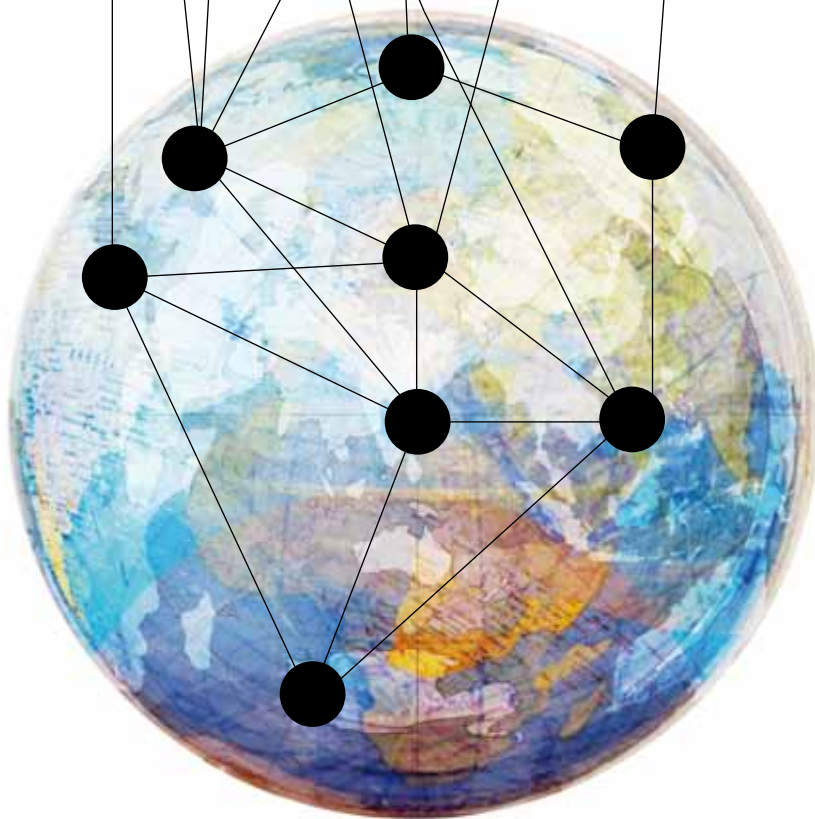


RETHINKING THE TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE: SHORTCOMINGS AND NEW APPROACHES

**INTERNATIONAL
WORKSHOP
13-14 SEPTEMBER 2012**

University of Fribourg
Avenue de l'Europe 20
Auditorium 3023
1700 Fribourg - Switzerland



Conveners:

Michael Nollert, Marina Richter - Sociology, Social Politics and Social Work - University of Fribourg, Switzerland
Janine Dahinden, Yvonne Riaño, Marc Tadorian - Maison d'analyse des processus sociaux - MAPS -
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SWISS NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Rethinking the Transnational Perspective: Shortcomings and New Approaches

International Workshop
Fribourg (CH) 13./14. September 2012

Programme

This conference is funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), the University of Fribourg, and the University of Neuchâtel

Aim

For nearly two decades scholars have argued that the everyday lives of many individuals are not merely bound to a single geographical location, but transcend national boundaries, thus connecting and positioning them in social spaces that encompass more than one country. Nowadays, a transnational perspective to social space has become an essential conceptual framework for understanding contemporary phenomena such as migration and mobility. The workshop aims to critically reflect upon the theoretical and methodological shortcomings of transnational studies so far, and to propose original approaches leading to a deeper understanding of transnational social spaces. The following preoccupations motivated us to convene the workshop:

- (a) *How to conceptualise space?* How can we conceptualise transnational social space from a perspective that goes beyond the metaphorical? What are some fruitful theoretical and empirical approaches for understanding the relationship between materiality, lived experience and representation?
- (b) *Temporal dynamics, social networks and belonging:* How to explain the (non)constitution, maintenance and/or dissolution of transnational social spaces? What role do social networks play and what are key actors? How do groups and individuals relate to such spaces, and how does such belonging evolve over time? What is the relationship between an individual's age, class, gender, ethnicity, legal status and experiences of mobility and the evolving characteristics of transnational social spaces?
- (c) *The relationship between transnationalism and social (in)equality:* What is the relationship between transnational social relations and social (in)equality? To what extent do situations of social (in)equality influence the (non)constitution, maintenance and dissolution of transnational social spaces?
- (d) *The question of the role of the state:* What is the relationship between the legal regulations of individual states and the character and dynamics of transnational social spaces? How do such state regulations influence the (non)constitution, maintenance and dissolution of transnational social spaces?
- (e) *A "post-migration" and "post-ethnic" perspective to transnationalism:* How to approach transnational social spaces from a perspective that moves beyond an exclusive focus on an ethnic or a national group to also include the actions of migrants and non-migrant groups? What may be the theoretical and methodological potential of alternative approaches such as cross cutting ties or boundary work?

