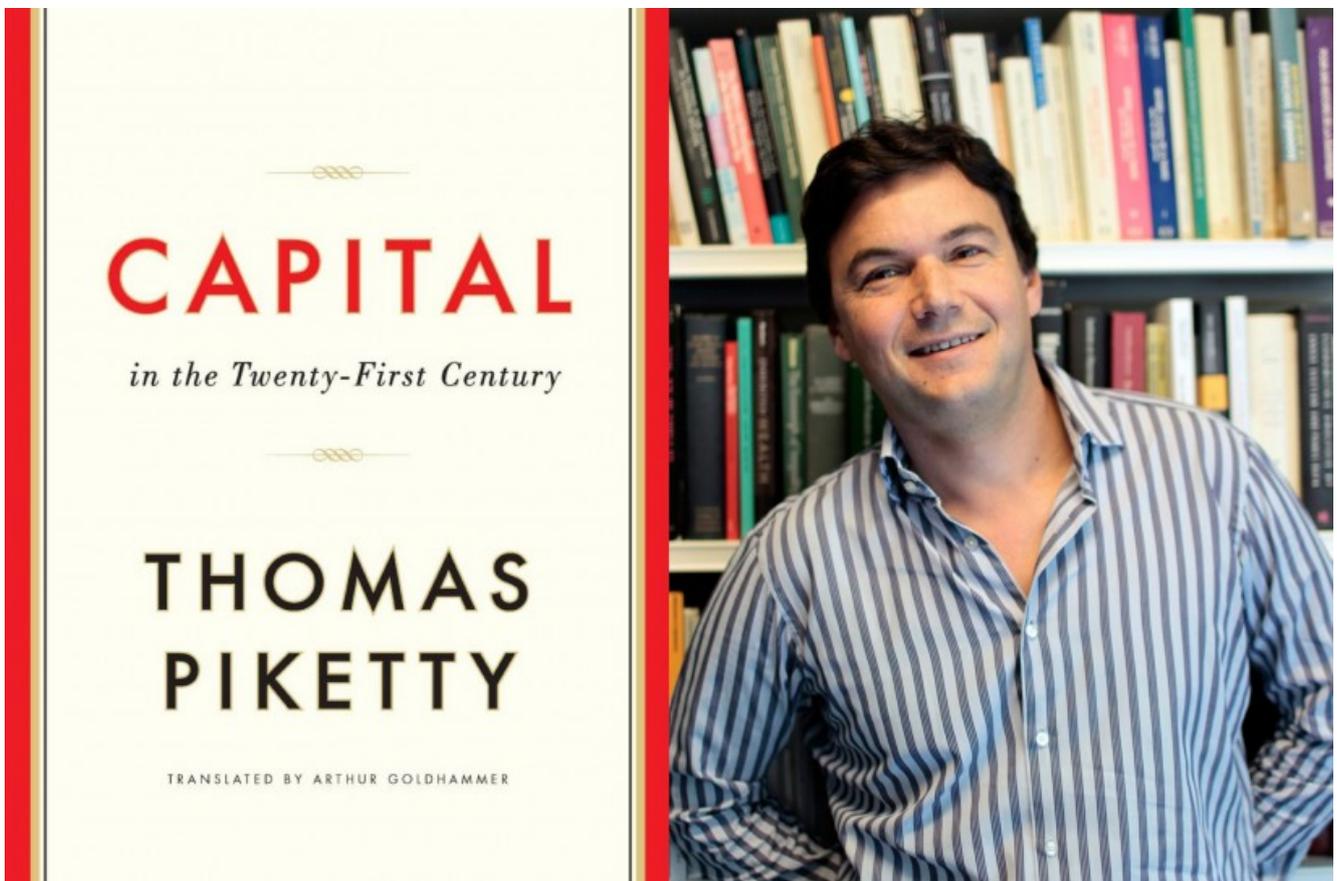




Piketty: “We want markets and capitalism to be the slaves of democracy!”

Allegra
July, 2014



A little while ago, we ran a thematic week on [#economics](#). This coincided with French economist Thomas Piketty’s visit in Helsinki, where he was invited to take part in the 60th Anniversary Congress of the Yrjö Jahnsson Foundation. Allegra jumped on the opportunity and sent one of its reporters to the press conference organised in hotel «Katajanokka». Even though Piketty, also nicknamed ‘the modern Marx’, is not as charismatic as Zizek, he too has become a kind of academic rockstar. Since the publication of the English translation of his



monumental book [Capital in the 21st Century](#) (soon to be reviewed in Allegra! Keep an eye on our review section!) in April 2014, Piketty has been touring the world, giving public talks in universities and interviews for the world media. At the press conference that took place in Helsinki on June, 12th 2014, he shared his concerns about growing inequality. His already classic book is built on more than a decade of research by Piketty and a handful of other economists, detailing historical changes in the concentration of income and wealth. This pile of data allows the economist to sketch out the evolution of inequality since the beginning of the industrial revolution.

Below is the recording of the press conference together with a summary. Enjoy!

INDEX

1.35 - A book about the history of income and wealth over 20 countries over two centuries.

What I am trying to tell in the book is a very readable history of money. It is not a technical economic history. It is a history of politics and social representations. I think it can be read by everyone.

3.00 - You don't have to agree with all the conclusions I draw about the future. I am better at analysing the past than analysing the future. The main objective of the book is to give all this historical material - and it is by far the largest existing historical database on the commonwealth since the 1980s that we put together with 30 scholars from 20 countries - to everyone so that people can make their own mind about the future.

3.39 - One of the conclusions is a tendency towards rising inequality of income and wealth. But this does not have to be this way. You have different forces going



on at the same time. You have different evolutions. Rising inequalities has been much stronger in the US than in Europe and in Europe our problem today has much to do with our attempts to modernise the social system and make our monetary union work better. We have problems with our pension system and with our public debt.

4.41 - There is a lot to learn from the history of public debt. (...) We have already had large public debts in the past. We have a lot to learn for the future from this historical account.

5.20 - 1st question: What is your opinion on inequality in Finland?

2nd question: Some politicians came up with idea to abolish the inheritance tax. What do you think of that?

7.05 - Inequality is less important in Finland and in most European countries than in the US. Now there has been a tendency toward an increase of lower income groups over the past decade.

8.15 - What is particular of Europe in general is that there has been a bigger rise in the total value of wealth relative to income. Which is not totally bad per se because it's always good to have wealth and not only public debt.

Private wealth has never been as large as a fraction of GDP in most European countries for a very long time. It is a good news except that the inequality in access to wealth is extremely high. And in this context I think we have to find a balance between taxation of labour income and taxation of wealth.

10.00 - We want to give people the possibility to accumulate income out of labour. But we need to find some balance in our tax. To me, a complete abolition of the inheritance tax would be a big mistake.

10.30 - Large number of countries in Europe and North America still have inheritance tax.



11.00 - and in Finland + if we are in small country it is very easy to control wealth.

11.25 - There is the same temptation with the taxation of corporate profit.

12.21 - My own view on this is that we should have a closer political and fiscal union in Europe and in particular in the Eurozone. It is very difficult to have a single currency with 18 different tax and social systems that are competing with one another in order to attract the taxpayers of their neighbours.

16.00 - 4th question: How realistic do you think it is for governments to diminish inequality through taxation?

16.23 - There is a lot that can be done at the national level. It is too easy to say: 'we cannot do anything on our own'. There is a lot that can be done: For instance reforming the property tax so that individuals are taxed on their net wealth rather than on their gross property value is something that we can do without asking the permission of Brussels.

17.00 - I think we should have a Eurozone parliament to which to delegate the fiscal decisions that we cannot take anymore on our own. Take the example of the corporate income tax: If you have 18 different corporate income taxes in the Eurozone, all that you have is that multinationals won't pay income taxes anyway. National sovereignty in the domain of corporate taxation has become an illusion. (...) At least for big multinational companies, it would be much better to delegate corporate taxation to the Eurozone parliament.

21.00 - Question on the Financial Times controversy around the mistakes Piketty would have made when analyzing his data.

Everybody can see, particularly in the US, that top managerial compensations is a lot higher today than 20 years ago. And if you look at wealth statistics it is pretty clear: you can see that the top wealth holders are rising a lot faster than middle class and average wealth. It is a bit ridiculous to deny this.



22.33 - The main conclusion of my book is that we should work towards greater financial transparency. Given the difficulties to measure offshore wealth and cross-border financial assets, we should not overestimate our ability to measure that.

23.45 - One of the reasons why I am in favour of wealth tax is that it is also a way to produce information, to produce statistics and more democratic knowledge about where we are going.

24.16 - What is really at stake is to convince our public opinion that globalisation is a positive sum game and that everybody can benefit from it. Otherwise we have a risk that a rising faction of our population thinks that a disproportionate share of the gains of globalisation goes to the elite and this can trigger nationalists responses. That is why we need global regulations so that we make sure that everybody pays a fair share of taxes.

25.31 - You have been criticized by some academics because of your assumption that rate of return will continue to grow faster than income. Will you answer to this critique?

26.40 - we keep collecting data on a weekly basis. We have regular updates about countries. It is going to continue.

27.11 - It could be that we are going to make a lot of innovations, that we are going to have a lot of children so that the total growth rate of our economy is going to be 4 or 5 % in the future and in line with the rate of return to capital. But this would be incredible considering all that has happened. It would be a mistake just to count on that. I think we have to make another plan in case this does not happen. Of course we need to do all we can to promote higher growth without wasting all our sources of energy...and I think we can make it...but it would be a mistake to think that this is going to be sufficient to bring us back to the 3-4-5% growth per year. There is no historical reason for the growth rate and the rate of return to coincide.



28.36 - what my book is saying is that instead of waiting for this incredible coincidence to happen, we should make another plan.

We should have more democratic transparency about wealth and income. (...)
From the data we have, I can say that the top wealth holders in the world are rising three times faster than the size of the world economy

30.52 - we should not take for granted that inequality will remain at a reasonable level.

31. 25 - Other question: you say that you are not anti capitalist but there is the strong political message in your book.

*I belong to generation that turned 18 with the fall of the Berlin wall. I never had any temptation with communism. I belong to the post-Cold War generation. I believe in private property. I have no problems at all with capitalism per se. I am just saying that markets and capitalism are not enough to prevent inequality from rising to excessive levels. **We want markets and capitalism to be the slaves of democracy** rather than the opposite.*

32.40 - It is important to remember that progressive taxation of income and inherited wealth was invented not in the European Union but in the USA in the 1920s and 1930s. Between 1930 and 1980, the top income tax rate in the US was 82%. This happened for half a century and apparently this did not destroy American capitalism. This is only because this was applied to very high incomes of above 1 or 2 million dollars.

33.40 - It is interesting to see that in Europe, more precisely in Germany, the only time when you had 85% of income tax rate was actually from 1945 to 1948 and this rate was set by the Americans. This was not to punish Germany. They did the same in Japan but they also did the same at home in the US. This is because at that time, if you want, this was part of the civilisation package between democratic institutions and financial institutions...in order to prevent democracy



from becoming a plutocracy. So this is not Marxist in any way, this is just trying to re-read history. This is part of our common history.

