Belonging in the World

How do we belong in/to the world? For Gloria Wekker, being deeply attached to one place does not exclude having the same feeling regarding other places. Place attachment is not an exclusive love, she can love many countries. Such a cosmopolitan position is rare and remarkable. Recently, the rise of nationalism shows that many citizens are deeply attached to specific people and places, so attached that they don’t want to share these places. When people start to call their country a ‘homeland’, it is hard to live together with ‘others’, as Nadim Rouhana will elaborate in his keynote tonight.

The Emplacement of Belonging

Reflections on Professor Amin Ghaziani’s Keynote lecture

Written@NIAS

Ghaziani, A. (2014), There Goes the Gayborhood? Princeton Studies in Cultural Sociology series. Urban gay districts have long provided sexual minorities with a safe haven in an often unsafe world. But as our society accepts gays and lesbians into the mainstream, are ‘gayborhoods’ destined to disappear?

Comples, L. and V. de Rooj (2016), The sociolinguistics of place and belonging: perspectives from the margins. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2016. This volume shows the relevance of the concepts of ‘place’ and ‘belonging’ for understanding the dynamics of identification through language.

Ask Professor Ghaziani

Is there anything unique in the perspectives that LGBTQ+ communities bring to how we think about belonging, especially its relationship to space and place?

A: Compared to racialised groups, LGBTQ+ people have a weaker sense of our heritage and history because we seldom grow up in families that are also queer. This difference in the experiences of sexuality as compared to race, raises questions for LGBTQ+ people about who we are, where we come from, who are our people, and if we have a homeland. The lack of a homeland, a place where we know we belong, creates greater significance for place in the imaginations of belonging for LGBTQ+ people. We need a place to plant our flag. This means that place is more than just a container or context for something else. For LGBTQ+ people, place is intimately intertwined with our experience of belonging.

Stories of Belonging:

Ex-communication

My grandfather, like myself, happened to be gay. His life, however, was dramatically different from mine. He had to hide his homossexuality as best as he could, by marrying and having 4 children. Despite his efforts, his gynmas came out and he was forced to leave his job as a pastor in the Lutheran church.

This happened in 1955 – a couple of years before his retirement. Since he lived in a house provided by the church, he had to leave his home. The reason for his dismissal spread like wild-fire, and my grandfather decided to move to the other side of the country. He lost all his belongings: his work, his home, many of his friends, as well as his religious community. With the ex-communciation, however, he did not lose his wife, my grandmother. Staying together was considered the least scandalous solution for both of them.

“...they actually rewrite the history of one of the most conservative colonial powers of Europe.”

The 1930s were a harsh time for people like my grandfather. Recently I was part of a research group that investigated hiring practices of Dutch municipalities from the post-war period until the 1950s. As it turned out, the municipalities of The Hague and Amsterdam had assigned special committees to ensure that lesbians and gays would not gain employment in the civil hall. In other cities, such committees did not exist. Homosexuality was not even illegal. Even the idea of having gay and lesbian civil servants was completely unimaginable. This may come as a surprise for those who think that the Dutch have always been tolerant and progressive. Especially as many Dutch politicians love to tell the story about the tolerant and liberal Dutch, they actually rewrite the history of one of the most conservative colonial powers of Europe. Tolerance for queer people only developed in the late 1960s – too late for my grandfather. If only he had known that 50 years after his ex-communication, sexual freedom and equality would be portrayed as quintessentially Dutch.

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Highlights of Today

“As NIAS is a fierce champion of academic freedom, I am particularly looking forward to the panels on this topic.”

Jan Willem Duyvendak

Belonging and Discipline: freedom, Truth and Epistemic Diversity - Part II

Belonging and Discipline: freedom, Truth and Epistemic Diversity - Part I

This panel deals with attacks on academic freedom in various countries - presented by fellows who are at NIAS currently.

Nadim Rouhana will examine the relationship between homeland, nation, and citizenship, and the important distinctions of rights in the homeland versus the homeland.

One attentive writer:

“One thing that really spoke to me was the argument for desire-centered research instead of damage-centered research. As a researcher, I am inclined to focus on the problem in my research.”

Co-creation Practices as Conditions for Belonging

Co-creation Practices as Conditions for Belonging

How did you create the panels?

Nancy Foner, co-chair for the panel ‘Co-creation Practices as Conditions for Belonging’

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