The Land-Grab Trap. Is there a Will to Govern Global Land-Grabbing? #AIGNetwork

Birgit Müller
October, 2014

How to govern the “global land rush” was at issue in the final negotiations on *Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems* at the Committee for World Food Security (CFS) in Rome from the 4th to the 8th of August 2014. For a week, a policy drama unfolded. On stage were private sector organisations clearly supported by the United States, Canada, Japan and Russia who wanted to prevent any regulation of investments. Opposing them were civil society organisations supported by Brazil, Ecuador, the Philippines and to some extent and on particular issues, Indonesia, Pakistan, Egypt, Iran and Sudan who wanted commitments from the governments that they would assume their obligations to govern investments in such a way as to realise the right to food as a national priority. China and India were conspicuously invisible and the EU was

unable to hold on to any principled positions. To the disappointment of civil society organisations most Africa countries were ultimately swayed to endorse the US position.

Food producers and land and water users have experienced a long-simmering crisis: over several decades governments (with IMF/World Bank pressure) and corporate markets have undermined or destabilized their production systems, investors and states have seized land, wetlands and forests, and farm/plantation/food workers have suffered declining wages and exploitative working conditions. Altogether, these deteriorating conditions triggered, over the last quarter century, a vast range of struggle, mobilization, and development of alternatives in all regions. By the first decade of the 21st century the crisis came to a head, as financial speculation and monopoly pricing of agro-inputs combined with rising energy costs of industrial foods and use of cropland for agro-fuel production triggered a spike in food prices worldwide.

In June 2008, the *Terra Preta* Forum, organised by civil society alongside FAO's Food Summit, noted:

> *The serious and urgent food and climate crisis are being used by political and economic elites as opportunities to entrench corporate control of world agriculture and the ecological commons.*

Crisis conditions provided cover for political and economic elites to impose their will. Transnational and domestic corporate investors, governments, and local elites took control over large quantities of land (and its minerals and water) to produce food, feed, biofuel, and other industrial commodities for the international or domestic markets. The WorldBank entered into an alliance with the G8 and corporate philanthropists like the Gates Foundation, feeding the world the idea that private agricultural investment was the solution to crisis. Conversely, the obvious crisis in multilateral governance also made the reform of the Committee on World Food Security possible. The restructuring of the CFS in 2009 opened up a space for the food insecure populations themselves, among them small

producers from all over the world. For the first time in UN history, civil society organisations and private sector organisations were sitting with representatives of governments around the table to discuss and make proposals about food policy issues.

Pause in the negotiations in the Red Room of the FAO

In parallel and behind closed doors, the World Bank, along with IFAD, FAO and UNCTAD crafted *Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment* (PRAI). Following the rationale of self-regulation of the private sector, the Bank's PRAI principles do not include any reference to binding legal instruments, for example, national laws and regulations, or international human rights law; rather, they build on corporate social responsibility frameworks such as the Equator Principles, the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI), Santiago Principles, OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, and numerous commodity or theme specific schemes. The Bank's PRAI principles were never

submitted for approval to the governing bodies of the four institutions that advanced them.

At the plenary session of the CFS in October 2010 civil society organisations led the charge to reject the Bank's PRAI and support a CFS-based process for developing responsible agricultural investment principles (rai), which would recognize the overwhelming role of small-scale producers in feeding the majority world and working the land and the right to food.

Normative framework

However institutional memory is wanting. In May 2014 when the First Draft of the CFS Principles for responsible investment in Agriculture and Food Systems was negotiated after lengthy preparations and consultations all over the world and over the internet the urgencies from hunger riots in the cities and starving rural populations seemed already somewhat forgotten and the First Draft was largely devoid of detail and concrete commitments. The major tension in the CFS deliberations was between a rights based approach defended by civil society organisations that tried to imbue the notion of investment with a moral and normative dimension, and a capital based approach asserted by the private sector, that emphasized that rights based language was the wrong idiom to talk about investments. Quoting the Webster dictionary private sector spokespersons defined investment narrowly as "investing money for profit, the action or processes of capital formation". The member states of the CFS assumed positions that covered the whole range of positions between these two positions, or rights versus profits.

Whenever civil society suggested "negative" verbs such as "prevent" they were immediately reminded to use positive language. However private sector representatives were also reluctant to include constraining verbs such as "ensure" in the principles that would firmly commit investments to a positive impact. They preferred formulations such as "promote", "contribute" or

“encourage”. It became apparent that many governments, most conspicuously the US, Canada and Russia countered any attempt to introduce words like “regulate” or even “govern”.Proposals to add concrete policy suggestions such as public procurement, public food stocks and distribution were immediately countered by remarks made Canada and the US “to keep it simple, keep it short”.

The distinctiveness of small-scale production

In the negotiation everybody from the private sector and the most liberal of governments to civil society were formally in agreement that investments by “smallholders” were important However, to determine who actually was a smallholder was difficult.The PSM and government allies routinely lumped “smallholders” with “large-holders” as if they practiced the same kind of agriculture, and in the name of “balance”.

> *This artificial balancing of different “stakeholders” pervaded the CFS dialogue.The PSM and its allies claimed to be simultaneously “pro-poor” and “pro-growth,” and yet “pro-growth’ policies have, by the World Bank’s own admission, regularly discriminated against the poor in the name of “trickle-down” capital growth, prioritizing large investors whose market horizons do not include majority needs. This claim stems from an unproblematic assumption that any increase in investment is positive.*

But the pursuit of “capital formation” often implies the progressive transformation of production models to make farmers dependent on purchased inputs: on seeds they are not allowed to reseed, pesticides and herbicides.Outside of the sanitized arena of the FAO’s Red Room, large-scale investments often involve smallholders in out-grower schemes for agricultural investors offering them grower’s contracts for which they carry the entire responsibility if the harvest fails, incurring debts from buying expensive inputs when they cannot reimburse. Accordingly, investment principles apply neither *equally* nor *similarly*

across this divide. As a spokesperson of the Via Campesina phrased it: “we do not belong to the private sector.”

Civil Society organisations managed to get a clear distinction between farmers that are smallholders and farmers that are private business inscribed in the paragraphs 47 to 50, but the principles fail to clearly differentiate between regulating corporate investment in land and other resources as value capture, and supporting small scale producers and workers as involved in multifunctional livelihood activities – that is, the right to produce food (rather than the right to commodify food). The overwhelming economistic language regarding investment, privileges financial investment and trivializes small producer culture, livelihood and “natural capital”. While the report of the High Level Panel of Experts on smallholder investments recognized “smallholders as the main investors in agriculture” the rai principles undermine that statement by affirming the truism that they are the main investors only *in their own* agriculture.

For civil society empowering small-scale producers and workers means to consolidate their knowledge and skills in working the land ecologically and harvesting, processing and marketing foods for domestic consumers, and meeting the needs of public procurement schemes for redistribution and emergencies. These are the basics of “food sovereignty” — a term that found no entry into the principles. “Agro-ecological approaches” are mentioned in Principle 6 but only to be followed immediately by an emphasis on “sustainable intensification”, a euphemism created by the biotechnology industry and its allies to promote genetically modified proprietary seeds as a “package of desirable and appropriate technologies” that would offer solutions to climate challenges, cold, heat and excessive moisture and increase nitrogen uptake through “genetic intensification”.Hidden behind the two terms agro-ecology and sustainable intensification, two opposing models for the future of agriculture thus get amalgamated, a corporate led model of high-tech agriculture and a model

building on the creativity and ingenuity of small-scale producers supported by participatory agronomic research, as the states, unable to take clear decisions, manouvred in between these two models.

What Role for the State?

One of the most heated but at the same time diplomatically disguised debates occurred about the inclusion of the imperative "do no harm," taken from the multilaterally endorsed Ruggie Principles which make business enterprises responsible for protecting and respecting human rights and for providing remedy in case of infringement. These principles endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011were in many respects precursors of the rai principles that stressed States' human rights obligations when they legislate for business enterprise. As Marc Edelman shows in an earlier *focaal* blog, discussions are just beginning in Geneva to make these principles compulsory.

> *In spite of this fact, however, the two major global players, the United-States and China supported by the private sector and Canada, resisted including the "do no harm" principle. As one of the spokespersons of the Private Sector phrased it: "It is up to countries in the plenary to decide whether they would want to adopt such absolutist language."*

The final draft of the principles fails to put strong emphasis on regulating investments. While it pays lip service to governance of investments by States in the public interest, it lacks the mention of any concrete strong measures. Effective public policies proposed by civil society are rephrased as extremely general statements of intent or remain anecdotal and ad hoc.CSM has been able (we think quite successfully) to sway the document, which would otherwise have been a monument to market driven development, in the direction of rights based language. However, the phrase "realization of the right to food in context of national food security" rings empty, as it is never systematically addressed –

probably because of (dead) WTO think. The document that appears to be about investment, avoids really tackling it – because the less said the better from the PSM/state perspective. At the next CFS Meeting in October 2014, Civil Society Organisations will not endorse the document, if Canada gets its way of eliminating the "free, prior and informed consent under the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples" (principle 9iv) from the document. However the thorny question is: will they endorse it, if Canada cedes on this point?

Implementation and monitoring by both the states and the CFS are promoted half-heartedly in the principles. The watchdog role is handed over to civil society. As the document states in paragraph 53, civil society organisations "are also encouraged to advocate for the appropriate use of the Principles, serve as drivers for transparency and accountability". How are they supposed to play that role if the principles themselves have no teeth. Will the CSM get caught up in a hegemonic "land-grab trap" standing in for principles, that trade unions, indigenous peoples and other organisations, consulted all over the world, wanted strong and incisive, and that turned out weak and entirely outside of their control?

This article was originally published in Focaalblog. It is reproduced here with the authorisation of the authors.

Interview with Birgit Müller

#AIGNetwork

Allegra
October, 2014

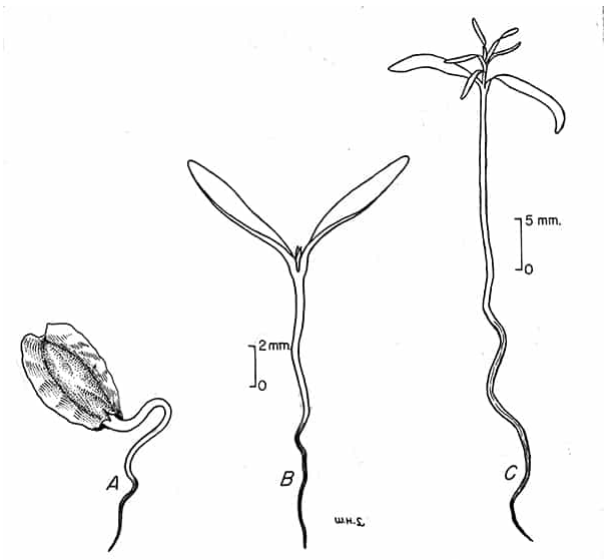
Birgit Müller is a senior researcher at Centre National pour la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). She is based in Laboratoire d'Anthropologie des Institutions and des Organisations Sociales (LAIOS) at Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris. She is also the coordinator of the EASA network for the Anthropology of International Governance. Last July, during the annual meeting of the EASA in Tallinn, we discussed with her the possibilities of collaboration between Allegra and AIG. There are many exciting projects ahead of us, but for the moment, we would like to take the opportunity of this virtual meeting to introduce Birgit's work as well as the history of the network.

Birgit Müller, you obtained a PhD from Cambridge University with a thesis in anthropology on alternative movements in West Germany. Can

you tell us a bit more about this early research?

The choice in the beginning of the 1980's of leaving African history behind and writing a PhD thesis on alternative movements in West Germany was linked to accounts I had to settle with Germany, my own society. While still in high-school the political climate in West Germany became more and more oppressive, stifled by the persecution of left-wing activists, teachers and civil servants accused of sympathy with left-wing terrorism. The emergence of the alternative movement was like a breeze of fresh air. Activists tired of authoritarian communist parties, ecologists and anarchists, the so-called spontis, came together to create all kinds of small initiatives, enterprises, housing communities that were radically anti-authoritarian, paid themselves the same salaries, refused to consider time at work differently than time off work and wanted to produce and promote useful objects. I set out to explore how these people were consciously involved in a social experiment in which they were at the same time the experimenters and the test subjects.

