respond to, and exceed processes of enclosure (Jeffrey et al 2012). The current paper discusses multiple tensions of enclosure-commons and how it produces specific materialities, spatialities and subjectivities.

For this purpose the study elaborates on a holistic time-space perspective on landscapes by focusing on tensions between absence and presence. These embodied tensions are as essential components of landscapes as co-seeing with materialities and perception capacities, the practice that draws together and disperses subjects, objects and worlds (Wylie 2007). Thus, the current approach tries to open some dimensions of “terrains indicating sensory and knowing field” (Amin & Thrift 2013).

The theoretical approach will be elaborated upon together with examples of the contested waterfronts and the informal garden allotments in Tallinn and Narva. These examples assemble some historical trajectories and situated practices to generate ‘matter in excess’ (Anderson & Wylie 2009), which guides us in reimagining relations between the material, perceptual, affectual and discursive.

## Session 5

### *Spatialities: Lived realities and mediated imageries*

#### **Landscapes, imageries and belonging**

Antti Vallius, Kaisa Ahvenjärvi, Kaisa Hiltunen, Saara Jäntti, Tuuli Lähdesmäki, Nina Sääskilähti, Tuija Saresma  
*University of Jyväskylä, Finland*

The concept of landscape combines nature and culture. Landscape is a human construction, created in social and cultural processes. Landscape imageries organise the physical, emotional and ideological spaces that people live in; landscapes are used as resources to be used when taking different positions in individual and national identity projects. The various meanings attached to landscapes are hierarchically organised, and continuously negotiated and challenged. In Finland, for example, national identities have traditionally been constructed with the aid of strong landscape imageries. National landscapes are thus created in continuous processes in which certain landscapes are prioritised, and these landscapes then maintain their special status for decades, or even centuries.

Visual images are essential elements in the production of landscapes and mental images as well as in interpreting their meanings. A shared understanding of the national landscape is often created via images of natural landscapes, such as mountains, forests or lakes. However, landscapes are always defined and delimited by humans, and public, national and personal landscape relations are mainly constructed through images. These images have an important role in organising people's everyday experience of place, their attachments to different places, and their belonging to them.

The contemporary situation, in which societies transform and diversify rapidly as a result of the cultural and social processes of mobility, migration, and globalisation, brings new challenges to the analysis of the understanding of meaningful landscapes. Who has the right to feel 'at home' in the national landscapes that include strong mythical elements? Whose memories are visible in landscape imageries?

The paper draws on our multidisciplinary book project on gender and nationality in landscapes (*Maisemassa* 2014). In our presentation, we continue to investigate the changing national and personal landscapes in the pluralised and multicultural society with the help of new concepts such as 'belonging', 'cultural sustainability', 'materiality' and 'translocality'. We suggest that these concepts might help us to scrutinise the various meanings of landscapes further, and thus enhance our understanding of the meanings of national and personal landscapes.

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## **Rivers as geography and culture among the Banat Bulgarians in Bulgaria**

Svetlana Tsonkova

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The Banat Bulgarians are a small but very active and self-conscious community in today's Bulgaria, approximately six thousand in number. In 1688, after a revolt against Ottoman rule, they emigrated from Bulgaria and spent approximately two hundred years in the historical region of Banat, in a multicultural and multilingual environment. After returning to Bulgaria, they settled in five villages in the north-western part of the country. The Banat Bulgarians are of the Catholic faith and have a very peculiar culture and language that is conservative and syncretic at the same time. On one hand, it preserved its emphatically Bulgarian character, with a lot of archaic features. On the other hand, it experienced strong Austrian/German, Hungarian, Romanian, Serbian and Croatian influences.

In my presentation, I shall focus on the river as a peculiar geographical and cultural feature of the villages of the Banat Bulgarians in today's Bulgaria. Establishing a settlement away from a river is a general and important requirement and condition of the community. At first sight, this attitude is due mainly to considerations of safety, and is based on negative experiences (including floods and drowning accidents) gained living close to the rivers in Banat. Indeed, three of the villages are deliberately built away from any such bodies of water. However, the other two villages have rivers at their very centres. In these two cases, the presence of a river has a special explanation, related mainly to conflicts with neighbouring Orthodox Bulgarians. Through analysis of personal narratives, I shall discuss the Banat Bulgarians' attitude toward rivers in respect to the following themes: the meaning of rivers as economic, environmental, cultural and emotional factors present in life in Banat; the positive and negative evaluation of rivers during the resettlement process in Bulgaria; and rivers as element of subjective feelings, memory and narrative. The focus will be on native perspectives on and evaluations of a natural phenomenon, and its role in the organising of the community's living space. In this context, the rivers are something to be avoided, although they also appear as a recurring topic in personal memory and narrative.

## **The lived materiality of tourist experience**

Maarja Kaaristo

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The tourist experience is essentially embodied and sensory – when touring, we are creative and reflexive subjects perceiving our surrounding physical and emotional spaces in various ways. The body interacts with the surrounding environments and (re)produces various imaginaries about the ideas of both nature and culture and their relationship. Moreover, quite often precisely these imaginaries trigger and actuate tourism in the first place. One could argue that this is how intangible imaginary becomes lived, bodily experience; however just like nature and culture, the imaginaries and bodily experiences should not be contrasted to each other – they can both be considered ‘real’ and embodied.

This paper seeks to discuss the bridges and divides between the imagined and the experienced materiality of the nature/culture relationship in the context of tourist experience. Particular attention is paid to the idea of ‘slow tourism’ – tranquil, relaxing and reflective tourist practices. The paper is based on empirical research in various tourism environments in Estonia and the United Kingdom between 2008 and 2014.

