



Exploratory Workshop Scheme

Scientific Review Group for the Social
Sciences

ESF Exploratory Workshop on
**A Home for Science – Research Stations in
Arctic and Tropics**

Finse (Norway), 27.11-30.11. 2013

Convened by:
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and John Manton^③**

SCIENTIFIC REPORT

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1. Executive summary

A Home for Science

The workshop 'A Home for Science – Research Stations in Arctic and Tropics' brought together scholars from anthropology, history and related humanities and social sciences, and with diverse regional expertise, as well as visual artists, to discuss human activities relating to the operation of scientific field stations in non-temperate geographical areas. The aim was to establish a dialogue across regions and disciplines, and to develop publications on the emplacement of science through stations, and on the comparative potential of arctic and tropical science.

Field-stations provide sites of reconnaissance, appropriation, adventure, and shelter. Harboured both laboratories and living quarters for resident scientists or visitors on far-flung circuits of scientific travel, they anchor ecological imaginaries and global futures in concrete locations and material forms. Field-stations are extra-territorial, often belonging to academic institutions in historical centers of exploration and conquest, science and empire. At the same time, they are literally in the field - the object of investigation, and a source of danger and hardship, desires, pleasures and freedoms.

The field-station's peculiar geography intertwines scientific work and domestic life. This hybrid landscape provides a frontier of scientific and technological possibility, and a space of security and comfort – a home away from home. The station's relations, across its own borders and larger distances, are at once physically enmeshed in the field, and institutionally linked to the metropolis. In its siting and in relation to local users of the land and its resources, it replicates asymmetries of epistemological, cultural, and political power. Due to these peculiarities, the field-station offers an exceptional vantage to explore emergent themes in the social studies of science, anthropology and history, geography and archaeology.

A conference about and at a research station

The 'Home for Science' meeting was held over four days at the Finse research station of the University of Oslo, from 27th to 30th of November 2013. Participants arrived mostly in the evening of 26th and left on the morning following the end of the meeting, in order to allow for complete participation and time for social interaction, dialogue and preparation of publications.

Participation numbered 30 from 10 countries, including UK, France, Holland, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden as well as USA, Canada, Tanzania and Kenya. Among the disciplines represented, anthropologists and historians were the majority, with historians of science and science and technology studies as smaller groups, and architects and visual artists providing important input into the programme.

The meeting programme consisted of themed panels with 30 minute papers followed by 15 minutes discussion. Each participant had submitted a 'proto-paper' of 3-5000 words in advance of the conference and focused Her/his presentation on some key aspects of the paper (which had been distributed among participants). While the programme during the day was focused on more academic papers, the evenings were dedicated to the artists presentations, which were given longer time slots to allow for discussion and informal exchanges.

The three days of the conference were organised around distinct sub-themes. The first day was dedicated to 'The station as a home', including the domesticity of scientific habitations and practical relations between the home and its environment. The second day then shifted attention to 'Field, Landscape, Apparatus and Work' that is the materiality of scientific labour and the objects and sites it engaged in, including architecture, landscape and technology. The last day then opened up for larger political and geopolitical questions under the heading of 'Geopolitical Imaginaries, Responsibilities, Hospitalities'. This theme included both the politics of scientific and non-scientific knowledge as well as matters of geopolitical scientific strategies and competition.

The meeting's setting in a remote mountain research station created an exceptional environment for reflection about the conference theme, as well as for social interaction. In order to facilitate the latter, two walks/ski tours (depending on interests and ability) were included in the programme. The mountain hut atmosphere of Finse, with excellent meeting rooms and comfortable fire place arrangements, and the fact that only our group was present – as well as the excellent food and organisation by Oslo University – made for a fantastic environment for academic debate and social interaction.

The overall atmosphere was extremely pleasant, and all participants (who commented during or after the meeting) expressed their satisfaction with the arrangements and that they enjoyed this as a unique event.

2. Scientific content of the event

A. Program Structure:

The conference opened with a formal introduction of the station and Finse, including environmental and security information, first by the Station Manager and then by Sabine Popp, an artist who had lived and worked in Finse for a number of years. This first Evening Art Session marked the first of a series of presentations by Mariele Neudecker, Deborah Robinson, Evgenia Arbugaeva, and Lars Einar Skageberg, following dinner over the four evenings that participants shared at the station.