They experimented with different forms of working together, attempted to find forms of expressing antagonisms and divergent opinions without succumbing to insolvable conflicts. I showed the accomplishments and limits of such an approach of wanting to plant in the midst of capitalist society the seed for a new society.

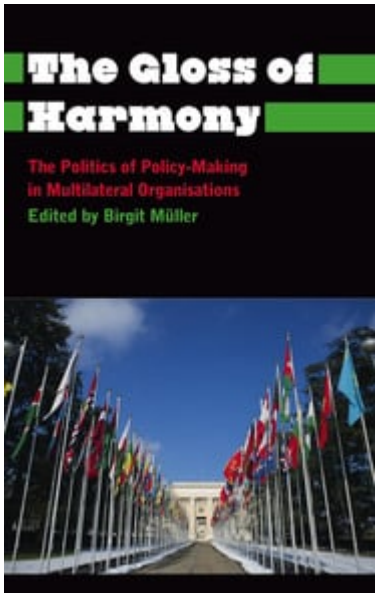


Ultimately the alternative enterprises that I studied were unable to thrive while the economic system worked against them and most disappeared after the fall of the Berlin Wall when capitalism celebrated its victory over eastern European socialism. When I did my PhD this type of research in my own society was still considered exotic even at Cambridge.

Since your second monograph, Disenchantment with Market Economics: East Germans and Western Capitalism (Berghahn Books 2006), you redirected you research towards the anthropology of international organisations. What, in your view, is the added value of anthropology for the study of international governance?

International governance actually invaded my fieldwork when multinational corporations took ownership of former socialist enterprises that I was studying in Eastern Europe in the 1990s. Western managers went on a civilizing mission teaching the staff of former state-owned enterprises western management philosophy instead of socialist ideology. International governance was also present and decisive in the controversies around another form of appropriation: the emergence of intellectual property rights over living organisms, in particular seeds, which became one of my research focuses in the last ten years. As an anthropologist I wanted to see the people behind the international organisations, how do people in these organisations think, how do they take decisions, what is the social life of the documents they produce?

> *Understanding these big organisations as made by people with their contradictions, interests, strengths and weaknesses would also give tools for action to those who are affected by international governance, might provide strategic clues for how to influence the directions these constantly changing organisations take.*



You recently edited a collective volume entitled '[The Gloss of Harmony](#)' with Pluto Press. The book focuses on the official objectives and unintended consequences of international governance. Why did you choose such an angle? What are the main ideas that come out of the book?

In my research in the [Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations](#) (FAO) and the [Committee for World Food Security](#) (CFS) I followed controversies about agricultural biotechnologies and land-grabbing. What impressed me was how these controversies that struck the heart of world food security and challenged enormous economic interests were rendered technical and harmonized by the mechanisms of governance that these organisations used. Intrigued by these findings and by the methodological challenges research in such large multi-facetted organisations poses I searched for other anthropologists working on international organisations that were encountering similar challenges. I brought them together in Paris in 2008 and 2010 to discuss methods and tease out the mechanisms of governance the international organisations that we were studying had in common. The book grew out of these exchanges.

The first mechanism we identified was the capacity of organisations of the UN system to render political conflicts technical, reducing them to technical issues of measures and numbers, of methods and 'best practices'. We found what Tania Li phrased ' the discourse of good governance' that focuses on the capacities of the poor rather than on the practices through which one social group impoverishes another. The second mechanism we found was the increasing tendency of international organisations to position themselves as 'neutral or competent

brokers' between diverse interests, between donor and receiver countries rather than as the warrants of Human Rights on which the UN system is founded. Contestation was brought into the arena of UN-organizations not so much through its own democratic mechanisms but from the outside by a whole set of actors that gravitated towards the organisations and were drawn into its realm. How these non-State actors were educated, formatted and disciplined and became skilled at moving within these structures and across scales of governance was the third mechanism we identified.

You are a specialist of GMOs issues. What are the main international institutions in charge of developing norms and regulations in the field of agriculture? Why do you think it is important for anthropologists to be involved in such organisations? What kind of knowledge can they bring to the debate?

A whole bundle of international organisations deal with transgenic organisms in agriculture, with the health, sanitary and phyto-sanitary problems they pose, with the intellectual property rights that are attached to them. From the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), to the FAO, from the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to the World Health Organisation (WHO), all develop guidelines, administrate agreements on aspects of GMOs, but only a few have the possibility of actually constraining states to follow their rules. The most powerful one is obviously the WTO with its arbitration committee that can actually force states to accept its verdicts and apply penalties. The Human Rights based organisations of the UN system can only recommend and advise.

What one also has to look at are the international investor state arbitration

committees housed by organisations like the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID), that is part of the World Bank Group and operates outside of national legislations. Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITS) and Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreements have become a global economic fashion as the United States, Europe, Canada, India and China have signed a series of free trade agreements among themselves or with smaller trade partners.

> *Some of these agreements undermine the precautionary approach some states still uphold to restrict the introduction of GMOs into their agriculture and these arbitration committees operate under the radar of democratic policy making.*

The problems such international governance poses for the regulation of GMOs but also for many other issues are thus enormous. Anthropologists can contribute to making them perceptible. I think the strong point of our discipline is that as anthropologists we never forget that international governance always affects concrete people in concrete places and situations. We should thus retranslate these extremely complex international regulations and agreements into their concrete impacts on people and the environment.

Our task should also be to penetrate as best we can these centres of power and unveil their formal and informal decision-making processes. This is of course all the more difficult when these organisations are powerful. Then they are also mostly opaque and closed to the public. We could become specialists for unveiling opacity, secrets, shady deals, for rattling at closed doors. Anthropology has a long tradition for doing that.

As a coordinator of the EASA Network on the anthropology of international governance, can you tell us a few words about the history of the network? Who were the founding members? When was it created?

The idea of creating a network of some sort emerged out of the Paris workshop of 2010. The people who took part in this meeting wanted to continue discussing

without putting in place a heavy bureaucratic structure. To create an EASA network that was not restricted to European members seemed ideal for that, as it gave regularity to the network meetings at EASA conferences and EASA even provided seed money for meetings outside of that schedule.

What is the main purpose of the network?

The main purpose of this network is to allow the increasingly numerous anthropologists who work on international governance to rapidly find partners with whom to exchange ideas, follow up cross-cutting issues that concern their particular field and find out what has been recently published about international governance.

What have been the main achievements of the Network since its creation? Are there any publications you would like to bring to the attention of our readers?

The main achievement probably is that we kept the issue of international governance going with workshops at the EASA and AAA conferences. The book from the Paris workshops came out. On a more practical level, we created individual web profiles for each member which present the issues members are interested in, list their publications and refer to readings they recommend. On the Network pages we also announce events and encourage members to announce new publications, articles or books with a short description. This possibility has not been used sufficiently by the members yet and could also be used by non-members as long as the publication deals with the anthropology of international governance. It is very simple and members just have to send their abstract of the article or book with or without a title picture of the book to me or/and to Eli

Bugler at webweaver@easaonline.org

Which direction would you like the Network to take in the future? How do you think the Network could better contribute to the production of scholarship in our small sub discipline?

The network has two very strong points: one is the political relevance. One cannot think anymore about politics and policy-making without considering the international dimension. Political and economic anthropology has to embrace this dimension if it does not want to loose its link with reality. The second strong point of the network is methods. We try to think in common how we could study the international dimension of governance, with what methods. How can we succeed in making acting individuals and groups behind international governance visible?

A call for further discussions of methods was strong in the last network meeting in August in Tallinn. Members suggested to look at infrastructures of international governance: buildings, websites, meeting rooms. They were

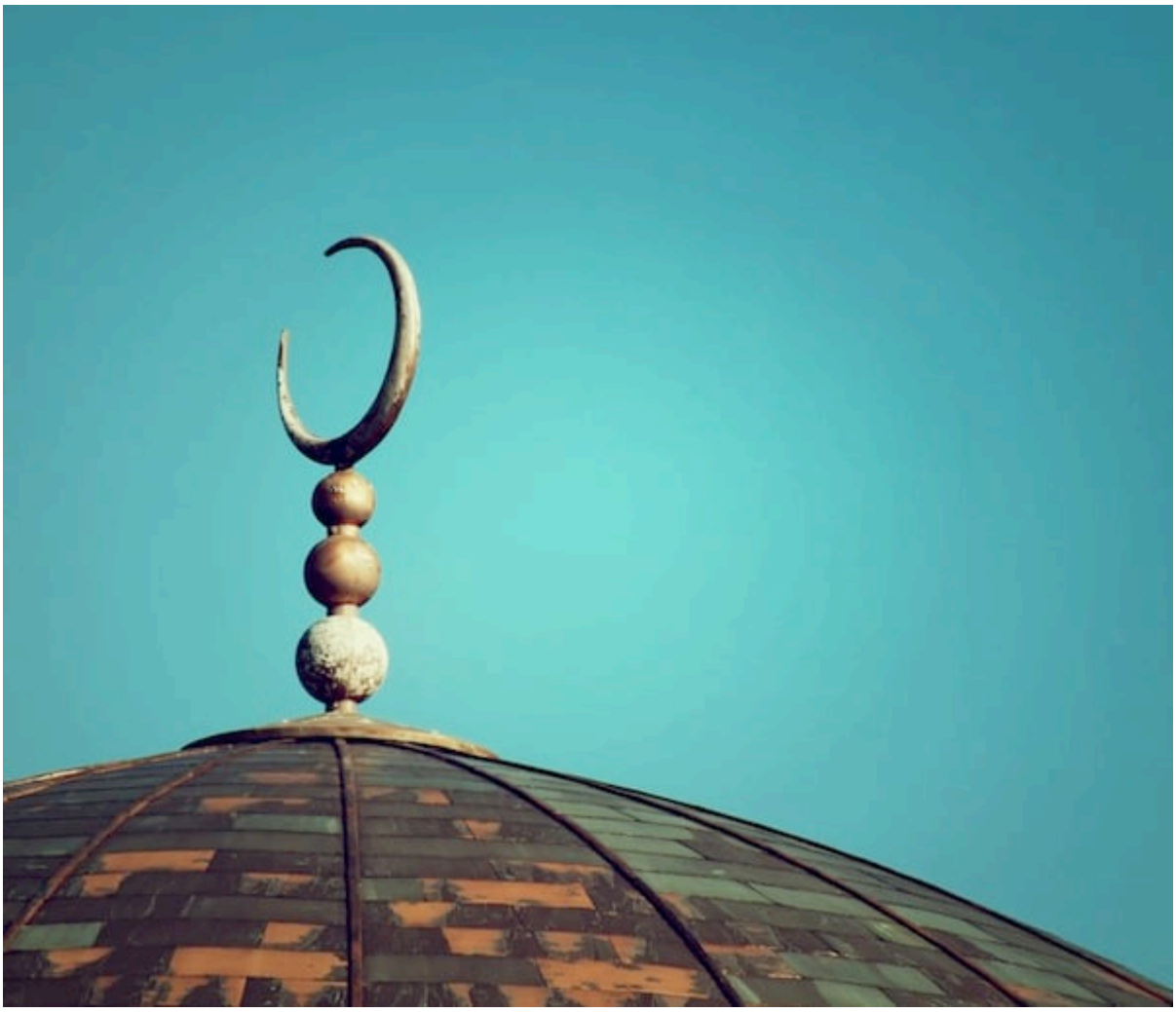
interested in the social life of documents and how to study it on paper, in meetings, on websites and relatedly how to become literate with the formal legal documents as an anthropologist. Another methodological question was how to study policy translation chains, processes by which policies are translated into real action on the ground. It was suggested to focus on global governance and self-governance through ethical regulations and global codes of conduct, to follow chains of decision-making and the methodological problems related to this. There was also a strong interest in following individuals in and out of international organisations.

Many of these issues are not limited to questions of international governance only and concern members of other networks, for example the EASA Network on the Anthropology of Law and Rights, the Network on Social Movements or the Network on the Anthropology of the Economy.