As the following programme shows, the workshop contributors tackle the above issues from a variety of perspectives that provide new and exciting insights. We look forward to inspiring presentations and fruitful discussions!

Programme

Thursday 13th September 2012

Day 1 – Morning

Opening

08.30 – 09.00

Welcoming address by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, University of Fribourg
Michael Nollert, Janine Dahinden | Introduction

Transnational networks and geographical imaginaries – Chair: Yvonne Riaño

09.00 – 09.45 | Natalia Gladkova & Valentina Mazzucato

Theorizing chance: capturing the role of ad hoc social interactions in migrants' transnational social networks

Discussant: Marina Richter

09.45 – 10.30 | Daniela Reist

Transatlantic dialogues: the construction of transnational spaces through communication between Ecuadorian migrants in Spain and their relatives left behind

Discussant: Marc Tadorian

10.30 – 11.00 | Coffee break

11.00 – 11.45 | Philip Crang

Transnational Spaces

Discussant: Roger Waldinger

11.45 – 12.30 | Anastasia Christou

Translating transnationalisms: problematising paradigms and polemics in re-conceptualising actors, agency and affect in (return) migration research

Discussant: Caroline Nagel

12.30 – 14.00 | Lunch break

Day 1 – Afternoon

(Trans-)locality – Chair: Michael Nollert

14.00 – 14.45 | Ayona Datta

The translocal city: mobility, embodiment and visibility among transnational migrants

Discussant: Yvonne Riaño

14.45 – 15.30 | Anna Neubauer & Janine Dahinden
Transnational aspects of 'forced marriages'
Discussant: Anastasia Christou

15.30 – 16.15 | Yvonne Riaño & Marina Richter
Mapping sites and tracing meanings: translocal practices of first and second-generation migrants
Discussant: Ayona Datta

16.15 – 15.45 | Coffee break

Wrap up and discussion

16.45 – 17.30 | Janine Dahinden, Yvonne Riaño, Marina Richter

Friday 14th September

Day 2 – Morning

Citizenship and politics – Chair: Marina Richter

08.30 – 09.15 | Roger Waldinger
Politics beyond borders: sending states and “their” emigrants
Discussant: Janine Dahinden

09.15 – 10.00 | Caroline Nagel
Welcoming the stranger? Christian evangelism and immigrant communities in the American South
Discussant: Boris Nieswand

10.00 – 10.30 | Coffee break

Social inequalities and status – Chair: Marc Tadorian

10.30 – 11.15 | Joëlle Moret
Gender, transnationality and social (in)equalities: the links between geographical mobility and social mobility
Discussant: Daniela Reist

11.15 – 12.00 | Boris Nieswand
Methodological transnationalism and the status paradox of migration
Discussant: Alain Müller

12.00 – 13.30 | Lunch break

Day 2 – Afternoon

Mobilities and circulations – Chair: Janine Dahinden

13.30 – 14.15 | Alain Tarrius

The new strangers: when European suburbs host the transmigrants of the “poor to poor” global economy

Discussant: Joëlle Moret

14.15 – 15.00 | Marc Tadorian

Apprehending transnational social spaces: tracking mobilities and transactions in the world of train writing

Discussant: Philip Crang

15.00 – 15.45 | Alain Mueller

Grasping the fine line between fluidity and solidity: the notion of rhizome as a methodological tool

Discussant: Valentina Mazzucato

15.45 – 16.15 | Coffee break

Wrap up and discussion

16.15 – 17.45 | Janine Dahinden, Yvonne Riaño, Marina Richter

Closing words

17.45 – 18.00 | Michael Nollert

Abstracts

Thursday 13th September

1. Transnational networks and geographical imaginaries

09.00 – 09.45 | Natalia Gladkova & Valentina Mazzucato

Theorizing chance: capturing the role of ad hoc social interactions in migrants' transnational social networks

