

Debates on Space, Community, and Locality in Anthropology, and their Usefulness for the Study of Region

Ingo W. Schröder

The chapter presents a survey of anthropological approaches to the study of space. Recent debates about the reproduction of locality and community under conditions of globalization have reinforced a scholarly tradition that views space primarily as a culturally constructed, multivocal realm of identification. On the other hand, a tradition focusing on the political economy of space stresses the constraints imposed upon people's lives by spatial power relations. As the example of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands illustrates, an anthropological study of region needs to combine these two perspectives and complement them with a diachronic view.

Dr. habil. Ingo W. Schröder, Center of Social Anthropology, Vytautas Magnus University, Donelaičio 52, LT-44244 Kaunas; Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, PO Box 110351, D-06017 Halle (Saale), Germany, e-mail: schroeder@eth.mpg.de

In this chapter I will summarize some general characteristics of anthropological approaches to issues of space, place, and region. To date region has not played a significant role in the repertoire of anthropological keywords. Region has neither been defined as a concept nor has there developed a discourse on the specific analytical potential of region as a field of study. However, from the discussion of certain anthropological approaches to space and spatially defined social identities, valuable insights can be derived for the study of region from an anthropological perspective.

While anthropologists and other social scientists have engaged with matters of spatial identification now and then, neither place nor region, which may be seen as place on a larger scale, have found a prominent place in the social sciences (see Gieryn 2000; Rodman 1992; Schroer 2006). Place has often been taken for granted as the physical setting of other concepts such as culture or society and not been accorded a meaning of its own. In contradistinction to such views, anthropologist Margaret Rodman has argued that

“places are not inert containers. They are politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions. ...Places have multiple meanings that are constructed spatially. The physical, emotional, and experiential realities places hold for their inhabitants at particular times need to be understood apart from their creation as the locales of ethnography” (Rodman 1992: 641).

In accordance with geographical understandings of place and region, anthropologists have viewed space from two different perspectives: (1) as an analytical construct in the localization of culture, i.e., the proverbial ethnographic field site or the territory of the group under study and (2) from a naturalistic perspective, as the realm of socially mediated experience. The latter experiential perspective can be considered as anthropology’s most important contribution to the social-scientific analysis of space. I will return to it in the second part of the chapter.

First I will focus my attention to the re-engagement with place that has occurred in anthropology in recent years in response to a general rethinking of local life worlds under conditions of globalization. At a time when anthropology has been focusing its attention to an increasing degree on global, transcontinental, transnational flows and imaginations, a general need of re-evaluating previously held notions of place as locality has become apparent during the 1990s. Interest in geographical areas that are obviously not global may be seen as representing a countercurrent of interest that recognizes the importance of spaces and relations below, as it were, the level of global interconnections. A focus on place and region (as spaces on a smaller scale than globalism) reflects – and can be fruitfully compared with – anthropology’s reviving debate on community and locality.

The terms community and locality have been used to describe more or less identical phenomena, albeit with somewhat different semantic connotations. Current debates on these concepts also illustrate a common understanding among anthropologists that it is impossible to consider ‘the local’ in the modern world without making some kind of reference to the impact of ‘the global’ on local worlds. While the fragmenting pressure of individualization in modern societies works to erode local communities from within, there are other simultaneous forces at work that rather serve to reinforce and reassert local life worlds.

Lack of space forbids a more detailed historical survey of the use of the community concept in the social sciences (cf. Brint 2001). It has been a key concept in many classical social theories, usually as one of a pair of opposites, be they *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (Ferdinand Tönnies and Max Weber) or mechanical and organic solidarity (Émile Durkheim). The idea of community

as a spatially and socially bounded unit was also fundamental to the classical ethnographic studies of functionalist anthropology. While simplistic notions of such communities as entities that are in some way clearly set apart from the outside world, which were entertained by early anthropologists, are no longer considered to be appropriate in today's world, the generic concept of community has by no means vanished from social-scientific discourse. In a recent survey of the literature, sociologist Daniel Brint defines communities in a very general sense as 'aggregates of people who share common activities and/or beliefs and who are bound together principally by relations of affect, loyalty, common values, and/or personal concern' (Brint 2001: 8).

