

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 homosexuality as best as he could, by marrying and having 4 children. Despite his efforts, his gayness 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-communication, 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 1950s 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 1970s. 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 city hall. In other cities, such committees did not exist; homosexuality did not exist. 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.



Jan Willem Duyvendak
NIAS Director

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 often unsafe world. But as our society accepts gays and lesbians into the mainstream, are “gayborhoods” destined to disappear?

Cornips, L. and V. de Rooij (2018), **The sociolinguistics of place and belonging: perspectives from the margins Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2018.** This volume shows the relevance of the concepts of ‘place’ and ‘belonging’ for understanding the dynamics of identification through language.

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Studies of Belonging Conference Newspaper

- Friday 11 June 2021 -



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 nativism 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

After mindfully acknowledging the indigenous lands from which the second keynote of the week is delivered, Prof. Amin Ghaziani takes us on a journey through ‘gaybourhoods’ and along gay bars to emphasise the significance of place for what it means to belong. He reflects on how such geographical areas and spaces are more than locations – to many, they are harbours of freedom. Spots where members of the LGBTQ+ community find a safe space to reveal themselves. Places where people become each other's family if their families of origin have rejected them.

Prof. Ghaziani shares a telling example of how Black and brown queer folks are frequently refused entry to such spaces, creating a reality in which even one of the few places they're ‘ought to’ belong in is hostile towards them. He explains how histories of exclusion can give birth to new forms of belonging and highlights how albeit horrific, even racism is not able to destroy the incredible cultural and political vibrance of queer and trans Black and indigenous people of colour. Prof. Ghaziani invites us to walk in the footsteps of these people around the world. If we punctuate our sentences not exclusively with

pain, but with agency and a generative approach, what might we be able to create? After offering several propositions for sketching the agenda of belonging, Prof. Ghaziani concludes by sharing how belonging is not a static outcome we achieve with finality. It is rather an iterative and emplaced process that we use to link ourselves with our local and global, actual and imagined communities.

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.

Interview with Ulrike Kistner;

Coördinator of the thread ‘Practices of Belonging’.

“I tried to create possibilities for debate through this structuring, by placing diametrically opposed papers together.”

What struck you when reading the papers?

The multiplicity of the specters; the locations of the scholars which informs their intellectual positions and approaches. They all have very different takes on Belonging. One looks at inclusive practices while another is much more aware of the tension especially between ethnic belonging and citizenship, and another looks at the exclusive nature of practices of belonging rather than inclusive ones.

How did you create the panels?

I wanted to maintain thematic coherence while retaining different perspectives, disciplines and locations. I tried to create possibilities for debate through this structuring, by placing diametrically opposed papers together. For instance placing a scholar looking at practices of inclusion while another looks at exclusion together in a panel.

What came to the fore in the panels yesterday?

I've been impressed by the productive tension between inclusion and exclusion on one hand and searching for possibilities beyond inclusion and exclusion. Especially with the attempt to go beyond the dualistic inclusion-exclusion, to look for places of multiple belonging, to look for practices of solidarity, co-creation around shared concerns and layered citizenship.

Take-aways

One attendee wrote:

“One thing that really spoke to me was the argument for desire-centered research instead of damage-centered research as I feel that I am inclined to focus on the problem in my research?”

- **Kay Mars**, co-chair for the panel ‘Co-creation Practices as Conditions for Belonging’

“To what extent do individuals in different groups have options in terms of defining themselves? Do those in some groups have more options than others--- and why? And, more broadly, what are the consequences of racial and ethnic categorization for interactions and societal inclusion?”

- **Nancy Foner**, chair for the panel ‘Citizenship and Ethnicity’

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 I

Friday 11 June, 14.40 - 16.05h CEST

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

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

Friday 11 June, 16.10 - 17.35h CEST

This panel looks from the outside (attacks on freedom) and the inside: how do we guarantee internal pluriformity? Reflections come from the members of the NIAS Academic Advisory Board.

Keynote by Nadim Rouhana - “Homeland and the Right to Belong”

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

Check the [full Programme](#) & [Community Map](#) here.

Re-watch today's Keynote, Welcome- and Closing sessions