When collecting migrants' life stories, researchers often report on the role of chance encounters in influencing the way a migration trajectory took shape or how migrants have managed their livelihoods in a new country. Aside from reporting on such encounters, however, little has been done by way of theorizing on the role of chance. This is mainly due to the lack of theorizing in many of the detailed ethnographic studies that recount such encounters, and on the focus on prediction in quantitative studies looking at migrants' trajectories and livelihoods. This paper aims to make a first attempt at theorizing the role of chance encounters in migrants' trajectories and livelihoods by bringing to bare insights from social cognitive theory where spontaneous or ad hoc social interactions have been theorized. This theory has been used in psychology, career counselling and gambling research but has remained separate of migration studies. Secondly, the paper will reflect on the methodological implications of chance encounters in analyses of migrants' personal transnational social networks. Network studies tend to capture lasting relationships be they weak or strong. Yet how can ad hoc social interactions that are usually short in duration but may have a lasting impact be included in network analyses? The paper makes use of some preliminary evidence collected amongst 50 African migrants in Ukraine.

09.45 – 10.30 | Daniela Reist

Transatlantic dialogues: the construction of transnational spaces through communication between Ecuadorian migrants in Spain and their relatives left behind

Migrants rarely suspend communication with members of their social network at their place of origin. Moreover, they maintain communication through a variety of means with relatives, friends and colleagues left behind in order to counteract their physical absence. Through these communication activities, information about the place of origin and the place of destination are exchanged; those who stay at the place of origin get access to information about living in a defined place abroad and migrants get to know about news from their former "home".

A transnational perspective suggests that such communication activities between migrants and members of their social networks at the place of origin contribute to the construction of transnational spaces between the place of origin and the place of destination. However, little has been said, how these transnational spaces can be conceptualized. Drawing on the idea of imaginative geographies (Said 1978) the proposed contribution seeks to trace the construction of transnational spaces through transnational communication.

This requires to identify the main imaginative geographies that are created, maintained and transformed through communication activities on the one hand, and to work out the variables in the communication framework, that guide those re-constructions on the other hand.

The analysis is based on a case study of labour migration from Cuenca, a small-town city in Andean Ecuador to Spain. Multi-sited fieldwork during eight months has been carried out in Barcelona and in Cuenca. Around forty interviews with migrants and relatives of migrants form the major part of the empirical data, completed by data obtained via participant observation.

11.00 – 11.45 | Philip Crang

Transnational Spaces

Abstract follows

11.45 – 12.30 | Anastasia Christou

Translating transnationalisms: problematising paradigms and polemics in re-conceptualising actors, agency and affect in (return) migration research

Over the past two decades migration research and scholarship on transnationalism has addressed the social, economic, political and cultural flows, links and interactions that transcend national boundaries. The contribution of this burgeoning literature is evident in the invaluable insights we have into individual and collective lifeworlds of transnational migrants, transnational communities and transnational spaces. Few, however, of these contributions have theorised the often conflated concepts of transnationalism and diaspora and/or problematised methodological and inter/disciplinary implications of such in the social sciences and humanities. Even more importantly, only recently have we seen explorations of ageing and caring transnational communities, sexuality and intimacy in transnational spaces as well as embodied, emotionalised and globalised conceptualisations of transnational practices. This paper seeks to 'translate' transnationalism as a phenomenon, a unit of analysis, an object of contestation and an opportunity not only to bring back theory into migration studies but also to explore how we might use such research to inform teaching and learning that incorporates critical perspectives, reflective underpinnings and an interdisciplinary approach to social and cultural theory. Based on multi-sited research conducted over the past decade, I aim to bring the above into a dialogic reading of transnationalisms.