A definition of this kind signals a move away from the idea of community as something that is fixed in space toward a concept of community as something based on a shared ideology and practice. This shift identifies community more or less explicitly with other concepts long fashionable in both scholarly anthropological and public discourse, those of collective identities based on nation, ethnicity, political interest, and the like. In fact, as has been argued by Vered Amit (Amit 2002: 3), the idea of community is still very much alive even in postmodernist anthropological investigations of mobile transnationals, which are still focusing their interest on migrant enclaves or using a terminology of 'transnational communities'. Such concerns illustrate a continued interest in integrated and bounded fields of social interaction. This continuous search by anthropologists for fields defined by an association of place and culture is propelled by two mutually reinforcing impetuses: (1) anthropology's methodological and theoretical toolkit has been developed with regard to the study of small-scale populations. These 'traditional' groups that have for such a long time been the focus of ethnographic research are now being incorporated into ever larger systems of political, economic, and cultural integration; so anthropologists have to work harder to account for the context and rationale of such groups. (2) Anthropology's methodology of participant observation and its focus on what is usually understood by 'culture' encourage a bias toward small-scale collectivities as the proper subject of ethnographic investigation.

While anthropology has its own historical reason for searching for communities, at the same time a discourse of community has become almost ubiquitous in the realm of identity politics. Politics of multiculturalism and nationalism feature claims based on essential cultural differences between clearly definable 'ethnic groups'. So even if anthropologists deconstruct the political ramifications of such claims, they cannot ignore the constant reference to 'ethnic identity' in the identity politics of the people they usually study. It is almost ironic that anthropologists are beginning to recognize at the same time that a sense of collective belonging in the daily life of modern societies is likely

to be, perhaps even more often, fashioned not by the primordial bonds that take center stage in political rhetoric but by rather mundane and ephemeral daily activities and opportunities for consociation such as work, leisure activities, club membership, or neighborhood.

From this perspective community in modern society is located at the intersection, as it were, of two powerful social forces, those of global encompassment and of individualization, both of which have the potential of eroding community. With regard to such views of community as an endangered form of sociality, community has more often become identified as an idea than as an actual social form, as something that is primarily shaped by a collective identity rather than by interaction. The most compelling version of this approach has been Benedict Anderson's well known concept of the 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983). In fact, the imagination of community is being understood as a reaction to the actual weakening of community's structural boundaries and in most instances, it is still oriented toward the mobilization of actual social relations. As suggested by Amit (Amit 2002), a sense of community does not only arise out of historically entrenched, ongoing social relations, but also, even to a large extent, out of an emotional attachment, a sense of belonging to a certain collectivity. This sense of attachment is both highly personal and collective at the same time (cf. Amit and Rapport 2002).

Locality has more recently become a rival concept to community in anthropological discourse. Notions of locality may refer explicitly to processes of emplacement, as expressed in the following quote by Nadia Lovell:

"Belonging to a particular locality evokes the notion of loyalty to a place, a loyalty that may be expressed through oral or written histories, narratives of origin as belonging, the locality of certain objects, myths, religious and ritual performances, or the setting up of shrines such as museums and exhibitions. Yet belonging is also fundamentally defined through a sense of experience, a phenomenology of locality, which serves to create, mould and reflect perceived ideals surrounding place. Accounts of how such loyalties are created, perpetuated and modified are of relevance to an understanding of identity at individual and, more importantly, collective levels, since belonging and locality as markers of identity often extend beyond individual experiences and nostalgic longing for a particular place. Belonging may thus be seen as a way of remembering instrumental in the construction of collective memory surrounding place" (Lovell 1998: 1).

A reading of locality more widespread in contemporary anthropology uses the term in a less naturalistic and more metaphorical sense, as proposed in Arjun Appadurai's often cited essay on 'the production of locality':

"I view locality as primarily relational and contextual rather than as scalar or spatial. I see it as a complex phenomenological quality, constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts. This phenomenological quality, which expresses itself in certain kinds of agency, sociality, and reproducibility, is the main predicate of locality as a category (or subject) that I seek to explore. In contrast, I use the term neighborhood to refer to the actually existing social forms in which locality, as a dimension or value, is variably realized. Neighborhoods, in this usage, are situated communities characterized by their actuality, whether spatial or virtual, and their potential for social reproduction" (Appadurai 1996: 178–179).