ARTifacts : Art Meets Anthropology (Part 2)

Noah Coburn
July, 2014



Anthropologists have traditionally been artifacts (the products of man) collectors. This is the reason why Allegra felt compelled to open its own [Virtual Museum of Obscure Fieldwork Artifacts](#): to exhibit the marvelous objects anthropofolks have brought back from their various fieldworks around the world. But Allegra would not be Allegra without the pinch of self-irony that characterizes our online experiments. Indeed, our artifacts humourously distort the 'mysterious' and the 'exotic' that tends to dominate in narratives of classic ethnographic museums. They nevertheless offer windows into our own belief systems and the belief systems of 'others/alter-egos'. They are material entry points into traditions of craft and reflect societal needs or the state of technological advancement of a specific time.



An artifact can have numerous definitions. In anthropology and history, the typical definition is that it is a product of some society, usually intentionally made by someone in that society. These can be ancient things, like Ming vases or soapstone carvings, or they can be fairly recent. They may be defined as being at least 25 years old, though people may be used to thinking of them as much older and from societies in the distant past.(...) Artifacts help create pictures of a society. The pictures are often incomplete, and new finds from the same society may completely change the way historians or archaeologists view it. (Source: [WiseGEEK](#))

In the spirit of continuing our reflection on the role of ‘artifacts’ both within our discipline and in cultures and societies more generally, yesterday we introduced [Amanullah Mojadidi](#) and the [ARTifact project](#) he ran with [Noah Coburn](#)’s students at Bennington College. Today, we share with you the artifacts students collected/created as well as some of their reflections on the process of representing the ‘culture of others’.

ARTifact #1

“Aman’s workshop was incredibly interesting and enlightening. Our task was to create or find an artifact and then give it a history or a story. Some people made their artifact out of found objects while others brought in objects they had and built a story around that. What I found most beneficial and informative was going through the process. I started by finding some tiles in the dumpster of VAPA. While collecting the tiles and thinking about what story I could come up with to represent them as an artifact, I found that I wasn’t totally invested in this idea. At the end of our first day, I thought more about a topic and artifact in which I might feel more passionately about. I had prayer flags hanging in my room from when I went to work with Tibetan exiles in Dharamsala. I decided to use those as my



artifact and build a story about them.



“I had been told a story about a boy who made the 30-day journey from Tibet over the Himalayas to Dharamsala. They were on their way when the police started chasing them and his friend fell into an ice pocket in the mountain. He had to leave his friend behind to die so he could save himself.

*What I found most powerful about the experience was the **process**. This is what Aman stressed the most, and it truly was the most important part of the workshop. I wasn't feeling passionately about my first idea, so I found something that had much more meaning to me. It was a **process** of finding something that had significance to me and making it a personal experience.*



ARTifact #2

“During the 2 day workshop (March 1st and 2nd) we were asked to create artifacts in relation to a social or anthropological event and its connection to current events around the world and how that can raise a controversial opinion on what meaning it holds. I chose to create a factual-fictional story about a journalist who was brought up in Afghanistan, then created a wave of political public involvement in order to provide more rights using the law through his writings. He gets through troubles with the law then gets exiled to France where he develops a bigger sense of responsibility towards the public and develops a wave of anti-government writers to change the rights of the public and religious minorities around Afghanistan. With his new ideologies and strong opinions he becomes a person of great power and strong words. After his return, he was assassinated by the Afghans who then changed constitutional articles about freedoms of expression and press in order to restrict these freedoms even more after the public movement toward a free spoken Afghanistan.”



“Looking at the works of Aman and connecting those to the stories of authoritarian power and control over the public gave me the inspiration to create the artifact of the remains of the assassinated journalist and write his story in order to show the struggles in third world countries like Afghanistan.”

The artifact consisted of a previously made ceramic backbone that was placed on a block of wood, and that was then placed next to the historical story and the segments of the Afghan constitution that were connected to the story.



ARTifact #3

“Coming to the Bennington Museum in 2257, Vermont Zen Center member Benjamin Ehlers gathered inspiration from Coffee Cup to create his photo print showcased here. In specifically noticing the holed out bottom of the cup, Ehlers created The Hungry Ghosts and The Thirsty Spirits, submitting it to the museum to showcase in its Vermont Artists exhibition. Drawing specifically from the Buddhist scriptures, these ghosts and spirits dwell in the six worlds and are never allowed relief for their endless desires. The Hungry Ghosts and The Thirsty Spirits show cases an era of consumption in which desires and ultimately addictions may never be satiated.”



ARTifact #4

“Globalization doesn’t just happen on the political level, but socially as well. Particularly in the digital age, interconnectedness between individuals on platforms such as Facebook has resulted in a shift of societal power. Through this,

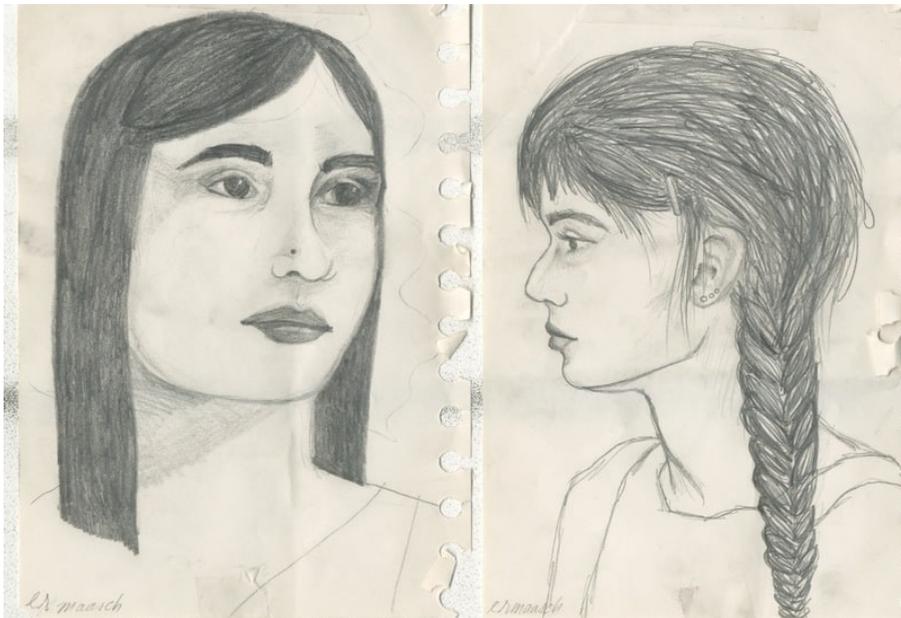


people are given more power while also conceding a great amount to a collective mindset and a “mob mentality” outlook with pop culture. Therefore, I created a [parody of Facebook and how this phenomenon will be perceived in the future.](#)”

ARTifact #5

“Realizing the power curators of museum exhibitions wield through my own invention of artifacts was illuminating. The process of ascribing meaning to a history with both fabricated qualities and authentic qualities gave me the opportunity to put a narrative into the world that I judged to have value and merit (even if our micro-world in VAPA was invented).”

“During Aman’s workshop I chose to create artifacts linking American Suffrage Movement icons Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Lucretia Mott to the six Iroquois nations. The matriarchal or Mother-Clan system imbedded in Iroquois culture did directly influence the work of these prominent women during the mid-late 19th century (I didn’t even have to make it up, real history was crazy enough). Matilda Joslyn Gage even became a full member of the Mohawk tribe’s wolf clan after being arrested for casting a vote in a school board election in 1893. I decided that this was exactly the type of story I would want hanging in a museum.”



I wonder why the connection between suffrage and the Iroquois is obscured, and what a modern young Iroquois-American feminist would look like. In my reflective sketches, I attempt to create my image of what this identity could look like. Aman's workshop definitely has me redefining what I believe the institution of a museum is responsible for, and what my potential role could be as a patron or participant within a museum setting.

“The authority a museum holds is one of the key elements at play in convincing patrons what is both history and fact. An instrumental facet of Aman’s workshop was the culminating act of placing each student’s artifact in a museum/gallery like setting in an attempt to replicate the institutional feeling of walking through the cultural artifacts section of the Museum of History and Natural Science. A gallery space in Bennington’s Visual and Performing Art’s building was reserved by Noah Coburn.”

ARTifact #5



“In Aman’s workshop we were presented with the task of constructing or curating an artifact and then prescribing it an invented or adulterated history. With this prompt, I fabricated a display of an “anato-pig” and developed a mythical scenario justifying it’s history as an artifact, that would address themes of censorship, intellectual freedom and education. Thank you to Aman for the incredible workshop.”

Listen to the soundtrack for ANATO-PIG!

About Anato-Pig:

Originally used in the mid 2100’s for educational purposes, the anatomical pig (anato-pig) was commonly found in primary public school classrooms throughout the United States. From 2110 when it was introduced to the market by the schoplastics corporation to the late 2140’s, the anato-pig was used ubiquitously by public school teachers in biology, health, and sexual education classrooms. Following the regime’s outlaw of models that displayed the human body, the anato-pig became the most popular demonstration doll among administrator’s of state institutions. At the height of it’s popularity the anato-pig had become such an iconic character for schoolchildren that it often made appearances in cartoons, particularly state-funded propaganda reels where the anato-pig was often portrayed in the “good citizen” role.

During the revolution the anato-pig became a symbol of the intellectual oppression that the rebels were fighting against, the majority of original models were burned during demonstrations. Shortly following the revolution, circa 2155- young people who had known the anato-pig in it’s original inception, when they



were school children began brandishing it's form on trendy nick-knacks. The irony guiding this trend was not understood by the older generation, conservative outliers and the more extremist youth liberal parties. Critics of the fashion statement often categorized it's followers as champagne-moderates with more mind for style than politics who had merely appropriated the anato-pig in the vain pursuit of an edgy new statement. Spearheaders of the trend deflected these accusations saying that the irony, meaning and theoretical underpinnings behind their statement were beyond the intellectual capacities of the critics. By the early 2160's the anato-pig could be found ironically placed on posters in recent college grad's apartments, refrigerator magnets, and baseball caps. In this era Anato-pig's were often displayed in a dead-pan manner with little adjustment from their original forms, though certain fashion sub-groups preferred images of them that more directly expressed the satire-following this trend they were often presented in quasi-religious or violent configurations.

[Reproduced with the permission of Noah Coburn.](#)

Featured image: Amanullah Mojadidi. [What Histories Lay Beneath our Feet?](#) 2012. Kochi-Muziris Biennale.

ARTifacts : Art Meets Anthropology (Part 1)

Allegra
July, 2014



Since this week is dedicated to Allegra's beloved [AVMoFA](#) we would like to share with you, dear readers, the marvellous ARTifacts collected by multi-media artist [Aman Mojadidi](#) during a workshop organised by anthropologist [Noah Coburn](#) in the context of his Anthropology of Democracy course at Bennington.

Aman's exhibition/workshop consisted in having students design a series of ARTifacts. Combining truth with fiction, students were encouraged to reflect on the ways objects and exhibitions can reinforce or upend power relations. Students worked for two days in the wood shop and in locations around campus to find artifacts and then create their own unique, often historically disruptive back stories. Artifacts included a murder weapon, tools used by elephants to dig for food and a Sandinista pin.