2. (Trans-)locality

14.00 – 14.45 | Ayona Datta

The translocal city: mobility, embodiment and visibility among transnational migrants

In this workshop, I will discuss the notion of the translocal city, as a relational experience negotiated between and across transnational imaginations and translocal journeys of migrants. I see 'translocality' as a process that situates

diverse spaces and practices within different locales – as a map that people arrive at through their many ‘scaling practices’ across urban, regional and national spaces. In taking this approach, I will break away from the nation as the sole unit of analysis in migrants’ lives to argue for a more situated and embodied understanding of everyday spatial practices of migrants in the city. These practices are tied to negotiations within localized contexts of neighbourhoods, streets, marketplaces, and public transport, which are also related to economic opportunities, subjective identities, and social networks in the city. Using a methodology of ‘visual narratives’– a combination of participant-directed photography and semi-structured interviews, I argue for the exploration of embodied and material aspects of everyday lives in the city, which destabilise traditional urban pictorial approaches to the city. Visual narratives relocate the observer as the everyday mobile-subject; they highlight the connections between urban and transnational mobilities; and they present participants’ constructions of different kinds of affective spaces in the city where they begin to negotiate home, belonging and return. Attention to both urban and transnational mobilities and their relationships to embodiment and visibility in migrants’ lives allow us to conceptualise transnational spaces as material and situated at a variety of scales.

14.45 – 15.30 | Anna Neubauer & Janine Dahinden

Transnational aspects of ‘forced marriages’

Marriage is one of those practices that take place more and more in transnational spaces. Since a few years there is a growing interest from the side of social scientists to analyse the motivations and practices linked to this form of transnationalization. At the same time, cross-border marriage has become a hot topic in immigration countries, particularly when migrants from non-European countries are concerned. Overall a politicization and ethnicization can be observed which trigger debates about ‘forced marriages’, violence against migrant women, sham marriage or cross-border marriages as entry tickets for immigration.

This context results in diverse pressures and constraints on the people entering marriage across borders (stemming from the family or the network of kin, from stigmatizing discourses or restrictive policies, etc.) and in corresponding strategies to overcome them.

In this contribution we want to answer the following main question: What are the transnational dimensions of constraints weighing on persons getting married across borders and how are they linked to the local context (most prominently the Swiss restrictive admission policies)? Our contribution lies in the fact that, even as we adopt a transnational perspective, we underscore the importance of “locality”.

Our presentation will be based on a research funded by the Swiss Federal Office for migration on ‘forced marriage’ in Switzerland, for which we conducted an online survey with professionals in the whole country and expert interviews.

15.30 – 16.15 | Yvonne Riaño & Marina Richter

Mapping sites and tracing meanings: translocal practices of first and second generation migrants

Researchers have recently emphasized the necessity to address the ‘embeddedness of migrants in specific localities’ in order to understand transnational social space. How to conceptually grasp such notion? We propose the following. First, the “locale” is not only constituted through social structure but also to a large extent through its material characteristics. Materiality, therefore, shapes the (transnational) actions of individuals, and materiality is also shaped by the actions of individuals. Second, if we aim at apprehending specific localities, we need to focus on concreteness and specificity. This, we believe, can best be apprehended by taking the actual actions and experiences of groups and individuals as an analytical point of departure rather than preconceived notions of scale. Third, we thus propose an empirical inquiry that starts with the actual experiences of individuals, tracks the geographical extent of their transnational practices and then draws conclusions on how localities are constituted in a transnational context. We will base our argument on two case studies: first-generation Colombians/Ecuadorians and second-generation Spaniards (all residents of Switzerland). The empirical data was gathered through multi-sited interviewing, multi-sited field observations and visual methods. In order to understand how localities are produced by and through transnational social

action, the paper addresses the following questions: What are the specific material sites in which/through which the transnational exchanges between migrants living in Switzerland and the members of their transnational networks take place? What is the role of materiality in shaping their exchanges? How do those exchanges materially and symbolically transform the specific sites involved? What is the relationship between those transnational exchanges and the migrants' sense of place?

Friday 14th September

3. Citizenship and politics

08.30 – 09.15 | Roger Waldinger

Politics beyond borders: sending states and “their” emigrants

This paper seeks to develop a framework for analysing the political sociology of emigration. The paper emphasizes the dualities at the heart of the migration phenomenon: immigrants are also emigrants, aliens are also citizens, foreigners are also nationals, non-members are also members. At once of the sending state, but not in it, the migrants are members whose everyday cross-border connections and on-going needs draw the sending state across the borders; residing abroad, however, their claims to belonging are undermined by their presence on foreign soil. At once in the receiving state but not of it, the migrants can access the economic and political resources available in their new home, using them to gain leverage in the home left behind; yet as outsiders, their rights are circumscribed and their acceptance is uncertain, vulnerabilities that can be aggravated if continuing homeland involvement triggers the suspicion of receiving state nationals. Both conditions activate interventions by home states seeking to influence and protect nationals abroad. While extension to the territory of another state keeps options inherently limited, even limited engagements can inflame the passions of receiving state nationals, already anxious about the foreigners in their midst. In the remainder of this essay, I will show how these dualities affect the politics of both emigration and immigration, making them inextricably intertwined.

