

## **COMPLETED DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS**

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### **Urban Firewalls: Place, Space and New Technologies in Figueres, Catalonia**

Based on 15 months of fieldwork in the Catalan city of Figueres, Spain, this research investigates the social impact of new media in contemporary urban life. Focusing on local realities in response to global technologies, I ask: How do people situate websites, Facebook, email and mobile phones within a communicative framework that is continually evolving in crosscutting trajectories with other forms of paper, wired and wireless media? Are Web 2.0 and social media truly anything new? Is the Internet a social tool or an ego-centric, individualizing entity? Is it bounded by traditional categories of social stratification like class, age, ethnicity and geography, or does it efface and transgress them?

Central to this thesis is a detailed analysis of the cultural landscape of Figueres, a small town unwittingly thrust into multiculturalism in recent years and now grappling with immense challenges for social integration. Concentrating on the construction of human spaces (place-making) as a process which inevitably traverses online and offline life, I reveal how old and new boundaries and borders between ‘us’ and ‘them’ are installed, protected and/or contested, and how technology maps onto the urban environment. The metaphor *urban firewalls*, referring to insulated models of social interaction that have developed in Figueres, correlates symbolic fears and expectations of technology with actual spatial logics in the streets of the city.

The elusive placelessness of the web continues to cause profound practical and analytical issues within and beyond the social sciences. Through case studies of Catalan linguistic nationalism, communication patterns, the Internet, mobile phones, social networking sites and banal activism I seek to overcome these difficulties by applying a multifaceted ethnographic and theoretical approach that envisages new technologies as symbolically and literally tethered to the ground. Overall, I aim to advance anthropological research into the impact of new media by challenging assumptions of inevitable change, reflecting instead on practical and pragmatic choices in an ethnically diverse locality struggling against lingering ghosts of the past and escalating fears of the future.

*Dr Francine Barone holds a PhD and BA Hons 1st in Social Anthropology from the University of Kent, where she is currently a Postdoctoral Research Associate. Dr Barone's work is primarily aimed at understanding people's everyday computing practices, interactions and activities on the Internet, through social media and via mobile devices. As an urban ethnographer, she emphasizes place and locality in her studies of technological change and the socio-cultural impacts of the digital age. Dr Barone's doctoral fieldwork (2007-9) explored the everyday use of new technologies in a Catalan city and provides the basis for her forthcoming book, *Urban Firewalls*. She is a founding member of the Open Anthropology Cooperative and blogs at Analog/Digital (<http://www.analogdigital.us>).*

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Flavia Cangia

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### **Performing the Buraku: Narratives on Culture and Everyday Life in Contemporary Japan**

The research on which this Doctoral Thesis was based drew on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Japan in the leather towns of Kinegawa (Tokyo) and Naniwa (Osaka) and with the Monkey Dance Company. The thesis examines representations of the 'buraku minority' issue by buraku networks and individuals. People labeled as 'burakumin' (hamlet people) are usually described as Japan's outcasts of the Edo period (1603-1868). They are engaged in special occupations (for example, leather industry, meat-packing, street entertainment and drum-making) and are compelled to live in separate areas, known as 'buraku'. Despite the abolition of the status system (1871) and the implementation of Dowa (assimilation) Special Measures (1969), the burakumin still experience forms of discrimination in terms of access to education and housing, discriminatory messages circulating on the web, as well as background investigations conducted by private agencies at times of employment and marriage. Through community and local grassroots initiatives, the buraku activists and people engaged with the issue negotiate their 'minority identity', appropriately nation-based, and common everyday language and images, and try to reposition the buraku in society. The research focus was on the leather industry and the monkey performance, comparing different social fields in which the issue is represented and exploring the resulting processes of transformation of social categorization and boundary-blurring.

*Dr Flavia Cangia obtained her Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, having previously obtained a Master in Sociology from the University of Rome 'La Sapienza'. She is currently a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Institute of Cognitive Sciences and Technologies ISTC ('Migration' Project). Dr Cangia Research*

*interests include minority and indigenous issues, migration, ethnicity and identity politics, children and young people's participation in inter-ethnic relations.*

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**Andrea Friedli**

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**Ethnicity as a Capital: Construction and Mobilisation of Ethno-cultural Identity by Tatar Youth in Tatarstan (Russia) - (in German)**

This study argues that the nation-building processes and identity politics in post-Soviet societies should not be understood as projects led by the state and local political and ethno-national elites alone. Strategies of 'identity management' can also be developed 'from below', as the example of Tatar youth scenes and movements in the city of Kazan shows. The empirical ethnographic material for this dissertation was collected during a one-year field research in 2007-2008 and, since then, periodically until 2010. The main methods were participant observation and semi-structured in-depth interviews with young people and adults involved in youth movements and scenes in the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan, one of the 83 federal subjects of the Russian Federation.

The dissertation focuses on two main aspects: First, it reflects on the boundary-making strategies of urban Tatar youth scenes that can be oriented against, for example, a perceived Russian hegemony, cultural globalisation or the rural Tatar folk culture. It investigates the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion drawing on different factors, such as language, religion and historical memory that underlie the construction of ethno-cultural collective identity. Second, the study explains how urban Tatar youth valorise and stage ethnicity in the public space, and how they mobilise their ethno-cultural identity in informal networks. In this context, ethnicity is conceptualised as a (social, cultural and symbolic) capital in the terms of Bourdieu; that is, how they are used by the Tatar youth scenes and movements in order to maintain boundaries and to gain performativity in the public space.