The academic presentations were grouped around three central themes. 'The Station as Home' provided the focus of the first day and an entry point to the overall themes of the conference. Following a Presentation of the European Science Foundation by Lise Kjølørød, the co-organizers, Wenzel Geissler, Ann Kelly, John Manton and Gro Ween, lead a discussion on the concept of the 'domus' in the context of scientific research, drawing from examples from field stations based in polar and tropical regions. Critical questions were raised about the intellectual merits of a comparative exercise and the elasticity of the notion of the 'fieldstation' when it came to scientific work. These questions were picked up followed by two key note speakers, Anne-Marie Moulin, whose extensive historical work on medical research provided a purview of the interlocking relationship of siting of science and clinical care, and Peter Redfield, an anthropologist, who insights from across his work on astronomy and humanitarian aid to open up issues of the infrastructural extensions demanded by science in the field. Discussion around the 'Station as Home' theme continued into the afternoon with presentations by Götz Hoeppe, Ann Kelly & Wenzel Geissler and Silvia Tomaskova, Noemi Tousiganant & Ashley Ouvrier.

The second day explored the theme of "Field, Landscape, Apparatus and Work". The morning session consisted of presentations by Guillaume Lachenal, Remy Rouillard, Vanessa Heggie, and Rene Gerrets, whose papers raised questions about the physical and conceptual boundary between field and lab, and mediated on issues of embodiment,

habituation and ecology. The afternoon session included presentations from John Manton, Luca Rendina, Martin Skrydstrup, and Gro Ween and which interrogated the meanings and affects of the architecture of the station.

'Geopolitical Imaginaries, Responsibility, Hospitalities' oriented our discussions for the third and final day of the conference. Branwyn Poleykett & Peter Mangesho, began the morning session, followed by Ferdinand Okwaro, Barbara Bodenhorn and Peder Roberts & Eric Paglia. These presentations broadened our discussions to consider issues of ownership and sovereignty and how nationality identity and belonging is fought over and forged through the scientific fieldstations.

The conference concluded with a discussion of central themes and future plans for research, publication and collaborative work.

B. Cross-Cutting Themes:

Participants took up the question of the home in a number of interrelated ways. Drawing on historical and empirical materials, Peder Roberts and Eric Paglia compared the domestic arrangements at the base of the 1950s Norwegian-British-Swedish Antarctic expedition in Maudheim and contemporary private and public arrangements at the arctic station of Ny-Ålesund. Across these two cases they tracked the subtle ways geopolitical and intellectual values are materialized in the built-environment of the station and in the tenor and texture of everyday life. Their work reminds us that while field-stations are extra-territorial, belonging to academic institutions in historical centers of exploration and conquest, the work conducted on these sites is rooted in everyday necessities and comforts. Contributions from Aïssatou Mbodj-Pouye, Ashley Ouvrier, and Noémi Tousignant and from Wenzel Geissler and Ann Kelly also reflect on the running together of scientific work and domesticity, drawing from material collected in the context of a collaborative project on the memories of medical research in Africa. Bringing together work in East and West Africa, these papers explore the ways in which researchers and their local staff dwell in the scientific sites over long periods and how their engagements with each other and with the particular sites of research change over time.

The contestations that arise during that process of mutual habituation were compellingly illustrated by Branwyn Poleykett and Peter Mangesho. Their archival research in Amani, a laboratory in northern Tanzania, showed the struggles of African scientists whose expectations of Amani as a home, and their aspirations of civic advancement in the new Tanzanian nation, failed to tally with the colonial notions of 'service' still at the heart of the institute's agenda. The power of imaginaries of the home to support and shape scientific endeavours was further illuminated by Silvia Tomaskova's research on Russian revolutionaries exiled to Siberia at the end of the nineteenth century. Through impressive ethnographic efforts, these exiles immersed themselves in local life and, in so doing, found a living exemplar of a political vision, which had cost them their home.

The station as a micro-polis was a Leitmotiv of discussions. Drawing insight from Latour and Sloterdijk, Martin Skrydstrup shed light on the aesthetics and layout of North Greenland Eemian Ice Core Drilling (NEEM) to reflect on the ideological commitments of climate research, to forge both ideal citizen-scientists and responsive publics. Barbara Bodenhorn's long-term ethnographic work with whaling Inupiaq communities living in Barrow, Alaska, suggested the ways in which the siting of the research station – here, The Naval Arctic Research Lab (NARL) – can open a space for collaboration, transforming the interesting of

visiting scientists to dovetail more closely with their local hosts. Those expressions of hospitality can also replicate historically sedimented asymmetries of epistemological, cultural, and political power; as Ferdinand Okwaro's work on international research partnerships in Kenya made clear. While the value of knowledge may be framed as a common good, Okwaro reminded us that research is mediated by everyday practices of reciprocity and material exchange and delicate negotiations around access to sites and population, bodies and labour.