> *I would like to see a stronger cooperation between networks and I would like to see young anthropologists without an established position and older established ones to take initiative, dig into the resources we have laid out for them and organise meetings, special issues, workshops. I will be happy to support them as best I can.*

Islam and Public Controversy in Europe #anthroislam

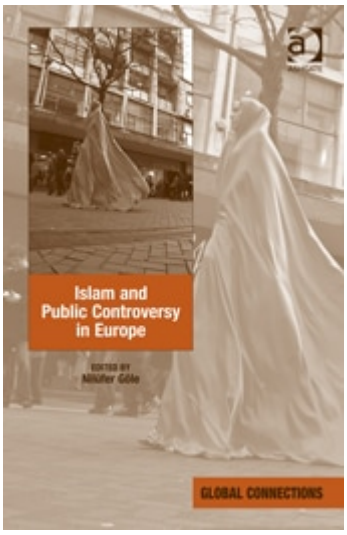
Daniele Bolazzi
October, 2014



Nilüfer Göle, ed. *Islam and Public Controversy in Europe.* Farnham: Ashgate, 2013. 262 pages. ISBN: 978-1-472-41313-0

Nowadays Islam plays a pivotal role in the social reality of Europe. The growing number of Muslims living within European countries has raised important questions related to their social and legal integration. The aim of the book, edited by Nilüfer Göle 'Islam and Public Controversy in Europe', is to provide an analysis of the effects related to the presence of Islam in Europe, highlighting its main aspects and problems. This volume is the result of two international conferences that were held in Paris in October 2011 and May/June 2012. The purpose of these conferences was to analyse the ways in which European public spheres have been shaped by controversies related to the topic of religious diversity.

In this regard, the notions of *public sphere* and *controversy* represent two basic epistemological tools that the contributors of this volume have adopted in their analysis. While the notion of public sphere is employed to identify the space in which Muslims gain visibility, and where the confrontation between Islam and Europe takes place, the notion of controversy refers to those issues that this confrontation raises.As Göle interestingly points out, the notion of controversy is used to study 'the emergence of new actors in unexpected places.' (Göle, Chapter 1).



In using these two notions, the authors focused their analysis on the challenge that the presence of Muslims values (such as democracy, freedom, equality) that are usually defined as the bases upon which European identity is built. This is due to the fact that the presence of Islam within the borders of Europe urges a reconsideration of the common understanding of well-established concepts such as secularism and pluralism (Balibar, Chapter 3). In this regard, it could be useful to ask if the socio-legal implementation of secularism and pluralism takes place in accordance with their epistemological principles. Whether we refer to the controversies related to the ban of the face-veil (Amir-Moazami, Chapter 7), or the different understanding that Islamic and Western traditions give to the public and private domains (Cesari, Chapter 4), it seems that secularism may have different implications for European and Muslim citizens.

In this case, the core of the issue consists in the difficulty of establishing a clear

line between the legitimacy to declare certain customs as illegal, and the duty to respect the religious diversity that Islam embodies.

It is under this perspective that, within 'multicultural' Europe, Muslims play a role of significant otherness. This fact implies that they are perceived as an element of *diversity*,whose traditions and (moral) rules cannot therefore be integrated within the different European legal systems. In highlighting the key aspects of this issue, *Islam and Public Controversy in Europe* challenges this position showing that problems related to the complete integration of Muslims, depend on the mistaken picture of Islam that Europeans hold. What is at stake, therefore, is not just a matter of social and legal integration, but also concerns how Islam is perceived and defined in Europe. A clear example is represented by controversies over the construction of mosques.

Unlike other places of worship, such as churches or synagogues that are deemed inherent to European tradition, mosques are perceived as an element that is very alien to European culture (Avcıoğlu, Chapter 5). The opposition against the construction of mosques becomes even more vehement when it concerns the erection of minarets. This is due to the fact that they are perceived as the symbolic representation of the radicalization of Islam within European territory (Allevi, Chapter 6).

What these controversies underline is that Muslims are often perceived and depicted as a religious diversity that is too different to be part of Europe.

This particular attitude may force autochthonous Muslims of Europe, like the Bosniaks for instance, to abandon their Islamic roots in order to become ‘European’ (Velioğlu, Chapter 19). As Tolan argues in chapter nine, the way in which Islam is portrayed in Europe is the result of a ‘deforming mirror’ that embodies more the fear of Islam, rather than its actual picture.

However, the relation between Us/Them, which characterizes every encounter with diversity, is not the only issue related to the presence of Islam in Europe. Muslims, either those who are immigrants or those who were born in Europe, face the challenge of respecting European laws without transgressing their religious duties. Is it therefore possible for Muslims to conciliate Islamic rules with European ones? This question deals directly with issues related to the problem of integration.

What the book seems to suggest is that this integration may be achieved through the adoption of some cultural notions that belong to either European or Islamic tradition.

Laegard (Chapter 10) discusses the case of Danish cartoons to show how this and other non-legal controversies can be approached through the concept of 'civility', which implies setting up 'social interactions with strangers in a non-violent way.' This perspective is of great interest since it emphasises the importance of equality in diversity – giving the same position to *others*' claims. Similarly, the concept of *halal* is employed as cultural means to enable the social integration of Muslims in the everyday reality of European societies, covering different aspects of cultural and social life (Yassine, Chapter 14).

Along with its legal and social aspects, the process of integration has to also deal with a specific imaginary embedded in the historical coexistence of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam in Medieval Europe. On the one hand, the historical Islamic

heritage of Spain has been employed to facilitate the integration of Muslims (Hirschkind, Chapter 18), while on the other hand, this past religious pluralism is challenged by showing that it was less harmonious than it was depicted (Anidjar, Chapter 17). In focusing it's analysis on issues that spring from the interaction between Muslims and European citizens or institutions, this book highlights specific features and problems related to a Muslim presence in Europe. Despite the contributors of this volume dealing with different case studies, they all show that an analysis of the process of integration cannot be focused solely on its legal aspects. Rather, it has to also consider those problems related to the implementation and fulfillment of daily duties and needs. It is in this regard that the Europeanization, as Göle called it (p.6), of Islamic terms such as *halal* or *Shari'a* becomes relevant. Since it represents an attempt to conciliate Muslim traditions with European standards of behaviors, posing a serious challenge to Islamophobic and xenophobic movements.

Overall, this book is a necessary read for those who are interested in topics related to religious pluralism, immigration, socio-legal integration, and Muslim diaspora. However, due to the clarity of its exposition, scholars and students who are not familiar with the above-mentioned topics will benefit from reading this volume.

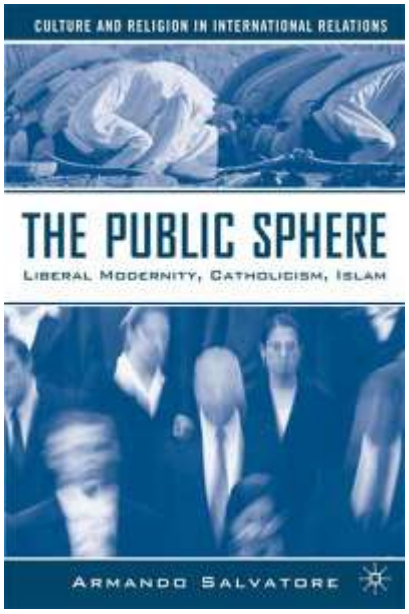
The Public Sphere: Liberal Modernity, Catholicism, Islam by

Armando Salvatore #anthroislam

Chris Moses
October, 2014

Of Allegra's excellent list of recent publications pertaining to Islam, *The Public Sphere: Liberal Modernity, Catholicism, Islam* is perhaps the least anthropological. Nevertheless, I was glad to get the opportunity to review Professor Armando Salvatore's book, one of a remarkable number he has written in recent years on the topics of Islam, modernity, social practice, and the common good.

Armando Salvatore, *The Public Sphere: Liberal Modernity, Catholicism, Islam. Series: Culture and Religion in International Relations*. Palgrave Macmillan (2007). 0230622313. 304 pages.



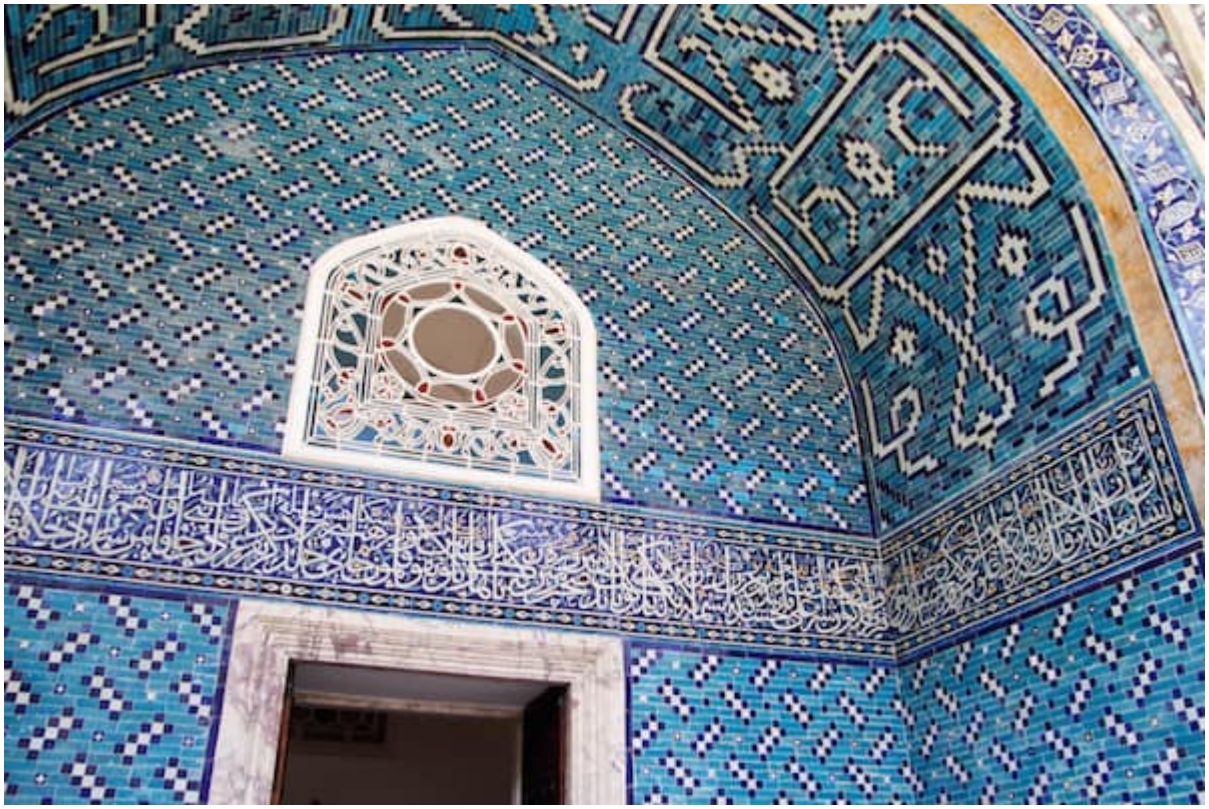
Since the English translation of Jürgen Habermas's *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, the notion of a 'public sphere' has become a central resource within academic circles and further afield. And yet, as others have observed, Habermas underplayed the role of religious traditions in his account. Salvatore suggests that 'this gap has been partly filled' by theorists such as Charles Taylor, Craig Calhoun, Adam Seligman and Shmuel Eisenstadt. His aim is to go beyond these figures by 'fill[ing] the gap in a more systematic way by devising a genealogical approach to the public sphere through the analysis of key transformations within Western traditions' (2). Genealogy here is understood as 'a history oriented, civilizational contextualization of communication and of its normative conditions' (10). For Salvatore, crucial to his approach, and indeed understanding the work as a whole, is 'an investment in reconstructing a sociologically viable notion of tradition' (13). So, while Habermas 'implies that tradition is by definition nonreflexive and not subject to an inherent process of revision', Salvatore's text aims to show that 'traditions are mainly forms for shaping, collating, and governing modes of speech and dialogue, and reasoning into synoptic ensembles which are in a permanent state of unbalance' (74).

