

ISA RESEARCH FORUM

THEORY OF MIND AT WORK: SOCIAL REASONING IN AN URBAN MOROCCAN NGO SETTING

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In this presentation, I will discuss the main results of my doctoral research. My exploration of sociality and cooperation in a work setting in Rabat, Morocco, revealed the importance of overt social reasoning for a group of NGO co-workers in the field of education. This stress on social reasoning was found to be linked to the group's work ethic of action research but also rooted in the way social relations in urban Morocco were lived, which valued the cognitive activity of 'reasoning'. What was striking were the group's joint efforts at making sense of their social environment but also of engaging in various kinds of anticipating, planning and strategizing vis-à-vis other people. I argue that this preoccupation with reading and anticipating the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of other people represents a distinct 'mindreader sociality' which stands in stark contrast to the 'opacity doctrine' found in many Pacific societies where such behaviour is tabooed.

Barbara Götsch recently submitted her doctoral thesis to the University of Vienna. Research for her PhD was funded through the dissertation scheme of the humanities section of the Austrian Academy of Sciences while she was based at ISA. She is a trained anthropologist (Vienna & LSE), linguist (Vienna) and mediator (Vienna). Her research interests are in cognitive and political anthropology in North African and Southeast Asian societies, with an emphasis on sociality, (situated) cognition, social learning, urban elites, as well as the anthropology of work.