With degrees in Cultural Anthropology, Aman's work utilizes a critical, experimental ethnographic approach, combining qualitative research, traditional storylines, and postmodern narrative strategies to approach themes such as belonging, identity politics, conflict, and the push to and resistance against modernization; intentionally blurring and merging the lines between



fact and fiction, documentation and imagination. His practice is particularly known over the last several years for projects he refers to as Fieldwork, site/context-specific works that respond directly to the social, cultural, political, and economic systems of the environment where he is working.

Tomorrow, we'll exhibit in [AVMoFA](#) some of the ARTifacts created and/or found by Noah's students. But for now, here is a video of Aman talking about his work. Enjoy!

<http://vimeo.com/88256355>

CONTINUE to [Part 2](#)

We warmly thank Noah Coburn for sharing this wonderful material with us.

Spraying Glamour at AVMoFA

Giulia Mensitieri
July, 2014



Yesterday we brought you back to basics by introducing the idea behind AVMoFA. Today we continue by sharing a 'jewel' from our [AVMoFA archives](#): the bottle of Professional Lightweight mousse 'Curl Collection', provided by [Giulia Mensitieri](#). The bottle is connected to her fieldwork of the fashion industry in Paris and Brussels - which she also shared with Allegra readers via some [fieldnotes](#). That this topic is timely is also reflected in our recent [New Publications list on #Economics](#) - put together by our very own reviews editor [Judith Beyer](#). Thus we'll continue with this theme soon as reviews will be arriving on books such as [Stitched Up: The Anti-Capitalist Book of Fashion](#) by Tansy Hoskins and [Flip-Flop. A Journey Through Globalisation's Backroads](#) by Caroline Knowles. ENJOY!



In this frame you can see a specimen of the Professional Lightweight mousse “Curl Collection” I picked up among the relics of a défilée during the Paris fashion week. It was my ‘treat’ for a 15-hour-unpaid-work shift, one of many in the context of my ethnography of fashion workers in Paris and Brussels. My fieldwork was carried out with creators, designers, stylists, models, photographers, as well as other professionals involved in the sector. In my research I focused on the new forms of precarities, subjectivations and dominations produced by capitalism in the context of “immaterial” labour. This very professional and expensive cosmetics was provided for free and in huge quantity by the sponsor of the event. It was applied on models by a dozen of unpaid workers in the prestigious and luxurious venues that hosted the Paris fashion week. It was then left on the floor as garbage: a metaphor of the paradoxes and inequalities that cut across the fashion world. Too expensive for me to purchase, this artefact has finally found its real ‘home’ in the AVMoFA.



Bright Horizons - July EVENTS!

Allegra
July, 2014



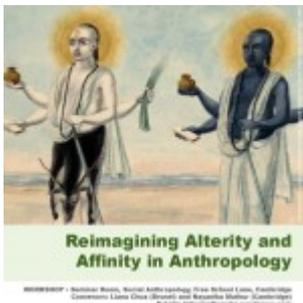
WE'RE BACK!!! We hope that you have all enjoyed yourselves during our absence - whether with work or play! On our part we're once again full of ideas for things to come, we're getting everything set for our [#EASA2014](#) coverage in Tallinn as well as the ['Shadow EASA'](#) in Helsinki. And of course continuing our [#Fieldwork](#) thread with plenty of [#AVMoFA](#) fun too...

So let's hop to it - and there's NO better way to pick up the pace than by glancing at July's [#EVENTS](#) (those besides the EASA 2014), courtesy once again of Hilja Aunela! This time we have noticed a strong embrace for all things visual, which is hardly a surprise considering the bright light and long summer days currently bracing the Northern hemisphere.

Enjoy & DO send us your conference notes & papers! And remember: CONTACT



US if you're organising an event that you think Allegra should feature;
EMAIL: allegralab@gmail.com



[A Web Project & A Workshop:](#)

[Who are We?](#)

Who do 'we' anthropologists think we are? And how does our sense of being part of larger collectives – disciplinary, professional, regional, and so on – shape our understandings of sameness and difference, self and other, intimacy and distance? In recent decades – particularly since the postmodernist 'writing culture' debates of the 1980s – much ink has been spilt on the question of how anthropologists construct and theorize otherness, as well as the ethical and epistemological ramifications of their efforts. What remains hidden, however, is the other side of the story: the implicit assumption of affinity *between* 'us' anthropologists, on which understandings of otherness often hinge. The 'Who are "We"?' project seeks to redress this imbalance by interrogating how 'we' are imagined and invoked in anthropological writing, theory and practice. Click [here](#) to share your thoughts and experiences!



[Call for Papers:](#)

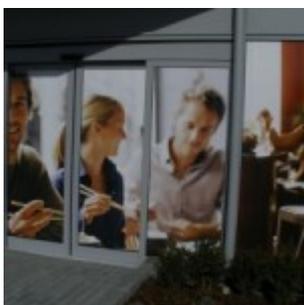
[Shadowing the Scene: Negativity in Affects, Politics, Aesthetics](#)

[Interdisciplinary Conference on Affect and Visuality](#)

26-27 September 2014, Vilnius, [Center for Contemporary Art](#)

Deadline for abstracts and visual work: 15 July 2014

A stalker of light, an ambiguous threshold, an imprint of the real: shadow is brought to give depth and texture to a surface, only to obscure it at next choice. It frightens, hides, protects, invites play, for animals, children, performers. A creative sublime or a perpetual negative: the grave of Capa's soldier, the homoerotic of Caravaggio's paint, film noir's pick of the obscene. The hideaway and the stage of the horrendous, traumatic, lurid. The metaphor and device for clandestine wars, unaccounted economies, illicit affairs. Proposing to elaborate and extend on the indexical and metaphorical notion of shadowing, as active process rather than empirical state or static quality, this conference invites critical and creative interventions into the conceptual bases shared by affects, aesthetics, and negativity.



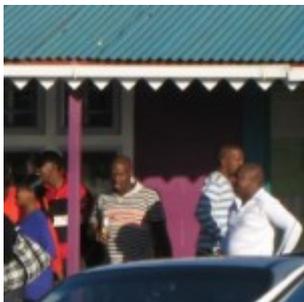
Training @ [Spectacle](#)

[Digital Video Production Weekends for Anthropologists & Social Researchers](#)

12-13 July / 16-17 August / 11-12 October / 6-7 December 2014, London, UK



Short, Sharp, Affordable. This is an intensive, hands-on, weekend training course with emphasis on developing your practical filming skills, participatory techniques, and do-it-yourself confidence that will enhance the quality and validity of filmed fieldwork material. The short, condensed and effective course will give all participants a solid foundation of practical knowledge and a working understanding of digital cameras, sound recording, and filming on location.



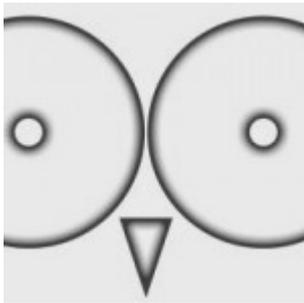
Call for papers and sessions

“Struggle and Style: African Youth Cultures Today”: an international symposium

12 September 2014, [University of Helsinki](#), Finland

Deadline for proposals: 21 July 2014

“Struggle and Style” approaches youth as a flexible and often prolonged period of life; according to conventional measures, such as establishing an independent household, many Africans remain reluctantly “youthful” well into their 30s. Yet even by more basic measurements, Africa is experiencing a demographic “bulge” with approximately sixty per cent the population under 24 years of age. Subject to high levels of unemployment and relatively low levels of education, Africa’s youth are alternatively depicted as a “ticking time bomb” ready to explode if new opportunities are not made available, and a vital asset to be harnessed in rapidly developing economies. The symposium seeks to address current issues concerning youth cultures across Africa from an interdisciplinary perspective, and warmly welcomes contributions from across the humanities and social sciences.



Call for films

The Athens Ethnographic Film Festival: Xenophobia and Ethnographic Film

Deadline for submissions: 28 July

[The Athens Ethnographic Film Festival](#) is proud to announce that its fifth edition will introduce a themed-screenings section, which will be showcasing ethnographic films focused on particular social issues and present visual/anthropological perspectives on these issues. In this year's edition the theme of this section will be "xenophobia". As we consider issues of racist violence, aggressive expressions of nationalism and social exclusion to be of pressing relevance for the Athenian society today, we have decided to launch the themed section of the festival with a selection of ethnographic films that deal with such issues. We are, thus, inviting submissions for films made by/ or in collaboration with anthropologists (or other social scientists), which deal with one or more of the following issues: xenophobia; racism; racist hatred/violence; (religious/ ethnic) intolerance; social exclusion; discrimination; nationalism; euro-centrism.



[Call for Papers](#)

[Global Institutions and Technologies in the Governance of Illicit Activity: Measurement, Data, Indicators and Quantification](#)

17-18 November 2014, [NYU School of Law](#), New York

Deadline for abstracts: 30 July (proposals to angelina.fisher@nyu.edu)

On November 17-18, 2014, [the Institute for International Law and Justice](#) at New York University School of Law and David M. Malone, Rector of the United Nations University, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, will convene a conference to examine how power-knowledge dynamics within global institutional governance are being transformed by new practices and cultures of measurement, data, indicators, and other quantified information. The central focus will be on governance of illicit activity (corruption, money laundering, human trafficking, illegal logging, narcotics, dangerous fake pharmaceuticals, etc).



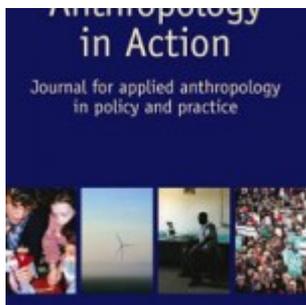
[Conference](#)



[Taboo Conference II](#)

7-9 September 2014, [Durham University](#) (United Kingdom)

The Centre for Intercultural Mediation, Durham University, and the Department of Interpreting and Translation, *Alma mater studiorum*, University of Bologna, jointly organise this interdisciplinary conference that seeks to explore questions related to taboos as diverse as sex, sexuality and nudity, to disability, sickness and death, among others, and to showcase research into linguistic, cultural and societal taboos and their reinforcement/debasement from both an intra- and inter-cultural perspective. [Registration open](#).



Call for papers

Anthropology in Action: Special Issue on Impact of Anthropology

Deadline for submissions: 30 September 2014

[Anthropology in Action](#) is an international peer-reviewed journal publishing articles, commentaries, research reports, and book reviews in applied anthropology. In a range of countries, the public 'value' of and support for a range of academic disciplines has been questioned and debated. Following the recent Research Excellence Framework Exercise in the UK, which introduced formal assessment of 'research impact', it is timely to reflect on the engagement of anthropology with public policy and practice and how it makes an impact on these spheres.



[Call for new monographs](#)

[HAU](#)

Deadline for proposals: 30 September 2014

HAU is now officially a full-fledged Open Access anthropology Press. Following the new partnership with University of Chicago Press, the editors of the HAU Book Series are delighted to launch an international competition for manuscript proposals for new, state-of-the-art monographs in anthropology. Proposals selected for publication will be published in our upcoming series, The Malinowski Monographs, distributed on [HAU's website](#) in Open Access format and in paperback via the University of Chicago Press. Short monographs (40-50,000 words) focusing on a specific conceptual engagement from the bottom-up (i.e. money, witchcraft, love, friendship, imagination, belief, etc.) are also welcomed.