> *The book offers a series of ambitious, impressive and sophisticated theoretical and interdisciplinary discussions, mobilising figures such as Baruch Spinoza, Giambattista Vico, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Talal Asad, Alasdair McIntyre, Taylor and Eisenstadt, and concepts such as the Axial Age, telos, poiesis, phronesis, and publicness understood as an ego-alter relationship.*

Having set out the problematic nature of the modern understanding of the public sphere, Salvatore uses the first two chapters to refine his approach. In Chapter 1 he aims to disentangle some key terms, specifically 'tradition', 'religion' and 'civilization', while in Chapter 2, he seeks to develop a notion of 'discursive

tradition' that 'ties… life form and language game, and thereby circumvents the pitfalls of phenomenologically impregnated visions of the "lifeworld", as well as postphenomenological versions of pragmatism that resist incorporating a notion of tradition' (72). The purpose of this exercise, Salvatore tells us, is to help us grasp more carefully the dynamics of change involved within his genealogy.

The next two chapters, 'The Public Reason of the Commoner' and 'The Collective Pursuit of Public Weal', explore how particular historical instances of religious traditions, namely Roman Catholicism and Sunni Islam, might be understood within his genealogy. Chapter 4 is the most relevant section of the text for those in Islamic Studies. Here Salvatore gives a useful historical and sociological introduction to Islamic traditions and jurisprudence, before connecting his overarching argument to the theme of *maslaha,* 'the conceptual proof stone for underpinning theoretically informed but practice-oriented views of the common good which were suitable to become platforms for concrete articulations of the pursuit of public weal', and the work of Andalusian jurist Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi (d. 1388), who is also placed in conversation with Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274).



Chapter 5 seeks to present how 'an important and early dimension of the European Enlightenment was also and by necessity "axial"' with a particular focus on Vico, who reads as the hero of the book, before Chapter 6 returns to the modern formulations of the public sphere. Salvatore concludes with a 'Complex Genealogy' of the Public Sphere, seeking to improve understanding 'of the ideational limits of a social theory exposed to the liberal bias of the Anglo-American tradition (251), and suggesting 'the possibility and maybe necessity of several competing, dialoguing, and overlapping theories of the public sphere' (260).

Salvatore's work engages with a significant concept within anthropology, and it is easy to sympathise with his claim that 'most social science tends to take [the construct of the public sphere] for granted, either glorifying it as the key to a scholarship committed to rationalization and democratization, or willfully ignoring it for disguising more relevant structural issues and cultural conflicts in society' (31).

> *For Allegra readers and their students, the book's most important contribution is the comprehensive way it complicates the idea of the 'public sphere', and how we might relate it to ideas such as religion, secularity, universalism, tradition and rationality. Salvatore might be usefully compared to Asad here, and it is an interesting coincidence that the title of this text seems to echo Asad's 'Formations of Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity'.*

The book is not without weaknesses, which will probably frustrate some readers more than others. Anthropologists, for instance, might find most unconvincing the various deterministic, normativist and universal claims within the text. Furthermore, while his cross-cultural readings of Islamic traditions are a welcome contribution to public sphere literature, as Dyala Hamzah has already noted, they represent 'a normative championing of marginal strands, rather than a historical reconstruction'. Finally, social theorists and historians might question both the soundness of his ego-alter model of publicness and the meaningful limits of Axial Age terminology.

Grounded in social theory, but touching on a wide variety of themes, scholars from a range of disciplines will find parts, if not all, of this book of interest. However, in view of both the author's dense writing style and the complexity of his enterprise, the study of Salvatore's 'Public Sphere' in its entirety might best be reserved for postgraduate level.

Islam and New Kinship by Morgan

Clarke #anthroislam

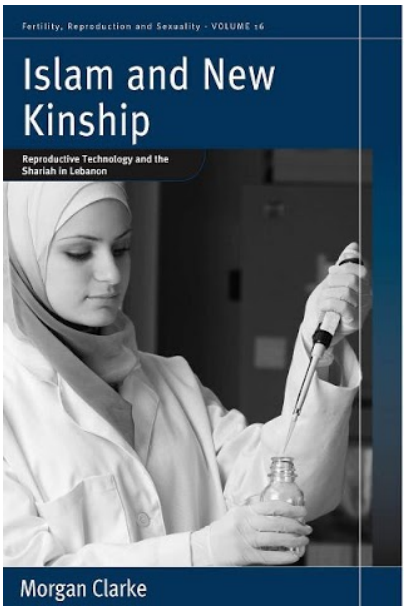
Ivayla Ivanova
October, 2014

Islam and New Kinship: A Nascent Horizon for the Relationship Between Science, Reproductive Technology, and *Fiqh*, by Morgan Clarke. ISBN 978-0-85745-140-8 $34.95/£22.50 Pb Published (March 2011). 262 pages, bibliog., index.

In Islam and New Kinship: Reproductive Technology and the Shariah in Lebanon, Morgan Clarke attempts to probe within the depths of Islamic theology, evolving juridical opinions, and the blurred limits of social proprieties to develop cohesive vision for the future of assisted reproductive technologies in Lebanon. Clarke has certainly provided the reader with an incredibly thorough academic endeavor on the current Lebanese zeitgeist with regard to the Islamic boundaries, which

surround reproductive technologies. However, he demonstrates his finest work in his discussion of the juridical nuances provided by contemporary Islamic religious leaders and jurists on the subject matter.

> *This may not be quite the ethnographic assessment of the integration of reproductive technologies in Lebanon that readers may be expecting, but Clarke acknowledges this issue and offers a comprehensive, systemic analysis of his own interactions with the actors and institutions, which both purposefully and indirectly contribute to the emergence of this issue with its requisite legalities, boundaries, and social ambiguities.*



Perhaps the most surprising social realities, which are drawn upon in Islam and New Kinship, rest in the unexpected relationships between different Shiite and Sunni religious authorities and their respective positions on concrete assisted reproductive technologies. As Clarke himself notes, “Far from Islamic legal opinion constricting the onward march of challenging and controversial procedures for overcoming infertility, it often facilitates it” (p. 176). Indeed, most Sunni writers have expressed support for in vitro fertilization (IVF) treatments, as well as for artificial insemination procedures, with the caveat that these innovations in fertility resources must be implemented in the context of a marriage that is both Islamically permissible and which continues to follow the expectations of the Islamic marriage contract. In the final chapter of Islam and New Kinship, Clarke subtly promotes the intellectual contiguity of these views, yet remains deliberately silent on their practical implementation, by exploring the

anthropological and philosophical precedents to this observed liberalisation of sexual and reproductive mores in the Lebanese setting.

As he returns to these foreign roots of the sexual revolution and their philosophical underpinnings in the 19th and early 20th centuries, Clarke juxtaposes the dogmatic issues of choice and restriction against the parallel questions on the subject. These inquiries challenge the rigid, dualistic extremes of propriety and impropriety through the known (and unknown) variables provided by evolving Islamic religious doctrine, contrasting scholarly opinions from multiple Shiite and Sunni leaders and thinkers, and fatwas that possess a social and religious value, which is dependent entirely on their source and on their date of issuance. Clarke's academic experience with Shiite sources on the matters at hand, while not necessarily indicative of his inferences on issues related to assisted reproductive technologies, exposes his impression that "the plurality of competing authorities…also perhaps lends…a seemingly greater diversity and dynamism to these debates" (p. 117). However, to the followers of the respective religious authorities discussed by Clarke, this multiplicity of ruling and opinion may not equate to quite the note of 'dynamism' in the socio-anthropological sense intended in this work.

> *In the opinion of Ayatollah Khamene'i, for example, not only are in vitro fertilization procedures between husband and wife absolutely acceptable, but the utilisation of donor gametes also proves to be completely Islamically permissible.*

Since Shi’a Islam allows temporary marriages, if a couple wishes to use donated eggs that are to be implanted to the wife’s womb, the husband is permitted to either temporarily or permanently marry the egg donor in order to both comply with Islamic rules and to establish the expected kinship relationships. Ayatollah Khamene’i also makes a distinction in his assessment of situations where a married woman could be inseminated with the sperm of a man who is not her husband.

> *He establishes that the essence of impermissible sexual relations, zina, depends on the foundational principles behind such acts, and not simply on their natural outcomes. In this view, artificial insemination does not constitute zina, and Clarke identifies this opinion as unique among Islamic authorities.*

Further, Clarke explores the opinion of Ayatollah Sistani, who opposes donor insemination, in contrast to the view of Ayatollah Khamene'i. However, Clarke discusses the "institutional machinery" of Sistani as, perhaps, not quite so influentially distributed in the Lebanese geo-social space as that of Ayatollah Khamene'i and Ayatollah Fadlallah. It is significant to examine the idea that Sistani allows the use of donor eggs, and does not require the legal vehicle of temporary marriage (in Shi'a Islam) in order to avoid the performance of a sinful act. For the purposes of comparison on this matter, Clarke also presents the position of Ayatollah Hakim, who establishes that assisted reproductive technologies are permitted between husband and wife, but does not explicitly appear to formulate the use of donor eggs as a prohibited procedure. Notably, Clarke's work finds that most Sunni authorities, in contrast to the Shiite religious authorities discussed above, oppose artificial insemination by donor, as well as procedures involving donor eggs.

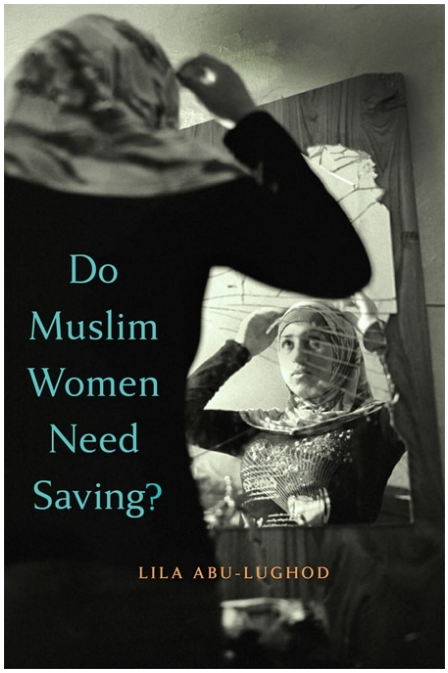
Indeed, Clarke has given readers a comprehensive investigation of the current frameworks within Shi'a and Sunni Islam, which impact the implementation of assisted reproductive technologies in Lebanon. His sound critical analysis of published answers by religious authorities, currently issued fatwas, and personal communication with prominent Islamic thinkers has resulted in a work that is as legally and religiously provocative as it is thorough. What are the implications for fiqh with regard to assisted reproductive technologies? Certainly, there will never be easy answers here, but competing juridical opinions do offer guidance in the religious context and assure the need for ever-evolving Islamic legal interpretation of the actions related to assisted reproduction procedures within the field of Islamic jurisprudence. Clarke has established a solid academic foundation for the Islamic legal inquiries, which will inevitably follow the future scientific development of these procedures and their related technologies.

Most importantly, however, Islam and New Kinship raises all of the requisite issues for the establishment of familial relations, the assignment of inheritance, and the maintenance of sexual propriety that will continue to impact the social fabric of relatedness through the use of assisted reproductive technologies in the Lebanese context.

Lila Abu-Lughod on Colonial Feminism and Muslim Women #ANTHROISLAM

Allegra
October, 2014

After the success of her article published in *American Anthropologist* in 2002 under the same title, Lila Abu-Lughod released her new book 'Do Muslim Women Need Saving ?' in 2013. The question still holds relevance in 2014, since the plight of Muslim women continues to be used as a moral grammar to justify interventions both 'at home' and abroad. As the French legislator recently discussed the opportunity to ban headscarves in Universities, after having banned face veils in public spaces in 2011 and headscarves in schools in 2004, and as controversies around Islam have emerged everywhere in Europe, it is indeed time to deconstruct some misconceptions about Muslim women.



