Going Public: Social Sciences and Humanities in the 21st century in Europe

Stream 4: Material Culture and Identity

Students:
- **Grigorios Antoniou**
- **Mircea Cinteza**
- **Rodica Ciopasiu**
- **Simona Elena Ion**
- **Mirela Petrica**
- **Kassiani Plati**
- **Andreea Maria Stanescu**
- **Smaranda Andreea Stoica**
- **Leonie Votteler**
- **Phoebus Zantes**

Relationship Human – Object

- Materiality is memorial
  - gives meaning, stipulates feelings
- Can reveal things that gave meaning at a specific period of time, might not have been obvious at the time
  - Reveals a certain "Weltanschauung" -> world view, ways of being in the world, seeing the world
- Material culture has objective and subjective function, cultural dimension
  - Can "give life" to places, interact with places
  - "Cultural third" that people gather around
  - Enable people, have agency
  - Triggers emotions/feelings -> instant reactions, transports us into ways of thinking/behaving
  - Gives feeling of home and belonging
- Ownership, different concepts -> shared ownership
  - Reveals responsibility and power
  - Change of spheres

Projects and Fieldwork

- Background:
  - Belonging, grounded experience (Hohenneuffen)
  - War, memorial, masculinity, sacrifice (Church of Curtea de Argeș, Monument to the Heroes of the Engineer Arm-"the Lion")
  - Human interaction with nature, nostalgia, meeting point, portal to different times and places (Linden Tree Bucharest)
  - Lighthouse, creation of belonging, highpoints of civilization, looking up to something, symbolism of dark and white, aesthetics creates matrix, creating memetic behaviour and relationships (Pathenon/Acropolis)
  - Meeting places, connecting, daily lives, symbolisms (main square Naphlio, University Square Bucharest)
- Results:
  - Interested in how they interacted with places and experiences
  - Subjective experience, how people interact
  - Materiality changes us, and we change it
  - Origin of people, backgrounds, makes us act in certain ways
  - New ways to use materiality, living materialisation of history today
  - Many layers of social activity, going on at same place and time, multidimensionality

Fieldwork Tübingen

- Arenas of research: Neckarbruecke/-ufer, Botanical Gardens, Neckar Island
- Challenges:
  - Not being embedded in local culture
  - Fear of disruption, reluctance to interfere in privacy, fear of rejection, only getting superficial answers (relationships with people we interview), fear of verbal violence, distinction between opinions and facts
- Advantages of fieldwork in Tübingen
  - No embarrassment for "stupid" questions -> anonymity
  - Curiosity as a foreign student in new environment
  - Fresh view, no prejudices or preconceptions, different social norms -> awareness of what we bring in arena

Potential of Places for Needs and Being in the World

- What did we actually find out there?
  - To be alone, but not lonely
  - Being in non-polluted place, recreational space
  - Having quiet space, oasis, sanctuary, rescue place
  - Antagonism with other people, but also with nature while achieving peace
  - Finding shade below trees, human – nature/surrounding relationship -> nature as a human need, being inspired by nature, being creative
  - Trust and security, feeling safe, feeling at home
  - Recharging, wellbeing -> were smiling, felt uplifted, breathing in and absorbing

Giving Back

- High sense of feeling home, feeling trust, relaxed interaction
  - Existing side-by-side, being part of a community
  - Privileged situation, high sense of consensus and harmony, sanctuary
- Conservation of places of leisure and peace that are threatened
- Overcoming challenges and fears
- Welcome connections between people, but also between people and materiality
- Valuing "simple" things, not taking everything for granted
- Integration, coming together and becoming part of a place, even though we have different origins
- Overcoming conflict and negotiation in public places, accept challenges and certain changes
- Being aware of how people reflect power relations and hierarchies
- Diversity, how different groups can share places without conflict
- Places create ecological consciousness, feedback to society about connection to nature,

-> Making sure that places are protected, being directly involved in conservation, actively fighting for it, claiming places, building emotions and relationships with places