Open Call for Contributions



Border Criminologies

Based at the [Centre for Criminology](#) at the University of Oxford, [Border Criminologies](#) brings together academics, practitioners and those who have experienced border control from around the world. Showcasing original research from a range of perspectives, we hope to better understand the effect of border control and to explore alternatives. The website has an open call for contributions such as (but not limited to): Themed posts, From the Field series, Audio and images, News and updates, Book or article reviews and Opinion pieces.

Thanks for all your hard work, Hilja Aunela!

LOVE is in the air

Allegra
July, 2014



It's been a long year with MUCH fun and also work. It's time for Allegra's first SUMMER BREAK! And of course, the only way to set it off is with PEACE & LOVE! We are thus very pleased to exhibit today in Allegra's Virtual Museum of Obscure Fieldwork Artefacts ([AVMOFA](#)) a new artefact by [Samuli Schielke](#)! See you all VERY SOON!

A Salafi man was selling red heart-shaped balloons with the text (in English) "I love you" on July 26th street in Cairo. I asked him whether I could take a



picture, and he answered he would not want to appear on a photo because pictures are 'haram' (forbidden in Islam). He was nevertheless very pleased to have his balloons photographed. A bystander came to his help and held the balloons for him. I bought one balloon and took this picture.

Cairo, March 2010, scan from medium format colour negative.
Photo by [Samuli Schielke](#)

Interview with EASA Founding Members

Felix Girke
July, 2014



Dear [Sydel Silverman](#), [Andre Gingrich](#) and [Rolf Husmann](#),



I welcome you to Allegra! As you are among the founding members of EASA, we would like to ask you some questions about EASA's trajectories and the development of social/cultural anthropology in Europe. Many of the attendants of this year's conference will have hardly been born when it all began, and it would be fantastic if you could provide us with your perspective on the journey so far.

Editor's note: [Adam Kuper](#) pointed us to his 1989 report in *Anthropology Today*, "[Becoming Europeans.](#)" I have inserted some excerpts from this voice from the past in juxtaposition to his peers' recollections. Accordingly, all highlighted entries are (Kuper 1989: 28). He will provide further insights during the plenary session on "EASA beyond crises: continuities and innovations in European anthropology" in Tallinn.

And so it began:

Adam Kuper: On 14 January 1989, twenty-two generally middle-aged anthropologists from twelve Western European countries assembled in Castelgandolfo, outside Rome. We were to meet in the think-tank of the ENI (the Italian state petroleum company), in the very shadow of the Pope's summer palace, and across the lake from Frazer's Nemi (which Bernardo Bernardi later took some of us to visit). From any point of view, a sacred venue. We were there to consider the establishment of a European Association of Social Anthropologists.

1) Was there any predecessor to EASA? Or, in other words, what were the



arenas in which anthropologists from across Europe interacted before EASA was founded?

Andre Gingrich: In the Cold War era before EASA's foundation, social anthropology in Europe primarily was organized along its various national formats. These national organizations always had international guests at their annual or bi-annual conferences. In western Europe, most of those continued to exist in one way or the other, while most of those under communist rule eventually changed their profile after the collapse of communism and together with the ensuing political transformations. Beyond those professional constellations of the Cold War era the [International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences](#) provided one of the few non-national fora in our fields – but for various reasons the IUAES already had lost much of its earlier momentum by the 1980s. In reality, the British, French, and the (West-) German associations provided perhaps the most lively national meeting places in European anthropology of those first post-1945 decades.

Sydel Silverman: I was involved in the creation of EASA as the then-president of the Wenner-Gren Foundation. In conversations with Adam Kuper (who was the editor of *Current Anthropology*, the journal sponsored by Wenner-Gren), he mentioned that the idea of an organization for social anthropologists across Europe had been broached to him by various people. To my knowledge, there had never been anything like it. (There was a European association of archaeologists, which might have been in existence then; I attended a meeting in 1991, and I believe it was already well established.) Adam and I discussed putting together a tentative meeting with social anthropologists from all the Western European countries to pursue the idea. It was to be a very informal gathering, with nothing committed in advance and no foregone outcome.



Rolf Husmann: As far as I know there was no direct predecessor, but in my special field, visual anthropology, similar moves were made in the 1980s, and one of them was EAVSoM, an association to connect European visual ethnographers. This association was founded around 1985 during the Festival dei Popoli in Florence and apart from myself, other founding members were Solveig Freudenthal from Sweden, Barbara Lüem from Switzerland (who sadly passed away some years ago) and Paolo Chiozzi from Italy (who was the festival director at the same time). But this organisation never got off the ground and hardly anything happened. It is in fact so long ago and far away that I cannot even remember the full name of that abbreviation correctly!

Adam Kuper: Such an association had certainly been talked about for years. Approaches had been made, in a desultory way. Like many colleagues, I suppose, I had heard rumours of one kind and another. Jack Goody once sent me an almost indecipherable note to say it would be a good idea. Visiting Cologne once, a group of anthropologists told me they heard it was about to be founded. But it took Sydel Silverman, determined and clear-headed, to say that someone really should get on with it. She promised that the Wenner-Gren Foundation would finance an exploratory gathering.

2) What would you say was the agenda for the establishment of EASA? The year 1989, of course, was momentous - did the palpable historical shifts figure in your efforts?

Andre Gingrich: The Castelgandolfo meeting certainly was a carefully orchestrated event, aiming at the successful launching of a pan-European professional organization in our field. That indeed was the main agenda, with



substantial organisational, financial, and institutional planning taking place in the actual meetings, as well as during preparatory meetings and behind the scenes. Perhaps a slight US-sceptical undertone also played a role for some time, but that was balanced out soon thereafter. More importantly, however, developments in eastern and south-eastern Europe already were relevant during the foundation processes. Up-coming political events could not yet be anticipated, of course – but the Polish uprising had been going on for some years at least, and events in East Germany were gaining momentum. I remember one discussion at the Castelgandolfo meeting about the question whether or not EASA’s founding members should approach the leadership in national organisations that were still operating under communist rule: as a result of that discussion, it was decided to abstain from such a move in order to strengthen EASA’s grass-root and mid-career-approach while waiting to see which course events would take behind the Iron Curtain.

Sydel Silverman: My discussions with Adam took place in 1988, and the meeting was then held in January of 1989. Thus, it happened before the “momentous” events of 1989. So much so that the original phrasing of the possible-association’s name was “Western European,” and the question of whether to admit researchers from Eastern Europe was a topic of considerable concern at the meeting. The more significant historical context was the impending formalization of the European Union (slated for 1992), which for many people created a sense of belonging to a unified Europe (as well as the potential funding that might be forthcoming from the EU). Less explicit was another motivating force, namely the hegemony of American anthropology at the time (especially in the form of the American Anthropological Association); there was a feeling that a united European body could counter that hegemony.



Rolf Husmann: At the time of EASA's foundation, the remarkable political shifts in Europe and worldwide (the fall of the Iron Curtain) had not happened yet and were not in the mind of the participants of the founding meeting in Rome. I was invited by Adam Kuper, obviously on recommendation by Gerd Baumann who knew me from our common interest in Nuba Studies. The official wording was that participants had been invited who were from different European countries (excluding Eastern Europe deliberately!) and in their "mid-career" - whatever that meant. The idea was to establish an organization on high professional levels, somehow with a certain exclusivity for anthropologists from these areas with a degree of at least PhD. Initially as exceptions, European anthropology students shortly before their final degrees and non-Europeans with a record of anthropological work in and/or about Europe were to be admitted. Two members' positive vote was to be necessary for becoming a member of this professional organization. In other words: the greater number of students, most of the American colleagues and the Eastern European ("socialist/communist") colleagues were deliberately not welcome. However, the situation changed quickly, because in 1990 the above-mentioned changes happened and quite soon EASA was opened to all those Eastern European colleagues who stood for a Western-style anthropology. I remember that Adam Kuper soon went to Moscow to find anthropologists there who were different from the old cadres.



Adam Kuper: The plan was for a preliminary discussion, a cautious minuet. We were an ad hoc, informal network. Nobody represented anyone else, nobody was committed to anything in advance. Very few of us knew more than two or three others. But however careful we were, it was immediately apparent that there was considerable enthusiasm for the initiative. People felt a need for closer co-operation in teaching and research, and for a professional body to represent social anthropologists in Europe.

3) From all the Founding Members, would you be able to single out somebody who was driving the process in particular? How did you all come together?

Rolf Husmann: No doubt, the one and only driving force in all of this was Adam Kuper.

Andre Gingrich: The driving force behind EASA's foundation certainly was Adam Kuper, who primarily was using his own professional networks across the UK and Europe to identify appropriate mid-career anthropologists from most Western European countries. A few years later Maurice Bloch and Ernest Gellner told me that each of them – independently from each other, it seems – had mentioned my name to Adam Kuper since I had enjoyed some professional exchange with them already. In the case of French and francophone anthropology, I know that Adam Kuper (as well as Bloch and Gellner who had conversed with him on this topic) was doing his best to strengthen an inclusive approach that would invite representatives from the various camps of French-speaking anthropology to Castelgandolfo. But that side of the enterprise turned out to be somewhat more



difficult than expected. In other cases though, the initial support (e.g., by Scandinavian or Iberian countries) for the process of founding something like EASA was wonderful, could be felt during the Castelgandolfo conference itself as much as during the first EASA congress at Coimbra - both events contributing decisively to a very successful first period in EASA's history.

Sydel Silverman: Wenner-Gren hosted and financed the meeting in Castelgandolfo, but I understood my role to be that of an observer; therefore I did not enter directly into the discussions (for the most part). The leading figure was certainly Adam Kuper, who drew up the list of invitees, set a tentative agenda for the meeting, and acted as convener. His leadership was much welcomed and appreciated by the group.

Adam Kuper: I am not at all sure whose idea it was.

4) Personally, what promise did you see then in the establishment of a European Association for Social Anthropology?

Andre Gingrich: I was quite convinced that the time indeed had come to establish anthropology as a wide, vibrant international discipline also in its European dimensions, and to move beyond national traditions and boundaries.



Sydel Silverman: As soon as the meeting got under way, it was clear that there was unanimous support for creating an association, and the rest of the meeting was devoted to issues of its form and functions: four working groups developed proposals concerning a constitution, conferences, publications, and educational exchange. A provisional executive committee of five was elected. By the time the meeting was adjourned, EASA was a reality, and plans were already in place for the first conference, in Coimbra in 1990. (By the time that conference took place, the map of Europe had changed: East Europeans were a significant presence, and the general assembly enthusiastically endorsed the proposal to hold the second conference in Prague.)



Adam Kuper: *There is still, clearly, a distinctive European tradition in social anthropology. We had been nourished by the same classic social science sources, and had responded to common historical experiences. The new political climate in Europe had given a fresh impetus for effective interaction. Moreover, contemporary trends in American anthropology seemed to many of us foreign and unappealing, but hard to resist without the support of a larger community of our own. The British participants-David Parkin, John Davis and myself-were also struck by the absence of effective equivalents to the ASA or*



the RAI in many European countries, whose anthropologists lacked viable national institutions.