In 2002, Abu-Lughod warned us against the imperialist logic in discourses about 'Afghan culture' that had accompanied the military intervention in Afghanistan:

> *The question is why knowing about the 'culture' of the region, and particularly its religious beliefs and treatment of women, was more urgent than exploring the history of the development of repressive regimes in the region and the U.S. role in this history. Such cultural framing, it seemed to me, prevented the serious exploration of the roots and nature of human suffering in this part of the world. Instead of political and historical explanations, experts were being asked to give religiocultural ones. Instead of questions that might lead to the exploration of global interconnections, we were offered ones that worked to artificially divide the world into separate spheres—recreating an imaginative geography of West versus East, us versus Muslims, cultures in which First Ladies give speeches versus others where women shuffle around silently in burqas.*

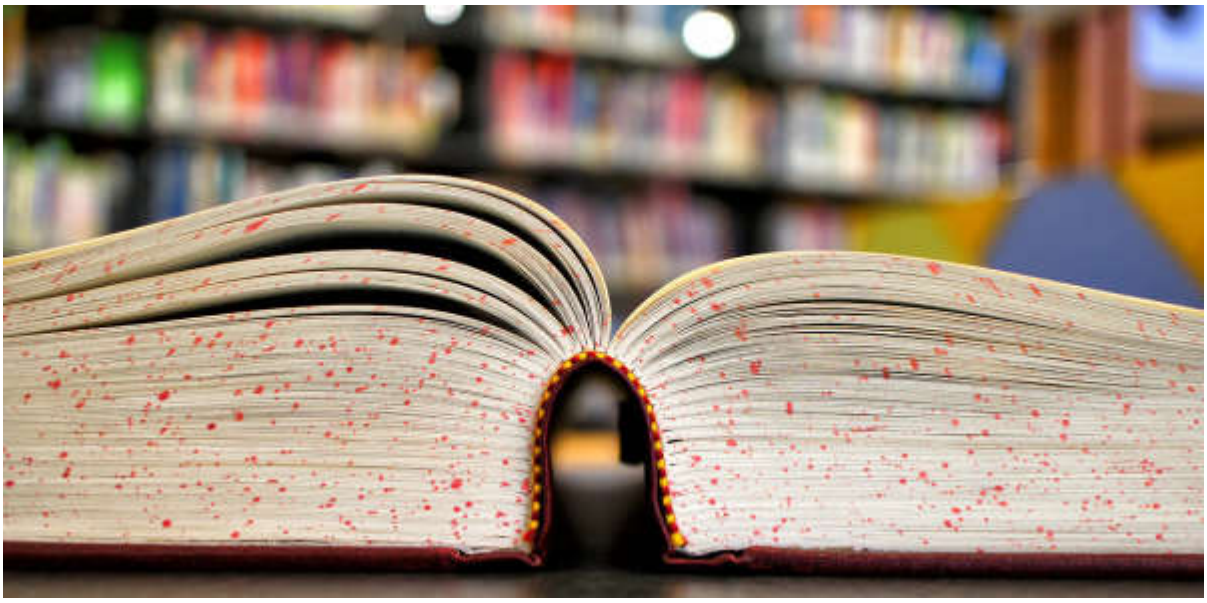
In 2013, the anthropologist who studied for thirty years various communities in the Muslim world, goes a step further by questioning whether generalizations about Islamic culture can explain the hardships (some) Muslim women face and by asking what motivates particular individuals and institutions to promote their rights.

In recent years Abu-Lughod has struggled to reconcile the popular image of women victimized by Islam with the complex women she has known through her research. Here, she renders that divide vivid by presenting detailed vignettes of the lives of ordinary Muslim women, and showing that the problem of gender inequality cannot be laid at the feet of religion alone. Poverty and authoritarianism—conditions not unique to the Islamic world, and produced out of global interconnections that implicate the West—are often more decisive. The standard Western vocabulary of oppression, choice, and freedom is too blunt to describe these women's lives. Abu-Lughod's new book will be reviewed soon for Allegra, but while we wait, here is already an interview in which she explains her main arguments.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uYAM7gMEd1g

Allie's reading week: #AnthroIslam

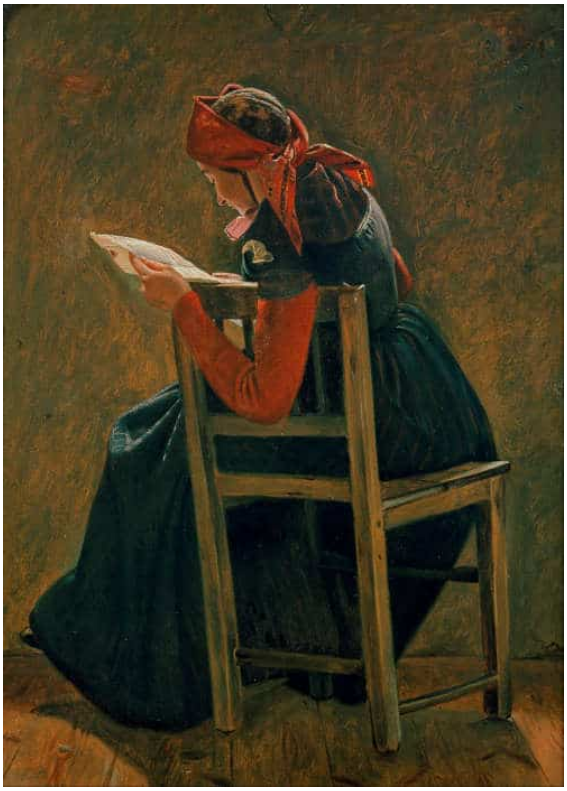
Allegra
October, 2014



We promised we would do it, and now it is done ! Here are the first glimpses into some of the books we advertised in the context of our thematic thread on the anthropology of Islam (#anthroislam). Because the list is very long, we already started last week with a review of Samuli Shielke and Liza Debevec's book *Ordinary Lives and Grand Schemes. An Anthropology of Everyday Religion*. This week, we continue with four books that we believe offer innovative insights into the broad topic of 'Islam' in the contemporary world.

We start with an already classic book : Lila Abu Lughod's *Do Muslim Women Need Saving ?* We did not receive the review yet (bear with us !) but to give you a foretaste, we recycle an interview in which she presents her main arguments. No need to say: it is refreshing to hear her deconstruct the stereotypical representations of Muslim women that currently circulate in the West !

On Wednesday, we publish a review of Morgan Clarke's *Islam and New Kinship: A Nascent Horizon for the Relationship Between Science, Reproductive Technology, and Fiqh* written by Ivayla Ivanova. The book, published in 2012, touches upon a timely topic : reproductive technologies and the various ways in which Muslim scholars in Lebanon mobilise Islamic law in the context of medical innovation.



We continue on Thursday with a review written by Chris Moses of Armando Salvatore's *The Public Sphere: Liberal Modernity, Catholicism, Islam*. The book is more sociological than anthropological, but remains an important contribution to current debates on the role of religion in the transformation of our conceptualisation of the public sphere.

We conclude the week with a review of Nilüfer Göle's edited volume *Islam and the Public Controversy in Europe* published last year. This interdisciplinary volume, which brings together contributions from sociologists, anthropologists and philosophers, provides an important contribution to current academic debates on the public sphere, but this time, from the entry point of controversies around Islam that have emerged in Europe in the post 9/11 context.

We wish you a nice reading week !

Hail to the Pioneer – Interview with Alex Golub from Savage Minds

Allegra
October, 2014

Dear Savage Mind,

We are approaching you in the singular, for if our understanding is

correct, it was just one 'savage mind' that got the blog with the same name going – is this correct? Now of course things have changed dramatically, and the title really should be in the plural for the list of contributors is large and impressive. Just what are the numbers today, and how did you arrive here?

"Actually, we've always been a group blog. Back in the day Kerim and I read each other's blogs, and thought about launching a group blog. When we finally unveiled the site in April 2005 the full roster was Chris Kelty, Dustin Wax, Alex Golub, and Kerim Friedman. We wrote an article about it in 2008.

It's a bit hard to say how many contributors we've had over the years since the different categories of membership have changed over time. I think we've had about 15 'Minds', around 70 guest bloggers, and maybe a couple of dozen 'invited posts'. At the moment We have about 10 full time Minds. Some write regularly, while others advise behind the scenes. People have come and gone over time. It's difficult finding people who write regularly, as I'm sure you know."

You got started in 2005 and quickly received vast acclaim as for example Nature ranked Savage Minds 17th out of the 50 top science blogs across all scientific disciplines We have no doubt that this was all well warranted due to spectacularly high quality content, but was this speedy recognition in all honesty, in your view, also symptomatic of certain 'tardiness' on the part of our beloved discipline. I am speaking, of course, of the hesitation, even reluctance of anthropologists to get online.

"Well, the Internetz were different back in 2005. Blogging was a form of self-expression, and people didn't clearly separate 'personal' and 'professional' when

they blogged. In fact, the appeal of blogging was the way that it broke down those barriers. I started blogging in 2002, and back then if you wanted to read my thoughts on anthropology, you had to scroll past my Jedi fan fiction and waffle recipes.

There was also much less concern with disciplinarity. my biggest interlocutors on the Internet were an Anglican priest and a management consultant. The conversation crossed boundaries in incredibly stimulating ways, and I'm so grateful that I came of age at that time.

So I don't think anthropologists were reluctant to go online at all, its just that we weren't interested in taking the hierarchies and boundaries of our academic discipline online. Savage Minds received recognition quickly because we were the first people to say "We are, officially, just going to write about anthropology." But we could only do this because there were already *lot* of anthropology bloggers out there — we felt that we had reached a critical mass of people who would read a blog that was *only* anthropology!

But on the other hand, yes, you're right: Like a lot of innovations, blogging was initially for the young and peripheral and only slowly moved to the center. Mid-career academics didn't blog much at first. This was not true of all disciplines. The key here is understanding how prior written genres were or weren't easily transferrable to an online form.

There are some academic disciplines that have always sought a public audience. Early bloggers like Crooked Timber, Volokh Conspiracy, and others all had pre-existing genres where there was a role for public debate, a desire to be 'relevant',

to inform policy, and to influence people. So those people took very naturally to blogging.

Similarly, a lot of people in the natural sciences started blogging early because blogging fit with earlier genre concerns of theirs: science writing for a general audience, a desire to publish research results as early as possible, a need to build your reputation in order to be attractive to funders, etc."

"Anthropologists didn't have genres that looked like blogs. They are often suspicious of collaborating with the powerful, and worry about the privacy and confidentiality of their research community. So for them *not* blogging was prudent and ethical. As a result, it took longer for anthropology *as anthropology* to go online. When it did, I think it was adopted with the speed that it was because of the way that people like me *weren't* peripheral: We were white men from top departments. This helped people see blogging as 'a bleeding edge trend' not 'something the hoi polloi are doing and will never be done at Chicago'."

Moving into the present and future: Last year we've seen an avalanche of talk of 'the ontological turn'. Are we done with this talk now, you think, in other words, where do you see the future of our discipline lie? Suppose for us this question has also a slight critical edge to it: as Isaac Morrison wrote in early on this year for Allegra, there is a whiff of navel-gazing with all this talk of these 'turns', you agree? It occasionally almost feels as if we collectively forget that we are actually supposed to be studying something besides ourselves! Again, this is starkly put, but do you see any truth in this?

"Well, a lot of things are covered under the term 'ontological turn', some of which have very little in common with each other. But overall I think the basic pros and cons of that approach were more or less apparent by 2008. The question last year was whether or not generic American cultural anthropologists would pick it up. I think in the long run, the turn is not for me and will not be very appealing to a lot of people in the US… although they may still may try to engage since they assume

that is the hot thing these days. When I look at exciting work being done, I think of the anthropology of infrastructure or of ethics — and course my own field, anthropology of mining, petroleum, and the corporation.

That said, I think reflexivity is a central, important, and healthy part of our discipline. Anthropology is constantly questioning itself: What kind of knowledge is knowledge of people? What kind of writing best conveys that knowledge to a reader? Most disciplines are founded on a particular way of answering these questions, while anthropology is founded on questioning them. Other disciplines grind out decades of papers on 'deviance' but we are always stepping back and saying "Wait a second, what do we actually mean by 'deviance'? Is that really there in my fieldnotes?"

To me the most valuable part of the turn was the way it forced us to get clear about our underlying sensibilities and ask: does ontology satisfy them? Is this how I want to write ethnography? What is the *point* of our discipline? Too often we muddle along from enthusiasm to enthusiasm without answering these questions, despite that fact that anthropology's distinctive feature is precisely a form of reflexivity which should be healthy!