## **Toward post-anthropocentrism: Our naturalcultural future as enfleshed in contemporary British and Estonian literature**

Maris Sõrmus

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Monique Roffey and Andrus Kivirähk, representing contemporary British-Caribbean and Estonian literature, radically challenge a rigid nature-culture divide, suggesting instead their reciprocal emergence and entanglement. Be it the green mountain woman in *The White Woman on the Green Bicycle* (2009), the flowering human being in *Sun Dog* (2002), or the tempting seascape in *Archipelago* (2012), Roffey portrays a posthuman world where humans and nonhumans are no longer dichotomous. Kivirähk, on the other hand, radically rethinks the concept of language in *The Man Who Spoke Snakish* (2007), recognised as “the first Estonian eco-novel” (Hasselblatt 2007). I set out to elucidate how nature and culture are transformed beyond recognition in this literature, shattering the anthropocentric core of the concepts of agency, body, and voice. Situated in the new materialist paradigm, I follow from reconceptualisations in the currently emerging material ecocriticism, also referred to as ‘non-anthropocentric humanism’ or ‘feminist ecocriticism with posthuman alliances’ (Oppermann 2013).

In line with this view, Roffey and Kivirähk combine nature with humans into a Subject, threatening thereby anthropo-normativity and envisioning an uncannily different reality: nature as a speaking agentive body that initiates the novel’s conflict or haunts humans with the trauma following climate change. Being articulate and bodily, nature emerges as a cultural creature, uncannily entangled with culture, as in *The White Woman on the Green Bicycle*. More compelling is the naturalisation of culture in *Sun Dog*: the human body undergoing environmental changes, forming a porous naturalcultural body. Nature and culture truly collapse, suggesting the posthuman body as a material–discursive phenomenon. These organic interconnections also provide an alternative male gendering of nature and provoke the composite co-becoming of the human and the nonhuman. The novelists furthermore suggest the blurring of human and nonhuman languages: the emergence of nature as “a self-articulating subject” (Oppermann 1999) and the view of humans as natural creatures. In *The Man Who Spoke Snakish*, anthropocentrism finally dissolves into a merging of nature and culture; the human protagonist not only grows turf on his body but becomes the turf, suggesting the intra-active becoming of nature and culture in the new materialist vein.

Qualities such as agency, voice and body are not singularly human but span the material world around us, as both writers compellingly indicate. This dissolution of the binary logic foregrounds the “unpredictable becomings of other creatures and the limits of human knowledge” (Alaimo 2010). Thinking along the same lines as Alaimo, Barad, Haraway, and Braidotti, I engage with the posthuman ethic enfleshed by Roffey and Kivirähk: instead of nature/culture, we are faced with their trans-corporeal intra-active entanglement – and quite inextricably so.

## **Freedom through nature: The healthy body and the autonomous subject**

Ott Puumeister

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There is no such thing as a soul. Not anymore, at least. We do not set out to attain salvation, our goal is health. As we know, health has replaced salvation. While a few centuries ago the body was still a site through which one could reach the soul, it is now largely argued that bodily exercise, enhancement, perfection, etc., do not have any other goal than the improvement of the body itself. The aim is a perfect body, which equates to a long and healthy life, an autonomous life.

My concern in this paper is to question the supposed equation (or even, causality) between health and autonomy. Or, between fitness and emancipation. To take a banal example: how does step counting constitute a person as an autonomous subject? How does self-tracking help one attain good morals? At this point we must admit that there is no such thing as a body *in itself*, that there is no such thing as bodily perfection simply in order to perfect the body. Increasing knowledge of one's bodily functions is impossible without comparing oneself with statistical data, and without thus inserting oneself into a population. Being able to make informed decisions on how fast to walk is impossible without the inscription of oneself into relations of power and onto the field of governmentality. However, as has been noted (by Nikolas Rose, for example), contemporary (bio-)power is dependent on freedom, and thus it is crucial that it produces specific sites of freedom (in this case, the body). Rather than conceptualising health and fitness as the cornerstones of an autonomous subject, we should focus on the normalisation inherent in techniques of biopower. Therefore, I will focus on the *production of freedom* and specifically how this freedom is constituted as natural and thus, in a sense, lying outside culture and outside social power relations. In addition, I would like to pose the question: how does this supposedly natural bodily freedom concentrate on health and fitness as they are related to social (re)production.



## **Session 6**

*The rhythms and non-places of everyday life and beyond*

### **“Now this is very profound, what rhythm is...”: Rhythm in linking movement, place and memory**

Susanne Österlund-Pötzsch

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This paper is an attempt to investigate the triangular relationship between movement, place and memory, and the role of rhythm in this context.

The point of departure is the premise that, through our spatial practices, we create and recreate landscapes and that landscapes are always multidimensional. However, in order to turn landscapes into personally significant places we need to interact with them kinetically through various types of movement. Through a practice such as walking we engage in our environment and are able to develop a sense of place. Consequently, walking performances are common ways of, for example, exploring new places, ritually demarcating borders, confirming (local) identity and expressing everyday creativity. My interest concerns how rhythm is a vital element for how we experience the intersection of movement and place and, thus, also influence memory processes. Memory, here, can refer both to social memory and to an individual sense of self.

In this paper I will reflect on the above through a series of case studies, with the main focus on the importance of life stories and personal narratives in the practice of pilgrimage. My suggestion is that rhythm might be the key to memory processes triggered by the movement-place-memory triad.

## **Everyday rhythms defining a place and manifesting social global inequalities**

Minna-Liina Ojala

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While rhythm analysis concludes Henri Lefebvre's project to open up science for imagination, it is also his most explicit work on the confluence of time and space. Reality and all of its phenomena are understood as rhythms. Their analysis begins from the sensitive body, extends to general power hierarchies and results in questioning the everyday life we live and produce. I explored rhythm analysis in its theory and in practice as I applied it to the everydayness of a tourism-influenced beach in Paje, Zanzibar – a place shared by people with globally variable and distinct socio-economic statuses. I investigated how the social and natural rhythms form the everyday rhythm of a place, and again, how the concurrent but hierarchical rhythms are embodied and experienced in the everyday life there. The material, including multimedia data and interview transcriptions, was collected with an ethnographic approach at the beachfront. The analysis is threefold: first, I depict the everyday rhythm of the beach, then break the harmony into a polyrhythm, and finally distinguish the personally experienced but general rhythms into which we all unequally drift. Since the corporeal body is a constant reference here, knowledge is considered subjective and value-bound. Although relative, it is created through the reciprocal interaction of rhythms, leading to a comprehensive understanding of the self and other spatio-temporal phenomena of the world.