The papers drew from a diverse range of geographical expertise – from Guillaume Lachenal's historical reflections on an ecological station in Cote D'Ivoire to Götz Hoeppe's work with visiting astronomers at an Observatory in the Chilean Atacama desert – but the spur of discussion was comparative. The arctic and the tropics represent radically distinct spaces of nature, conquest and imagination and yet these antithetical landscapes are similarly anchored in the research outpost, scientific fieldstation and ethnographer's tent. Giving the ethical questions and geopolitical concerns attendant to circumpolar and equatorial a mundane material focus we hoped to elaborate new conceptual vocabularies that link northern and southern marginal spaces. Peter Redfield's discussion of medical kits and offered a clear entry point into that creative dialogue, suggesting how research infrastructures extend temperate milieu's across space. Remy Rouillard and Vanessa Heggie, describing processes of acclimatization undertaken by Russian oil workers and Alpine Research respectively, showed how the body can also perform that work of stabilization and extension in extreme climates. Gro Ween's collaboration with the artist Sabine Popp described experiments of embodiment work to reflect upon the many meanings of physical presence in extreme contexts.

Sabine Popp was one of a group of artists who in the evenings following dinner (often involving local elk and reindeer meat) showed their work. Evgenia Arbugaeva, a Siberian photographer presented some startlingly beautiful images from her childhood home, Tiksi a once-important Soviet military and scientific base. Mariele Neudecker presented work from a recent trip to Greenland, encouraging the audience to speculate about what defines the line between nature and landscape, and my contemplations on how to define the 'contemporary sublime'. Deborah Robinson presented work conducted at the Wellcome Sanger Institute in the UK; her multi-screen installation Parasite created in response to malaria, raised a number of questions about the disentanglement of research populations from the sites of knowledge production. We also had the pleasure of hearing about the work of Hugh Broughton Architects from Gianluca Rendina and marveling over the recent designs of mobile arctic stations and watching a screening of Lars Einar Skageberg's documentary, An Arctic Space Odyssey, which provides a window in the isolation and political pressure of research in the arctic station Ny-Ålesund, on the remote archipelago of Svalbard during the height of the cold war.

Skageberg's project as well as that of the other artists gave expression to the visceral dimensions of life at the fieldstation, which often escape scholarly analysis. From photographs and super-8 films, installations and multi-media interventions, we were able to reconceptualise the unpredictable forms of contact between humans and their surroundings in these 'dark' and 'unspoilt' areas and begin to come to terms with the multiple ways in which the fieldstation yokes laboratory to outpost, exploration to domesticity, inquiry to survival. A domus of a very particular kind, the field station generates zones of shared living between humans and landscape, scientists and their local collaborators.

3. Assessment of the results, contribution to the future direction of the field, outcome

The conference gained its texture and the general atmosphere of excitement with the subject from its concrete empirical focus, combined with a very wider range of theoretical, methodological and disciplinary approaches. Of particular value was the contribution by visual artists whose works and methodological reflections provided innovative inspiration to the academic participants. These trans-disciplinary and multi-media encounters helped press forward a number of theoretical preoccupations across the fields of Anthropology, Geography, Social Studies of Science, History and Archaeology about the relationship between place and science, the affective dimensions of laboratory lives (past and present), and the material exchanges that underpin the ethics of research.

At the conclusion to our meeting we identified two core problematics which we will interrogate in two special issues aimed at interdisciplinary high-impact journals. For the Social Studies of Science (3S), we have selected a suite of papers that specifically probe the theme of the home of science with particular attention to the materiality of the fieldstation. This special issue seeks to develop and extend discussions on the co-production of science and space by troubling familiar binaries of intimate/detached; somewhere/nowhere; inside/outside and field/lab. Further, by simultaneously situating scientific places in their domestic atmospheres and geopolitical location, we hope to illuminate the private ideals and national visions that animate them, complicating political geographies of science on across scale.

The second special issue which will be submitted to Science, Technology and Human Values, examines 'Science in Exile' and explores themes of expatriation, decolonization and domestication. Less anchored to the particular siting of science, these papers elaborate the longing and desires of fieldwork, and track the movements, in both space and time, that create the conditions of possibility and meaning of scientific practice. Our hope is to draw attention to how space mediates the relationship between the civic condition of the people of science and the civic ideals of the science they generate.

The further aim is to establish a dialogue across regions and disciplines, and to develop proposals and additional publications on the comparative potential of arctic and tropical science. One project plan that arises from this is for a programme grant, to be submitted to the Norwegian Research Council, on 'Cold war medical cosmopolitanisms' (working title), that will explore transnational circulations of expertise and experts, material medica and scientific practices during the 1950s-70s, and the attendant diversity of developmental visions and trajectories.