5) After your initial participation, how were you further involved in EASA? How would you say did involvement with EASA impact your career?

Andre Gingrich: I was lucky to be at the right place at the right time, when EASA was founded. I already had good professional connections before, but for me that early inclusion at the centre of EASA certainly helped to speed up my career, showed me the right arenas to turn to with my academic questions and with my queries concerning next steps in my career, and so forth. I was review editor for *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* during the journal's foundation process and throughout its very first years of existence. Apart from that, I have remained a member ever since EASA's foundation, have participated in several (Coimbra, Prague, Oslo, Copenhagen, Kracow, Vienna, Maynooth...) but not all EASA conferences, contributed to or co-edited volumes in the EASA book series, and so forth.

Sydel Silverman: Since I did not qualify for membership by EASA's criteria, I was elected an honorary member. In subsequent years, I attended most conferences and was gratified to witness the association's growth and maturation. Within a short time, it more than fulfilled the aspirations for it that were articulated at the organizing meeting.

Rolf Husmann: At the initial meeting I was voted to be a member of the Executive Committee with the special task of creating a directory of European



anthropologists, the so-called “EASA Register”. In other words, in the era before emails and before the internet I was to gather personal data from all members and publish them in a book. I had done a similar thing twice in Germany (the German Directory of Anthropologists) and thus could build on some experience. In fact, I did so together with my wife Gaby, who had also assisted me in the German directories. All in all, two directories appeared (in 1990 and 1992) and were distributed at the EASA conferences in Coimbra and Prague, before Vaclav Hubinger took over this task from me.

6) Looking at it from a more global perspective, what niche do you see EASA occupy today in the total ecology of anthropological associations?

Andre Gingrich: To my mind, EASA is the uncontested professional organization of our field in Europe. Through its various formats and arenas, EASA is a) the decisive intellectual forum for most social anthropologists with a professional position inside Europe (or a degree from a European university), b) our academic field’s European voice within the wider groups of “continental” professional organizations – be they African, American, whatever – and in the World Council, c) an authoritative voice when it comes to interdisciplinary dialogues with neighboring fields such as philosophy, sociology, history, archaeology, biology, and so forth, d) also, and to an increasingly important extent, a voice that is heard and appreciated when various European professional organizations in the social sciences join forces to address issues of common concern, such as decreasing funding for the social sciences and humanities at large within the EU’s S&R budget schemes, such as “Horizon 2020.”



7) What importance would you assign to participation in EASA for young scholars today?

Adam Kuper: The Association hopes to provide an umbrella for a variety of European initiatives, and the conference should serve as a venue for all sorts of discussions and planning-sessions, for the exhibition of books and journals, for arranging student placements, and for finding jobs.

Andre Gingrich: Try to connect with the most interesting and the most curious anthropologists wherever you can find them (regardless of passport, gender, religion, language, age, etc.) – and you will find a good part of them in EASA. Present your queries and your results to sympathetic colleagues, and listen to their critical questions and comments. Sometimes smaller workshops are more adequate than the big EASA conferences, sometimes regional or topical specialization that appropriately speaks to yours is easier to find elsewhere than inside EASA.



But whenever it really matters what your own professional field is doing and saying, either to give you feed-back or to let you know what's going on elsewhere, then EASA is the right place for you. EASA helps you to connect, to improve, and to reach out.



Felix Girke is, among other merits, Allegra's Master of Ceremonies for EASA 2014 and related coverage.

[Enterprise Estonia](#) is Allegra's official sponsor for the event.

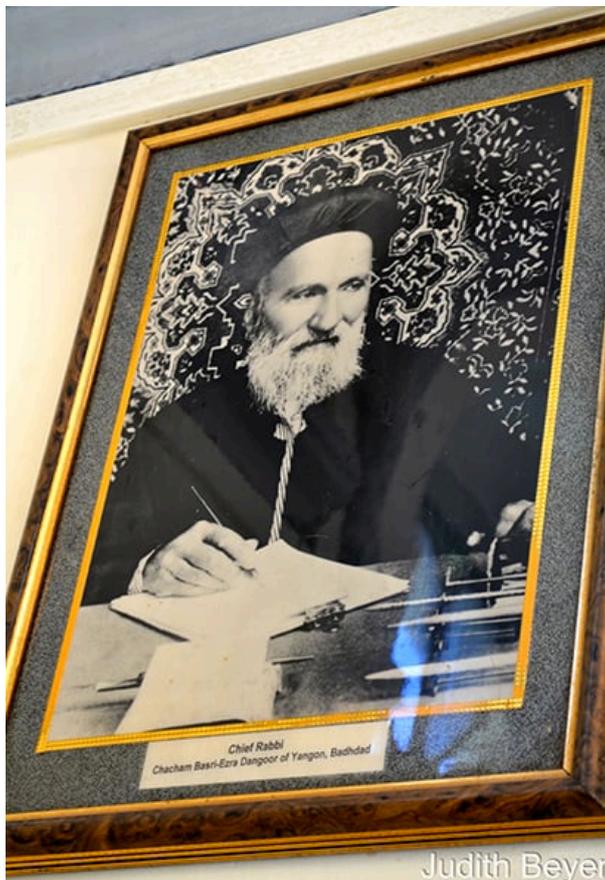
Almost Englishmen. Baghdadi Jews in Yangon

Judith Beyer
July, 2014



Introduction and Photographs by Judith Beyer, Book Review by Nina Johnen

On an office desk in Yangon (Rangoon), the former capital of Myanmar (Burma): a bottle of wine - a present from Israel; few letters; a calendar with Jewish holidays; a stack of photographs from the recent Hanukah celebration. The tiny office is located in the only synagogue in Yangon, built from 1893-1896 on land given to the Jewish community that established itself in Yangon in the first half of the 19th century. While I am waiting for Sammy Samuel, the youngest community member, my eyes wander around the room until I notice the photograph on the wall: “Chief Rabbi Chacham Basri-Ezra Dangoor of Yangon, Baghdad.”



The Jewish community of Myanmar consists of only a few families, not more than twenty people altogether. They keep the building in shape and open its doors to anyone interested in the cultural heritage of the city. Several small shops are built inside the synagogue wall, facing the main street, and merchants pay the synagogue a small fee in order to be able to sell their products there. They also help to keep the place clean, as Moses Samuel, the host and manager of the synagogue, is getting old. His son Sammy, who resides in New York City most of the time, now takes care of administrative matters. He runs a tourism company bringing in Jewish tourists from the US who book “heritage

tours” with him to Yangon to see the synagogue which houses a 120-year-old Sifel Torah from Baghdad. Outsiders thus regularly bolster the small community of “the last Jews of Myanmar”, celebrating holidays or Shabbat together, and enabling the reading of the Torah aloud, a ritual which requires that a quorum (minyan) of ten people be present.

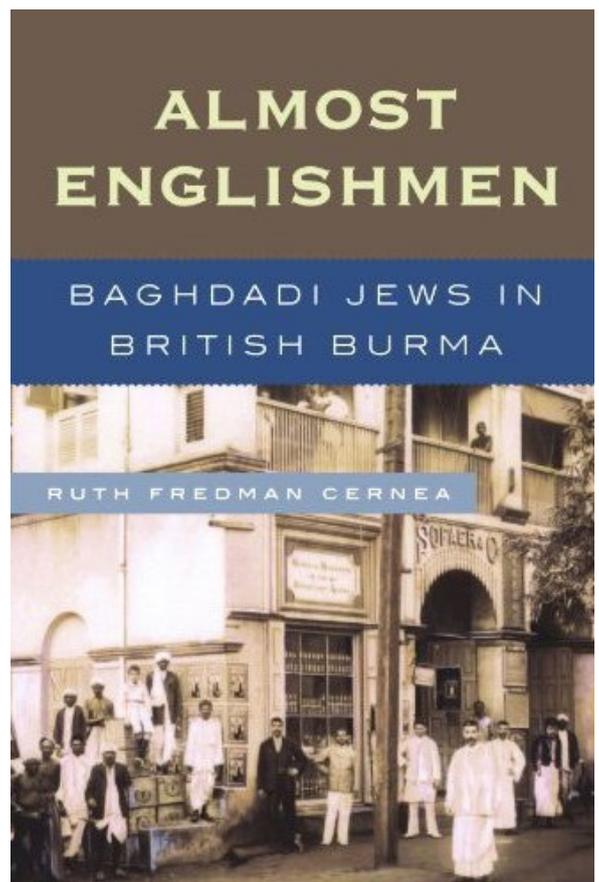
The history of the community is as interesting as its current initiatives and strategies to sustain itself. Because it is unique in Myanmar, there have been several [stories published](#) about the community over recent years, all similar since everyone primarily talks to Sammy; the articles have thereby become a historical record in themselves which trace the personal development of ‘the youngest Burmese Jew’ - from his [studies in Israel and the United States](#); to his [business endeavours](#), up to his [marriage](#) in February 2014, which was celebrated in the synagogue - the first Jewish wedding in Myanmar for twenty years.



Anthropologist Ruth Fredman Cernea started her inquiry into Burmese Jewish life in 1987 as a tourist, but then spent almost two decades researching the history of the Baghdadi Jews in Burma and the family history of the Samuels in particular. In her book “Almost Englishmen” she weaves various strands of data together, including (auto-) biographies of various Jewish community members living in Yangon as well as abroad.

Book review by Nina Johnen

[*Almost Englishmen. Baghdadi Jews in British Burma.* Ruth Fredman Cernea. 2006. Lanham: Lexington Books ISBN: 9780739116470, 202 pp.](#)



In her book *Almost Englishmen. Baghdadi Jews in British Burma* (2006) Ruth



Fredman Cernea presents her research on the Jewish Diaspora of Baghdadi Jews in Burma (now officially called Myanmar) during the period of British colonialism from 1824 to 1948 with the aim of contributing “to the construction of this collective memory of Jewish life in Burma” (p. x). Cernea’s research is mostly based on memories and written accounts of members of the Burmese Jewish community or religious records of synagogues in Rangoon (nowadays called Yangon) in the south, and Mandalay in the heartland of Burma. In addition, she got in touch with the offspring of former family dynasties that today are spread all over the world from Australia to Germany.

The book gives a comprehensive overview of the development and establishment of the Baghdadi community in the social, political, economic and religious contexts of the time. The author’s main focus lies on the assimilation efforts of the Jewish community, the maintenance of their religious practices, their economic activities, and their social and political status with regards the English colonial power and other minorities and religious entities that co-existed in Burma over the centuries. “Almost Englishmen” manages to balance scientific research with an entertaining, reader-friendly style of writing, whereby the narrative style dominates the book. Many parts are direct quotes of written reports such as diaries, or are based on the narrations of eye witnesses and their offspring.

The book is of interest to academics as well as non-academics who are personally committed to the history of the Jewish diaspora in South(East)-Asia.

