



SESSION ABSTRACT

Tracing the Intimate

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This session addresses methodological questions on studying intimacies. We define the intimate as a set of sensory experiences unfolding invisibly in the individual that is intrinsically social.

Following Jean-Luc Nancy (1996), who considers intimate closely linked to proximate, we want to explore the interdependency and synergy of the individual intimate body with others. Proximate refers to closeness, to a limited distance – physical, emotional, spatial, and temporal – between bodies and experiences. We understand the intimate to only emerge in the presence of others and/or in confrontation with them, and argue that rather than a solipsist concept, intimacy starts at the edge of community, when individuals face each other. Thus, intimacy has to be conceptualized and analysed in its social and cultural embeddedness, in its relatedness to others. Moreover, shaped by social habits and encounters, intimate experiences have the potential to be transformative phenomena, extending or shrinking the flexible 'limits' of what we consider to demarcate as 'the intimate'.

In this session, we are interested to discuss different experiences of the intimate – from interpersonal relationships, to intimacy through touch, or situations that seem to violate the intimate, when 'the other' (things, people, experiences) gets too close, too proximate. We are also keen to explore methodological questions: how do we access intimate experience of others? Are words capable to give account of expression of feelings, pain or hope? Or does tracing intimacy call for other approaches? What kind of tools/methods can we develop to reach the core of intimate issues experienced by the people we encounter? And then, how do we translate these experiences into written texts?

We are looking for innovative/creative contributions responding to these questions.

SESSION SCHEDULE

Thursday, September 20, 2018 | Slot 5 | Room 2

Valeria Lembo: *"The red of the flesh": An experiential workshop on the intimacy of voice.*

Judith Ehler: *Body Maps - Visualizing the Intimate in Urban Vietnam*

Gabriele Weichart (paper): *From Intimacy to Privacy in Contemporary Indonesia*

SESSION PAPERS

"The red of the flesh": An experiential workshop on the intimacy of voice.

Lembo, Valeria (University of Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, GBR)

The expression 'the red of the flesh' refers to a quote from the novelist Italo Calvino, that the philosopher Adriana Cavarero uses in the book 'For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression' (2005). In this book, Cavarero elaborates a 'politics of voice' wherein the Western idea of a platonic disembodied logos is challenged in favour of an 'ontology of uniqueness', aiming to address the specificity and radical otherness of each individual. According to Cavarero, the Western philosophical tradition has elided the singularity of the vocalic itself in favour of speech that strongly privileges meaning and the semantic. She therefore wishes to recover the force of the vocalic, the acoustic, the resonant and auditory quality of voice.

According to the feminist philosopher, voice is essentially relational and it 'precedes, generates, and exceeds verbal communication' (Ibid.). It is the expression of one unique, embodied individual to another and, as Calvino wrote, it 'involves throat and saliva, that comes out of a red mouth and arises from the red of the flesh [...] and it is different from all other voices' (Ibid.). As voice originates from 'the red of the flesh', it is often associated to notions of 'soul' and manifestations of the intimate. With this workshop, we will explore together the uniqueness of our voices, through simple tasks that I have learnt from different singing, movement and theatre techniques and have adapted to my practice of anthropology. The significance of these tasks, in fact, is not linked to their potential for performative outcomes. Instead, I invite the participants to conceive the tasks as methodological tools to reflect on the following questions: How an education of attention to voice and to its vibrational quality can change the way in which we carry on research within social sciences and, more generally, how this education of attention can generate different forms of sociality and experiences of intimacy?

Body Maps - Visualizing the Intimate in Urban Vietnam

Ehlert, Judith (Institut für Internationale Entwicklung, Wien, AUT)

This presentation prominently addresses epistemological and methodological questions.

When interviewing – a strongly minds-centred method to reflect on individual experiences and perceptions verbally – fails to capture the routinized, the tacit, and the affective, how far do we get with the visual technique of body mapping? Body mapping originates in therapeutic and activists circles but is rarely applied in social science research. It denotes the process in which research participants create individual body maps by using drawings, painting, art-based techniques and symbols to visually represent and reflect on their lives, their bodily being and the process of societal objectification of 'normal' and 'abject' bodies in the world they live in.

By understanding the body as a lived space between the Self and the world and as agent and object of social interaction at the same time, the paper discusses the potential and limits of body mapping as inquiry into the intimate. To do so, it draws on the experience of a workshop conducted with female participants in Ho Chi Minh City/Vietnam in 2017, in which the women created body maps that centred on emotions, the bodily dimensions of caring practices and the affective measuring of their bodies as female in everyday life and socio-cultural contexts.

From Intimacy to Privacy in Contemporary Indonesia

Weichart, Gabriele (University of Vienna, Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Wien, AUT)

Perceptions and practices of intimacy and intimate relations are situational, contextual and culture-bound. As such, they are subject to adaptation and change, but they can also be driving forces for change in other contexts. In my paper, I will discuss perceptions and practices of intimacy in the context of modernisation, housing, and the division of space on the island of Nias in western Sumatra, Indonesia. In the past few decades, the "traditional" architecture of private houses on Nias has increasingly been modified or replaced by "modern" architectures. This has had drastic effects on spatial and social arrangements for cooking, eating, sleeping and socialising in and around the houses. While in the past, the interior of a house had only a couple of relatively large multi-functional rooms that were used by most household members and guests, the recent trend for larger numbers of smaller rooms has led to their specialised use and social exclusivity in their function and usage. This raises the question of whether "modern" architecture has led to the re-interpretation and re-evaluation of social habits and intimate situations, or, conversely, whether new forms and degrees of intimacy have been a strong factor in architectural change.