**An attempt to tell the story of everything at the moment**

Daniel Briggs

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Public spaces and interactions these days take place in the *non-place*: a simulated space designed by marketing experts and corporations for our enjoyment and excessive consumption. Here, the 'good life' comes alive and subjective identities revolve around a narcissistic quest for personal gratification which is increasingly commercially and ideologically woven into the subjective politics of our lives. Yet, both the meaning people attach to these spaces and the way in which they are designed, reflect no substance. However, it is not only this spatial construction that prompts other ways in which these kinds of 'nothing' are thrust upon us and are reinforced through popular culture such as television, iPads, Facebook statuses, and mobile phones. People are swiftly developing, I suggest, *ontologies of nothing* devoid of political thinking and critical objectivity. Though people engage with these non-spaces, and in microspheres of subjective space, they find overt signs of destitution increasingly confusing; social problems are distant and *real* 'suffering' in *real* places is detached from us by powerful political and commercial forces. This, I suggest, reinforces *ontologies of nothing* and distances us from what I call the *subjectivity of suffering*: a view into the lives of those who suffer. But there's more. Even when we, as academics, try to document this view, we cannot quite honour its complexity. We use outdated theories and remain obsessed with deconstructing social problems into variables and regressions that offer no glimpse of the harsh reality of real *places* in which there are real people who exist. This all takes place behind the *non-places* and beneath ideologically constructed *ontologies of nothing*. Using the work of Augé, Miles, Sloterdijk, Wacquant and Bauman, I show how powerful political and commercial forces are diverting us from pressing social problems and their painful social gravity, and how social science researchers can fail to represent what is really happening in the *real* places where suffering is endemic.

## **Non-places as temporary sacred places**

Reet Hiimäe

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Marc Augé invented the term non-place, which means urban spaces of circulation, consumption and communication that exist beyond historical, symbolic and identity-related ties. The focus of my paper is on the question: in which cases and to what extent can such non-places temporarily become sacred places or spiritual spaces and therefore obtain spiritual, symbolic and identity-related features? A popular nightclub hosts a Latin American shamanistic ritual in which interested people gather to learn from the shaman how to get into contact with their spiritual selves. Here the transformation of the space can be perceived even as a double shift – the ritual is brought into another culture and takes place in an urban place that, in its usual usage, would be rather considered to be the antipode of spirituality. An auditorium in one of the biggest commercial centres of Tartu accommodates a series of lectures and workshops presenting various New Age teachings. The ritual of walking through fire that usually takes place in a village is moved into an office room in the city centre due to cold weather. I try to observe these phenomena in the contemporary time frame and find out to what extent the (temporary) shifting of sacred space into cities is a feature that is characteristic of on-going urbanisation trends and changes in spirituality and the perception of space connected with it.

**Session 7**

*Everyday struggles - against domination*

**Troiked living – everyday life in Lisbon under the financial crisis**

Francisco Martinez

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This paper explores the quotidian ways of dealing with socio-economic circumstances arising from the recent financial crisis in Portugal. By focusing on the way people perform their daily lives, I set out to account for unexpected consequences of that crisis and contextualise these practices in a wider perspective. The methodology of this research shows an experimental and open-ended ethnography – close to an artistic intervention – in which I sit for seven hours for five days in a row in a public terrace of Lisbon. By taking notes of what seem to be non-activities and non-events, I connect minor details with bigger processes and try to explain them within the frame of multiple modernities (Eisenstadt 2000), tactical resistances (de Certeau 1984), and peripheral modernisation (Chakrabarty 2011). My conclusions include: (1) crisis is not only a discourse, but also a dominating mood, a physical restlessness. (2) Dealing with the crisis might become a personal and cultural acquired competence. (3) Portuguese society is experiencing self-defensive negotiation of late-modern processes. Upcycling practices – which give a new use, a new life, to something considered obsolete – are increasing in Lisbon. Rolling professions that seemed abandoned, such as the knife-grinder, have regained popularity in recent years.

**“Power is a word”. Discursive practices and symbolic imaginary in action: The path of Rifiuti Zero**

Marta Ferri

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Power among discourses could be considered as both an important research tool and an issue. This could also be true about studies of new social movements in which the organisational system as well as the impact of activist groups’ actions in the society can be understood through the analysis of the diffusion of power. As a new social movement, Rifiuti Zero (promoting the Zero Waste strategy in Italy in order to create a sustainable society) can represent an example of how power is about social relationships through the observation of interactions among activists (promoting alternatives), citizenship (supporting or being the object of activists’ actions), and political leaderships (keepers of the dominant idea). In this research I note how the discourses came from the continuous interaction between the ‘vernacular alternatives’, i.e. the dominant ideas and the symbolic representation of realities, set up by the population, and can generate a certain system of meaning about sustainability and social change. The movement, understood as a grassroots reaction to the economic crisis, is believed capable of creating political and economic alternatives by the empowerment of communities in order to escape the situation of instability. Through empowering actions, the power of the movement (in terms of the diffusion of its discourses and symbolic imaginary) involves the citizenship and fights, or collaborates with, the political leadership. In this context, power also implies “cultural selection” (“*sociopotere*”, Stefano Boni, *Culture e Poteri*, 2011) that addresses communities through a certain path and promotes change in order to achieve a goal. The *sociopoteri* are the evidence of the complexity of internal power relations, showing some negative aspects of the Rifiuti Zero organisation: who decides which cultural frame to promote, and in which way they do this, is a matter of power.