*Dr Andrea Friedli is currently a post-doctoral teaching and research fellow at the Seminar of Social Anthropology, Department of Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of Fribourg/Freiburg, Switzerland. Dr Friedli is completing the publication of her doctoral dissertation (in German language), to appear in the series 'Freiburg Studies in Social Anthropology' with LIT Publishers.*

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Defended December 2012

### **Mining Postsocialism: Work, Class and Ethnicity in an Estonian Mine**

My thesis is a study of what happens to the working class in the context of postsocialism, neoliberalisation and deindustrialisation. I explore the changing work and lives of Russian-speaking miners in Estonia, showing what it means to be a miner in a situation in which the working class has been stripped of its glorified status and stable and affluent lifestyle, and has been stigmatised and orientalisised as Other. I argue that a consequence of neoliberal economy, entrepreneurialism and individualism is that ethnicity and class become overlapping categories and being Russian comes to mean being a worker. This has produced a particular set of practices, moralities and politics characterising the working class in contemporary Estonia, which is not only a result of its Soviet past and nostalgia, but also deeply embedded in the global economy following the 2008 economic crisis, and EU and national economic, security and ethnic policies.

Miners try to maintain their autonomy and dignity. Despite stricter control of miners' time and speeding up of the labour process, workers exercise control over the rhythm of work. The ideas of what it means to be a miner and ideals of a good society create a particular moral economy, demanding money and respect in return for sacrificing health and doing hard work. Increasing differences in consumption patterns are levelled with leisure activities such as drinking and sport that are available to all. New management practices such as outsourcing labour and performance reviews assist class formation processes that increase workers' precarity and the differentiation between workers and engineers in a previously relatively equal community. Despite this, management practices often have unexpected outcomes in everyday situations in which actors with different worldviews and ambitions meet. Miners' labour politics might not correspond to Western ideas of strong unionism, but show that trade unions can take different shapes depending on local context.

*Dr Eeva Kesküla defended her PhD at Goldsmiths, University of London at 2012. She has published articles about the changing workplace practices of Estonian miners in *European Review of History and Journal of Baltic Studies*. Currently she is a postdoctoral research fellow at Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in a research group *Industry and Inequality*. Her new project will concentrate on the changing work and lives of miners in Kazakhstan. Her research interests include anthropology of work and industry, class relations in postsocialism and economic anthropology.*

**Iain Lindsay**

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Defended December 2012

### **Life in the Shadow of the 2012 Olympics: An Ethnography of the Host Borough of the London Games**

On 6<sup>th</sup> July 2005 the London Olympic bidding committee won the right to host the 2012 Olympic Games. Some seven years later London's Olympic venues were built on time, Team GB accumulated an unprecedented medal haul and no significant security incidents occurred. These outcomes facilitated an understandable positive evaluation of the 2012 Games. It would be churlish not to be positive; Olympic venues when experienced by spectators during Games are *breathhtaking*. World records and Olympic contests are *exciting*. Olympic narratives that bond competitor and audience alike are *inclusive* and *unifying*. However, the prevalent belief that Olympic hosting provides unambiguous benefits to local communities is less sound. The evaluation of this assumption provides the focus for this inquiry, it follows French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu by considering that 'one cannot grasp the most profound logic of the social world unless one becomes immersed in the specificity of an empirical reality' (*The Field of Cultural Production*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993, p. 271). Accordingly, this research contrasted the rhetoric and reality of 2012 Olympic-delivery via an ethnographic inquiry in the Olympic borough of Newham. This location is defined as a '*non-place*' wherein the majority of the Olympic restructuring and events occurred. This research addresses Olympic-delivery issues of inclusion, exclusion, power relations, ideology and identity, in doing so it argues that the relatively short Olympic-delivery time-frame necessitated a divisive segregation between 'Olympic' and 'non-Olympic' Newham. Furthermore, it is argued that 2012 Olympic-delivery was orientated towards the needs and goals of Olympic migrants, of various description, rather than enhancing the lives of those living within a community that was rife with crime, poverty and deprivation. Consequently, this research considers that the Olympic milieu disseminated the capitalistic norms and values to global, national and local audiences. The outcome of such processes facilitated a re-negotiation of place-identity and place ownership within Newham that was orientated toward attracting a future affluent populace whilst concomitantly vilifying the pre-Games community. This research concludes that such attempts to re-mould Newham into a post-Olympic utopia where prosperous and educated families, to follow the Newham council strap line, 'live, work and stay' are based

upon the short-sighted assumption that creating an aesthetically pleasing entertainment location is tantamount to creating a desirable location for sustainable family life.

*Dr Iain Lindsay is Visiting Lecturer and Research Fellow at Brunel University). His primary research focus surrounds the use of sport as a tool for socio-economic modification. To date his research has considered this broad topic in diverse inter-disciplinary themes primarily through ethnography. Dr Lindsay's primary research interests include mega-events, sport for international development, social movements, urban modification, gangs, youth cultures and subcultures, policing and security, urban cleansing and research methods.*