Anthropology is a modernist project, and a certain breathless fadism is part of embracing the new. But I don't think excitement for an 'ontology' fad is as helpful as a deeper reflexivity. In some ways, the people at the center of the turn do a better job thinking through these issues than someone who throws a few decorative citations to Viveiros de Castro into their article."

To continue in a similar vein: we get that the name of Savage Minds has certain playful layers too (for all unfamiliar with this tale, we urge you to consult that 'About' section of Savage Minds to see the word play of Lévi-

Strauss' original title in French!), yet the title undoubtedly is from one of the best known classics of anthropological research. Now we have seen an interesting similar revival with HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory. We're not quite sure how to take this – is the subtext to insinuate that our noble discipline is most potent and 'true' if it stays with its classical roots – the study of the 'exotic other'?

Or are we getting ahead of ourselves? To explain this question further: where do you see the greatest relevant or explanatory potential of anthropological scholarship to lie?

Or do you find this question even meaningful? We suppose we insist with these questions do to our increasing sentiment that, as we examine seemingly different field sites – be it islamic legal actors in the UK, NGO workers in the Middle-East, UN bureaucrats in Geneva or even academics engaged in their/our regular professional endeavours, we are increasingly exposed to a sense of 'radical sameness', not 'radical difference' which is what we have largely been seeing and hearing around us.

"We occasionally get flack for 'Savage Minds' from people who think we're calling indigenous people 'savages' or trying to co-opt their identity or something, which is totally not the case. We chose the name because we wanted the blog to be playful and protean and full of pensée sauvage. Both our blog and Lévi-Strauss's book have a title which describes the *author's* thought! Sometimes people don't get that dimension of the pun. Also, we liked that our mascot is a flower. A purple flower. It immediately helps diffuse an urge to a certain sort of bullshit academic masculinity.

> *You ask about anthropology's potential and relevance. I've talked about anthropology's hallmark reflexivity already, but I think the discipline is also unique because it has a unique object of study: the sociocultural. Some call it 'culture' while others call it 'society' or 'the social'. I think we're at a point*

know where we have theoretical frameworks powerful enough to synthesize both these concepts.

We're also wonderfully schizophrenic in our simultaneous commitment to extreme particularity and extreme generality. We want ethnography that tells you what day the pig was killed, who butchered it, who was given the neck, who the legs, and so forth. But then we take this close ethnographic account and use it to make an argument about the fundamental nature of human being. It's absolutely mad and unbelievably wonderful.

I guess this is a way of saying that for me, anthropology has never been about culture shock or white people studying brown people. I think it's ludicrous to tell a European they can't study the European parliament, or to tell a Hawaiian that they can't study the politics of indigeneity.

Anthropology has always been a cosmopolitan project. The second person to earn a Ph.D. with Franz Boas — before Lowie, Sapir, Radin, or Goldenweiser — was William Jones, an Indian! Malinowski got the LSE to waive course requirements so that Jomo Kenyatta could finish his anthropology degree in good time. John Dollard's *Caste and Class In a Southern Town* came out in 1937. Hortense Powdermaker's ethnography of Hollywood came out in 1950. Pitt-Rivers's Spanish ethnography *People of the Sierra* was 1954. Lupton's shop-floor ethnography in 1962. Firth's London Kinship Project was publishing by 1968. Bruce Kapferer's study of factory workers came out in 1972. Cris Shore's study of Italian communists was in 1990. The list goes on and on.

One can quibble that early ethnography of Europe was exoticizing, and shop-floor ethnography was classist. Anthropology is often criticized for being colonial and

evil and there's a lot of truth to that claim, but the reason the discipline sometimes goes sideways is that its practitioners and topics are always crossing cultural,racial, and ethnic boundaries. Given this fact, the question is not 'are we doing more of this now?' but 'why do we think we haven't always done this'? I think Allegra should raise its head tall and claim that genealogy for itself and emphasize that what it is doing is what anthropology has always done.

That said, I had a very traditional fieldwork experience, undergoing extreme culture shock in the highlands of Papua New Guinea. That was very valuable for me and I think it's a bit sad that people no longer have the chance to grow by experiencing ways of life radically different from their own. Its broadening. It's true that today more people wear t-shirts and have mobile phones than they used to. But unfortunately, global poverty is not disappearing, and neither is anthropology's tendency to recruit from the upper middle class. I try to see an upside in this: as long as anthropologists do fieldwork in places where people grow their own food and build their own houses, there will always be culture shock."

Finally, let's talk a bit of us, please! We remain extremely pleased with the warm reception that we have enjoyed from the anthropological blogging scene as well as the surprising numerous people who call themselves our 'fans', praising us to be a 'breath of fresh air' in the anthro-blogosphere. While we are vein enough to interpret this as honest praise for the hard work that we are doing, we are simultaneously wondering if there is another side too – for the things that we have been doing are not all THAT spectacular (that is, compared to all the things we HOPE to be doing one day soon!)

What do you think of the anthro-blog scene at the moment, or the social science / scholarly blog scene more generally?

We're wondering if there isn't a bit of fatigue around – as if after an invigorated start when many people were hugely enthusiastic for the

possibilities to just have your say RIGHT NOW with no intermediaries people are feeling discouraged by all the collective noise that the virtual world is producing.

And let's face it: our current academic grading patterns do not exactly reward active online activities.

"Well you're exactly right — your popularity is inversely related to the depth and complexity of your content. If you want thousands of fans, keep on producing incoherent 500-word rants about Beth Povinelli's hair, or airbrush Foucault's face onto photos of kittens and post the link on twitter. You will have tons of fans for the next 18 hours, all of whom will spend ten seconds on your blog. They can retweet your content without even bothering to read it! It's good for a laugh, and provides distraction for a moment or two. Who wouldn't want to be a fan of that? This is the sad truth of the Internet: it's easy to be famous. If you want to be the Buzzfeed of anthropology, then go for it — that niche is open. But I'm sure Allegra is aiming for something higher than that, eh?

Blogging did have an 'invigorated start' — in about 2004. Soon anthropology got into act. Savage Minds and Zero Anthropology got started in 2005, Media/Anthropology and Culture Matters in 2006, Somatosphere in 2008, and Anthropolitea in 2009. In 2010 they were featured in American anthropologist, which indicates they had attracted the mainstream — that is, they were now old-fashioned. Jason Antrosio started blogging in 2011, and I think of him as 'the new guy'. Now blogs are old hat. So comparatively, Allegra is relatively late on the scene.

I mean, who even reads blogs anymore? Back in the day blogging flourished because the genre seemed faster, more vital, and less confined than books. Unique communities, like the University of Blogaria, formed. A variety of blog communities (linked by 'blog rings' or 'blog rolls' as they used to be called) existed, and you could use the new search engine 'Google' to find them, or read them using a new-fangled format called 'rss'. But they were still relatively balkanized. And — maybe I need to say this for people who don't remember back that far — there was no such thing as Twitter or Facebook.

Today, blogs are just one element in a rich ecosystem of social media. The velocity of information has increased dramatically, the quality and length of content has fallen, and the total volume has increased by orders of magnitude. I value the democratic, public nature of twitter and, to a lesser extent, Facebook and other social networking sites.Twitter has really created an anthropological public in a way blogs could not. It's incredible. But I'm not that interested in the content it produces. I find it too easy to be successful, and as I get older, the easy wins are less and less interesting to chalk up.

If twitter is the roiling surface of the Internet ocean, blogs are its depths, or at least its middle level. At its best social media provides an index to blog content, filtering and aggregating it for users. It also increasingly provides a forum for discussing blog content (who reads the comments on a blog any more?). But at its worst social media makes the competition for eyeballs and attention unwinnable for slower forms of media like blogs. The signal to noise ration gets worse and worse, sadly.

I think you're right to sense fatigue or disorientation. It's the result of a mediascape that is so fast, so shallow, and so broad that no one has any sense of what the master narrative is anymore. But blogs didn't create this problem — social media did.

You write that "our current academic grading patterns do not exactly reward active online activities." I don't think that's true. Having an Internet presence gives one a lot of soft power in the academy. And in fact it is getting easier and easier to demonstrate the value of social media presence to members of promotion and review committees. Today sites like Impact Story, the LSE Impact blog, and many others are demonstrating how our work has an impact in online spaces. Wiley actually has 'altmetrics' (as they're known) baked right into its website now. It's remarkable.

I'm sure Allegra's authors don't get the recognition they deserve inside the academy for the pieces they write but actually I think we are living in a much happier time than we were ten years ago. I blog under a pseudonym because when I started the blog, I thought I might be punished in the job market if my identity was well known. Today it seems crazy to think that having a social media presence is unprofessional, but not so long ago this seemed a real concern."

So what is your take: are we collectively living up to the promises of virtual spaces – what else should we be doing? What kind of things would you want to see us & other newcomers doing – and what do you envision that the anthro-blog scene will look like in, say, 5,10 years? What would be needed in order for things to stabilise themselves and for blogs to really start living up to the promises that they hold?

> *"A lot of people want to do FoucaultCats and I totally encourage them to do that if they want to. Who doesn't want to see FoucaultCats? I don't want to sound like a curmudgeon, but I think — and I'm sure you agree with me — that blogs are useful for the way they slow the conversation down and create communities*

of people who are united in their commitment to a topic and in their investment of their attention to it. Blogs are the connective tissue between twitter and journal articles. In the past year or so I've tried to use conference reports, book reviews, and interviews to give people a sense of where the discipline is now."

"This, I think, is what makes Savage Minds unique: lots of blogs have reading lists that cover 'ontology', but we have a 4,500 word interviews with Michael Scott and a 5,600 (!) word interview with Eduardo Kohn. A lot of blogs have short conference reports, but we have a 2,3000 word summary of a webinar on which report on the substance of these conversations. I know Allegra is interested in doing more of these, and I'd love to see you move in this direction. Its harder than FoucaultCats, but its much more worthwhile. And after doing it for a while, people really start to realize the substantive value of your work. Its exhausting work, a sort of 'anthropology beat' in the journalistic sense of the word, but its what the discipline and our readers deserve. And when you do it well, people start respecting you — and you know that respect comes from their opinion of your work, not your position in an academic hierarchy. It's earned.

The other thing I think Allegra needs to realize is: Churn Happens. Anthropology blogging seems new and vital to you because you are new and vital and a great addition to the blogosphere. But over time there has been a lot of ambitious projects. You just don't see them because they've already failed. Consider, for example, the first fully open access peer reviewed general anthropology journal. I'm not talking about *HAU.* I'm talking about *After Culture.* What?You don't remember it? Well, that's because it folded after one article. Or how about the brand new collaborative blogging platform that would give a blog to every anthropologist, anthroblogs.org? Or four stone hearth? Or

antropologi.info? They all had great first years. Some of them even had great third years. But really keeping something going, long term — that's not easy. So as Allegra moves forward, I'll give you the same challenge I gave HAU: Don't strive for the first anniversary, strive for the fifth anniversary. Stay focused and realize that failure is the default option unless you actively get to the keyboard and write. You're having your triumph now, so I suppose its my job to stand behind you and whisper in your ear "remember: thou art mortal."

When I try to imagine where we'll be five or ten years from now, I think of Vernor Vinge's science fiction novel *A Deepness In The Sky.* The hero of that book is thousands of years because he spends centuries at a time in suspended animation traveling between stars. When he wakes up, technology has advanced, and all of the new computer systems are built on top of the old ones. He solves problems and saves the day because he's the only person who remembers that buried in thousand-year old code is a backdoor or function that he alone knows about and can be used to Win.

I think that blogs will be like that. We'll still be here. We may be less relevant, less easy to find, and less read than newer forms of media. But we'll still be posting good work — although it will probably be filtered and aggregated by a variety of newer forms. The Internet will probably be more commercial, more controlled by the government, more expensive to access, and less open. Academia will be smaller, with larger centers of gravity in the amateur and applied communities. But blogs will still be there, and they'll still be important, because they'll be shaping the conversation, and they'll be shaping the careers of future anthropologists. I'm looking forward to it."

