



WEDNESDAY SEMINAR

12.10.2022, 17:00 Uhr, HS-C
IKSA, NIG, Universitätsstraße 7, 1010 Wien, 4. Stock

Johanna Markkula (Central European University) What is a Ship?



Johanna Markkula is Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at Central European University. Her research is an anthropological study of maritime labor and

of the sea as a social, political, and legal space, and she has carried out long-term ethnographic research onboard cargo ships of various types. In her work, she explores changing labor politics and practices within the shipping industry and their effects on the everyday life of maritime workers. She is currently writing her monograph, "Moving Worlds: Maritime Work and Life on the Social Ocean."

kommende Termine

16.11.2022 Lana Salman
tba

23.11.2022 Gwen Burnyeat
tba

Ships have featured prolifically in social theory, yet have rarely been objects of social scientific inquiry. In this paper, I raise a deceptively simple question that I have been thinking about for a long time. This question can—at its most basic—be phrased as “What is a ship”? Drawing on over a decade of anthropological research on and around ships, I explore this question in two distinct but related ways. First, I examine how ships are empirical real-world objects, whose ontological presences in the world are entangled with multiple and complex economic, social and cultural processes and practices. Second, I analyze how “the ship” can offer an epistemological tool and theoretical device for helping us understand some of these same processes. I build my analysis around the life story of one group of ships that I have interacted with throughout their entire lifecycle. By telling the life story of these ships, I simultaneously tell a larger story of continuity and change in the maritime industry, including shifts in practices of maritime labor, as well as the changing materialities of ships and seafarers’ physical and affectionate engagement with their vessels.
