



Social Responsibility at a Distance: Caring, Parenting and Generation in Transnational Social Spaces

Invitation to Stockholm Anthropology
Roundtable
October 24-25, 2014

The annual Stockholm Anthropology Roundtable at the Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University, will in 2014 focus on caring, parenting and generation in transnational social spaces. *Social responsibility at a distance* turns the spotlight on how self-imposed or assigned responsibilities are altered in the context of transnational migration or mobility, particularly in relation to different types of role divisions, such as parenthood or other close kinship social relationships within networks or local communities. Examples of how responsibilities can be "transnationalized" include situations in which migrants engage in parenting despite prolonged periods abroad (i.e. "long-distance" or "transnational parenthood") or experience greater economic burdens related not only to the immediate but also to the extended family, and even to close friends (i.e. "remittances"). In addition, it is often expected that migrants, who move from poor to wealthy countries, will contribute to local community development through financial investments or through "social remittances" by offering services and ideas from abroad, by assuming a leadership role, or by becoming a broker for people in the same social network.

But social responsibility in transnational social spaces is clearly changing. Consider, for instance, the non-working part of the population (retirees or the wealthy) from developed countries who settle permanently or seasonally abroad. This could give rise to an inverse care deficit or a new economy of care if those who settle abroad are in need of care and medical support. From this perspective, it is critical to examine new practices for caring and the responsibilities associated with parenting, and "grandparenting". More generally, globalization has expanded the opportunities to maintain social relationships and therefore social responsibility, through e.g. new technological means of communication and faster economic remittance systems. Social networks and families have in this sense many times "moved" into a transnational social space where they also become reorganized as social units. New technologies thus impact on roles and expectations that are attached to social responsibilities related to, for instance, being a son or a daughter, a husband or a wife, or the head of the family.

Most generally, the Roundtable directs attention to the effects of transnationalization on the changing roles and structures of everyday life. It will discuss, from an anthropological perspective, how different forms and practices of social responsibility are developed and reproduced. We have organized the discussion about these research questions into three panels: 1) *Long Distance Caring* 2) *Transnational Retirees and Changing Forms of Care* 3) *Techno Parents and Cyberkids*. The first panel will mainly focus on the changing roles and practices in transnational families, for example, how parenthood, childhood and intimacy are shaped by transnationalization. The second panel will focus mainly on care and other kind of social services in transnational contexts. More specifically, however, we are considering an inverse relationship in which older people migrate or approach old age away from conventional services and practices of caring. Examples include retired seasonal migrants (so-called "snowbirds"), elderly expatriates or migrant labourers who remain abroad after retirement. Both panels will have an interest in the way diasporas are assuming responsibility by developing collective practices or services for migrants. Finally, the third panel will discuss the use of ICT practices in the context of responsibility in transnational social spaces. How do people use new technologies when practicing their social responsibilities and what impact do these have on people's everyday life?

The Stockholm Anthropology Roundtable is devoted to short interventions and discussions among a rather small number of participants. This year's Roundtable will include 15 to 20 invited presenters and a limited number of discussants and audience. Invited presenters are not expected to submit a written paper but rather to give a short talk or statement of no more than 10-15 minutes, which links to the panel's research topic. We therefore ask invited presenters to send us a title and abstract for planning and scheduling purposes. In conversation with the other presentations the researcher's statement should serve as an input for intense and fruitful discussions with the intention of expanding the knowledge of the field while inspiring future research.

Long Distance Caring

This panel will focus on practices of parenting and kinship. How are social responsibilities maintained and handled when family members are scattered around the world? How is parenting for the young and care for the old managed over vast distances? How do wives and husbands maintain or transform marital relations in transnational social space? One possible starting point for this theme concerns the expectations and demands made on migrants (and the other way around) and how global infrastructure makes this possible. What practices are people engaged in to be able to fulfil social responsibilities? What transformations in these responsibilities emerge with new global possibilities? In this panel there is room for discussion on the transnational dynamics in social roles and structures. How are ways of being a parent and being a dependent child changing when the parent is a migrant? Is the absent parent substituted or complemented by a grandparent? Do parents develop new forms of parenting in their everyday life abroad? We are not only interested in individual responses to these questions but also in social practices that emerge in for example diasporic social networks, in associations or in enterprises.

Transnational Retirees and Changing Forms of Care

This panel will focus on retirement, mobility and caring and the different kinds of practices of assuming social responsibility that arise when the conventional services and practices of care are absent or geographically distant. The international category of retirees from northern Europe who move to a warmer climate, or who profit from the economic benefits of living on his or her pension in a more inexpensive country, is an obvious example. This "cosmopolitan" category eventually demands care and services as the conventional possibilities of social care, such as domestic help or having relatives in attendance, is prevented or interrupted. In addition, the important social relations of family and kin are in these situations often transnationalized, which has implications for how they are able to assume expected responsibilities as a source of support to their parents or grandparents. How do these migrants find solutions to their care and service needs and how are different associations, entrepreneurs and institutions assuming this responsibility in the host country? In this panel the situation of the retirees from rich countries should be compared with the solutions that migrants *to* rich countries are developing. Many of the aging labour migrants have assumed the role of breadwinner and the source of remittances for families and kin in the country of origin. In some cases this could also prevent them from returning to their country of origin. How do these elderly find solutions to their situation when they themselves, for health reasons and reduced physical mobility, require social care and service?

Technoparents and Cyberkids

This panel is concerned with the classic anthropological question of the relationship between technology and culture. It will more precisely focus on the global infrastructure of ICT in the context of transnational family relations. What are the consequences of ICT on the everyday life of transnational family relationships? How do people use new ICTs in the context of long-distance caring, parenting, and intimate relations? More specific questions include: How do people use ICTs and how do they fit into everyday practices? How do these practices vary across generations? What types of language develop in these processes? How does the use of ICT, and the potential of more intensive communication, create new expectations across generations? Finally, what effects do commercial actors who control ICT platforms have on transnational relationships? In other words, what are the consequences of ICTs on the everyday life of transnational family relationships?