



– Institute's Colloquium –

Dr. Simone Pfeifer
Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz

The Media of Transnational Social Relationships: Absence and Presence in Transnational Weddings between Dakar and Berlin

Transnational social relationships are characterized by the geographical separation of socially close persons, sometimes over long periods of time. Many studies on transnational migration argue that new technologies can effectively compress time and space to overcome distance – making the physical movement of people (almost) obsolete (Baldassar 2008). Yet rapid or instantaneous communication across distance should not be conflated with intimacy or social closeness, as some scholars remind us (e.g. Hannaford 2014:4).

In this talk, I develop the notion of transnational media practices and explore how images are circulated and appropriated by Senegalese migrants and their families and friends in Senegal. Tracing how absences are acknowledged and presences constructed by means of montage and collage in wedding albums and videos demonstrates the fundamental significance of images – and sometimes their absence – during processes of migration, and in everyday life in transnational settings. Images of absent people travel with people, become digital and mobile, and create gendered spaces of mobility and immobility. Relating the practices of presence and absence during ritual practices and transnational social relationships to discussions on (mediated) co-presence, I show how local notions of absence and presence are strongly linked to wider configurations of love, care, and responsibility, and do not always relate to the ideal of being physically present.

Wednesday, January 8th 2020

4-6 p.m.

Institute of Ethnology

Stadtstraße 21, Raum STU 105 (2.10)

Everybody is welcome!