09.15 – 10.00 | Caroline Nagel

Christian evangelism, missions, and immigrant outreach in the American South

This paper uses recent research on faith-community outreach to immigrants in the American South to complicate ideas of transnationalism. The transnational framework has typically been applied to migrant groups and their persistent economic, social, and political links with homelands. This paper, however, shifts attention to the transnational practices and imaginations of host society groups, and the ways these shape their encounters and relationships with immigrant groups. This paper examines efforts by predominantly white Christian evangelical churches to engage with the South's rapidly growing immigrant community. White churches historically have participated in evangelizing missions, often implanting Christian-

American values in the developing world. In the context of immigration, this missionizing zeal has been brought to the local. Notions of mission—of bringing the Good News of Christ to ‘strangers’ in their midst—form an important rubric in which some in the South are approaching immigrants. This missionizing impulse, however, exists in tension with the region’s conservative politics, which conceives of certain populations as ‘illegal’ and as a threat to sovereignty. Congregations thus grapple daily with the need to reconcile unbounded Christian imperatives with secular law. This case, overall, encourages us to think about the ways that transnational practices and outlooks of Christian organizations are helping to shape immigrants’ experiences in the South. In addition, this paper encourages us to recognize places of worship as important sites of citizenship and integration politics, where immigrants and non-immigrants negotiate the meaning of ‘foreignness’ and ‘sameness’.

4. Social status and social inequalities

10.30 – 11.15 | Joëlle Moret

Gender, transnationality and social (in)equalities: the links between geographical mobility and social mobility

This presentation will address the links between transnational geographical mobility and social mobility. It is based on semi-structured interviews and informal discussions with women and men of Somali origin, mostly citizens of a European country, living in Switzerland and in England. Geographical mobility is defined as repeated cross-border movements undertaken for different reasons including family, business, political or professional motivations. Such movements, undertaken from a principal place of residence, can be characterised as circulatory, ‘star-shaped’, and back and forth movements. At the theoretical level, geographical mobility, and the transnational networks in which it is imbedded, are considered as unequally distributed resources through which people access different forms of capital (in Bourdieu’s sense). They thus become an element of social differentiation. The former means that there exist bi-directional links between social inequalities and access to cross-border mobility and transnationality. For example, as migrants from a non-European country, Somalis need to stabilise their legal status, ideally by obtaining the passport of their country of residence, which allows them to cross national borders. Economic, cultural and social capital further condition the ways people can accumulate, mobilise and ‘transnationalise’ their resources.

In this presentation, I will focus on the gendered dimension of the studied mobility processes, highlighting how gender intersects with other social categories of difference, in particular age and lifecycle, ethnicity, social class and legal status to create, maintain or challenge social (in)equalities.

11.15 – 12.00 | Boris Nieswand

Methodological transnationalism and the status paradox of migration

During the last two decades, the transnationalism paradigm has turned out highly productive. After its contribution to the field of migration studies is by now widely acknowledged, the question emerges in which direction transnational migration studies can develop both empirically and theoretically in the future.

A central problem that emerges from the first generation of research is how to understand the relationship between transnational and other forms of social inclusion (e.g. local, national and global) (cf. Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Glick Schiller et al. 2004). In this context, it makes sense, to distinguish an empirical transnationalism from a methodological transnationalism (Khagram and Levitt 2008; Nieswand 2008). While the former aims at increasing the knowledge about transnational relationships, the latter is an intellectual framework in which the relation between different modes of socio-spatial inclusion can be conceived and researched. The most important difference is that within a methodologically transnationalist framework the relevance of transnational relationships changes from being a presupposition to being an empirical variable. Moreover, methodological transnationalism offers opportunities to question and broaden established knowledge about the nexus about migration, integration and development without rejecting it in the first place. Exemplary, I want to show the analytical productivity of a methodological transnationalism by describing a transnational status paradox that I have identified among Ghanaian migrants. I argue that it challenges conventional sociological views of social status and exemplifies the importance to consider the multiplicity and interaction of social inclusions for understanding migrants' processes of status attainment.

