



Exploratory Workshop Scheme

Scientific Review Group for the Social Sciences

ESF Exploratory Workshop on

A home for Science: the Anthropology of Tropical and Arctic Field-Stations

Finse (Norway), November 27th-29th 2013

Convened by:
Paul Wenzel Geissler ^①, Ann Kelly ^②
and John Manton ^③

^① Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo, NO

^② Department of Sociology, Philosophy and Anthropology, University of Exeter, GB

^③ Dept. of Archeology and Anthropology, Cambridge University, UK

Co-sponsored by

Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Oslo
Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo

Convenor:

Paul Wenzel GEISSLER
p.w.geissler@sai.uio.no

Department of Social Anthropology,
University of Oslo
Moltke Moes vei 31
Eilert Sundts hus
0851 Oslo

Norway

Co-convenors:

Ann KELLY

A.H.Kelly@exeter.ac.uk

Department of Sociology, Philosophy and
Anthropology
University of Exeter
Amory Building
Rennes Drive
Exeter
EX4 4RJ
United Kingdom

John MANTON

jm918@cam.ac.uk

Department of Archaeology and
Anthropology, Division of Social
Anthropology
Free School Lane
Cambridge
CB2 3RF
United Kingdom

Objectives of the Workshop:

The arctic and the tropics represent radically distinct spaces of nature, conquest and imagination. As objects of knowledge, these antithetical landscapes are encountered through the scientific enclosure of the research field-station, a zone that yokes laboratory to outpost, exploration to domesticity, inquiry to survival. Field-stations provide sites of reconnaissance, appropriation, adventure, and shelter, and animate far-flung circuits of scientific travel: they anchor ecological imaginaries and global futures in concrete locations and material forms. Field-stations are extra-territorial, often belonging to academic institutions in historical centers of exploration and conquest, science and empire. At the same time, they are literally in the field - a source of danger and hardship, desires, pleasures and freedoms.

The field-station's geography intertwines domestic life and scientific work. This hybrid landscape provides a frontier of scientific and technological possibility, and a space of security and comfort – a home away from home. While at once physically enmeshed in, and socially entangled, with the field, the station remains institutionally linked to the metropolis; its relations to local users of the land then replicate historically sedimented asymmetries of epistemological, cultural, and political power. The peculiar siting of the field-station offers an exceptional vantage to explore emergent themes in the social studies of science, anthropology and history, geography and archaeology.

This workshop will assemble scholars from anthropology, history and related humanities and social sciences, and with diverse regional expertise, to discuss papers addressing the ensemble of human activities relating to the operation of scientific field

stations in non-temperate geographical areas. The further aim is to establish a dialogue across regions and disciplines, and to develop proposals and publications on the comparative potential of arctic and tropics, through the finely-grained lens of the field-station.

1. The House of Science – Labs, Fields and Space

The importance of place in scientific practice has received considerable historical and anthropological attention. Critical to these discussions has been the distinction between the laboratory, designed to strip experimental objects of their quotidian associations, and the field, where particularities of time and place enhance the representative character of findings. Field stations link these distinct modes of research: they are a controlled, yet uncontained, setting from which scientists can both access and anchor reality. As the home for visiting scientists, they are also enmeshed in the mundane practices of daily life, and bear the traces, deposits, and erasures of successive comings and goings. Fusing the generic space of the lab and the particular domestic space of the house, the aesthetics and layout of the station reflect diverse ideological commitments and pragmatic adaptations – to empirical efficiency and ethical transparency, as well as to privacy and family life.

2. Domestication – Culturing Arctic/Tropic Natures

Exploring how tropics and arctic are lived and articulated, within field stations, on an ongoing and day-to-day basis, the overarching aim of this workshop is to extend appreciation of our evolving relationship to our environment. Recent work in Animal Studies brings together insights from cultural and biological anthropology, archeology, social ecology and human geography around the theme of ‘domestication’. The field station represents two interlinked modalities of this process. First, scientific practices transform ‘nature’ – glaciers, mosquitoes, reindeers, solar storms, parasites, diseased bodies – into ‘epistemic objects’ and, variously into moral forces and economic resources. While this transformation entails a certain degree of mastery – over ‘dark’, ‘unspoiled’ or simply unwieldy wilderness – the social and material practices of data collection and experimentation occasion new and unpredictable forms of contact between humans and their surroundings. Second, the ways in which the field-station situates these natural-cultural encounters within practices of everyday living speaks to a mode of domestication premised not on control but, rather, on cohabitation. A *domus* of a very particular kind, field stations generate zones of shared living between humans and landscape, scientists and their local collaborators.

