Conference of the European Association of Social Anthropologists, Stockholm August 14-17

Panel “Revisiting Railroads: Sociality, Mobility and Infrastructure”

**Short description:** The panel invites presentations focusing on railroads as (post)modern infrastructure projects engendering new forms of (im)mobility, remoteness, (dis)connection, social engineering and interactions, involving human and non-human agents.

**Chair names:**
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**Abstract**

Mobility and the transport of goods have rested on transportation infrastructures since times immemorial. While railway technology characterized the industrial transformations and nation-building processes in Europe during the 19th century, renewed interest in railways stems from technological advances of the 21st century, the production of new geopolitical and resource frontiers, and the increased density and sprawl of urban centers. Railways, however, produce particular configurations of remoteness and (dis)connection, linking certain places and disavowing others. Their promise of progress and modernity entangled in complex local histories is often haunted by the specter of failure. In the growing body of anthropological literature on transportation infrastructures, railroads have largely fallen out of the main research focus, particularly in the recent studies with their methodological shift from a developmentalist paradigm to one focused on material culture. This panel aims to extend the scope of topics connected to railroads as well as to revisit the approaches to the studies of (transportation) infrastructures existing in anthropology and social sciences. We invite presentations focusing on railroads as (post)modern projects engendering new forms of (im)mobility, remoteness and (dis)connection, social engineering and interactions, involving human and non-human agents. How have railroads been used to engineer particular configurations of remoteness and dis/connection? How do particular affordances of railroad infrastructure, in specific ethnographic locales, shape (im)mobility? What are some of the entanglements and encounters with human and nonhuman others engendered or enabled by railroads? What is the affective and material life of railroads in contexts of modernization and ruination?

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