The introduction provides an overview of Baghdadi/Jewish Diaspora in South Asia around the 19th at a time when Calcutta was the site of its biggest community. Cernea traces the roots of Jewish diaspora movements back to the fall of the first temple in Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E, in the aftermath of which many found new homes in the Ottoman Empire and the Islamic world, especially around Baghdad in Iran. Due to these historic developments, the Baghdadis’ cultural heritage and teachings originated from Jewish religious authorities in Baghdad. This is in



contrast to another group of Jews that also established themselves in South Asia, including Burma: the Bene Israel, whose religious traditions and beliefs originated from religious authorities in Jerusalem.

Cernea names different key economic, social and religious key factors whose symbiotic co-existence fostered the quick and sustainable establishment of Baghdadi Diaspora all over Asia. “Those patterns of communal responsibility, both to Jews and to the wider society in which they lived, were replicated in other locations where Baghdadis resided” (p. xxii). These factors include trading and family networks, language and social and economic independence, but also Judaism’s inherent concepts of social welfare, philanthropy, communal responsibility and the importance of Jewish educational institutions such as schools.





The first and second chapters give an overview of the British Empire's economic interest in Burma, as well as the economic activities of the first Baghdadis in Mandalay and Rangoon. The first Jewish traders arrived and began to settle in 1840, building a synagogue in 1857. The author identifies these early traders as the founders of several Baghdadi family dynasties which successfully established themselves in colonialist society shortly after their arrival and which would dominate the future economic and social development of Jewish Diaspora across Burma until its collapse during the Second World War.

“The Saul family was intricately related by marriage to the Solomon and Sassoon families in Rangoon - and many of the other families in Burma - as sisters of one family married brothers of another and cousins married cousins throughout the generations” (p. 31). The social, economic and political activities of these family dynasties are the principal topic of the author's discussion in her book.

Chapters Three and Four discuss integration processes and assimilation attempts by the Baghdadi upper class and give an overview of the co-existence of Jewish and British life and traditions in a country in which both cultures were foreign. In conclusion, the author suggests that Jewish assimilation was highly dependent on the political and social will of the British to accept them as part of their hierarchical society, though the orthodoxy of home, synagogue rituals and the establishment of institutions such as community centers, schools and the celebration of Jewish holidays also contributed to the preservation and strengthening of Jewish identity at the time.

Chapter Five discusses rising conflicts between the Bene Israel and the Baghdadi communities due to the different origin of their religious authorities. Exacerbated by the Baghdadi Community, these tensions eventually led to a court ruling in



1936 affirming the legal status of Bene Israel as Jews and their right to be part of synagogue communities.



Chapter Six and Seven describe the complete destruction of Burma by Japanese invasion and its impact on the Baghdadi community during and after the Second World War. In the course of growing anti-colonialist movements, Burmese resistance groups cooperated with Japan as they believed this would pave their way to national independence. Meanwhile, Baghdadi life in Burma was almost completely destroyed, as most community members fled to India. Cernea writes that attempts to revitalize the community by returnees after Burma's independence in 1948 were impeded by the country's new administration. In the course of a so-called "Burmanization" process, a variety of strict policies, impacting on the social and political rights of religious minorities, were



implemented in such a way that by the 1960s most returnees had left Burma and migrated to Israel.

In Chapter Eight, the author investigates Burmese diplomatic relations with Israel. Due to the fact that Burma's international political and economic role was, as a former British colony, isolated, strategic political and economic bonds between the two countries did not take off until the 1950s, providing a period of cooperation that only lasted until the beginning of the 1960s when the Burmese government declared a policy of strict self-reliance in all state affairs as the country became a socialist military dictatorship. The author closes with Chapter Nine, in which she gives a short overview of the traces left by the Baghdadi community in Burma, predominantly in Yangon.

Cernea reports that "Burma's Jews are scattered around the world, primarily in London, Los Angeles, Sydney and Israel" and that actual Jewish community life is non-existent in today's Myanmar. However, she also writes that "[w]hile many markers of Jewish life in Burma no longer exist, the coordinates of the community remain the same" (p. 130).

The Yangon Synagogue is in the care of Moses Samuels, a member of one of the biggest Baghdadi family dynasties, and there is hope that his son will take over the role of preserver of Baghdadi Jewish heritage in Burma, something which constitutes an important part of Burma's diverse cultural roots.

Despite the narrow thematic focus on Jews in Burma, Cernea's analysis provides material for comparative anthropological as well as sociological and political research which is concerned with the establishment of religious minorities abroad. It offers a contribution to the analysis of international migratory movements in terms of patterns of assimilation, and the socio-political role and



rights of religious minorities within the contexts of statehood and citizenship before and after colonialism. In addition, the Baghdadis' belief-based community bias can serve as another example of the positive impact of religion on the establishment of international trade networks in South and South-East Asia. In common with Islamic trade networks, these types of connections have helped diaspora communities gain social and economic recognition in foreign societies in both short and long-term time frames.

Unfortunately, the sources of Cernea's research mostly attest to the lives of rich Jewish family dynasties that successfully managed to work their way into the country's hierarchical colonial class system, thereby reaching a relatively high social and political standing and independence within Burmese society.

Information on the life of non-privileged or poor members of the Jewish community is limited, resulting in an imbalance of sources representing the perspectives of community members ranging from the high class elite down to simple vendors or traders.

This creates a gap in the attempt to portray Baghdadi diaspora life in all its facets, explained by the relative absence of historical records of "non-elite" Jews compared with those of family dynasties that had developed a tradition of documenting their families' lives. As the latter were well educated and had a sense of the future cultural and religious benefit and significance of their written records, historical sources are dominated by their perspectives at the expense of other Jewish community members.



Security by Remote Control: Automation and autonomy in robot weapon systems. Report on symposium

Alcides Eduardo dos Reis Peron
July, 2014

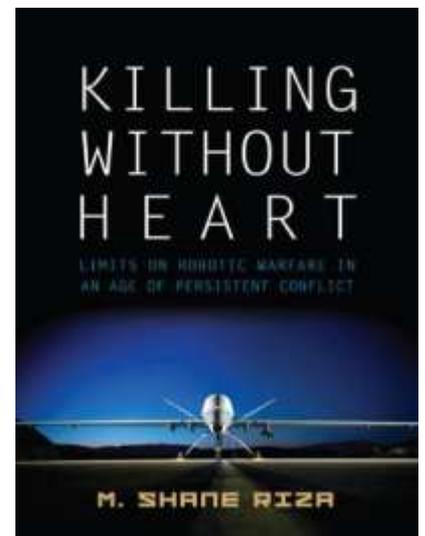


On May 22 and 23, 2014, [Security Lancaster](#), the Lancaster University [Centre for Science Studies](#) and the [Centre for International Law and Human Rights](#) co-sponsored “[Security by Remote Control](#)” an interdisciplinary symposium on automation and autonomy in robot weapon systems. Organized by **Lucy Suchman** and **Karolina Follis**, the event gathered over 30 participants representing different fields and backgrounds. The purpose of the Symposium was to shed light on the use of autonomous weapon systems and remotely controlled weapons by the United States and other actors in recent military campaigns and operations.



The intention was to explore the intimate relation and inherent contradictions between automation and autonomy in the context of modern wars, understanding how these new technologies claim to offer more precision while creating new complexities regarding relations among combatants and civilians, and the international legal frameworks of war.

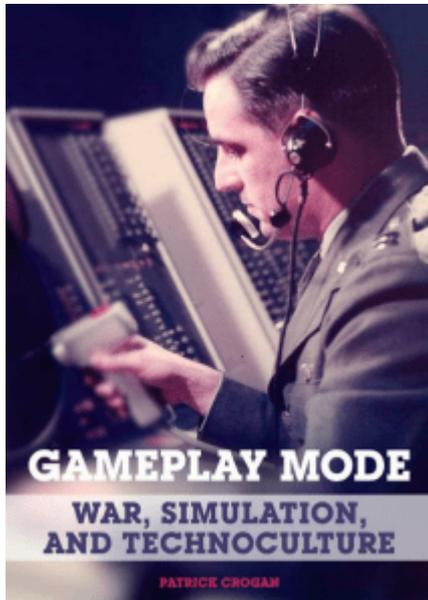
The symposium opened with a keynote by the command pilot and former instructor at the U.S. Air Force Weapons School, and author of [Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict](#), **M. Shane Riza**. A strong critic of the current trends in military technology, Riza focused on presenting his hypothesis of “risk inversion” in the use of autonomous or remotely operated weapons systems. Speaking both as a scholar and a practitioner, his critical position on drone warfare was received with great interest by the academic audience, even if not everyone was prepared to accept the entirety of his argument. He argues that that with the advent of remotely-controlled warfare, the non-combatants face greater risk than those charged with fighting within what he characterizes as the “spectra of impunity” in warfare. This “risk inversion” happens when, on the one hand, unmanned systems permit the technologically superior nation’s combatants to be fully protected from the harm inherent in war; on the other hand, as combatants fight ‘from the homeland’, they create the conditions for legitimate targeting of the homeland on the part of those who are the weapons’ targets.



On the second day, the participants heard four papers by scholars from a range of disciplines. **Derek Gregory**, cultural geographer at the University of British Columbia, talked about the “*The God trick and the administration of military violence*”, in which, drawing on Donna Haraway’s work, he problematizes the notion that drones can deliver a fully transparent view of the battlefield. In his presentation, Gregory made clear how the multiplicity of “visions” produced



through a complex technical apparatus leads to a de-centralized, distributed and dispersed geography of vision, resulting in less, not more control of the operations.



[Christiane Wilke](#), of Carleton University discussed “*The optics of bombing: International law and the visibility of civilians*”. She highlighted the problematic nature of the distinction between civilians and combatants in International Humanitarian Law and argued that visual technologies play a central role in both constituting and blurring this distinction. [Patrick Crogan](#), of the University of the West of England in Bristol, and author of the book [GameplayMode: War, Simulation, and Technoculture](#), spoke on “*Un-securing the Territory*” and highlighted the genealogy of drone warfare reaching back to classic Greek military tactics. [Jutta Weber](#), of the University of Paderborn, Germany, gave a paper titled “*Making Algorithms Kill. On the Epistemic Logic of Robotic Warfare,*” which traced the blurring of the boundaries between humans and machines and its political consequences.

One problem addressed, is how the idea of “precision” could be contested in the context of a war that generalizes the territory and the enemy. Discussions regarding the limitations of the visual equipment, the multiple de-centralized visions of the battlefield, and the consequent increase of incapacity to distinguish civilians from combatants, were some of the features concerning this western-



militarized way of conceiving and viewing the enemy. Further, the evolution of disruptive technological systems could pose new problems. Here of concern was the evolution from unmanned to autonomous systems, and the constant “algorithmization” of the targets in the context of signature killing. Ultimately, the discussions presented us with several new perspectives to comprehend critically the dynamics and trends of war conducted by remote control.

Stuck at the Gates: Seminar on Migration, Biotechnologies and Limits of Regulation #EASA2014

Allegra
July, 2014



Once you arrive in Tallinn for the [EASA](#), you are already almost in Helsinki - so why not hop on a ferry and make the journey all the way! On August 4th Allegra Lab organises a small scale 'Spill Over' for the EASA in collaboration with the [Finnish Anthropological Society](#), Research Project 'Bodies of Evidence' (Kone Fund)) and with support from the Department of Social Anthropology of the University of Helsinki (et al). The event centres around the international regulatory framework on migration, thus continuing also our thread on [Borders](#), and features [Ghassan Hage](#), [Sarah Green](#), Heath Cabot, Husein Muhammed and Allegra's very own [Judith Beyer](#) - with your humble Allegra moderators [Miia Halme-Tuomisaari](#) and [Julie Billaud](#) (wo)manning the floor.

