

Workshop Program Point Sud 2019

Local Narratives and Debates on the Experience of Migration and Return Spoken and Unspoken

Récits et débats locaux sur la migration Dits et non-dits de l'expérience du départ et du retour

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Convenors

Pr Mamadou Diawara, Anthropologie, Université Goethe Francfort/Main, Allemagne
Dr Aïssatou Mbodj-Pouye, Anthropologie, CNRS-IMAF, Paris & Point Sud-Bamako, France/Mali
Dr Kelly Poulet, Sociologie, Université de Picardie Jules Verne d'Amiens, France
Dr Fodié Tandjigora, Sociologie, Université de Bamako, Mali

In collaboration with the Goethe University Frankfurt

Abstract

Migration is the topic of constant reflection and debate among people in social settings marked by mobility. We invite contributors to investigate the *local* emergence and circulation of discourses, and to pay attention to their conditions of enunciation as much as to their reception. How can a migrant talk about his/her experience, in which context and with which narrative tropes? What can be said about one's experience and about others'? Who circulate such discourses, and how far are they trusted or contested?

To answer these questions, it is necessary to confront discourses with other dimensions: narratives are built upon images and contribute to create new ones; the effects of migration are inscribed in bodies and families, buildings and landscapes; the experience of migration is staged through photographs and circulated on social networks. Beyond words and images, we suggest an investigation of daily acts supporting discourses, in rural and urban settings.

This approach will provide nuances to the body of scholarship on migration imaginaries. Contributions need to pinpoint nodal terms and recurring phrases these discourses, that explore how they are politically and morally framed, and that delineate the social individual and collective contexts of their production.

The ambition is to illuminate the social relations between people grappling with the spoken and unspoken dimension of migration. In this respect, intergenerational dynamics seem crucial. Thus an often described situation is the case of return migrants exhibiting riches and telling stories of success, or at least leaving aside the reality of migration. This trope of a "lie of the elders" raises, in turn a series of questions: Are listeners so naïve? When migration is practiced over generations, does this discourse repeat itself or do early listeners manage to untie it? Under which social and moral circumstances is it possible? How do private and public discourses, general statements and personal stories, intersect? Are difficulties in migration pictured in more and more realistic ways? How much do temporalities of migration affect these discourses? Finally, what can we learn on changing local views on success and failures through such a study?

On this last point, existing studies tend to focus on migrant men and on masculine values associated with mobility. We will pay a specific attention to women's narratives, to their own notions of such male values as courage, dignity and shame, and to the notions they put forward.

Taboos, silences and the unspoken need also to be addressed, and the methodological challenges of such a task will also be addressed. Likewise, the epistemological issue of the right scale of the investigation, in order to espouse social settings, or milieus in which such "local" discourses emerge and circulate, will constitute a core issue of our exchanges.