5. Mobilities and circulations

13.30 – 14.15 | Alain Tarrus

The new strangers: when European suburbs host the transmigrants of the “poor to poor” global economy

Poor international migrants have become aware of the rich countries' refusal of hospitality. Many of them no longer present themselves as “e”- or “im-migrants”, but as “transmigrants”: perpetually circulating from one nation state to another. They are traders from Afghanistan, Turkey, Morocco and Albania as well as medical doctors from “Egypt” and female sex workers from the Balkans. They have become the peddlers of the ultraliberal market capitalism. The leaders of the South-East-Asian electronic industries have not been mistaken when they developed, through Dubai, a “poor to poor” global and “horizontal” economy. Nevertheless, when coming across the poor in Europe, the transmigrants encounter the ones who preceded them and who live in urban enclaves. Hosted in their apartments, the transmigrants offer to the youth, in exchange, access to their networks, generating, thereby, a new kind of strangers, as well as “solutions from below”, which are based on multiple-stage cosmopolitanisms.

14.15 – 15.00 | Marc Tadorian

Apprehending transnational social spaces: tracking mobilities and transactions in the world of train writing

Contemporary globalisation transforms the way in which individuals relate to urban space. Moreover, the emergence of new forms of mobility and social exchange, owing to new information and communication technologies, plays a key role in extending living spaces across borders. Therefore, understanding the constitution, maintenance, dissolution and meanings of transnational social spaces has become an important challenge in social sciences. While the concept of space is frequently used in transnational studies, scholars that specifically address the question of how to conceptualize and how to empirically analyse the spatiality of cross borders practices are rare.

Taking up a transnational and pragmatic perspective in order to bring this issue to the fore, I present the conceptual framework I have developed to examine the logics of the actions of individuals belonging to the “world of train writing”. Train writing is mostly practiced by young men, who frequently travel around European cities to explore their railway networks, paint graffiti on train cars, bring back from their graffiti trips visual “trophies” of their performances, and diffuse them in peer networks.

Based on multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork among Swiss activists “on the move”, in-depth interviews and visual methods, the aim of this paper is, on the one hand, to provide a conceptual framework of transnational social spaces related to motility and exchanges practices in the world of train writing. On the other hand, I will show that urban space is not simply a context of inter-actions but above all, a medium for trans-actions among peers. The world of train writing will be illustrated through what I call the “Action, Bed & Breakfast institution” - an informal guide and host service practiced by “local activists” and “tourist activists”. This institution is at the core of the (re)production of transnational social spaces.

15.00 – 15.45 | Alain Mueller

Grasping the fine line between fluidity and solidity: the notion of rhizome as a methodological tool

In this paper, I will discuss the notion of “rhizome” as a tool designed to help to account for transnational and translocal cultural arrangements that are shared in a dimension that transcends local, regional or national contexts, categories or essences, and the large-scale systems they rely upon.

Although my use of this notion draws on earlier formulations by Deleuze and Guattari, and on its more contemporary reinterpretation by Actor-Network Theory authors, I propose the rhizome as a practical and pragmatic methodological tool, designed to be used in research at two levels: (1) a descriptive one: the rhizome is intended to help mapping out and visualizing the world system under study on a macro-level, (2) a conceptual one: the use of the rhizome, as I understand and design it, constitutes a research policy, which is articulated around two main precepts: (a) taking seriously the role of non-human actors by assuming that in transnational settings and networks, their circulation and their temporary assemblages are as important, if not more so, than those of human actors; (b) setting heterogeneity and fluidity as

default, which therefore posits homogeneity and solidity as temporary and fragile assemblages; thus, this tool is designed to account for groups, spaces, places and scales not as stable entities, but as accomplishments, the results of continual actions, *i.e.* as *makings* and *doings*.

The design of this tool, *i.e.* this pragmatic use of the notion of “rhizome”, was elaborated in a grounded dynamic on the basis of two transnational, multi-situated and *dislocated* fieldworks I have led: (1) the circulation of *hardcore-punk*, a cultural setting commonly associated with the notion of “music-based youth subculture”, and (2) the transnational learning and sharing of specific body techniques related to *street workout*, a physical activity mixing fitness, bodybuilding and gymnastics. I will therefore use insights from both these case studies to illustrate my point.

