



4th International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Emotional Geographies 1-3 July 2013 at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands

Session Summary	
Session Title	Researching Migrants as a Migrant Researcher
Session Abstract	<p>The purpose of this session is to give voice to those researchers who work with migrant communities of their national origin, and to open a critical discussion on identity, sameness, and emotional relations between the researcher and the researched.</p> <p>A vast literature discusses the issues of researchers who are ‘insiders’ or ‘go native’ (Merton 1972, Ohnuki-Tierney 1984). In this discourse, ‘insider’ researchers share a cultural, linguistic, ethnic, national and religious heritage with their participants. The methodological considerations thus circle around the problem of proximity and distance. In the positivist tradition, a researcher ought to maintain analytic distance from the object of study. On the other hand, the feminist scholarship encourages involvement with the subjects and the cultivation of self-reflexivity.</p> <p>This session evaluates critically what it means to do ‘insider research’ if ethnic and national belonging are multi-layered, culturally constructed concepts. The papers in this session challenge the latent understanding that common origins produce ‘common individuals,’ and offer new insights on how migrant researchers emotionally relate to the migrant group they do (not) belong to. Reflecting on distance between migrant researcher and migrant participant of the same origin, the contributors shed light on how migratory pathways and conditions at destination alter the understandings of nationality and ethnicity.</p>
Keywords	Reflexivity, ethnicity, knowledge, identity, methodology

Presentations		
#	Title	Author Name
1	Between methodological nationalism and social constructionism	Magdalena Nowicka Anna Cieslik
2	Re-visiting insiders and outsiders: researching migration through multi-positionalities	Louise Ryan
3	“Talk to her, she is also Chinese’: a reflection on the spatial-temporal reach of the co-ethnic card in migration research	Maggi W. H. Leung
4	Constructing the ‘inside’ in immigrant integration research: migrant researcher as an ‘immigrant supercitizen’	Tatiana Matejskova

Session Convenors and Chair	
Session Convener Name	Affiliation
Anna Cieslik	Max Planck Institute, New Jersey City University
Magdalena Nowicka	Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany
Session Chair name	Affiliation
Magdalena Nowicka	Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany

Session presentation details**Presentation 1**

Title	Between methodological nationalism and social constructionism
Abstract	<p>The growing transnational connectivity of educational institutions results in an increase in the number of students and faculty who study and work abroad (King/Chenicheri 2005, Brown 2009, Fincher/Shaw 2011). A part of these transnational flows is comprised of students from the “global South” travelling to pursue higher education at the European and Northern American Universities. A large number of international students in social sciences decide to return to their home countries to conduct fieldwork. Others, especially recently, have turned to studying migrant groups from their country of origin, residing abroad. As a consequence, more and more studies are done on migrants and migrant communities by researchers who have migrated themselves.</p> <p>This paper reflects on the methodology and epistemology underlying the obvious choice to study one’s own national group in a foreign context. Generally, migrant researchers have easier access to migrant groups by virtue of speaking the native language and possessing some appropriate cultural competencies. Gaining entry to the research group takes them less time, which in times of notoriously short fieldwork time and insufficient funding is a frequently exploited advantage. Beyond this point, however, are there any methodological advantages of being a member of the researched group? How do the perceived differences and similarities between the researched and the researcher affect the creation of knowledge? Does the experience of migration create an emotive connection between the researcher and their researched? The academic literature has recognized challenges related to doing research “at home”, i.e. in places that we originate from or are expected to be familiar with (Gilbert 1994, Mullings 1999). Yet, comparable attention has not been paid to migrant students and scholars who, rather than returning to their country of origin to do fieldwork, chose to focus on migrant groups from their country of origin.</p>
Author name	Author affiliation
Magdalena Nowicka	Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany
Anna Cieslik	Max Planck Institute, New Jersey City University

Presentation 2

Title	Re-visiting insiders and outsiders: researching migration through multi-positionalities
Abstract	<p>Drawing upon my long experience of qualitative migration research, this paper uses the concept of ‘multiple positionalities’, to challenge the fixity of positionality underpinning constructions of ‘insiders’ versus ‘outsiders’ in the research process. While ‘insider’ status is usually associated with shared ethnicity/ nationality, migration studies have recently been urged to go beyond the ethnic lens (Glick Schiller and Caglar, 2009; Amelina and Faist, 2012). I argue that migrants cannot be neatly contained within fixed ‘insider’ ethnic categories, instead it is more illuminating to consider how identities are re-constructed through migration (Ryan, 2010). In this paper I use case studies of three migrant women interviewed in London. In comparing and contrasting my encounters with these migrants, who come originally from Ireland, Poland and India, I critically reflect upon how empathy and rapport were negotiated through positionalities of gender, age, class, parental status and migratory experience as well as nationality. In so doing, I consider the challenges but also the opportunities of researching within as well as across migrant populations and how this may inform an attempt to go beyond the ethnic lens.</p>
Author name	Author affiliation
Louise Ryan	Middlesex University

