

## ALONG AND OUT OF THE WAY: PLACE-MAKING AMIDST MIGRANT TRAJECTORIES

Workshop, 1-2 July 2021

### Call for Papers

**Organizers**    **Heike Drotbohm**

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**Keynote**        **Wendy A. Vogt**

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**Confirmed speakers and discussants:** Noelle Brigden (Marquette University), Heath Cabot (University of Pittsburgh), Nauja Kleist (Danish Institute for International Studies), Annika Lems (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology), Ester Serra Mingot (University of Guadalajara / Bonn International Center for Conversion), Antje Mißbach (University of Bielefeld), Georgina Ramsay (University of Delaware), Joris Schapendonk (Radboud University Nijmegen)

People considered to be ‘in transit’ do not traverse this often-extended transit space in a void. They encounter, dwell in, and engage with particular places along the routes of their journey towards a desired destination. In the literature on borders, migration and humanitarianism, many of these places remain invisible, especially if they are not located in major cities or near a heavily monitored nation-state border. They may be constructed as ‘remote’, ‘peripheral’, or ‘marginal’ from a scholarly and policy point of view. However, we wish to emphasize and interrogate the centrality of these places as key sites in the shaping of migrant trajectories, from the surveillance and care they experience, to the re-creation of social ties and the struggles over communication, documentation, and onward travel. Moreover, the histories of these places, their (geo)political positioning, ethnic and religious diversity, socioeconomic dynamics and local actors – who may be mobile themselves – interact with passing and dwelling migrants. But how, exactly, do these interactions, these entanglements of what moves and what stays, shape these places?

For this workshop, we ask anthropologists, geographers and migration scholars to think about migrant involvement in place-making in two ways: through re-considering the open and dynamic character of places; and through re-conceptualizing the places and place-making practices that often remain invisible in migration research. Our first point follows up on the recognition of a dialectics of mobility and immobility, displacement and emplacement, and how this recognition has enabled a re-appreciation of place in thinking about migration (Bjarnesen & Vigh 2016; Lems & Tošić, 2019) and migrants’ cross-border connections (Drotbohm & Winters, *forthcoming*). Not place as a static, bounded entity, but as a specific articulation of flows, relationships, and exchange: place constituted by movement and intersection (Massey, 1994). People on the move are always *in place* through their bodies, and by being in place, they co-constitute these places (Casey, 1996). Throughout their journeys, even those displaced become emplaced through sensing, navigating, claiming and ultimately, transforming the places that make up their journey.

Our second point concerns the importance of taking into account the multiplicity of places that are part of winding migrant trajectories between departure and (un)desired destination settings (Schapendonk & Steel, 2014). Although there have been critical explorations of migrants co-creating (sanctuary) cities (e.g., Bauder & Gonzalez, 2018; Çağlar & Glick Schiller, 2018), and migrant presence transforming the fringes of the so-called Global North (e.g., Tazzioli, 2018), there has been considerably less attention for the ways in which migrants still ‘in transit’ engage in place-making ‘along the way’. As if the supposed temporality of their stay and the supposed faraway-ness of their location, away from the assumed hegemonic centers, would inhibit such place-making. The literature on the local particularities of transit states and border externalization (Mißbach & Phillips, 2020) has, through notions such as arterial borders (Vogt, 2017), drawn attention to the ways in which the (unintended) manifestations, ruptures and openings of migration regimes take place in an increasing diversity of places located away from the territorial borders of the Global North. Still beyond the priority areas for border security and its accompanying humanitarian interventions, there are other places that interact with migrant trajectories. Places that may be mentioned as ‘footholds’ or ‘anchorage’ in the migration journey literature (Schapendonk et al, 2020), but require further exploration. Examples include coastal villages that alternate livelihoods between fishing and transporting people; indigenous or separatist communities that carve out a living in marginalized territories by catering to migrants passing through; (sub)urban neighborhoods that function as, yet cannot be reduced to, gateways to elsewhere; or desert towns that have so far escaped attention of the international policy and scholarly community. The ways in which the (temporary) inhabitants themselves position and engage with such ‘out-of-the-way’ places (Tsing, 1994) forces us to recognize the active and open-ended implication of ‘the local’ in the constitution of ‘the global’.