To Appadurai, locality is not something that simply exists by itself, but rather, an 'inherently fragile social achievement' (Appadurai 1996: 179) that needs to be carefully maintained and reproduced. He distinguishes among three main strategies in the reproduction of locality:

- the creation of local subjects in *rites de passage*
- the spatial production of locality in its material dimension (houses, streets, territories, etc.)
- cosmological and ritual practices that serve to establish locality in space and time through performance, representation, and action (Appadurai 1996: 179–180).

In Appadurai's own words:

"Local knowledge is substantially about producing reliably local subjects as well as about producing reliably local neighborhoods within which such subjects can be recognized and organized. In this sense, local knowledge is what it is not principally by contrast with other knowledges... but by virtue of its local teleology and ethos" (Appadurai 1996: 181).

He thus draws a clear distinction between locality as a form of knowledge and neighborhood as the material basis for the production of this form of knowledge. In his conception, neighborhood closely resembles the notion of habitus, as a historically produced set of spatiotemporal contexts with their own set of 'localized rituals, social categories, expert practitioners, and informed audiences' where local subjects are produced 'in a regular and regulated manner' (Appadurai 1996: 185). However, Appadurai also recognizes a more dynamic aspect of neighborhoods by acknowledging that in the process of local subjects' activities in the production, representation, and reproduction of culture, the material contexts of their life worlds can also be transformed both materially and conceptually.

Under conditions of modernity, the task of reproducing locality is becoming an increasingly complicated struggle. This is due, on the one hand, to the

efforts of the nation-state to define all neighborhoods in terms of their allegiance to the state and, on the other, to the growing disjuncture between territory and both individual and collective experience. This disjuncture is being propelled most importantly by the blurring of the distinction between spatial and virtual neighborhoods due to the forces of the electronic mass media (Appadurai 1996: 189). Thus, according to Appadurai, locality is – and always has been to some degree – fragile in two senses: (1) the material reproduction of neighborhoods is up against the corrosion of context and (2) neighborhoods are subject to the impact of more complex hierarchical organizations, most notably the nation-state.

Such views on the fragile nature of local contexts notwithstanding, recent ethnographic studies have shown that locality is very much alive and well as a meaningful structure of people's everyday lives despite the eroding force of globalism. It can indeed be argued that the analysis of locality and its production – just like the above-mentioned interest in the continuing role of community – is particularly well suited to the grassroots approach to social worlds and everyday life experiences favored by anthropologists. In a recent effort to argue for a 'postglobalist anthropology', that is, an approach that goes beyond the commonsense global-local opposition, Harri Englund addresses the specific role played by sites and places in processes of global circulation:

"I suggest an approach to emplacement that discloses ethnographic subjects as situated in specific historical conditions that are as much embodied as they are discursively imagined. Ideas, practices, images, and institutions are, in this perspective, at once both particular and capable of spreading widely as elements of the globalist imagination" (Englund 2002: 263).

In other words, the notion of 'emplacement' that Englund employs in his effort to define the situatedness of both people and cultures, refers to a perspective where the subject is 'inextricably situated in a historically and existentially specific condition' (Englund 2002: 267). Emplacement means lived practice in a place that is defined by its location, material form, history, and meaningfulness. The ethnographer's task, Englund concludes, is to study the expressions of globalist imagination through the eyes of actors that are situated in such specific existential and historical circumstances. While by no means denying the impact of global forces and imaginings, the focus on emplacement takes the specific circumstances of people's engagement with global flows into consideration – circumstances that are responsible for variable capacities to act upon or react to processes on a global scale.

Such recent anthropological reflections on space that have been prompted by contemporary reconsiderations of community and locality in a globalized

world crosscut with the above-mentioned, more 'traditional' anthropological concern with the cultural mediation of space. Margaret Rodman has called for a combination of several different perspectives in order to fully understand the social construction of space:

"Anthropologists would do well to follow geographers' renewed interest in reunifying *location* (i.e., the spatial distribution of socioeconomic activity such as trade networks), *sense of place* (or attachment to place), and *locale* (the setting in which a particular social activity occurs, such as church) to yield a more rounded understanding of places as culturally and socially constructed in practice" (Rodman 1992: 643; italics in the original).

