

Conference Abstracts & Biographies

4C – Creating places to belong? Narrating society and the sea across three generations and five countries I

Chair: Anne Trine Kjørholt, Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Organizer: Professor Anne Trine Kjørholt. Norwegian University of Science and Technology, NTNU. Head of research program: Norway as a sea nation. Coastal communities, generation, sustainability, in NTNU's thematic research priority: Oceans.

Session Abstract:

Coastal societies are characterized by being in transition with regard to economies, work, demography, and social-cultural life. The chronic loss of young people in some societies represents a large problem (Gerrard 2008). Studies reveal that local identity and sense of belonging to *place* and 'nature' are important reasons for staying (e.g. Nystad 2003), as well as the presence of activities connected to coastal culture (Gerrard 2008). Interesting questions to be addressed are: How is the coast and the sea narrated and represented as a 'home', and as a place for learning and work? What is the social meaning of sea and the coastal landscape for identity and belonging, for experiences of life quality?

This session explores perceptions and representations of everyday life, work and learning in coastal societies in five countries as these have changed over time, encompassing 1945 to present, in rapidly changing socio-cultural and material contexts.

All the papers are connected to the research project; *Valuing the past, sustaining the future. Education, knowledge and identity across three generations in coastal communities*, funded by Research Council Norway and NTNU, and the research programme: *Norway as a sea nation. Coastal communities, generation, sustainability*. A comparative qualitative research design has been developed, using life-biographies across three generations, supplemented with other methods. The research group is interdisciplinary, including anthropology, childhood research, public policy, education, health science and comparative literature. Six papers are included, examining the various ways in which coastal identities, education, and work opportunities in different coastal societies has changed over time. In some small communities, island identity is imbued with a deep connection to land and sea. Though the data in some contexts show that younger generations do not necessarily pursue fishing professionally, for many the sea continues to have a powerful impact on their identities and sense of belonging.

Australia - Identity and place in small coastal communities in Tasmania, Australia

Sharon Bessell, The Australian National University

Abstract:

Islandness is a defining characteristic of Tasmanian identity (Stratford, 2008). In small coastal communities, island identity is imbued with a deep connection to land and sea, providing a sense of emotional attachment to place, defining social positionality, and shaping economic opportunities. This paper examines the ways in which island/coastal identity and the opportunities available to coastal dwellers has changed over time. It explores both the deep connection to nature and the ongoing tension between preserving and exploiting the coastal environment.

Norway - Narrating the coast as a home across three generations in small coastal communities in Norway

Anne Trine Kjørholt, Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Abstract:

Historically, livelihood in societies by the sea has been a collective responsibility for the whole family, including not only men and women, but also children. Furthermore, work has been an important arena for transfer of knowledge from older generations to younger, and thus development of a variety of different practical skills and knowledge. Learning processes are connected to social relations, identity formation and belonging. Based on life-biographies with three generations in coastal communities, this paper explores how the coast and the sea are narrated and represented as a 'home', and as a place for learning and work. The social meaning of sea and the coastal landscape for identity and belonging, for experiences of life quality across generations will be discussed.

Cyprus - Identities and the Sea: Exploring young people's sense of belonging in a small fishing community in Cyprus

Spyros Spyrou, Professor of Anthropology and Sociology, European University Cyprus
Eleni Theodorou, Assistant Professor, Social Foundations in Education, European University Cyprus, Nayia Stylianidou, PhD Student, Education Sciences, European University Cyprus.

Abstract:

Our paper will draw on interviews with three generations of Greek Cypriots living in a small fishing community in Cyprus which finds itself in decline. Though the data show that the younger generations do not pursue fishing professionally, for many of them the sea continues to have a powerful impact on their identities and sense of belonging.

Ireland - A Place for Learning? – A three generational perspective on formal education, identity and change in peripheral coastal communities in Ireland

Dympna Devine and Aoife Crummy, University College Dublin, Ireland

Abstract:

Our paper will draw on the formal educational experience across and between three generations living within peripheral Irish coastal communities. Focusing on two communities of diverging transitions; values, identity, connections/disconnections to place and community will be explored within the context of formal education. Subjectivities of past, present and future will be illustrated against the backdrop of broader socio-political structures and sustainability discourse, within an increasingly individualized society.