4. Final programme

PROGRAMME

Tuesday 26th November 2013

From mid-day *Arrival of participants to Finse train station, transfer to UiO station*

18.00 *Drinks followed by supper at the research station*

20.00-21.00 Evening Art Session:

Sabine Popp: Scenic Spaces of Isolation

Wednesday 27th November 2013 – THE STATION AS HOME

8.30-10.30 Opening Session

08.30-9.00 **Welcome and introduction of participants**

09.00-09.30 **Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF)**
Lise Kjølsvold (University of Oslo)

09.30-10.00 **Opening by Convenors: Scientific domus – the station as home**
Wenzel Geissler (University of Oslo)

Ann Kelly (University of Exeter, UK)

John Manton (University of Cambridge, UK)

Gro Ween (Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo)

10.00-10.30 **Tea**

10.30-12.00 Morning Session: Arctic/Tropic/Research/Station

**Anne-Marie Moulin: From the Arctic to the Tropics: Sites of Research on Leprosy
(Bergen 1879; Bamako 1935)**

Peter Redfield: The Edge of Infrastructure

12.00-15.00 **Lunch & Leisure**

15.00-18.00 Afternoon Session: Home and/as field

**Goetz Hoeppe: A ship on a mountain: Place, temporality and the training of visiting
astronomers at an observatory in Chile**

Geissler & Kelly: Amani (Peace). On Heimweh in tropical science

Tea.

Silvia Tomaskova: At home in exile: longing in places of political dreams

Noemi Tousignant & Ashley Ouvrier : How to live in a 'permanent' observatory: Homes, Fieldwork and Family Ties in Niakhar

18.30 **Dinner**

19.30-21.30 Evening Art Session:

Mariele Neudecker: A Contemporary Sublime: Re-framing Perceptions of Landscape

Deborah Robinson: Making Parasite: an installation artwork in response to malaria

Thursday 28th November 2013 – FIELD, LANDSCAPE, APPARATUS AND WORK

09.00-12.00 Morning Session: Outside the station – field, boundary, exposure, climate

Guillaume Lachenal: Measuring the Savannah. The political ecology of the ecology research station of Lamto, Ivory Coast

Remy Rouillard: Making the Body at Home: Russian Oil Workers' Physiological and Psychological Adaptation to the Arctic

Tea.

Vanessa Heggie: Higher and Colder - the success and failure of boundaries in high altitude and Antarctic research stations. Tea will be served during the session

Rene Gerrets: From tool of empire to coveted traditional medicine: domesticating cinchona in NE Tanzania

12.00-15.00 **Lunch & Leisure**

15.00-18.00 Afternoon Session: Station, edifice and apparatus

John Manton: Domestic life at the Yam Barn: furnishing an oasis for science in Nigeria

Luca Rendina: Polar Research Stations: Meeting the challenge of isolated living

Tea.

Martin Skrydstrup: Archimedean assemblages. On the architecture of glaciology at the end of the world

Gro Ween: REMOTE SENSING- remote sensing. An effort to put bodies back into Arctic research

18.30 **Dinner**

20.00-21.00 Evening Art Session:

Evgenia Arbugaeva: Tiksi - An Introduction

Friday 29th November 2013 - GEOPOLITICAL IMAGINARIES, RESPONSIBILITY, HOSPITALITIES

09.00-12.00 Morning Session: Nationality, ownership, sovereignty

Branwyn Poleykett & Peter Mangesho: Making a home for African science

Ferdinand Okwaro: Wonderful research sites: Strategies employed by African scientists in making laboratories in Africa

Tea.

Barbara Bodenhorn: From Cold War to Climate Change: shifting missions and changing social dynamics framing arctic research in Barrow, Alaska

Peder Roberts & Eric Paglia Field stations and the geopolitics of Nordic knowledge production on Svalbard

12.00-16.00 **Lunch and time for informal conversation**

16.00-17.00 **Closing session, future plans**

17.00 **Tea**

17.00-19.00 Film Session and discussion:

Lars Einar Skageberg AN ARCTIC SPACE ODYSSEY (Documentary, 2013)

19.00 **Dinner**

Saturday 30th November 2013

End of Workshop and departure of participants in the course of the day.

5. Final list of participants

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6. Statistical information on participants

The distribution of participants between academic age was as follows:

Post-doc or equivalent non tenured junior: 9

Lecturer or junior faculty: 10

Professor or senior faculty: 6

Artists (age range 28-58): 5

The distribution by sex was:

Female: 16

Male: 14

The distribution by country was:

Canada: 2

France: 3

Germany: 1

Holland: 1

Kenya: 1

Norway: 7

Russia: 1

Sweden: 2

Tanzania: 1

UK: 9

USA: 2