An often cited article by Nancy Munn (Munn 1990) has demonstrated how ethnographic analyses of social practices with regard to their geographic setting can identify the construction of 'regional worlds in experience.' In a similar vein, Rodman aims to 'consider how specific places implicate each other in a wider geographical milieu' (Rodman 1992: 644). Taking the region of contemporary Melanesia for an example, she proceeds to outline the concept of 'multilocality' as crucial for the understanding of how spatial experiences, social practices, and locales¹ are intertwined in modern societies. Multilocality, in Rodman's view, encompasses four dimensions:

- a 'decentered analysis' which understands the construction of place from multiple viewpoints, Eurocentric and indigenous
- a 'comparative or contingent analysis' of place as intertwined in a system of connections that links multiple agents in different localities
- a 'reflexive relationship' with place, taking the observers' own way of experiencing certain places they encounter and being shaped by them into consideration
- a consideration of the 'polysemic meaning of place' for different groups and individuals (Rodman 1992: 646–647).

In a final step, multilocality is to be joined with 'multivocality' in order to 'look "through" these places, explore their limits with others, consider why they are constructed as they are, see how places represent people, and begin to understand how people embody places' (Rodman 1992: 652). The notion of multivocality refers to the fact that places are constructed culturally through experiences and narratives reflecting specific 'senses of place'. The collection of essays of the same title, edited by Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Feld and Basso 1996), can be cited as a prime example of anthropology's concern with

¹ Following Giddens (Giddens 1984, ch. 3), Rodman views locales as 'physical settings of social activity as situated geographically'.

place as a cultural construct. The investigation of senses of place calls for anthropology's commitment to long-term ethnography. Keith Basso's own study (Basso 1996) of the way White Mountain Apaches of Arizona relate to places through a multitude of stories that inextricably link physical space to cultural narratives of history and morality illustrate the complexity of cultural constructions of place, which can only be understood properly on the basis of a thorough ethnographic knowledge of the society that expresses its particular sense of place, to some extent even of the individuals telling stories that are anchored in space. Cognitive anthropological approaches of this kind recognize place primarily as something that becomes culturally relevant only by virtue of its being encoded by narrative, as something that acquires meaning for the people that inhabit it through its cultural representation rather than a physical entity imposing constraints on inhabitants' ideas and actions.

Recent anthropological debates on place, which speak from the above examples of senses of place, community, and locality, have been dominated by such culturalist understandings. They are thus to some extent expressions of the discipline's fashionable postmodernist infatuation with discourse, experience, and subjectivity. However, there exists a very different anthropological tradition of engaging with space that focuses rather on the political economy of space, that is, on investigating place as the setting of power hierarchies, exploitation, and marginalization. From this perspective, places shape social relations through historical trajectories of power and domination which are imposed upon people's lives in material and existential fashion, not as mere discourses or cultural mediations. Places may still be multivocal, but their voices are not equally powerful.

This politically committed analysis of a political economy of space is represented, for example, by the writings of Marxist cultural geographers like David Harvey (Harvey 1973), but it also represents a strong trend in urban anthropology, which cannot be addressed in detail here.² In recent years the growing field of the anthropology of borders has demonstrated that even in an age of increasing global interconnections, in some crucial locations – such as borders – space continues to be structured by the interests of powerful political actors. While evidently mediated by multivocal cultural discourses, borders remain instances where regimes of inclusion and exclusion are materialized that impinge upon people's lives in ways that severely restrict their agency (see Donnan and Wilson 1994; Donnan and Wilson 1999; Wilson and Donnan 1998).

