

52. Hunter-gatherers in a changing world

16533 - Contemporary hunter-gatherers: do we need a new definition?

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): Pyhälä, Aili (ICTA-Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and University of Helsinki, Barcelona, Spain / Spanien); Reyes-García, Victoria (ICREA and ICTA-Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain / Spanien)

Scholars working among hunter-gatherer societies typically rely on a multi-faceted definition which takes into account a) a mode of subsistence based on hunting wild animals, gathering of wild plant foods, and fishing, with no domestication of plants or animals (except the dog) and b) a unique form of social organization largely based on sharing, communal ownership of land and resources, and egalitarian political relations. Such a definition, proposed by Lee and Daly (1999:3), is not without problems, moreover as it is applied to contemporary hunter-gatherers. For instance, scholars have pointed out that virtually all living human groups depend on cultivated food or domesticated animal sources and are integrated at some level in the global market. Similarly, scholars have also highlighted that the categories of wild vs. domesticated species do not account for different regimes of species and landscape management practiced by contemporary foragers. Here we present a review of the evolution of the term hunter-gatherer (or forager) as it is applied to contemporary societies. We examine recent literature on contemporary hunter-gatherers to analyze to what extent groups typically classified as 'hunter-gatherers' conform to the definition, and highlight how current socio-ecological changes affecting such groups challenge the standard definition. We also draw insights from all the papers presented in this session to end with some concluding remarks on what it is to be a hunter-gatherer – both by definition and in practice - in the modern and rapidly changing world.

16532 - Corporal movement and political movement

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): Weig, Dörte (*Institute of Cultural and Social Anthropology, University of Cologne, Cologne, Germany / Deutschland*)

The dancing and structured human movements of the Baka living along the River Ivindo in north-eastern Gabon today take on many different forms. Dancing takes place in diverse ritual and social contexts, involving Edzengui or current pop music videos, in the central village space or in individual dwellings. This talk will give examples of the range of situations in which dancing and singing amongst the Ivindo Baka occur. In particular, I will address how new technical influences are challenging long-standing movement values and the ritualised male-female interaction of an egalitarian society. I will consider the impact of electronically generated music available as a result of changes in livelihood opportunities driven by a growing cash economy; the loss and lack of large ritual gatherings in the Ivindo region; and the way women are gently testing their female role and kinesis. The theoretical approach in this inquiry draws on mobility, body movement and dance theory. My aim is to show how an analysis of Baka dance and structured human movements can provide a window on the challenges the Baka groups are experiencing to their sociality. The examples of current practices of ritual and social dance serve as an indicator of shifting values, as a physical window and bodily commentary on political and ideological change in Baka egalitarianism. Social and cultural change is conceptualised from a perspective which emphasizes human movement as well as material or environmental facts.

16531 - How does social change influence Local Ecological Knowledge acquisition? A case study among the Baka from southeastern Cameroon

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): Gallois, Sandrine (ICTA-Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Barcelona, Spain / Spanien); Duda, Romain (ICTA-Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Barcelona, Spain / Spanien)

Worldwide, hunter-gatherer societies are facing socio-ecological changes that are leading them to adapt their livelihood strategies. In such societies, the transmission of local ecological knowledge (LEK) for subsistence is mostly oral, practical, and embedded in daily activities. As the transmission of knowledge is largely embedded in daily activities, one can assume that time allocation in different activities conditions the transmission and acquisition of knowledge. Working with the Baka, a hunter-gatherer group of the Congo Basin, this study examines how social-ecological changes might be affecting the way local knowledge is transmitted and acquired. In Cameroon, the Baka have been exposed to several socio-ecological changes in the past 50 years, including sedentarization, followed by the recent and progressive adoption of agriculture, schooling, and a market-based economy. Still, some Baka households continue to be semi-nomadic, spending most of their time in the forest and basing their lives essentially on hunting and gathering. Based on both quantitative and qualitative data collected during 12 months, we examine three indicators of social change: adult's daily involvement in different activities, sources of subsistence, and sources of income. We then analyze Baka children's (n=102; ages 5-16) use of time. Our results highlight a decrease in specialized LEK transmission, and our findings suggest that, more than being shaped by parents' livelihood strategies, children's involvement in different activities - and thus in LEK acquisition - is influenced by other tendencies, the most relevant being changes in children's and adolescents' perceptions of adulthood.

16530 - Sharing by a Contemporary Hunter-gatherer Group in a Context of Rural Development in East Kalimantan, Indonesia

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Napitupulu, Lucentezza (Institut de Ciència Tecnologia Ambiental (ICTA) Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), Cerdanyola del Vallès-Barcelona, Spain / Spanien)*

The practice of resource sharing amongst hunter-gatherer groups is being modified with increasing market/national system influences. This study looks into the practice of sharing amongst a contemporary hunter-gatherer society, the Punan from East Kalimantan, Indonesia, and explores differences of sharing practices in relation to individual levels of integration to the market and national economy, as well as their story in a context of national efforts for development in rural and delayed-economy groups. Government cash transfer to the Punan offer a unique opportunity to study how integration to the national system and market economy relate to sharing, as these transfers offer changes both in livelihoods and in economic activities. Based on 12 months of fieldwork and 1762 sharing observations from 118 adults in 2 villages, I present findings on the association between sharing and integration to the market/national system, also in comparison to studies in other hunter-gatherer groups. Results suggest that elements of traditional sharing behaviour still persist, although with variations between individuals and across products shared. Men (more exposed to the market economy than women) or people who visit the town more often, were found to share more goods/products. Individuals tend to refrain from sharing products that are easily stored and have high market value, as in the case of market foods and non-food products. Sharing continues to be a mechanism to distribute resources and might also be a strategy to signal status in the village.