

## Reconstruction of the Anthropology of Identity

Hylland Eriksen, Thomas and Elisabeth Schober (eds). 2016. *Identity Destabilised. Living in an Overheated World*. London: Pluto Press. ISBN: 978 1 7868 0004 6

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This volume consisting of fourteen chapters aims at updating and reconstructing the anthropology of identity. The introductory chapter by Eriksen and Schober addresses the need for re-establishing the identity concept in a world of accelerated change where forms of belonging to places, groups and societies are being challenged in new ways. For example, in the context of migration, urbanization, tourism and communication technologies (1). The natural scientific term 'overheating' represents a central metaphor for depicting the contemporary phase of globalization where places may have experienced accelerated change or stagnation with unforeseen consequences. This creates friction and tension between and within groups, affecting individuals' self-understanding. Theorizing the world as an overheated space of living, Eriksen and Schober contribute to developing a particular grammar to speak about intensified contact between contemporary identity formations in various places of the world. In the following chapters, this global grammar is put into practice.

In contrast to the friction which may arise between different 'we-hoods,' MacClancy, in the second chapter, presents three ethnographic examples from Ireland and Spain where transactions between separate identifications are characterized by inclusion (24), networking (26) and groups

learning to live together (28). Instead of turning the exotic into the familiar, MacClancy's ethnographic findings does the opposite as well as questions a critical aspect of anthropological knowledge productions. Essentially, that of the risk that differences are enhanced where few exist and the downplaying of equality because research projects focused on difference are rewarded with funding (32). Drotbohm, in the third chapter, describes complex relations and friction from the view of Cape Verde migrants who intended to make their lives in a nation-state different from their country of origin but who were coercively removed by means of statecraft and have had to reintegrate involuntarily into their communities of origin (42). The chapter clearly shows how processes of identification and reidentification can be challenged in contexts of migration.

The fourth chapter focuses on identify formations in the context of urbanization in Majes, Peru where everyone presents themselves as strangers. Similar to earlier anthropological research findings, Stensrud shows that identities cannot be taken for granted and are negotiated through practices and encounters with others. Eriksen, shifting focus from South America to an urban space in Australia, describes how continuity is perceived as an anomaly because of the constant change and how local identities 'avoiding fixation and keeping their options open' (86). The fifth chapter raises questions concerning the facility which the informants thought about resettlement, given that human identity is so often associated with place (96). Unlike Eriksen, Thorleifsson, in the sixth chapter, studied lived experiences of statecrafted migration to Israel. The chapter's focus on lived experiences can, according to Thorleifsson, offer a more nuanced understanding of identity dilemmas caused or heightened by accelerated change rather than a static group approach (102). It is Thorleifsson's interpretation that one of the informant's nostalgia for the country of origin as well as belonging and inclusion outside of the nation contains a critique of state projects. Kearney, in turn in the seventh chapter, studies the Yanyuwa in Australia who were exposed to genocide as a consequence of European colonialism. Kearney represents the current condition as an overheated effect of cultural contact gone wrong (118), depicting the Yanyuwa strategies to limit the cultural wounding and decelerating effect on Yanyuwa identification. Rather than opposing state programs, Kearney produces knowledge for supporting state projects developed for saving and rescuing Yanyuwa cultural practices.

In the eighth chapter Schober discusses how the Aeta population in Subic Bay, the Philippines has been affected by external forces such as colonialism and globalization including how anthropologists have played a role in the formation of the Aeta identity. Schober problematizes the historical relation between the anthropologist and the local population as well as her own contemporary identification. The ninth chapter takes form in the context of the mining industry in Marampa, Sierra Leone. Pijpers describes how identity politics can become instrumental in struggles for personal benefits at the expense of others. This politics of localness can arise in situations that are marked by economic despair and the hope of a better future, resulting in practices of inclusion and exclusion. The chapter addresses the need for anthropologists to be aware of such situations.

Wimpelmann turns the tables in the tenth chapter by giving an account of conflicts between so called traditional elites and contemporary political leaders in Afghanistan through an exploration of one extended family in Afghanistan and the family member's strategies and reflections over their diminished position as self-evident community leaders (171). The struggles for status in the Afghan society are described in a context of change. Moving on to the eleventh chapter, Banovic brings the mustache to the fore as a symbol of overheating effects in Montenegro's first Pride Parade. Previously associated with masculinity, the mustache is now used in struggles for sexual minority rights. Banovic studies how certain groups of heterosexual males oppose this political use of the mustache and question the new identification with sexual minorities. In the twelfth chapter, Martin discusses an identity and loyalty conflict among some English football supporters in the context of the football club's entry into the global economy. The analysis emanates from a discussion on an internet forum during the first decade of the millennium where football fans express their views on true membership. Martin shows how the contemporary economic transformation of football has paved the way for tensions which have become more visible today. Rounding off, Neumann reflects in the thirteenth chapter over historical monuments as an organization of thoughts and social relations. A few monuments by certain peoples are discussed as visual stories of Self and ways of depicting the Other, and Neumann finds a change in contemporary Western depictions of the Other (238). Hann closes the book in the fourteenth chapter with a reflection on European identities as well as his own identification from a nation-state model and argues that the uneven acceleration of globalization often leads to

an accentuation of national identity. Ending the chapter on a more optimistic note Hann provides an analysis of the Eurovision song contest as a contemporary ritual of inclusion (248).

Summing up, *Identity Destabilised: Living in an Overheated World* sheds light on a reconciliation of the social and natural sciences. ‘Identity’ and ‘living’ constitute classical social scientific concepts while ‘destabilized’ and ‘overheated’ taps into natural scientific terminology. The reconciliation is directed at updating and constructing an anthropology of contemporary identity. However, the outline of figures and tables (vii) as well as the index (252) of places, peoples, unfamiliar words and (un)recognized scientists pose as remains from positivistic studies where researchers sponsored by colonial powers intended to turn the exotic into the familiar to facilitate governance, for instance, by descriptions of fixed and stable identities at places represented as remote and timeless. Each chapter in this volume invites the reader to reflect on parts of the anthropological knowledge production, i.e., the relation between the anthropologist and their informants, the validity of ethnographic material based on fieldwork carried out several years before publishing (which raises questions concerning the informants ways of life at present), the identification of anthropology with former colonial powers and sometimes with post-colonial powers, the application of classical colonial concepts, how anthropological text production may contribute to construction of identifications, and the role of truth in knowledge productions when practices of particular historical peoples are identified and reproduced. Moreover, the volume raises the concerns as to who benefits from the knowledge, the risks of viewing the world as a laboratory from a natural scientific perspective and the effects of reconciling social and natural sciences. Time will tell how this anthropology of contemporary identity may address these issues.

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