Ordinary Lives and Grand Schemes, An Anthropology of Everyday Religion – Edited by Samuli Schielke & Liza Debevec

Benedikt Pontzen
October, 2014

The reviewed volume tackles the question of "how to account for the complex duality of religion as an everyday practice and a normative doctrine." The editors, Samuli Schielke and Liza Debevec, argue that we take the everyday practice of religion as a starting point in dealing with this question: a Muslim diviner in the Senegambia who looks at some cowrie shells, a woman who rubs family photographs on the tomb of a saint in southern Italy, Egyptian youths who listen to dance songs, and farmers on Apiao who invite each other over for dinner. All

are engaged in “little practices” through which they relate to and make sense of the “grand schemes” of their religion.

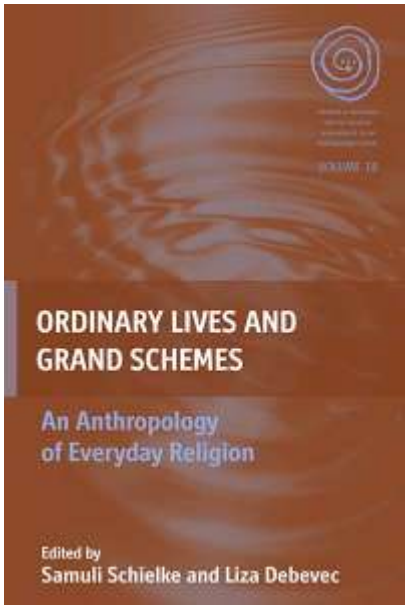
Ordinary Lives and Grand Schemes. An Anthropology of Everyday Religion. vi, 168 pp., bibliogr., index. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012.

60.00 $ (hardcover). ISBN 978-0-85745-506-2.

Edited by Schielke, Samuli & Liza Debevec

The questions raised and tackled by the contributors are central to the study of religion, their general argument – that we should take people’s everyday practices to make sense of the world – is not only compelling; it opens up long-needed spaces to rethink our established categories in dealing with religion, including the conventional notion of “religion” itself.

The volume deals with the religious practices of those who are usually considered as laypeople. In their everyday religion, these people relate to each other, the divine, saints, their ancestors and religious institutions. They uphold, transmit, and contest their religious traditions, and they attempt to come to terms with their existential issues, hopes, and expectations. Thereby, they relate and contribute to the grand scheme of their religious tradition and attempt to make sense of their lives.



Knut Graw describes this for Islamic divination practices in Senegambia. Instead of reading them as an exotic other, he shows how these consultations allow the involved people to deal with existential issues and to engage in chronopoetic productions of prospect, *i.e.* (re)establish hope, in problematic situations. Thus, Islamic divination emerges as "a cultural technology of hope and prospect" (p.25) within a specific socio-cultural context and as existentially significant to those engaged in it.

Samuli Schielke demonstrates for the case of Egypt, how the Islamic revival and neoliberal capitalism have emerged together and mutually influenced each other since the 1970s. Both "involve a sensibility of living in the future tense" (p.142): capitalism with its stress on profit and consumption, and the Islamic revival with its focus on reward. However, the promises of both are transient. The capitalist one is literally consumed in its fulfillment, and the notion of religious reward leaves one constantly insecure about one's achievement. Hence, these grand schemes open at once on the hopeful and the tragic. Liza Debevec points out that one's life situation can conflict with the religious ideals one adheres to. Moderate Muslims in urban Burkina Fasso postpone their involvement in prayer, as "postponing piety does not draw piety itself into question" (p.44).

> *Especially young, unmarried men do not make prayer a priority, as they have to struggle with the constraints of a complex life under economically harsh conditions. They become more involved in prayer only after marrying, as a way to establish themselves as adult members in their community. This involvement grows with age, when they wish to secure access to Heaven.*

However, their postponement of prayer does not entail a rejection of what they take as "a matter of being Muslim" (p.33), but rather enables them to postpone

dealing with this conflict.

How religious practices can integrate conflicting issues, is discussed by **Jennifer Peterson** in her essay on *mulid* festivities and the *mulid* dance songs in Egypt. Bothcombine spiritual and secular aspects. The sound of these songs "shifts between the piously moral and the jadedly tough" (p.120) and thus speaks to the conflicting desires of Egypt's street-smart youths who provide the fan base of this music. These youths wish to follow both: Islamic moral ideals *and* a desire for pleasure and worldliness. Rather than contesting its Islamic framework, this music negotiates how to have fun and to secure one's place in Heaven. In *mulid* dance songs, Islamic ideals are inseparably bound up with people's desires.

Such an entanglement of religious ideals and everyday practices is likewise stressed in the Christian case studies. Giovanna Bacchiddu writes about Catholics in Apiao on the Chilean coast whose "religious affiliation is inextricably tied to their moral universe" (p.70) and contained in their daily deeds where reciprocity and hospitality take a prominent place. One becomes a proper Christian through enacting these values in everyday practice, thereby partaking in the community. This derives from local traditions and cosmologies rather than from the Church. The people of Apiao have thus "vernacularized" Christianity by reaffirming their local values within the framework of this institution.

Alison Marshall depicts how everyday religious practices are central to the formation and maintenance of the specific community where they take place and acquire meaning. In her history of "Frontier Confucianism" (p.49), she presents how Chinese migrants in early 20th century Canada came to integrate Chinese nationalist ideals with Confucian and Christian beliefs and practices in their daily religious practices. They have thereby created a space for individual agency and a basis for their migrant community. However, these remain rooted in the ambiguities entailed by this historic integration.

Evgenia Mesaritou stresses the agency of “ordinary” persons in her chapter on pilgrims to the shrine of Padre Pio in Italy. The Church has attempted to control the saint’s charisma through the material structure it has erected around the shrine. Conversely, the pilgrims have re-appropriated this space through their devotional practices without openly challenging the Church. The pilgrims establish personal relations with the saint that escapes the control of the Church, though they take place within its material structure, which imposes certain limitations. The “religious void” (p.98) of the pilgrimage site is thus invested with various practices and meanings, by both, the pilgrims and the Church, thereby contributing to the making of the saint.

Séverine Rey describes similar dynamics for the Orthodox Church on Lesvos where the Church had to accommodate three saints of the people in the 1960s. The Church had to accept and integrate as “stories of the simple people” what it had first rejected as “women’s tales” (p.94). While the Church tried to canonize what it had not initiated, the faithful attempted to give their lives and daily

experiences significance, and found it in the figures of the saints and their relations with them. For the people, these saints are less canonical figures than "concrete models to follow and to identify with" (p.83).

All the studies focus on "actual lived experiences and their existential significance for the people involved [in these] little practices" (p.2). They furthermore show that these practices cannot be reduced to "popular religion" or to "little traditions" that derive from a "Great Tradition" (pp.3-4).

> *Here, the grand schemes and the actual lives of the people come together and co-constitute each other – often in contradiction. In their rituals and other acts, the people make "use" of the spaces provided and constrained by their religious traditions, institutions, and hierarchies, and thereby (co)constitute these. In their little practices, the people relate to the divine, which is principally an open and ambiguous endeavor.*

In accordance with Orsi, these studies challenge our established analytical approaches to religion. The described practices appear as "off-modern [and] illustrate the multiplicity of temporalities that coexist within the modern and contemporary" (p.149), thereby calling into question the (analytical, normative, and descriptive) category of "modern religion." These practices are ways and means by which the people (re)appropriate the "dominant religious idioms of their cultures" (p.150) and thereby participate in and contribute to these. The studies demand for a reassessment of our established analytical dichotomies – sacred/profane, us/them, and presence/absence of the divine – as these are inextricably intertwined in the presented practices. As Orsi argues, "religion situates practitioners in webs of relationships between heaven and earth, living and dead, and in rounds of stories" (p.151), and "religion in everyday life is abundantly intersubjective and relational" (pp.156-157). Our contemporary world is anything but disenchanted, as the divine is present and encountered in these practices apart from the human imaginations and bodies out of which it arises. As "religion" is embedded in the life world of people, their everyday practices, and

their attempts to make sense of their lives, we should begin with their "manifold paths of daily lives" (p.152) in dealing with this phenomenon.

> *The great merit of this book consists in taking the practices of the people "on the ground" into account. It thereby addresses a gap: the moments when grand schemes and daily practices come together, often in contradiction or in complex and open ways.*

These are otherwise reduced to the dichotomy of "popular vs. high religion" and thereby misrepresented. Religion is not a dichotomous affair; it rather consists in the manifold practices, hopes, and disappointments, as well as attempts to make sense of one's live that are waged by "ordinary" people in relation to the grand scheme of their religion which is (re)made through these very acts. This is competently conveyed in this compelling and inspirational volume.

Let me raise three critical comments. The volume hardly addresses religious institutions or elites. An "everyday" of non-"ordinary" actors would provide a supplement to the excellent studies "from below." Secondly, there is a bias in the considered religions – Islam and Christianity –, which apparently strive towards "a comprehensive metaphysical, moral and spiritual order" (p.1). A comparison with other religious traditions could add further refinement to the theoretical framework. Lastly, is the "everyday" of these studies "daily" (p.2)? Moments of existential crisis are characterized by a break with the everyday. The consultation of a diviner or the establishment of personal relations with saints feedback into one's daily live, but in themselves they are no daily events, nor are rituals tantamount to the "ordinary everyday" (pp.2-3). Mostly, however, these are quibbles.

The authors' phenomenological approach to religion aims at a more nuanced

understanding of the everyday religious practices of people on the ground. Human subjects are not reducible to their piety but (possibly) striving toward it in more complex lives (pp.6-7). Nor are these practices ascribable to individual agency or a religious structure. People make use of the limited spaces for action provided by their grand schemes, thereby (re)making these (pp.8-11). In the studies of this thought-provoking volume, “everyday religion […] becomes those occasions when humans in the mundane circumstances of their lives engage and are engaged by the gods along with all the media […] of real presence” (p.156), as Robert Orsi puts it in his afterword.

Mental Welfare in The Field: A neglected subject?

Allegra
October, 2014

By Marcus Jordan

The time is 7 in the morning, and it is yet another long day of my fieldwork. Now all I need to do before moving on to the day, as I say to myself each morning, is write up yesterday's field notes and get ready to leave. After all, isn't fieldwork the greatest thing ever?

Listening to my supervisors, I couldn't help but think how interesting their fieldwork sounded. There was the work on local democracy and participation, and there was the study on politics within the "Greater Middle East." The stories of successes and comedic encounters, combined with anecdotes of local culture, filled my imagination and made me yearn for my own similar experiences.

Now, I am in the field. When I step outside each day and walk down my street, filled with cars and storefronts, I see sights one would find anywhere else: young people spending time together, professionals rushing to work, and grocers minding their wares. At 7 am, the coffee shops will be soon occupied by businessmen, politicos, and bureaucrats, and the news outlets will be coming out with their latest stories of political intrigue and international animosity.

This is it, this is the moment I've been waiting for. It's time to get out of bed and move on with the day. However, no matter how hard I try, I can't stop thinking about the tasks I have to accomplish today. Reminding myself that I must concentrate on the here and now, my thoughts then involuntarily turn to other aspects of my fieldwork. Have I met enough people who could become informants? Why haven't this person and I seen each other after first meeting a month ago?

> *Am I just perpetuating the same colonial power-structures which I despise? Is my year here, in this ambiguous place, merely in vain?*

And the thoughts go on and on. An hour passes and I am still in the same position I had been in since I officially woke up. I feel exhausted from the still-happening mental roller-coaster, and I wonder how I will function today after having been "puttering around," as my grandfather used to say, for the past sixty minutes.

Of course, it would be quite convenient to just blame the stress on myself, on my own laziness and unwillingness to get moving. That's what the "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" discourse does, right? And to be fair, it is true that I have not been getting as much sleep as I should and my schedule could be more regular.

Additionally, less than 4 months in, I am still gaining more familiarity with the culture. Things are different here, and I shouldn't expect myself to understand many cultural meanings immediately, for example. A thick fog blocks my access to so many parts of this setting, and I cannot possibly understand more of it until I have spent more time here.

To remedy this situation, I have, for example, consulted my supervisors and restructured my schedule in order to allow myself both more time in the field and time for myself. I also tell myself that one of the best remedies for internal fieldwork confusion is to just keep at it, and I try to remind myself that I am making progress, however, slight it may seem.