Presentation 3

Title	‘Talk to her, she is also Chinese’: a reflection on the spatial-temporal reach of the co-ethnic card in migration research
Abstract	<p>In this paper, I reflect on my experiences in studying various modes of (ethnic) Chinese international mobilities and transnationalism since I began my doctoral research in 2000. As a</p>

Hong Kong-born and -raised Han Chinese who began her journey as a migrant at the age of 17, and continued to study, work and live in the USA, Germany, Hong Kong and the Netherlands, I have been equipped with a stack of cards that brings me different kinds of access (or not) to my research participants' life worlds. While 'being Chinese' and 'a migrant' have mostly been my trump cards in studying Chinese migrants, international tourists and mobile academics, they work with and against my other identities during my encounters with research participants. Here, I put forth the notion of 'spatial-temporal reach' to make sense of the complex, dynamic, often unplannable and most importantly deeply situated relationalities between researchers and their research participants. Illustrating with episodes from my journey as a migrant researcher, I shall demonstrate how sensitivity to (socio)spatialities (insiderness-outsiderness based on criteria e.g. place of origin, mobility biography, language and cultural background, gender, occupation etc.) and temporalities (age, generation, stage in life cycle, time (when and how long) and frequency of contact with research participants) help us, as researchers, reflect on our positionalities and experiences (e.g. feeling of affinity, distance, success, confusion, disappointment, frustration) in knowledge co-production with the people whom we study, that in turn, shape our understanding of our own identities and heritage.

Author name	Author affiliation
Maggi W. H. Leung	Utrecht University

Presentation 4

Title	Constructing the 'inside' in immigrant integration research: migrant researcher as an 'immigrant supercitizen'
--------------	---

Abstract

Early, conventional renunciations of 'insider' research as lacking in objectivity have been long rectified, if not conclusively, by careful considerations of potentials of such research by critical scholarship across disciplines. However, as scholarship becomes increasingly attuned to the complex intersectionality of belonging and identity, the question of "What is the 'inside'" becomes even more pertinent. This paper examines how 'the inside' gets constituted in the everyday research settings in shifting and complex ways from what is a rather unconventional perspective. Namely, it does so from a position of an ethnographer – a Slovak national with immigration experience – as a nominal outsider to both, a country of research, Germany, and immigrant subjects of the research, post-Soviet Russian-speaking migrants. Substantively speaking, I investigate discursive and affective tactics through which I was being interpellated and imagined by varied subjects of the study of local immigrant integration projects as privy to their episteme and structures of feeling, as 'their' insider. While migrants for example constructed homologies invoking Slavic cultural affinities as well as socialist and post-socialist experiences, integration practitioners tended to assume a shared institutional interest and understanding of what 'integration' entails. Moreover, through the positioning of the researcher as an exemplary, integrated migrant subject the researcher's body - mine - became a pivotal ground on which many of the contested lines of local micro-politics of immigrant integration congealed. This leads me to suggest that an investigation of a migrant researcher as an imaginary figure of an "immigrant super-citizen" (Honig 2000) in liminal settings of doing research "not-quite-at-home" provides a particularly productive lens through which to consider questions of belonging, citizenship as well as research ethics in integration research.

Author name	Author affiliation
Tatiana Matejskova	Central European University

Short biographical notes of session organisers and presenters

Anna Cieslik	Anna Cieslik is an Assistant Professor at New Jersey City University and a Research Fellow at Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Goettingen, Germany.
Maggi W. H. Leung	Maggi Leung is an Associate Professor, Department of Human Geography and Planning, Utrecht University
Tatiana Matejskova	Tatiana Matejskova is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Central European University, Budapest.
Magdalena Nowicka	Magdalena Nowicka is employed at the Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany. She is the leader of the ERC funded project: Transforming Migration: Transnational Transfer of Multicultural Habitus.