The aim of the researcher is to understand the role of discursive practices inside/outside the movement, and how the cultural frame could influence the dynamics of the relationship with the population and the political leadership in the process of creating meaning and sociopolitical change.

## **Representation of evil in documentary films on rights i.e. the liberation of animals, or slaughtering of nature by culture**

Suzana Marjanić

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As the title suggests, in this paper I seek to document the representation of evil in documentary films on rights, for example films that deal with the liberation of animals, based on the ethical statement by film director Shaun Monson (*Earthlings*, 2005). He posed the need to behold the evilness of the industrial concentration camps of death since – as he defined it – the animals suffered physically, and all we have to do is to see it (with our own eyes). Thereby I will ‘shed light’ on the aforementioned evil using the chapter “The problem of evil” from the academic novel *Elizabeth Costello: Eight Lessons* (2003) by J. M. Coetzee. In the chapter Elizabeth Costello is invited to a conference in Amsterdam to address the age-old, as she put it, problem of evil – i.e. to try to elaborate on “why there is evil in the world, what if anything can be done about it”. In brief, due to the performative nature of the text, Elizabeth Costello is deeply convinced that a text on evil, the mimesis of evil, can contaminate the text itself, the authorial *ethos*, and continue to project and perpetuate the textual mimeticised evil. Admittedly, as in the lecture on realism, Elizabeth Costello finds the solution in a paradox: she acknowledges that she used to apply the same strategy – she demonstrated what happens in slaughterhouses as variants of concentration camps or, as she put, it: “[...] if Satan is not rampant in the abattoir, where is he?” Indeed, the aforementioned, so-called *obscene* strategy is applied by Coetzee as well as by all documentary films on rights, for example those on the liberation of animals. Finally, I will address the short (20’) documentary film *Le sang des bêtes* (*The Blood of Animals*, 1949) by Georges Franju, which has cult status in cinematic history (cf. Pick 2011, 132). Specifically, on one occasion of the film’s screening, which many claim to have been filmed in colour so as to render it unwatchable due to the representation of evilness in a Parisian slaughterhouse, Franju made the following assertion: “[...] violence is not an end, it’s a weapon which sensitizes the spectator and which lets him see what’s lyric or poetic beyond or above the violence, or what’s tender in reality” (Franju, qtd. in Burt 2002, 176).

## **Mexican narco-culture between dominants and alternatives**

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The topic of this paper is Mexican narco-culture as a discourse for understanding the social context of organised crime related to drug trafficking in Mexico. The term narco-culture involves a series of cultural expressions, such as cinema, popular music, religious rituals and novels, which surround and describe the Mexican drug cartels, the lifestyle of the drug dealers and the general panorama of drug trafficking inside Mexico and at the Mexico-US border.

The intention of the presentation is to take these cultural expressions as a discourse that generates meaning and works as system of references for the different groups directly or indirectly involved in drug trafficking activities. An additional question is whether this specific discourse can be described as a dominant or as an alternative. On the one hand its content is in almost complete moral contraposition to the official statements on the same topic, privileging and exalting the illegal activities and lifestyle of the drug dealer as tenacious and brave and using it as a symbol of pride. On the other hand most of the production and consumption of such expressions is currently done on a mass scale, working closely to the logic of the market.

Some of the questions and topics that the research seeks to treat are: what is the role of such a discourse and who or what is the real power behind it? Is it an outlet for drug dealers to express their vision and their lifestyle as an alternative to legality? Or is it just an exploded market theme? How does narco-culture reflect the power of the drug dealer and the importance of the Drug War in the context of Mexico and the US by becoming a profitable market theme, and, most importantly, by generating a mythos and an ethos around the whole topic? What are the power dynamics, and how can we trace a clear line between the dominant and the alternative when an alarming number of Government representatives and armed forces have been found to be in collusion with organised crime?



## **Session 8**

*Live theory: Drawing borders and exploring concepts*

### **The unnatural: Policing boundaries, articulating claims, and positioning the human**

Franz Krause, Tarmo Pikner, Maaris Raudsepp, Kadri Kasemets, Anne Kull  
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This presentation explores how the concept of the ‘unnatural’ emerges and is used in different contexts, and what consequences it has politically, socially and culturally.

Much has been written about the concept of the ‘natural’, while its polar opposite has largely remained out of the light of academic attention. However, in an age when the natural has been declared obsolete as a substantive category, it may be high time to inspect its antonym more closely. In this presentation we will illustrate how the unnatural is an immensely powerful, if inherently ambiguous, concept with critical implications for the formation of social categories, the morality of classifications, the characteristics of urbanity and the directions of environmental conflicts and restoration.

We approach the unnatural from five different angles, in order to elucidate complementary aspects of the concept’s efficacy. First, we will outline how the unnatural emerges as a label to verbalise and sanction categorical and social boundaries. Second, we explore how the unnatural articulates with the cyborg concept: on the one hand, the unnaturalness of the cyborg rests in its categorical transgression, and therefore its threat to the classificatory order; on the other hand, the tension between the omnipresence of cyborgs and the maintenance of categorical boundaries also points toward the ceaseless and complicated work of ‘purification’ that is needed to uphold a classificatory order in the face of a much more messy reality. The third section illustrates how the unnatural is never a given entity but emerges out of complex ecologies of practice in which materiality and non-human entities participate alongside human beings. In the fourth section, the unnatural is approached through a process that has been dubbed ‘summurbanisation’, in which the unnatural emerges as a label for the incongruence between the material dynamics of water, seasonality and rural infrastructure, on the one hand, and the urban-derived lifestyles and expectations of the new population, on the other. Finally, the fifth section traces how the unnatural functions as an attributor of responsibility, through which people explicitly introduce human actors – and thus ethics, morality and exchange – into debates about environmental transformations.

