



FRAMING STRUGGLES

Critical Approaches to Anthropology and Sociology

Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Central European University (Budapest)

Date: June 13-14, 2008.

Location: Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Central European University (Nádor utca 9. Budapest, H-1051).

Each applicant should submit an abstract (max. 250 words) and introduction of their academic affiliation/research topic/general research interests (max. 100 words). The deadline for submissions of the abstracts is February 1, 2008. Please send to: framing.struggles@gmail.com.

Contact person: Mariya Ivancheva.

As each panel will have a discussant – an invited scholars from the relevant field – the approved candidates will have to submit a full-length paper by the 1st of May 2008. This is a strict deadline. Conference papers will be made available to all participants in advance.

The organizers will be able to provide a partial reimbursement of travel expenses and accommodation at a hostel in central Budapest to a number of panel participants. A possibility exists that for some participants to be hosted by students from the department; please indicate if you are interested in such an option.

Participants are also requested to state whether they would need a visa for Hungary so that organizers can assist in the visa process.

Until recently, most social research has focused on political and economic struggles to the detriment of understanding cultural struggles. But an undue focus on culture tends to ignore the contested nature of economic and political interactions that provide the structural underpinnings to cultural form and content. Anthropology can contribute equally to understanding frames of struggles, and framing the relevant problematic that needs to be exposed to public scrutiny, while sociology is able to situate and analyse these struggles in a broader perspective through its focus on macro-micro interactions.

The main purpose of this trans-disciplinary conference is to investigate how cultural, political, and economic struggles are framed, both by actors and scholars. By framing struggles we mean the ways in which participants themselves construe and delimit the meanings of their actions in an era of accelerating global changes, as well as the manner in which scholars and researchers select their own frames of reference to make sense of these social upheavals. Regarding social phenomena in an integrated and multifaceted perspective, the conference will reflect on and mediate between broad, distant, and sometimes seemingly incompatible research fields and approaches e.g., religious studies, studies of popular culture, as well as social movement studies and the scholarship on migration and informal economy.

Concentrating on a variety of issues concerning struggles, we seek to encourage critical ethnographic/sociological research enriched by theoretical grounding. The conference will tackle the issue of framing struggles from four main perspectives in the following panels (also see the more detailed descriptions further down):

Panel I: Borders, Economy, Conflict

Panel II: Approaching Religious Modernities: Constructions, Contestations, Mobilizations

Panel III: Performing and Representing Culture, Ethnicity and Gender

Panel IV: Activism in (Post-)Socialist Contexts

Description of Panels

Panel I: Borders, Economy, Conflict

This panel seeks to scrutinize from a critical and trans-disciplinary perspective the features of borders: physical and symbolic, fixed and transgressed. How do they separate different categories of actors, while framing and enforcing their social roles and identities? However economic, political, and cultural borders need not necessarily imply »bounded-ness«. What we aim to do is to pinpoint the fluidity, volatility, and mutability of the concept of »borders«. Furthermore, we seek to discuss how different sorts of conflicts reinforce, but also displace, borders in various everyday contexts and the manner in which the micro-macro actors involved negate and define them through their practices, interactions, and collisions.

The panel invites papers and visual materials that actively engage with issues of borders, border-crossing economies, and conflict. Contributions should include, but are not necessarily restricted to questions such as:

1. Border sovereignty: empire(s) and nation-state(s).
2. Border trouble: conflict and trade.
3. Micro actors vs. macro actors: border economies in a regional and global context.
4. Trafficking in humans, arms, and drugs.
5. Transnational (under)classes, informal economies, and host states.
6. International refugees and no-man's land(s).

7. Economy without borders: transnational corporations, international organizations, and global capital.

Panel II: Approaching Religious Modernities: Constructions, Contestations, Mobilizations

The persistence of religion within processes of social change all around the globe has called into question the secularization paradigm. Social scientists have been forced to reassess the theoretical and methodological categories for understanding the shifting place of religion in various societies and to be more open to the notion of multiple religious modernities. We are thus in a fruitful reflexive moment which could open new perspectives on religious phenomena entangled in social processes.

Our panel revolves around a number of issues which are still waiting for adequate theoretical and methodological approaches:

1. The shifting location of religion within the public sphere in various social contexts.
2. Constructing and contesting boundaries between the ›religious‹ and the ›secular‹.
3. Agents active in the processes of construction/contestation (state, church, civil or religious associations, academia, new religious movements etc.).
4. The framing of contemporary religious mobilization, both within world religions (Islam, Christianity, Hinduism etc.) and indigenous religions.
5. The emergence of new religious movements (e.g., global religions such as Pentecostalism).
6. The impact of these movements on nation-states and traditional (historical) religions.
7. Socio-cultural and political strategies employed by religious actors in new contexts dominated by global media technologies and global horizons of consumption.

Panel III: Performing and Representing Culture, Ethnicity and Gender

Performance has become a catch-all term to refer to the practices of agents as opposed to a prior focus on structure. In the new era of all kinds of promotion initiatives on behalf of agency, the belief that agents can resist or contest forces of domination has become widely celebrated. But this capacity can be called into question and is itself problematic. Indeed, such performances cannot be properly understood without taking into consideration their often mediated or represented character. Therefore, it is worth looking at the interplay between performances and representation, especially when these performances become embedded in global networks of production and circulation.

The main themes of this panel would include the following issues:

1. Markets and media as a facilitators of cultural exchanges.
2. Struggles over cultural recognition through the staging of performances (arts, sports, tourist practices, etc.).
3. Performing gender/race/ethnicity.
4. The transformation of performances through processes of interaction and mediation.
5. Political institutions and the representation of cultural practices.
6. Ethnographic writing as representation and the framing paradigm: the responsibility of ethnographers.

Panel IV: Activism in (Post-)Socialist Contexts

In societies where leftist themes of class, economic redistribution, and social justice have formed or still form the regime's dominant discourse, social movements trying to make demands related to such themes face complex problems, e.g. of avoiding cooptation or negative associations. This phenomenon can be seen in artern social democracies, but it is equally present under social democratic regimes in the global south that have taken a »Third Way«. And these complexities are all the more present among activist groups in societies with a history of repressive »really exiting« socialism, such as in Eastern Europe. Our panel calls for papers that explore the complexity of political contention in such



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historically determined political contexts. These could address topics such as:

1. Framing struggles of oppositional groups under repressive socialist regimes.
2. Activists strategies in a context dominated by social-democratic rhetoric.
3. (Dis)Continuities in performances and narratives of present and past dissent.
4. Strategies for alignment with trans-national activist campaigns.
5. Relevance of class-based claim making: past and presence.
6. Framing of collective and individual memory in processes of political transition.
7. Left- or right-wing protest: (un)civil society in post-socialist contexts.