However, this article is not just a convenient, anonymous opportunity for me to broadcast my personal stress to the Internet. I also do not seek to duplicate Jessica Tremblay's [illegible]post[illegible] which describes 10 means of "surviving fieldwork." Rather, I seek to highlight the issue of the anthropologist's mental welfare and how it affects the discipline. Simply put, stress of the type depicted here results from the researcher's own body being their primary research instrument. The researcher's mental welfare then directly affects their ability to conduct their methods, making the topic of stress during fieldwork a crucial, yet overlooked, area of discussion.

While conducting fieldwork, there persists a pressure to be among informants as much as possible due to the researcher having a limited amount of time to spend before returning home. While this pressure encourages the researcher to be active within their host community, it can also lead to the perception that time spent away from apart is wasted. As Charis Boke [illegible]writes[illegible], it is incredible difficult to separate between "fieldwork mode" and "real mode," and the end result seems to be a) feeling like a spy, with all the associated guilt, and b) constantly reflecting on work, to the detriment of the self. There is then a substantial amount of pressure on the anthropologist due to their own body often being used as the primary research tool.

> *Indeed, what happens if we, all alone in the field, just can't keep moving? In the age of Facebook and email, we can contact our supervisors and colleagues, but there is still a stigma surrounding mental health. Some might think that, as anthropologists, we should be able to tough it out, and, if we can't, we shouldn't*

be anthropologists.

Anxiety and depression are things to be ashamed of, needs for personal space are professional shortcomings, and introversion is less of a personality trait and more of a societal problem. Within such an environment, one may wonder whether it in the fieldworker's best interests to fully disclose or keep silent, suffering alone. Does the □□□isolation□ described by Chris Diming extend beyond observation and into academic practices?

Unfortunately, it appears that anthropology, a discipline often noted for its concern with the welfare of informants, neglects its own. Very little from textbooks I have read or seminars I have attended has prepared me for the sheer amount of pressure which "being there" brings upon me. The lecture I audited on fieldwork methods only briefly covered the various stages of fieldwork, while the sole, lonely mention of mental health during a first-year PhD seminar referred to the availability of the university's counseling office. Similarly, Watson's introduction to Being There, an acknowledged preparatory text, highlights feelings of unease among beginning anthropologists as the reason for the volume's publication, while simultaneously glossing over the issues of stress and mental health as they appear in practice. Broader attitudes towards mental health, such as those described in the previous paragraph, combine with the discursive neglect of mental welfare within the discipline to create a situation which, for the struggling fieldworker, becomes increasingly difficult to withstand.

Trapped, their concerns are silenced by hegemony's morose embrace as they are paralyzed between the daily demands of their fieldsites and anthropology's indifference. Consequently, the anthropologist's relationships with informants can become threatened, as feelings of fatigue and disillusion lead to irritability or worse, and dilemmas faced during the course of fieldwork may be resolved less than ethically. Furthermore, the quality of ethnographies produced under such conditions may decrease. Thus, anthropology, in glossing over the topic of mental health, risks simultaneously the quality of its efforts, the welfare of informants, and the well-being of its practitioners.

The hardship I have experienced is not limited to myself and reflects how anthropology regards its practitioners' mental welfare. To remedy this situation, the discipline should acknowledge that it has a collective responsibility for the well-being of its ethnographers, because the problem of fieldwork stress endangers both informants and the discipline itself.

> *Rather than being left for university-run counseling services, mental health and stress need to be discussed directly and openly within anthropology for any substantial relief to be experienced by those in the field.*

Works Cited

Watson, C.W., 1999. "Introduction: The Quality of Being There," in C. Watson, ed. Being There: Fieldwork in Anthropology. London: Pluto Press, pp. 1–24.

Time for October #Events!

Allegra
October, 2014

How did the summer go by so fast?! October's almost here, and Allegra is once again offering you a sample of upcoming #events in anthropology, this time courtesy of Alina Suvila, a new member of our editorial staff.

Remember to CONTACT US if you're organising an event you think Allegra should feature! You can reach us by email at **allegralab@gmail.com**.

Panel

"The personal is political? Emotions and resistance in the neoliberal academy"

21-22 November 2014, **Babeș-Bolyai University** and **Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.**

Within the11th Annual Conference of the Romanian Society for Social and Cultural Anthropology. This round-table will focus on the emotions developed within the academic work environment and their subsequent consequences in the form of modes of embodiment, enactment, organization and resistance.

Deadline for submission of abstracts was 28th of Sept 2014.

International Conference

Research Network on Religion, AIDS and Social Transformation in Africa (RASTA), Spirit and Sentiment: Affective Trajectories of Religious Being in Urban Africa.

28-30 May 2015**. Freie Universität Berlin, Germany.**

Experiences and social practices of people living in urban Africa are powerfully shaped by the dynamics of affect and emotion. Moving into and residing in the vital and (economically, ethnically, socially) diverse urban centers of the continent often triggers, and is driven by, states of anxiety, insecurity and fear, as well as feelings of excitement and hope, e.g. for a better life and socio-economic liberation. In addition, urban centers, and the opportunities and risks that living in them implies, provide space for sensations of pleasure, love, care and intimacy, but also experiences of suffering, alienation and emotional drama.

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 30 September 2014.

Worldwide congress

The World Society of Mixed Jurisdiction Jurists' "The Scholar, Teacher, Judge, and Jurist in a Mixed Jurisdiction"

24-26 June 2015. **McGill University, Montreal, Canada.**

Mixed Jurisdictions, as they are traditionally understood, stand at the crossroads of the Common law and Civil law. They also frequently encompass other ethnic and religious laws. Rich in legal history and complex pluralism, they are often seen as natural laboratories of comparative law. The laws, methods, and institutions of mixed jurisdictions are inevitably affected by the influence and presence of different traditions vying for supremacy or requiring reconciliation. Their added complexity places special demands upon the training of judges and jurists, the staffing of courts, the teaching of private law, the research of scholars, and the task of law reform. To what extent have these challenges been met by the actors and institutions of mixed jurisdictions?

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 15th of Oct 2014. Registration is open!

International Workshop

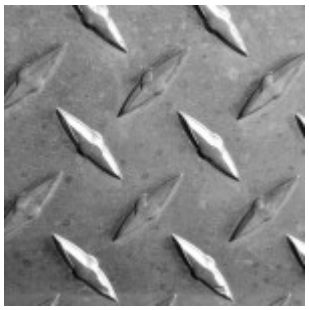
FAQs about Open Access: The Politics of Publishing in Anthropology and Beyond.

16-17 Oct, 2014, **Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain**

This workshop, entitled FAQs about Open Access: The Politics of Publishing in Anthropology and Beyond, will address the current debates concerning how to provide free access to information and knowledge produced at academic

institutions. The discussion will focus on the current politics of access to the results of publicly-funded research and will aim to elucidate sustainable and non-discriminatory formulas of free access to scientific knowledge. It will also explore how ethnographies of digital technologies, free licences and free software may contribute to expanding the debates about open access.

You can participate in it either on-site or off-site (via live streaming). **Registration is open!**



The 2015 Soyuz Symposium

Shifting Territories: Historical Legacies and Social Change

28 February – 1 March 2015, **The Ellison Center for Russian, East European, and Central Asian Studies at the University of Washington, Seattle, U.S.**

The 2014 Soyuz Symposium seeks to engage scholars in an interdisciplinary debate about contemporary social, cultural, and political transformations in socialist and post-socialist regions world wide.

The Soyuz Research Network for Postsocialist Cultural Studies is an interdisciplinary forum for exchanging work based on field research in postsocialist countries, ranging from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America. Soyuz is an interest group in the American Anthropological Association (AAA) and an official unit of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES). The Soyuz symposium

has met annually since 1991 and offers an opportunity for scholars to interact in a more personal setting.

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 1st of Nov 2014. Registration is open!

Job Announcement

Tenure-Track Assistant Professor position in Legal Studies at University of Illinois – Springfield

The interdisciplinary Department of Legal Studies in the College of Public Affairs and Administration at University of Illinois Springfield (UIS) seeks applications at the tenure-track ASSISTANT PROFESSOR level with expertise in legal research, writing and analysis. In addition to teaching legal research, writing and analysis at the undergraduate and graduate levels, the candidate will be expected to offer courses that contribute to the law and society curriculum offered by the department. The position will begin August 16, 2015.

Deadline for applications: October 12, 2014.

Also: check out the new APLA Section News column on Anthropology News: Josh Clark on Human Rights and virtual fieldwork with the UN.

That's all for now! Stay tuned for more, and remember to send us your conference notes & papers!

Mass-produced Desire and the Doughnut Machine

Paul Mullins
October, 2014

We conclude our thematic week on #BODY with an AVMoFA entry by Paul Mullins & mass-produced desire via the Doughnut Machine. How exactly were doughnuts historically transformed into mass produced goods and just through what kind of senses do they awaken popular desire?

Few foods have been as unapologetically mass-produced than the doughnut.

While doughnut consumers nurse complicated feelings for particular brands and local shops or celebrate one variety while castigating others, the doughnut is an enormously standardized and predictable food; indeed, that standardization, the anonymity of its ingredients, and its bold acknowledgement that a doughnut is a pure food of desire may be what critics loathe about the doughnut. The contemporary doughnut is almost entirely a mass-produced food, and perhaps no material thing is more important in the evolution of the modern doughnut than doughnut machines. In the 1920's doughnut production was mechanized—a skilled baker would not need to even touch a doughnut in the 1930s—and this was probably the single most important step in doughnuts' ascension to mass-consumed food.

Adolph Levitt arrived in the United States in the 1890's, trying his hand running Wisconsin department stores before heading to New York City in 1916 and buying into a bakery chain. Levitt was discouraged by the practical challenges of forming hundreds of doughnuts by hand and then lording over them as they bobbed about in hot oil. Levitt enlisted an engineer to help him produce a doughnut-making machine, and in 1920 they developed a prototype that was installed in Levitt's Harlem window and marketed to other bakers. Levitt began hawking doughnut machines and prepared flour mixes all over the country, and his local doughnut shop soon mushroomed into a series of stores that came to be known as Mayflower Doughnuts.

> *Levitt understood that for many doughnut consumers the literal act of production was fascinating theater: a doughnut machine in open display to the waiting consumer became a sort of pleasant anticipation that heightened desire as a consumer awaited the freshly made treat. Doughnut aficionados routinely intone that a fresh doughnut is far superior to a reheated or cold doughnut, and for many consumers there is a distinctive and desirable sensory excitement in watching doughnuts march through a little factory production machine amidst the scent of yeast and sugar.*

We do not seem especially interested in seeing many of our foods being produced by either a skilled chef or an automated process, but a doughnut floating across a sea of boiling oil has often been an attraction for doughnut consumers.

Levitt's standardization of doughnut machines and his marketing of prepared doughnut supplies took nearly all the surprise out of doughnut consumption, since there was very little variation between doughnuts formed by doughnut machines. This sort of streamlining is now standard organization among fast-food chains—a Big Mac or a Krispy Kreme doughnut all taste pretty much the same regardless of where we consume them—so the doughnut machine was clearly at the cutting edge of a revolution in how foods could be mass-produced and consumed. By the end of World War II Levitt's Doughnut Corporation of America was the world's largest maker of doughnut mixes and bakery goods, with factories in the US, Canada, England, and Australia. They charted a steady increase in the quantity of doughnuts being consumed in the US, indicating that Americans consumed 7.2 billion doughnuts in 1945. Today by one count roughly 10 billion doughnuts are consumed each year.

It is perhaps ironic that in the early 21st century a host of doughnut producers has now turned to the manufacture of gourmet doughnuts. Gourmet doughnut shops run by professionally trained chefs use a host of organic and artisanal materials and make creative if idiosyncratic flavors (e.g., Glazed Gourmet Doughnuts offers up a Blue Cheese Cabernet Doughnut with homemade pear jam, Cabernet glaze, and blue cheese honey drizzle). These doughnuts perhaps defy the machine-made doughnut that dominated markets for nearly a century, instead appealing to a consumer's desire for culinary creativity and a unique consumption experience breaking with the mass-produced glazed doughnut. However, all evidence suggests that while cosmopolitan foodies flock to gourmet doughnuts the masses are likely going to continue to consume the mass-produced doughnut made in machines that have not changed much in a century.