I will illustrate the intricacies of the study of region perspective with reference to one such borderland area that has been in the focus of anthropological

² See for example, Eade and Mele 2002; Evans 2002; Schneider and Susser 2003.

research for a long time, the Borderlands/*La frontera* region of the North American Southwest and Northern Mexico. In Americanist anthropology and geography, there is a long tradition of the spatial structuring of culture, exemplified by the classification of Native American cultures according to 'culture areas' as defined by Clark Wissler and Alfred L. Kroeber in the early 20th century and by well-established regional categories such as 'the Plains', 'the Southwest', or 'the South' in history, geography, and related fields. The Borderlands encompass a somewhat loosely defined area on both sides of the border between Mexico and the United States, from southern California and the northern part of Baja California in the west to Southern Texas and the Mexican Gulf coast in the east. Despite today's increasing impermeability of the actual border – a situation that represents only the most recent picture in a long history of simultaneous efforts at border consolidation (from the north) and border permeability (from the south) – the Borderlands are shaped by a unique culture and a constellation of border-crosscutting social networks that mark it as a region that is clearly discernable and clearly distinguishable from its surrounding areas.

In brief, several features have been identified by researchers that mark the Borderlands as a region:

- a desert environment that has spawned a specific economy based mostly on cattle ranching and a little irrigation farming
- a shared history shaped by the Spanish conquest and long-term control (for a short time taken over by Mexico since 1821) of the whole area, before the current borderline was established in the mid-19th century; this historical experience is very different from the majority of the United States
- as a result of this history, a large Hispanic population north of the border, with long-standing networks of social ties crosscutting the border
- a unique hybrid culture encompassing both Hispanic/Mexican and US-American elements. This culture is the result of parallel processes of the 'Hispanicization' of the American culture north of the border and a stronger, more immediate impact of 'Americanization' on the culture of the northern part of Mexico than the rest of the country. This unique Borderlands culture has produced a specific folklore and numerous expressions in art and popular culture and, last but not least, a view of the Borderlands themselves as an icon of the construction of a unique identity.³

³ For a general overview of anthropological and historical research on the Borderlands region, see Alvarez 1995; Berndt 2004; Heyman 1991; León 2004; Limón 1998; Martínez 1994; Vila 2000; Vila 2003; Vila 2005.

The history of the Borderlands testifies to the border's powerful propensity to define insiders and outsiders in a regional context both through discourse and political economy, but it also demonstrates that a regional identity can develop despite such political divisions. Based on insights from long-term anthropological studies of areas such as the Borderlands, some conclusions can be drawn regarding general aspects of an anthropological approach to region. They can be organized around four overall themes:

- (1) a region is a unique geographical space that can be – more or less clearly – identified by its physical environment. In other words, a region is more than a concept that can shift across time and space – although its exact outline may be debated in scholarly and popular discourse, – it is 'fixed' on the map in a topographical sense.
- (2) A region is not only a geographical entity, however, but is also the product of a concrete historical process. It is 'made' by political and economic powers that structure it from above and that have created a specific historical trajectory that sets the region apart from its surroundings.
- (3) A region is invested with specific meaning, emotional attachment, and value 'from below', by the people inhabiting it. There are likely to be a 'regional culture' and the idea of a 'regional heritage'. As a place, a region is subject to interpretations, narratives, perceptions, feelings, understandings, and imaginations; these form the basis of a local identity, memory, and of specific future aspirations.
- (4) A region as a meaningful space is maintained through the efforts of the people inhabiting it. In turn, the region creates a specific social environment that becomes evident in forms of agency, of power relations, of collective action, of social classifications, and of local attachment through identity and memory.

In the preceding pages I have sketched several strands of anthropological approaches to space, along with recent renewed debates on the understanding of community and locality as metaphors for the discipline's continuing interest in entities below the 'global' level. Can this help us to design a specifically anthropological approach to region? Current reflections on locality and community indicate that anthropology is increasingly considering spatially defined identities as imagined and constructed to the same extent as, e.g., ethnic or cultural identities. While it is fairly obvious that space is experienced differently by people occupying different positions in social space, an exclusively culturalist approach fails to do justice to the political economy of spaces that constrain people's agency and life-chances to a significant degree. For this

reason, a purely culturalist or postmodern interpretation of space falls short of addressing the full capacity of places and regions to shape people's lives while in turn being shaped by people's actions.