Join us thus for some more Anthro Fun - and as you remember from our coverage from [Knots](#), the mad Finns sure know how to enjoy themselves in all conditions (although please note: weather forecast predicts very little snow in August)! Email us at [things\(at\)allegralaboratory.net](mailto:things(at)allegralaboratory.net) if you want to register - we look



forward to seeing you!

Stuck at the Gates: Seminar on Migration, Biotechnologies and Limits of Regulation

4.8.2014, 2- 5pm, Room 505, [Tieteiden talo](#), [Kirkkokatu 6](#), Helsinki, Finland

'Spill Over' of the Bi-Annual Meeting of the European Association of Social Anthropology organized in Tallinn 31 July- 3 August, 2014; organized by Allegra Lab Association in collaboration with the Research Project 'Bodies of Evidence' (Koneen Säätiö), University of Eastern Finland, The Finnish Anthropological Society, and supported by the Department of Anthropology, University of Helsinki

The global regulatory framework around migration is structured around frontiers and gates, both concrete and figurative. For the privileged groups they are irrelevant and to be crossed on a whim. For the underprivileged majority they become arbitrators of life and death, resulting in intense sentiments of 'stuckedness' in the words of Ghassan Hage, precariousness and exclusion.

In this seminar these themes are discussed by focusing on the rationales and concrete means of governing migration. Key topics of the seminar are the paradox of urgency in the experiences of asylum seekers, and the ideals of detachment, predictability and predetermined aesthetics characterizing bureaucratic and judicial processes. Furthermore, it explores technologies of 'truth production' (e.g. fingerprint and iris scan databases, bone x-rays scans, and DNA analysis), which impose themselves on the very flesh and blood of the involved individuals.



What is actually going on? What is being measured and regulated, how and why? What is the nature of the knowledge regimes that justify such interventions and the differential treatment in between groups of people? What kind of realities - or fantasies - are being upheld, what kind of dystopias are suppressed or destroyed as distinct groups are (attempted to be) included or excluded? What happens to notions of citizenship in the process - as well as humanity? How is justice included in this equation: how to approach a regulatory system built on a structurally unjust world order where migrants frequently become criminalized by the very regulation they are subjected to? And most importantly, what are the effects of all the above on the lives of those who are subjected to these techniques?

Speakers

[Ghassan Hage](#), University of Melbourne

[Sarah Green](#), University of Helsinki

Heath Cabot, College of the Atlantic

[Anna-Maria Tapaninen](#), University of East Finland

[Judith Beyer](#), University of Halle-Wittenberg

Husein Mohammed, Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment

Panel Discussion



Chair: [Miia Halme-Tuomisaari](#)

Remember our EASA coverage, previous posts [here](#) and [here](#)!

Why Metrics Cannot Measure Research Quality: A Response to the HEFCE Consultation

Allegra
July, 2014



We re-post here the reponse to the Higher Education Funding Council for England written by Dr Meera Sabaratnam (SOAS) and Dr Paul Kirby (Sussex University), initially published on June 16 on [The Disorder of Things Blog](#). [Allegra stands in solidarity](#) with all initiatives against ‘impact’ measurements in scholarship and wants to join forces with colleagues struggling against the neoliberal forces attempting to transform our universities into corporatized knowledge factories.

Why Metrics Cannot Measure Research Quality: A Response to the HEFCE Consultation

The Higher Education Funding Council for England are [reviewing the idea of using metrics \(or citation counts\) in research assessment](#). We think using metrics to measure research quality is a terrible idea, and we’ll be sending the response



to them below explaining why. The deadline for receiving responses is **12pm on Monday 30th June** (to metrics@hefce.ac.uk). If you want to add an endorsement to this paper to be added to what we send to HEFCE, ***please write your name, role and institutional affiliation below in the comments***, or email either [ms140\[at\]soas.ac.uk](mailto:ms140[at]soas.ac.uk) or [p.c.kirby\[at\]sussex.ac.uk](mailto:p.c.kirby[at]sussex.ac.uk) before Saturday 28th June. If you want to write your own response, please feel free to borrow as you like from the ideas below, or append the PDF version of our paper available [here](#).



Response to the Independent Review of the Role of Metrics in Research Assessment

June 2014

Authored by:



Dr Meera Sabaratnam, Lecturer in International Relations, SOAS, University of London

Dr Paul Kirby, Lecturer in International Security, University of Sussex

Summary

Whilst metrics may capture some partial dimensions of research ‘impact’, they **cannot be used as any kind of proxy for measuring research ‘quality’**. Not only is there **no logical connection** between citation counts and the quality of academic research, but the adoption of such a system could **systematically discriminate against less established scholars and against work by women and ethnic minorities**. Moreover, as we know, citation counts are highly vulnerable to **gaming and manipulation**. The overall effects of using citations as a substantive proxy for either ‘impact’ or ‘quality’ could be **extremely deleterious to the standing and quality of UK academic research as a whole**.

Why metrics? Why now?

1. The rationale for looking at metrics as a “potential method of measuring research quality and impact” (Consultation letter, section 1) is somewhat opaque in the consultation letter. This letter notes that some people may use metrics to assess research, and that the Secretary of State wishes to look at the issue again. The previous review on the matter in 2008/9 concluded that the ‘data was insufficiently robust’ to adopt their use.

2. To speak more precisely, we might consider the following underlying rationales as driving this general interest:

- The research assessment exercises conducted at a national level (RAE



2008; REF 2014) and at institutional levels are difficult, time-consuming, expensive and laborious because they consume large quantities of academic energy. Universities and academics themselves have complained about this.

- Ministers, civil servants, research administrators and managers might prefer modes of assessment that do not require human academic input and judgement. This would be cheaper, not require academic expertise and would be easier to administer. This would facilitate the exercise of greater administrative control over the distribution of research resources and inputs.
- Moreover, in an age of often-digitised scholarship, numerical values associated with citations are being produced – mostly by data from large corporate journal publishers – and amongst some scholarly communities at some times they are considered a mark of prestige.

3. This present consultation proposes to take views on the use of metrics – for the most part meaning citation counts – to prospectively incorporate these into mechanisms of research assessment once more. In particular, they want to look at ‘research quality and impact’ as areas in which research should be assessed.

4. We suggest that it is *imperative to disaggregate ‘research quality’ from ‘research impact’* – not only do they not belong together logically, but running them together itself creates fundamental problems which change the purposes of academic research.

5. We also want to note a contradiction in different reasoning for using metrics. On the one hand, one position seems to be that we should be using metrics as a source of ‘big data’ we don’t currently have to produce different judgements about what good academic research is. On the other hand, the argument is that metrics do actually replicate the outcomes of peer review processes so approximate a cheaper and quicker way of doing the same thing. There is an important tension here: the former reasoning implies we want to change what we think good academic research is and a downgrading of peer review processes; the



latter implies that peer review is still the key standard for assessing research but we want to do it (or something like it) more quickly. The Review team need to make a clear determination on which of these objectives it is pursuing.

Using metrics for measuring impact: what are we actually measuring?

6. Why do academics cite each others' work? This is a core question to answer if we want to know what citation count metrics actually tell us, and what they can be used for. Possible answers to this question include:

- It exists in the field or sub-field we are writing about
- It is already well-known/notorious in our field or sub-field so is a useful reader shorthand
- It came up in the journal we are trying to publish in, so we can link our work to it
- It says something we agree with/that was correct
- It says something we disagree with/that was incorrect
- It says something outrageous or provocative
- It offered a specifically useful case or insight
- It offered a really unhelpful/misleading case or insight

7. As an example, an extremely widely cited piece in the field of International Relations is Samuel Huntington's book on 'The Clash of Civilizations'. This has been one of the most controversial pieces in the discipline, and has probably been cited for all of the reasons above (he initially published a short version in *Foreign Affairs* journal). As of today, GoogleScholar lists 22,353 citations to the book or article. Amongst these citations are an extremely large number of 'negative' ones criticising the research and critiquing the piece for its gross simplifications, inflammatory political claims, selective and problematic reading of the historical record, cultural essentialism and neglect of multiple other issues such as the global economy. After 9/11 however, various non-academic readers seized on some of the broad arguments to suggest a perennial struggle between



Christianity and Islam, as validated by a famous Harvard professor (with no academic background on either of these religions). This no doubt has contributed to a political climate which has facilitated military interventions in the Middle East and more aggressive attitudes towards religious diversity from members of different religions. On the other hand, much more detailed and nuanced work exists based on solid historical evidence and knowledge of contemporary relations, which will have many fewer citations due to publishing outlet, the profile of the author, and the less outrageous, if much more rigorous, findings. These accumulated citations to Huntington clearly indicate that the texts have been central to networks of scholarly argument about world politics in recent decades, and we might learn much from that fact. But this is no measure of quality, not even one of 'popularity' (if we understand that to carry positive connotations).

Metrics and the measurement of impact

8. Based on the analysis in points 6 and 7 above, it is clear that citation counts can be one way of thinking about the generic 'impact' of an academic piece on a field. However, in their current form they cannot properly differentiate between 'positive' impact or 'negative' impact within a field or sub-discipline - i.e. work that 'advances' a debate, or work that makes it more simplistic and polarised. Even where there is some inclusion of 'positive' or 'negative' evaluation, such crude forms of voting miss the complexities of much scholarly work (such as where others might find the empirical discussion useful, but reject the theoretical framing or inferences drawn). Without such fine-grained information on the actual contribution of a piece to a debate, it would be very short-sighted to suggest that aggregate citations are any grounds for awarding further funding or prestige. Indeed, the overall pressure it creates is simply to get cited at all costs. This might well lead to work becoming more provocative and outrageous *for the sake of citation*, rather than making more disciplined and rigorous contributions to knowledge.



9. Moreover, we must be clear to differentiate between this kind of academic ‘impact’ and the public ‘impact’ sought in terms of the present REF case studies. Citations can tell us about academic citations – themselves a mixture of good and bad – but they *can tell us very little about the public engagement and contribution made by particular pieces of work for non-academic communities in society*. To the extent that the ‘impact case studies’ in the REF genuinely seek to open the door for academic work to better engage with the society in which it is embedded, citation counts cannot be used as a way of judging this at all. This is especially the case where academics are trying to work with small-scale and grassroots organisations rather than governments or international organisations. Wider forms of alternative metrics like number of social media shares extend the definition of impact, but are also likely to be driven by controversy, and are even less likely to reflect the underlying *academic* quality of pieces (since the audience is generally less expert than for scholarly citations).

Metrics and the measurement of research quality

10. It should be further evident that because of what citation counts actually measure, these are not an appropriate proxy for research quality. The current REF asks its panel members to apply criteria of ‘originality, significance and rigour’. These are broadly the same kind of criteria that expert peer reviewers apply when reviewing book manuscripts or journal articles.