By thinking through the importance and production of ‘in-between’ places (Crawley & Jones, 2020) we aim to contribute to the understanding of place amidst mobility, transit and displacement. What does migrant involvement in ‘along-the-way’ and ‘out-of-the-way’ place-making tell us about the spatiality and temporality of place-making? About its tensions with the people, ideas and things that move or disappear and those that (inadvertently) remain? About the differences and disturbances between the traces of those that are on their way ‘elsewhere’ or rather ‘home’? We also consider how cultivating a ‘peripheral vision’ (Nash, 2001), i.e. looking at actors and places that are not conventionally considered central to transit and trajectory research, might open up new avenues for understanding emplaced migrant trajectories. Next to border control agents, police officers, civil servants, humanitarian workers, volunteers, activists, missionaries, smugglers, traders and other entrepreneurs, we may think of an additional diversity of emplaced actors such as ‘earlier arrivals’ or diasporic communities, and residents of neighborhoods and towns considered to be peripheral, and explore how together they *join* migrants, of different flows and directions, in experiencing, interpreting and making these places. We expect this place-making to take place simultaneously, but not necessarily in sync. With these strategies, we hope to contribute to the de-migranticization of migration scholarship (Dahinden, 2016) and to a further upsetting of the hierarchy of places and knowledges that reinforce Global South/North dichotomies (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020).

We invite papers that look into the ways in which ‘along-the-way’ and ‘out-of-the-way’ places figure in migrant trajectories, and how these places transform and get transformed through migrants’ embedded practices of place-making during their journey, which may also end unintentionally. We envision the following thematic lines:

**1. Meaning-making *en route*:** how do places in migrant journeys acquire political and symbolic meaning for migrants and a diversity of other emplaced actors? How do these actors identify and represent these places, and their imagined global positioning, in their everyday interactions? Which kinds of social practices are employed for ascribing meaning to these places? To what extent are these places understood as ‘stuck local places’ (Tsing, 1994) or resisted as places of ‘being stuck’ (Lems & Tošić, 2019)?

**2. Socialities and sociabilities** (Çağlar & Glick Schiller, 2018): what kind of relations are formed and maintained between migrants, and between migrants and the diversity of actors they encounter in these places, who eventually move with different speed and into different directions? How are identities and socialities understood and sociabilities created in moments of brief contact, in pragmatic forms of mutual support and competition, or rather in more profound encounters and sustainable relations that continue after leaving a certain place? How are differences or commonalities in privilege, gender, nationality, ethnicity, migrant status and religious group perceived, negotiated and manipulated in everyday interactions? What role do illegalization and racialization play in the (im)possibilities of carving out space for dwelling and living?

**3. Temporality and translocality:** how do migrants and other emplaced actors experience the different kinds of temporalities involved while passing through and dwelling in so-called transit places (Ramsay, 2017, Tazzioli, 2018)? Places that may simultaneously be or become ‘home’? How do different kinds of speed, urgencies or even emergencies for some, and routines and slowness for others affect the (trans)local dynamics of these places? How do the (im)mobilities and multiple directionalities of different actors re-position and connect these places vis-à-vis other places within networks of circulation?

*It can be assumed that the Covid-19 pandemic has significant consequences for place-making amidst migrant trajectories in all world regions. Papers addressing this aspect are more than welcome.*

If you are interested to join our workshop, we look forward to receiving your contribution! Please send an abstract of 200-300 words and a short bio to [winters@iss.nl](mailto:winters@iss.nl) before the 31<sup>st</sup> of January.

**Important dates:** workshop: **1-2 July**  
abstract submissions: 31 January  
decision on abstracts: 14 February  
full paper submissions: 13 June

The ongoing pandemic has us consider both in-person and on-line workshop options. In case of an on-site meeting at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, all costs of accommodation and transport would be covered. But even in case of a virtual meeting, we envision a truly interactive workshop, with a small group of dedicated scholars and an engaging program that combines in-depth discussion, relaxing moments, and a firm commitment to publish the results of our conversation.

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