3. A Home away from home: The Emotional Life of Research

While the intersubjectivity of fieldwork is a key anthropological preoccupation, the affective dimensions of natural sciences have remained largely unexplored. The embodiment of research in tropical or arctic environments elicits specific affective temporalities: the confrontation with extreme climates girds the pursuit of knowledge with suffering and valor, sacrifice and survival. In the field-station, the relationship between scientist and science exceeds one of disinterested reason. Research may be motivated by a spirit of adventure, a longing for escape or a sense of national duty; the course of life in the field-station is shot through with hope and despair, camaraderie and loneliness, homeliness and homesickness. As scientists come and go, the traces of their presence in the social and physical landscape both enables and constrains where

and how research will be conducted in the future. Extending insights from the anthropology of emotions and approaches to memory, we seek to elaborate the affective basis of scientific work and lives.

4. Hosts in the Homeland: Science, Sovereignty, and Value

Conducted within local communities, field-station research involves distinct forms of benefit—one associated with the long term epistemological and economic gains of science and the other attendant to the quotidian conduct of research such as, employment, training, health-care services, road maintenance, and electrical infrastructure. While the value of knowledge may be framed as a common good, it is mediated by everyday practices of reciprocity and material exchange – the delicate negotiations around the use of land and labour; the mutual hospitality extended between visiting scientists and native inhabitants; and the temporal and spatial unfolding of these relations. The reciprocal obligations of scientists and their native hosts are complicated by the territorial implications of their work: from the scramble for Africa to Russia's and North America's expanding northeastern frontier, the pursuit of science has been intrinsically linked to imperial conquest. The field station presses us to rethink the fragile balance between domination and dependence achieved by the field station and the complex questions of belonging, alterity, and sovereignty, which tropical and arctic research entails.

5. A Small Planet: Locating Global Predicaments

In addition to representations of particular landscapes, field stations also produce global imaginaries. Research in the tropics and the arctic is often conducted for the sake of mankind, exploring common origins through archaeology, paleontology or genomics, confronting shared environmental, medical, and agricultural challenges. The work of the field station is tasked with discerning global futures in regard to pandemics, climate change, and food shortage. Whether oriented by humanitarianism or environmentalism, these extreme outposts are central to our imagination of 'the global'. Taking inspiration from a burgeoning interest across anthropology in phenomena that defy a focus on 'local' communities tied to a particular place, we will seek to understand the field station as a mechanism in the creation of 'global assemblages'. The engagement of individual scientists, in particular sites, with objects of knowledge that encompass the globe invite reflection about science and its scales, the constitution of publics and the geography of responsibility.

Workshop Agenda

All workshop participants – except for discussants – will submit a proto-paper of 3 to 5000 words (i.e. approximately half the length of a conventional full paper manuscript) at the very latest by November 1. Only those participants who will have submitted these texts will present at the workshop. The collected proto-papers will be circulated to all participants one week before the meeting.

At the workshop, participants who have previously submitted a text will be given 20-30 minutes to present the text, followed by 30 minutes of joint discussion.

As several participants will collaborate on joint papers, the total number of presented papers will be approximately 15 to 18. This will give appropriate time for discussion about the papers, as well as about the wider themes addressed by the conference.

Since one important dimensions of the workshop theme is the aesthetic nature of scientific work and the affective dimensions of scientific research stations, we have invited several artists and an architect to present. These presentations will be scheduled in separate sessions on the four evenings that the workshop participants will spend together during the workshop..

Report publication and dissemination

The collected proto-abstracts of the workshop will be published on the conveners' websites, together with an introductory text to the subject matter, which the conveners will assemble after the workshop.

In terms of publications, the primary output of the workshop will be a special issue in a leading journal in the field. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the workshop constituency, we have approached the journal 'Social Studies of Science' - the leading journal in the field of science and technology studies, history of science and social studies of science, and received a positive response, inviting us to submit a selection of proto-abstracts and short illustrated texts by the artists with an overall introduction immediately after the conference. Due to the peer-reviewed nature of journal special issues, one would expect 8 papers to be accepted for publication. These will be complemented by a substantial introductory chapter written by the conveners.

Should the first journal of choice decided against this special issue, other journals will be approached, as well as a suitable book publisher for an edited volume (Duke, Berghahn), which would be a possible alternative to a special issue, giving room for all strong papers.