The presentation concludes that the unnatural is a flexible container for generating meanings with a morally and politically powerful message. What is considered unnatural depends heavily on the framing of what is normal and right, as unnatural emerges at and beyond the limits of these concepts.

## **The human voice – innate or acquired?**

Viivian Jõemets  
*INALCO, France*

Humans share a number of cognitive capacities with other species. For a long time innateness was related to our ‘animal self’ and culture was viewed as the dividing line between *homo sapiens* and all other species. Does this imply that such heterospecific traits prove innateness? We may view the nature-nurture dichotomy to be a false one, as any innate capacity is always a mere potential and inevitably needs to be developed through the process of learning to become a fully functional skill. So where is the demarcation line between the innate and the acquired, or should these be viewed as theoretical tools?

Emission of vocal signals is characteristic of all normal humans and of the vast majority of mammal and bird species. Therefore vocal communication might be viewed as an innate capacity that is little influenced by culture and learning more generally. We shall look at some examples of voice production that question the idea of the innateness of vocalisation – the quest for the primordial voice – and look for the biological or social prerequisites for meaningful vocalisation. How does science determine which aspects of voice are innate? Does culture have the power to invent mechanisms that compensate for a lack of a specific cognitive capacity, is it nature itself that exploits latent aptitudes in cases of averred necessity or does the impaired individual simply have to do without? We shall analyse some specific neurobiological and sociocultural conditions of voice production, interpretation, and recognition that allow us to explore the nature-nurture dichotomy from a new angle and ask whether we could eventually leave the either/or predicament behind.

**The choice of conceptual tools as the primary methodological act in the humanities**

Indrek Peedu

*University of Tartu, Estonia*

In this presentation I intend to argue that choosing one's conceptual tools (and thus one's categorical divisions) functions as the primary methodological act in the humanities, comparable to the role of experiment in the natural sciences. Seeing the choice of conceptual tools as a methodological and not as a strictly theoretical decision is a heuristically more meaningful way to make sense of what happens when one decides to categorise one's presumed object of study through one set of conceptual tools or another. The actions that are more commonly seen as methodological – whether its anthropological fieldwork or textual analysis – are only secondary to the initial decision regarding the choice of categories. For example, by making the decision whether something is 'cultural' or 'religious' one has already delimited one's object of study. This act of delimitation is comparable to the choice of experimental tools in natural sciences. Experimental method enables one to highlight and/or measure an aspect of something; the exact choice of method is decided depending on how one wants to study the presumed object of research. The choice of conceptual tools functions analogously in the humanities. I intend to make use of two cases to exemplify my argument. First, there is the curious case of caste in India and the debate surrounding it brought about by Western missionaries: should this phenomenon be seen as 'merely cultural' (and thus tolerable as a local custom) or as 'religious' (and thus unacceptable for Christians)? Secondly I intend to turn to the problems that one comes upon with the usage of the concept of 'syncretism'. I plan to show how the use of this category greatly (and most of the time not in a good way) influences the ways in which the presumed object of study will be presented and thus understood whenever this category is used. Together, these cases are used to highlight the reasons why one should see the choice of conceptual tools as a methodological act.

## **Basic human values as cultural borders**

Indrek Tart

*Tallinn University, Estonia*

Which cultural indicators provide a basis upon which to draw borders in and between cultures is a difficult question for cultural theory and practical studies. Could we separate aggregate indicators used to search for division between cultures? One of the possible solutions is to follow basic values that function as important motivational spaces at the personal as well as the culture level. In general, under the forces of globalisation European countries acquire more and more ethnically distinct layers in their national value structures, making finding centres and borders in this case more important than ever. If values can be treated as quite stabilised after the process of individual socialisation then we are facing a need to find mechanisms for how they will perform in our changing cultural environments. Symbolic fields created by basic values could be studied effectively from this perspective. Strong research practice helps us find comparable solutions for survey data management. The research experience from the late 1980s has shown the high structuring of basic values at the level of cultural communities.

At the same time basic values serve as a meeting place for different cultures, especially when they are neighbours on the political map of Europe. We are concerned with the Nordic and Baltic countries' basic value similarities and differences. We also expect to find – with reference to the Inglehart-Welzel world values map – an explanation of why the Baltic countries do not give much hope for the postmodernist, self-expression-centred change that has been taken to be the key signal of cultural change – from survival to self-expression values. It seems that institutional change (at the opposite end of the axis from secular-rational values) in the Baltic states has been seemingly more visible, resource-hungry and self-centred than essential personal development. The Shalom Schwartz bi-axial performance level has a place to note more openness to change in the Nordic countries while the Baltic states remain more tradition bound. Is this a mental border (the symbolic power of basic values) that makes sense?

We study ethno-linguistic qualities through European Social Survey (ESS) data. Six rounds of this survey between 2002 and 2012 involve 298,248 respondents from 35 countries representing 50 larger ethno-linguistic communities. We will develop the search into a three-dimensional one that will involve a quasi-spherical solution. Schwartz' Portrait Value Questionnaire (PVQ) had served well in basic values–landscape research, along with some of correlates of broad social and political activities in different cultural environments. Now we will test the basic personal-level and culture-level values models using the aforementioned ESS 21-item PVQ data.

Basic human values thus represent quite sophisticated and rough-but-trusted indicators for cultural borders inside multicultural societies, serving for a deeper understanding of human sign systems constructed into personalities at the culture level.

## Session 9

### *Vernacular communication as a form of resistance*

#### **“Ten days that shook the world”: Putin’s disappearance as a trigger for the construction of a myth**

Alexandra Arkhipova

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In recent years the mainstream of research on the personality cult and its modern ‘reflections’ in today’s Russia has been focused on the processes of construction of national identity (Vázquez Liñán 2010; Persson & Petersson 2014), legitimation of power through people’s support (Rose et al 2011; Hanson 2011) and formation of a postmodern ‘personality cult’ (Congrove 2013; Foxall 2013; Cassidy & Johnson 2013), while the importance of the popular perception of Putin has so far been underestimated.