It appears most useful to approach space in the same classical manner as introduced for class by Marx (and transferred to anthropology by Clifford Geertz), as something that exists both *by itself* and *for itself*. With regard to space, this means that a region exists at the same time as a physical and geopolitical entity and as a location of meaning to its inhabitants. The meaningful experience of such a locality, then, forms a specific kind of collective identity. Both of these aspects must be historicized, i.e., analyzed from a diachronic perspective: the political-economic circumscription of a region as well as the production of a regional identity develop in a historical process. Any synchronic analysis of these dimensions is likely to fall short of grasping the full impact of historical forces that are at work in regional space. By providing an analysis of these three dimensions (i.e., political economy, identity, and history) based on grassroots ethnography in the study of spatial formations such as places and regions, anthropology can provide a fruitful, comprehensive approach to the study of place.

References

- Alvarez Robert R., Jr. 1995. The Mexican-US Border: The Making of an Anthropology of Borderlands, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 447–470.
- Amit Vered (ed.). 2002. *Realizing Community: Concepts, Social Relationships and Sentiments*. London: Routledge.
- Amit Vered and Nigel Rapport. 2002. *The Trouble with Community: Anthropological Reflections on Movement, Identity, and Collectivity*. London: Pluto Press.
- Anderson Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Appadurai Arjun. 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Basso Keith H. 1996. *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Berndt Christian. 2004. *Globalisierungsgrenzen: Modernisierungssträume und Lebenswirklichkeiten in Nordmexiko*. Bielefeld: Transcript.
- Brint Steven. 2001. Gemeinschaft Revisited: Rethinking the Community Concept, *Sociological Theory* 19: 1–23.

- Donnan Hastings and Thomas M. Wilson (eds.). 1994. *Border Approaches: Anthropological Perspectives on Frontiers*. Lanham: University Press of America.
- Donnan Hastings and Thomas M. Wilson. 1999. *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State*. Oxford: Berg.
- Eade John and Christopher Mele (eds.). 2002. *Understanding the City: Contemporary and Future Perspectives*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Englund Harri. 2002. Ethnography after Globalism: Migration and Emplacement in Malawi, *American Ethnologist* 29: 261–286.
- Evans Peter (ed.). 2002. *Livable Cities: Urban Struggles for Livelihood and Sustainability*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Feld Steven and Keith H. Basso (eds.). 1996. *Senses of Place*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.
- Giddens Anthony. 1984. *The Constitution of Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gieryn Thomas F. 2000. A Space for Place in Sociology, *Annual Review of Sociology* 26: 463–496.
- Harvey David. 1973. *Social Justice and the City*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Heyman Josiah McC. 1991. *Life and Labor on the Border: Working People of Northeastern Sonora, Mexico, 1886-1986*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- León Luis D. 2004. *La Llorona's Children: Religion, Life, and Death in the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Limón José E. 1998. *American Encounters: Greater Mexico, the United States, and the Erotics of Culture*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Lovell Nadia (ed.). 1998. *Locality and Belonging*. London: Routledge.
- Martínez Oscar J. 1994. *Border People: Life and Society in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Munn Nancy. 1990. Constructing Regional Worlds in Experience: Kula Exchange, Witchcraft and Gawan Local Events, *Man* (N.S.) 25: 1–17.
- Rodman Margaret C. 1992. Empowering Place: Multilocality and Multivocality, *American Anthropologist* 94: 640–656.
- Schneider Jane and Ida Susser (eds.). 2003. *Wounded Cities: Destruction and Reconstruction in a Globalized World*. Oxford: Berg.
- Schroer Markus. 2006. *Räume, Orte, Grenzen. Auf dem Weg zu einer Soziologie des Raumes*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Vila Pablo. 2000. *Crossing Borders, Reinforcing Borders: Social Categories, Metaphors, and Narrative Identities on the U.S.-Mexico Frontier*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Vila Pablo (ed.). 2003. *Ethnography at the Border*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Vila Pablo. 2005. *Border Identifications: Narratives of Religion, Gender, and Class on the U.S.-Mexico Border*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Wilson Thomas M. and Hastings Donnan (eds.). 1998. *Border Identities: Nation and State at International Frontiers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Debatai apie erdvę, bendruomenę bei vietą antropologijoje ir jų naudingumą regionui tyrinėti