In addition to publications, the workshop is hoped to foster collaborations between scholars studying (ant)arctic and tropical research stations - combining different disciplinary perspectives and bringing together diverse institutions – which will lead to subsequent grant applications to be submitted during 2014.

PROGRAMME

Tuesday 26th November 2013

- From mid-day *Arrival of participants to Finse train station, transfer to UiO station*
- 18.00 *Drinks followed by supper at the research station*
- 20.00-21.00 Evening Art Session: Sabine Popp: Scenic Spaces of Isolation**

Wednesday 27th November 2013 – THE STATION AS HOME

8.30-10.30 Opening Session

- 08.30-9.00 **Welcome and introduction of participants**
- 09.00-09.30 **Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF)**
Lise Kjølsvold (University of Oslo)
- 09.30-10.00 **Opening by Convenors: Scientific domus – the station as home**
Wenzel Geissler (University of Oslo)
Ann Kelly (University of Exeter, UK)
John Manton (University of Cambridge, UK)
Gro Ween (Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo)
- 10.00-10.30 **Tea**

10.30-12.00 Morning Session: Arctic/Tropic/Research/Station

Anne-Marie Moulin: From the Arctic to the Tropics: Sites of Research on Leprosy (Bergen 1879; Bamako 1935)

Peter Redfield: The Edge of Infrastructure

- 12.00-15.00 **Lunch & Leisure**

15.00-18.00 Afternoon Session: Home and/as field

Goetz Hoeppe: A ship on a mountain: Place, temporality and the training of visiting astronomers at an observatory in Chile

Geissler & Kelly: Amani (Peace). On Heimweh in tropical science

Tea.

Silvia Tomaskova: At home in exile: longing in places of political dreams

**Noemi Tousignant & Ashley Ouvrier : How to live in a 'permanent' observatory:
Homes, Fieldwork and Family Ties in Niakhar**

18.30 **Dinner**

19.30-21.30 Evening Art Session:

**Mariele Neudecker: A Contemporary Sublime: Re-framing Perceptions of
Landscape**

**Deborah Robinson: Making Parasite: an installation artwork in response to
malaria**

Thursday 28th November 2013 – FIELD, LANDSCAPE, APPARATUS AND WORK

**09.00-12.00 Morning Session: Outside the station – field, boundary, exposure,
climate**

**Guillaume Lachenal: Measuring the Savannah. The political ecology of the ecology
research station of Lamto, Ivory Coast**

**Remy Rouillard: Making the Body at Home: Russian Oil Workers' Physiological and
Psychological Adaptation to the Arctic**

Tea.

**Vanessa Heggie: Higher and Colder - the success and failure of boundaries in high
altitude and Antarctic research stations. Tea will be served during the session**

**Rene Gerrets: From tool of empire to coveted traditional medicine: domesticating
cinchona in NE Tanzania**

12.00-15.00 **Lunch & Leisure**

15.00-18.00 Afternoon Session: Station, edifice and apparatus

**John Manton: Domestic life at the Yam Barn: furnishing an oasis for science in
Nigeria**

Luca Rendina: Polar Research Stations: Meeting the challenge of isolated living

Tea.

Martin Skrydstrup: Archimedean assemblages. On the architecture of glaciology at the end of the world

Gro Ween: REMOTE SENSING- remote sensing. An effort to put bodies back into Arctic research

18.30

Dinner

20.00-21.00 Evening Art Session: Evgenia Arbugaeva: Tiksi - An Introduction

Friday 29th November 2013 - GEOPOLITICAL IMAGINARIES, RESPONSIBILITY, HOSPITALITIES

09.00-12.00 Morning Session: Nationality, ownership, sovereignty

Branwyn Poleykett & Peter Mangesho: Making a home for African science

Ferdinand Okwaro: Wonderful research sites: Strategies employed by African scientists in making laboratories in Africa

Tea.

Barbara Bodenhorn: From Cold War to Climate Change: shifting missions and changing social dynamics framing arctic research in Barrow, Alaska

Peder Roberts & Eric Paglia Field stations and the geopolitics of Nordic knowledge production on Svalbard

12.00-16.00

Lunch and time for informal conversation

16.00-16.30

Tea

16.30-18.30 Film Session: Lars Einar Skageberg

AN ARCTIC SPACE ODYSSEY (Documentary, 2013)

19.00

Dinner

Saturday 30th November 2013

End of Workshop and departure of participants in the course of the day.