A recent book dedicated to various aspects of the construction of Putin’s public persona investigates the visual representation of the president, his public language and image in literature (Goscilo 2013). However, a key element is missing in this volume: how do people perceive Putin? Without such a sample of narratives, it is impossible to understand the particularities of the discourse about Putin.

The personality cult, even a ‘postmodern’ one (in terms of Cassidy & Johnson 2013), has been studied basically as a political technology, from the top-down perspective, but a real personality cult can be implemented successfully only when the propagandistic activity causes a popular feedback.

Over ten days (between March 5th and March 15th 2015) the President of Russia was not seen in public. The systematic rejection by the press service of possible causes of his disappearance, for example illness and/or other rational causes, led to a number of rumours about an alleged deadly disease, secret wife, illegitimate children, doubles, *coup d’état*, arrest, murder, and so on. These rumours are not generated randomly but according to two key discourses about “the mythological Putin”. One of those discourses tends to represent Putin as a superstrong and testosterone-filled leader, whereas the second displays him as a half-dead, weak, ill and old ruler. The interpretation of Putin’s disappearance depends on the discourse chosen by the narrator.

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## **Naming the president: Silence, euphemisms, and humour in Belarus**

Anastasiya Astapova

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In this paper, I aim to give an account of strategies used for naming Alexander Lukashenko, who has continuously been the president of Belarus since 1994. I start with the humorous nicknames given to him and then proceed to the difference in naming strategies in the vernacular discourse of the Internet and verbal communication. According to my hypothesis, the two realms present different naming strategies, dependant on fear and consequent self-censorship. Stemming from the current political situation, the strategies for naming Lukashenko in these realms are conditioned by the rumours about surveillance and punishments not fitting the crimes. On the Internet, for instance, naming differs depending on whether the comments the users leave, mentioning Lukashenko, are anonymous or not. The paper examines avoidance, silencing, and irony in naming as responses to Belarusian politics.

## **The Antichrist is between us: The new Orthodox discourse and the anxiety in modern Russian society**

Anna Sokolova

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Here one can see a milk package from the Ruzskoe milk company (the most expensive brand) with the bar code crossed out. The owner of the company, Vasilii Boiko-Velikiy, who calls himself an “Orthodox businessman”, claims that using bar codes is dangerous for Orthodox people because any bar code could contain the Number of the Beast – 666 (see picture). According to him, the crossing of the bar code (in the shape of St. Andrew’s cross) secures Orthodox customers from the Antichrist.

The lack of confidence in the future among Russian citizens became an instrument with which to construct paranoid expectations. People are not used to lodging a complaint against their government and demanding clear answers about current social and political issues. Modern Russian society has neither political opportunities nor a ‘political language’ with which to communicate with the authorities. Instead of this, mythological explanatory models have become extremely topical. Traditional folk language and mythological models transmit such fears into the supernatural sphere to explain current difficulties. Signs of the coming of the Antichrist is one such example.

This paper (based on several such case-studies) is devoted to the following research question: how does anxiety in modern Russian society trigger traditional mythological interpretations instead of political explanations? Of course, one can claim that such expectations always exist. But usually that kind of discourse is a part of microsocieties or special religious groups (Old Believers is perhaps the most famous example). However in the current situation it becomes the important part of the common discourse.

The processes described above become more interesting in historical perspective, as, since the 17th century, eschatological discourse has become marginalised because of church schism and, from the second half of the 17th century, the popularisation of apocalyptic ideas. While in imperial Russia apocalyptic discourse was suppressed by State and Church authorities, after 1917 it was completely repressed by communist ideology. After 1991 this discourse was set free; its relevance has become more and more evident, not only in Church discourse but also in public life. This process has so far been little described (see for example works by A. Panchenko, M. Akhmetova and P. Bodin). My paper is intended to focus on the outlined subject matter.



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**Prohibited folklore in the history of Soviet scholarship**

Natalia Komelina

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The presentation highlights the history of folklore prohibition in Soviet science (political, erotic and urban folklore). I analyse state control of folklore in the USSR and the relationship between performers, folklorists, archivists and the state using archival research and material collected in expeditions carried out in the 2000s.

## **Session 10**

*Vernacular discourse contesting authority*

### **Borders of the credibility: Ideological dynamics in research on the natural and the supernatural**

Kristel Kivari

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The label 'alternative' accommodates different interests and focuses. The material that is analysed in this presentation is rooted in the diminishing field of research into natural anomalies and paranormal phenomena that is still practiced within the circles of earth energy enthusiasts. With its investigative aims it provides an alternative to mainstream science (mainly from the field of the natural sciences and medicine), whereas the interviews and observation resemble more undemanding fields such as collecting folklore and ethnological observation. Its research questions are: are there any unknown parameters in the environment that would explain the various reports of supernatural occurrences? And vice versa: what should one do if the sites of natural phenomena (such as mushroom circles in the grass or the particular shapes of trees) have also been places of supernatural encounter? In sum: what to do with 'folklore'?

From the ideological point of view, the activity consists of deep cultural criticism towards the institutionalised scientific paradigm. The rootedness of the activity in a broad vernacular voice – various stories, reports as well as the interested people – gives them the valid authority of the folk. At the same time the activity inhabits a no-man's-land between religion and science, relating itself to the search for a third paradigm: the model of legitimate social thought that would accommodate metaphysical presence as well as a valid model for describing the source(s) of metaphysical/paranormal agent(s).