Ingo W. Schröder

Santrauka

Antropologijoje erdvei skirta nedaug dėmesio. Straipsnyje apžvelgiami keli būdai, kuriais antropologai atkreipė dėmesį į vietos ir regiono problemą. Tai, kad globalizacijos sąlygomis, nepaisant transnacionalinių ryšių, tebėra svarbios vieta ir bendruomenė, privertė iš naujo įvertinti erdvę kaip kultūriškai sukonstruotą socialinių santykių ir individualios patirties lauką. Vered Amit mintys apie bendruomenę ir Arjun Appadurai pateikta vietos samprata iliustruoja, kaip vietos tapatumo supratimą tuo pat metu formuoja globalizacija ir tikri socialiniai santykiai, egzistuojantys „vietoje“. Appadurai nuomone, vietą formuoja du dėmenys: vietinis žinojimas ir jo materialus pagrindas – kaimyniški santykiai. Nors ardomosios globalizacijos jėgos veikia vietos aplinką, vis dėlto vieta tebėra reikšminga žmonių kasdienių gyvenimų struktūra. Kitais žodžiais tariant, žmonės yra „įvietinti“ ta prasme, kad subjektas egzistuoja istoriniu ir egzistencijos požiūriu savitoje aplinkoje, vietoje, kurią apibūdina jos padėtis, materialiai forma, istorija ir reikšmingumas.

Kad pripažintume, jog erdvė socialiai konstruojama, Margaret Rodman siūlė laikytis požiūrio, kad būtina nagrinėti „apsigyvenimą“ (*'location'*) (t. y. veiklos paskirstymą erdvėje), „vietos pojūtį“ ir „(veikimo) vietą“ (*'locale'*) (t. y. aplinką, kurioje atliekama tam tikra veikla). Laikantis tokio požiūrio, turėtų būti vartojama daugiareikšmės vietos (*'multilocality'*) sąvoka. Ji reiškia tai, jog vietos supratimas konstruojamas remiantis įvairiais požiūriais ir jam būdingas daugiareikšmiškumas. Itin svarbu, kad vietų „daugiabalsiškumas“ būtų nagrinėjamas etnografiniuose lauko tyrimuose, t. y. būtų tyrinėjama, kaip, remiantis patirtimi ir naratyvais, kurie atskleidžia savitą „vietos pojūtį“, vieta konstruojama kultūriškai. Dėl šių kognityvinių požiūrių vieta pirmiausia atpažįstama kaip kažkas, kas dėl jos kultūrinio tarpininkavimo tampa svarbu joje gyvenantiems žmonėms.

Priešingai kultūriniais aiškinimams, antropologijoje egzistuoja kita tradicija, kuri susitelkia ties erdvės politine ekonomija. Remiantis ja, vietos suprantamos ne tik kaip kultūriškai sukonstruotos, bet ir kaip galios hierarchijų, eksploatavimo ir marginalizacijos aplinkos, kurios formuoja žmonių gyvenimus pagal istorines galios ir dominavimo trajektorijas. Remiantis šia perspektyva, daugiausia tyrinėtose miesto aplinkos ir paribio sritys, mat čia ypač matyti, kaip vyksta žmonių priėmimo ir pašalinimo procesai.

Abi perspektyvos iliustruojamos remiantis gerai ištyrinėtu JAV ir Meksikos pasienio sričių regionu. Šio regiono studijos perša keturias bendras išvadas dėl antropologinio požiūrio į regioną: (1) regionas yra aiškiai apibrėžta geografinė erdvė; (2) jis taip pat yra politinių ir ekonominių jėgų atlikto struktūravimo istorinio proceso rezultatas; (3) regione gyvenantys žmonės jam suteikia savitą prasmę, vertę, yra emociškai prisirišę prie jo; egzistuoja regioninė kultūra, regioninis tapatumas ir regioninio paveldo idėja; (4) pagaliau regioną reikšminga erdvė padarė jame gyvenantys žmonės; regionas kaip savita socialinė aplinka tampa matomas per veikimo formas, galios santykius, socialinę klasifikaciją ir kt.

Baigdamas teigiu, kad regionas antropologiniu požiūriu turėtų būti tyrinėjamas ir kaip fizinė bei geopolitinė erdvė, ir kaip socialinio tapatumo erdvė. Tai turėtų būti nagrinėjama diachroninėje perspektyvoje, kai į regioną žvelgiama kaip į unikalių istorinių procesų rezultatą.

Gauta 2006 m. lapkričio mėn.