Workshop speakers

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Practical information

Workshop venue:

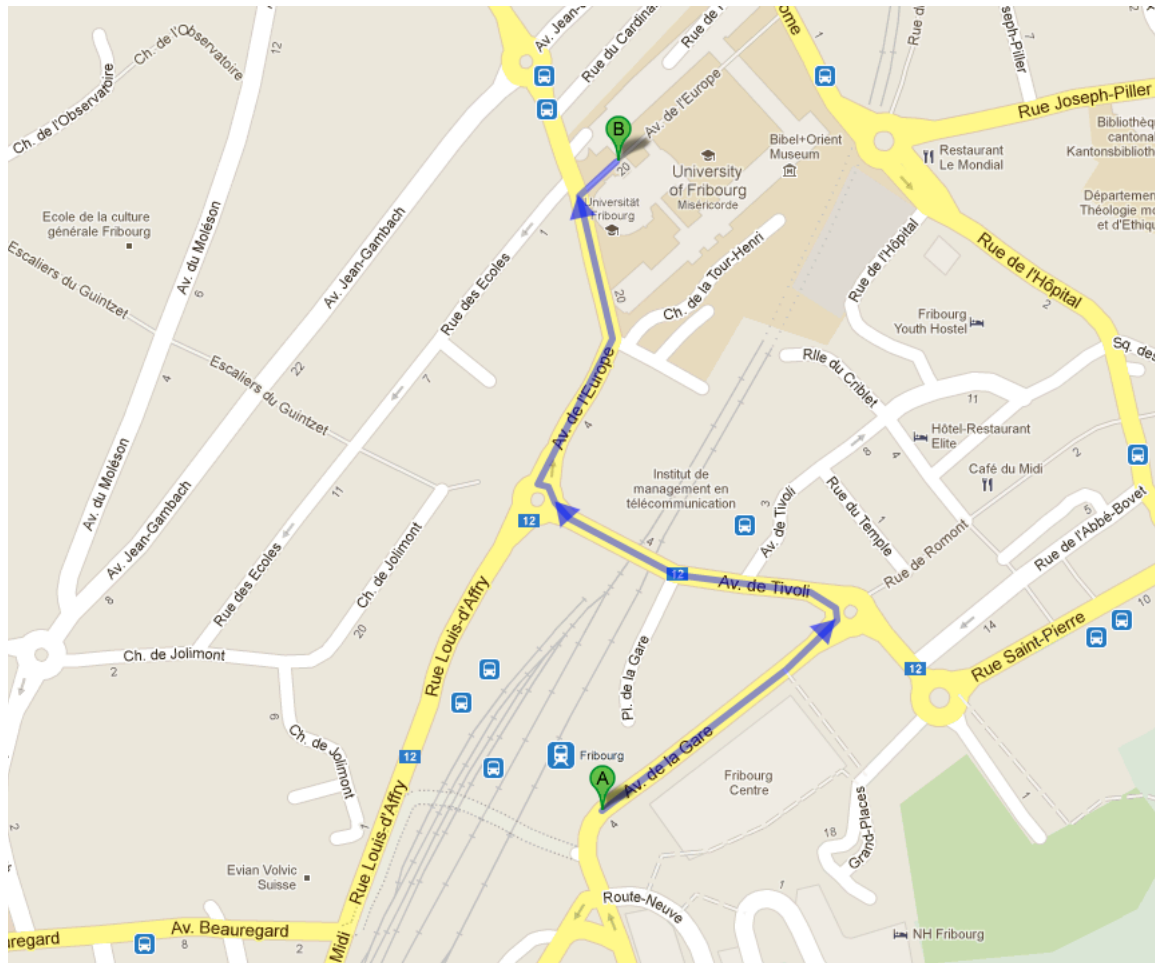
Auditorium 3023

Faculty of Human Sciences (Building 3, ground floor)

University of Fribourg (Miséricorde)

Avenue de l'Europe, 1700 Fribourg

(see map below indicating route of access from the train station)



Fribourg is easily accessible by train from Switzerland's international airports and/or main train stations in Zurich, Geneva, Basel or Bern. For detailed train schedule see www.sbb.ch. The workshop's venue is only a five minute walk away from Fribourg's train station and a ten minute walk to the city centre and the old part of town. Coffee and lunch breaks will take place in building 3.

The workshop is open to the public. For registration please send an e-mail to the workshop administrator until 25.08.2012 at the latest:
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