**An immured soul: Demonological narratives as a reflection of contesting ritual traditions (a case from Mongolian culture)**

Aleytina Solovyova

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“A horse stumbles, a car fails, even the equipment on planes flying above that place goes crazy”.<sup>1</sup>

This report focuses on the conflict between two ritual traditions, new official and old traditional forms of funeral, in modern Mongolia and its reflections in folklore. The methodological approach of my research is based on cultural anthropology and the comparative historical method. One of the main principles of this study is an indivisible unity of beliefs, folklore narratives and rituals in traditional culture. The topic of the report concerns such questions as dominants and alternatives, contesting authority, ways of transformation in the traditional culture and social pragmatics of demonological narratives.

In contemporary Mongolia a variety of loci are connected with demonological narratives: natural objects, haunted houses, abandoned roads, cemeteries, etc. In the rural tradition one of the most popular topics is devoted to *guideltei gazar* or *gazarin guits* – ‘an area with movements, restless activity’. These loci, referred in local tradition, are special, fixed places with ‘bad reputation’, something like haunted places or ghost sites.

According to the available sources the term *guideltei gazar* or *gazarin guits*, as well as complex of beliefs and narratives connected to it, seem to be quite recent, originating in the second half of the 20th century and becoming widespread in different parts of Mongolia at the end of the century. A goal of this research is to explore the background and roots of this topic, which lead to the folklore beliefs related to remains and the funeral traditions of the previous periods in Mongolia.

The examined materials allow us to presume that the topic of the ‘restless place’ is basically related to the changes in ritual practices and reflects a conflict between different funeral traditions and ideas connected to them. The traditional Mongolian funeral was the ‘sky funeral’, or the even more widespread ‘leaving in the steppe’. There were attempts to institute inhumation as an official form of funeral several times, the most violent being at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and during the period after the Second World War. Among common people the new ritual practice was met with strong resistance that continued painfully and for quite a long time. One of the basic contradictions of this opposition, which is still actual in popular belief, is that “the soul immured in the earth cannot find the next birth or form of reincarnation, and is doomed to stay on the earth as a homeless evil demon, disturbing living people”.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> G.H., born in 1975, Dalanzagdad, 15.05.2009.

<sup>2</sup> H.D., born in 1941, Kharkhorin, 26.08.2011.

**Vernacular discourse and professional authority: Magic in the narrative tradition of rural Assam**

Ülo Valk

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The paper is based on fieldwork in the historical region of Mayong in the Marigaon district of Assam, which has been known as a centre of magical practices (*bejāli, tantra-mantra*) all over North Eastern India. Like many other rural areas in Assam, Mayong is today dominated by the mainstream neovaishnava religion, which condemns the worship of deities who are evoked in magic and related ritual practices, such as animal sacrifices. However, in spite of this discordant social environment, there are more than one hundred semi-professional healers and magicians (*bej*) in Mayong who carry on their art as an alternative tradition to the public forms of religion. Among them there is a well-known *bej* who plays an important institutional and ritual role in the house of the local king. According to his words, combining these seemingly discrepant roles is possible because he keeps magic and public service totally separate.

The paper explores how the reputation of *bejes* is constructed in vernacular discourse. The authority of magicians depends on several factors, such as belonging to a family lineage of powerful *bejes*, ownership of magical manuscripts (*mantra-puthi*) and co-operation with assistant spirits (*birā*), but also on stories in which the magicians figure as protagonists and heroes. The element of secrecy and uncertainty about factual data has contributed greatly towards the variation of narratives and the blurring of boundaries between social reality and storyworlds. The paper argues that vernacular practices, such as storytelling, create the worlds of ontological liminality and that the professional authority of *bejes* depends on their positioning in the storyworld. Vernacular discourse forms an inconsistent web of perspectives, agreements and disagreements about the social reality and supernatural world. The boundaries of these two realms are never fixed but remain in constant fluctuation.

## **Christian conversions among the Khasis of North Eastern India: Converting belief?**

Margaret Lyngdoh

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The Khasis are an ethnic community in the North Eastern part of India and they number approximately 1.2 million. It was only in 1842 with the arrival of Thomas Jones and the Welsh Calvinistic Missionaries, that the Khasi script was founded on the basis of the Roman script. Khasi education, healthcare and Christian training, and on a deeper level, westernisation, thus began with the missionaries.

Today, approximately 85 percentage of Khasis are Christian converts with the population mainly being divided into Presbyterians and Catholics.

This paper will not explore the religious paradoxes and contradictions that underlie mainstream Khasi society, although these are existent. Rather, this presentation will focus on the indigenous Christians living in the peripheral areas of the Khasi Hills and will try to examine individual, local responses to institutionalised Christianity.

The vernacular discourse attempts to bring about an uneasy reconciliation between the traditional knowledge system (alternative discourse) and Christian doctrines (dominant discourse). Almost entire villages are Christian converts but negotiations between traditional belief system (*Niam Tynrai* or 'Root Religion') and the imposed religion are expressed in creative, unorthodox and subversive ways. In the words of one of my informants from Shillong, "people there are not real Christians, they have not accepted Jesus into their hearts". This separation between what constitutes a 'real' Christian and someone who is 'not a real Christian' will inform the focus of this presentation.

## **Session 11**

### *Borders in landscapes and minds*

#### **Imagining Another Tyumen: The city centre and its borders in mythological and historical local narratives**

Marina Baiduzh

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The paper examines the collection of urban texts about positive and negative places that were collected in the Siberian city of Tyumen between 2009 and 2014. These notions are connected with the idea of space divided into the lived locus and other, unknown parts. The chronological, mental, geographical and other borders are well marked in popular belief. The urban landscape and its parts are very meaningful in the modern mythological discourse. Typically, citizens divide urban places into home locus and wild territory, and such division is reflected in contemporary legends and urban narratives. City sites are inhabited by different demonological personages or by non-personified energy, a 'genius loci', for example, giving rise to a very popular type of text in contemporary folklore – placelore. In the paper placelore (primarily negative) and local city narratives are considered as the mechanisms of understanding the centre and periphery.

The author discerns a few types of local narratives about negative places: (1) places haunted by a poltergeist, (2) places in which dangerous non-personified forces live, (3) underground tunnels in the negative places, (4) an area as a swamp or whole Tyumen as a metaphysical swamp. While groups 1–3 are universal types of mythologising a contemporary landscape, the 4th type is locally specific to Tyumen.

The paper presents a map of such mythological narratives in Tyumen. Ordinarily we suppose that the city centre is a more comfortable and positive place and the periphery is more negative. However, the geographical borders may not coincide with the mental map of beliefs about the cityscape. On the one hand, citizens have demonised some marginal and peripheral locations (for example Tyumen's outlying districts Lesobasa or Zareka), while on the other hand, the historic borders of Tyumen city have been given some negative features for a long time in spite of it being the centre of a growing city (the Gorodizshe district has a negative association, as does the haunted house in the centre). In the report the author presents the complex of narrative types inherent to Tyumen's cases in contemporary folklore and historical narratives. In addition, the paper illustrates how Tyumen's people define the city and its surroundings.

## **The rise and fall of metalworkers' guilds and the effect on rural smiths**

Ragnar Saage

*University of Tartu, Estonia*

This paper makes use of archaeological, historical and ethnographic sources to look at the division of metalworkers into guild, and guildless, smiths during the 14th–19th centuries. The study is a good example of authorities constructing cultural borders that are strengthened by physical barriers.

The formation of crafts guilds in 14th century Estonia marked a new era for local metalworkers. The dominant metalworkers in towns wanted to monopolise production and distribution rights, which created an opposition with the guildless rural smiths. This marks the formation of the first border, which was enforced by the ever-growing power of the Hanseatic towns and their legislative authorities.

As the medieval towns were fortified, the border between guild artisans and their rural counterparts received a physical manifestation in the shape of city walls. While it made the regulation of metalwork inside the walls easier, the guildless smiths were pushed to the suburbs and countryside where the authority of the town was greatly reduced. We know this from several sources of complaints, directed towards Tallinn town council, to stop the illegal activities of guildless smiths operating in the vicinity of the town. The archaeological remains of smithies show that guildless smiths even had some advantages, like concentrating iron, bronze, and bone working under one roof, while the different crafts guilds argued over the production rights of certain products. The clearly negative effects of this segregation are illustrated by 19th century ethnographic sources.

The fall of the dominance of craft guilds in the 19th century was a combination of several factors. By the end of the century, the towns had seen abolition of serfdom, rapid population growth, industrialisation, and eventually the destruction of the border set in the Medieval society.



**“Burhan” or “Byrkan”? Practices of categorisation and demarcation in the Altai religious groups**

Dmitry Doronin

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Different geographical and geopolitical mythologems spread among the inhabitants of the Altai region in Russia state that this region is the cultural centre of the area and at the same time the cultural province. These contradictory mythologems are very important today.

Altai is believed to be the ancestral home of all Turks, Altaic people and many peoples from the Turkic group (a popular belief in modern Turkey). There is also an exotic Altai folk belief stating that the origin of the Slavs is related to the region. On top of this Altai is said to become the ‘last land’ which will be saved at the end of the world. The final battle between good and evil will take place near the confluence of two rivers – the Biya and the Katun.

Altai (historically and today) lies at the border of Christian, Buddhist and Muslim worlds. It has always been under the cultural influence of the Chinese and Russian Empires, Mongolia, Tibet and the Islamic states of Central Asia. In different centuries the dominant state religion has been Shamanism, Buddhism and Christianity. However, despite the opinion of some cultural anthropologists, these traditions did not change each other in a similar progression.

Now among the Altai people we can find several competing centres of religious/confessional identity. Some of them are the result of the ideological/creative activity of the urban intellectuals of Altai. Others appear in rural areas of the Republic. However, all of them are in different ways related to traditional Altaic faith and often stress the idea of the revival of the Altai people and culture.

In my presentation I will focus on a number of cases related to cultural boundaries and conflicts between some of the Altai religious centres. I am interested in the mechanisms of demarcation between different societies with different versions of the Altai identity, such as Buddhism and the ‘White Faith’/Burkhanism, both of which are trying to acquire a dominant position. The linguistic demarcation between the Christian and shamanistic groups of Altai people will also be in the focus of my presentation.

## **The border between the world of living beings and the underworld in Russian funeral lamentations**

Elena Iugai

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Funeral is the most obvious among the *rites de passages*. The verbal expression of the vernacular Russian funeral rite is lamentation. Lamentation is an improvisational poetic text with a great deal of formulas (stable combinations of words with a symbolic meaning). The ritual meaning of these texts is making the opening of the border between life and death more secure. In traditional oral culture using of these formulas is a way to comprehend cultural and life phenomena. All formulas of lamentations can be divided into 3 classificatory groups: related to the deceased and the underworld; related to the world of the living and the orphans; related to the borders and transitions. The world of living beings and the underworld have their centres and peripheries. Centres are formed by people from the village, as well as relatives who died long ago and the cemetery. The deceased and the orphans stand close to the border because their status is changing. Communication between the orphans and the deceased is possible because of their liminal position. As a contact zone, border is a productive site of meaning making. There are two types of transitions on the border between life and death: death itself in funeral lamentations, and the temporary return of the deceased in commemoration lamentations. The analysis of the lamentations' poetic language is the focus of the research. The metaphorical and direct names of people and places are both important. All realities noted in lamentations can be observed as signs. For example, A. Baiburin notes in his *House in the Rites and Beliefs of the Eastern Slavs* that in a semiotic sense the traditional house is a system of borders. In case of lamentations the house is a system of borders collapsing (the windows become cloudy; the staircase is broken).

The databases of North Russian lamentations and the vocabulary of formulas, collected by the author, form the source material of the paper. The methods of statistic, structural and semantic text analysis are used.

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