11. On ‘originality’ – work *may* be cited because it is original, but it may also be cited because it is a more famous academic making the same point. Textbooks and edited collections are widely cited because they are accessible – not because they are original. Moreover, highly original work may not be cited at all because it has been published in a lower-profile venue, or because it radically differs from the intellectual trajectories of its sub-field. There is absolutely no logical or necessary connection between originality and being cited.

12. On ‘significance’ – ‘significance’ also seems to imply the need for broad



disciplinary recognition of the contribution. To this extent, we might expect 'significant' work to have a high citation count; *however having a high citation count does not mean that the work is 'significant'*. In addition, using citation counts will systematically under-count the 'significance' of work directed at more specialised sub-fields or technical debates, or that adopts more dissident positions. Moreover, when understood through the problems discussed in point 8, it becomes clear that 'significance' can be a distinctly ambiguous category for evaluating research quality. If we understand 'significance' as 'academic fame' then there is some kind of link with citation counts. However, if we understand 'significance' as 'the development of the intellectual agenda of the field' (REF panel criteria), then citation counts are not an appropriate proxy. In addition, as is well-known, in fields with long citation 'half-lives' - particularly arts and humanities, present research assessment cycles are far too short for the 'significance' of the work to emerge within citation counts, if it was going to do so.

13. With regard to 'rigour', there is also no necessary connection between citation counts and this aspect of research quality. To the extent that citation counts in part depend on how widely-read a journal is, and to the extent that widely-read journals may apply exacting peer review standards, and to the extent that these peer reviews are focused on the 'rigour' of a piece, there is again a potential or hypothetical link between a citation count and 'rigour'. However, there are a *lot* of intervening variables within here, not least those discussed in point 6, which would disrupt the relationship between the number of times a piece is cited and how rigorous it is. To the extent that more 'rigorous' pieces may be more theoretically and methodologically sophisticated - and thus less accessible to 'lay' academic and non-academic audiences, there are reasons to believe that the rigour of a piece might well be *inversely* related to its citation count. To summarise, citation counts are not a reliable indicator of rigour.

14. Overall then, upon close examination the relationship between citation counts and our historic and current definitions of academic research quality is *extremely* weak in logic, and problematic in practice. Notwithstanding that in certain



disciplines the practice of using citations as a proxy for quality as taken hold, the practice is itself fundamentally flawed and should not be encouraged, much less institutionalised within national, international or institutional research assessment contexts.

15. That REF panellists and other academics may informally use the reputation of a journal as a quick means of judging a piece on which they are unable or unwilling to provide detailed expert opinion does not mean that this is a good idea. One argument for the use of metrics has been that quantitative and qualitative measures sometimes mirror each other. However, this may be explained often by the fact that qualitative assessments often themselves take place under flawed conditions which do not entail double-blind peer review; rather the review of pieces in which one already knows the author and the publishing outlet tends in practice to lead to shortcut decisions which confirm prejudices - and not academic judgements - reflected in citation counts.

Potential consequences of using citation metrics as an indicator for research impact and/or quality in research assessment

16. Whilst our concerns are with the basic logic of attempting to use citation counts as a proxy for research quality and impact, there are also a number of troubling potential consequences of research assessment of moving in this direction as a widespread practice. We focus here on problems of inherent conservatism, structures of academic discrimination and emerging practices of gaming/manipulation, although this is a non-exhaustive list.

17. If we use metrics as a mode of assessing research quality or impact, we potentially introduce a further *conservative bias into the field by favouring the work of already-famous scholars*. Whilst they may be famous for an ongoing and productive research agenda, they may also be famous generally for work produced many years ago which has generated a lot of citations. This is an indication of 'reputation' in general, but for the purposes of choosing who/what to



fund or one's professional contribution, this introduces further prejudices against less established scholars, who really do need to compete on a level playing-field in terms of the quality of their ideas and findings. This will over time lead to a greater concentration of research funding and prestige in a smaller circle of people - not the most innovative researchers.

18. This problem of conservatism is compounded when we look at the systematic under-citation of women and minority groups. Recently, the large international TRIPS survey found evidence of a massive bias against citing women in the field of International Relations.[1] We also know that academics more generally carry sexist and racist biases as evidenced through experiments for hiring processes and judging academic quality.[2] Reasonably assuming that these prejudicial attitudes drive citation count differences as well, the move to metrics and away from peer review processes would compound (or at the very least mirror) the effects of these prejudices and embed them into research assessment.

19. The last issue to consider is the gaming of citation counts. It has been demonstrated already effectively that GoogleScholar can be gamed with ease and with dramatic effects.[3] One counter-argument is that other metrics are harder to game, and that companies like Thomson Reuters police issues such as self-citation in their journal rankings. We do not argue that existing methods for measuring research quality are pure, or desirable. However, once systematic gaming sets in, it is increasingly difficult for any ranking system to keep itself 'clean'. As long as GoogleScholar remains game-able - and Google have not shown any interest in trying to change that, following its commercial model - then it will also affect any 'clean' rankings, as people using Google to look for references will be presented with Google's top articles and works first. In turn, this is likely to generate more 'real' citations for a piece based on its gaming of the GoogleScholar rankings. The closer the link between citations or altmetrics and assessments of quality, the greater the incentive for academics and their managers to game those metrics. In and of itself this should be a huge reason against using citation counts as a means of assessing research in any meaningful and serious way.



Conclusions

20. Overall, the academic community as a whole should resist the adoption of citation metrics as a means by which to make conclusions about either research impact or research quality. They are not logically connected to either issue, contain systematic biases against different researchers and are all too easily manipulated, particularly by corporate rankings providers. They should certainly not become institutionalised in national, international or institutional practices.

21. It is, of course, difficult and time-consuming to assess academic research by having experts read it and carefully evaluate it against complex and demanding criteria, ideally under conditions of anonymity. That is as it should be. That is the whole point about good academic work and this cannot be automated or captured by present, or even future, citation counts. Simply because the market produces products, and because some people use them, does not mean that these are the things that we actually want or need for the purposes we have in mind. If we really are committed to using research assessment practices to fund the best quality, most innovative and most publicly engaged work, then citation counts are not the way to do it. Rather, we will end up funding not just those whose work is genuinely transformative, original and field-defining (assuming these qualities earn them high citations), but those who are best at self-promotion and rankings manipulation, and who are privileged by existing structures of prejudice.



[1] Daniel Maliniak, Ryan Powers and Barbara F. Walter (2013). The Gender Citation Gap in International Relations. *International Organization*, 67, pp 889-922. doi:10.1017/S0020818313000209. See open version here: <http://politicalviolenceataglance.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/the-gender-citation-gap-in-ir.pdf>

[2] Ilana Yurkiewicz, (2012) 'Study Shows Gender Bias in Science is Real. Here's Why It Matters', *Scientific American*, available at <http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/unofficial-prognosis/2012/09/23/study-shows-gender-bias-in-science-is-real-heres-why-it-matters/>; April Corrice (2009) 'Unconscious Bias in Faculty and Leadership Recruitment: A Literature Review', Association of American Medical Colleges, available at this location.

[3] Phil Davis, (2012), 'Gaming Google Scholars Citations: Made Simple and Easy', *Scholarly Kitchen* blog. Available at: <http://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2012/12/12/gaming-google-scholar-citations-made-simple-and-easy/>



From Maya enthusiast to Occupy activist: Allegra meets David Graeber REDUX

Allegra
July, 2014



David Graeber (1961) is the author of several books on theories of value, social theory and anarchism, including the award-winning [Debt: The First 5000 Years](#). For the wider public he is known for his involvement and visibility in the [Occupy Movement](#), a global commotion born out of protests against the growing disparity of wealth, social inequality and corporate influence on democratic decision making processes. With his ample 25 000 [Twitter followers](#) he is also likely the world's most visible anthropologist in the social media. Graeber was in Helsinki in mid-January 2014, for the [Anthropological Knots Symposium](#). Juho Reinikainen had a quick chat with him for Allegra after [a long day of anthro-talk](#).

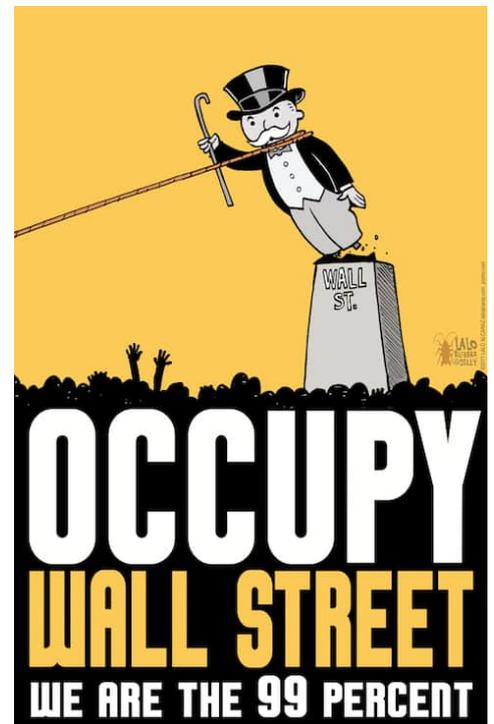


Juho Reinikainen: How did you become an anthropologist?

David Graeber: Good question. I usually attribute it to my upbringing. My parents were sort of working class intellectuals, the house was full of books. I started reading anthropology books from an early age, my parents were interested in that sort of thing. At the age of twelve I became fascinated by codes and translating hieroglyphics, and I actually got discovered by some archaeologists and ended up going to some fancy high school as a result. They were planning on sending me off to become a Maya exporate. Needless to say, I got over that phase. But when I went to college I finally thought I want to become an anthropologist after all, as it was something I had been interested in, one way or the other, my entire life.

You are especially, at least to the wider public, known for your writings and opinions about anarchy and public movements. Can you tell me what is the current situation of the Occupy Movement?

At the moment Occupy has become a multiplicity of different projects, at least in the United States. It is not gone by any means but it has been broken into a whole range of things.



For example, today there are people working on Occupy farms, there's the debt movement, anti-eviction projects - almost anything you could possibly imagine. In



a way I think these are all responses to the realisation that we are facing really heavy police repression in public spaces, which revokes the (US Constitution's) first amendment in terms of freedom of assembly. When this repression began to occur and when the sorts of people we thought were our allies - the moderate left, progressive types - failed to come to our aid and help us make an issue out of this experience, we (the Occupy Movement) realized we had to get organised on a longer term perspective.

So I think that what people are really working on through the Occupy Movement is to build a culture of direct democracy and direct action. People are training to acquire new skills that facilitate organizing meetings and street action.

We're gradually building a foundation so that in the face of the next financial crisis, the next natural disaster, we will be in the position to be the first ones out on the the streets doing something.

You talked about a major Occupy related movement in the Anthropological Knots symposium about students occupying a University building...?

Oh yeah, that is happening in London right now. Initially the student movement in London was organised actually before the Occupy movement; there were at least 14-15 student occupations occurring the same time as the earlier anti-cons[umerism] movement. In the first phase students protested against an educational reform which effectively semi-privatized the university system, a reform which momentarily vanished. Now the reform has really come up again, dramatically and quickly, out of nowhere.



I had sort of already given up on participating in the student movement, as I figured it was done, over. Yet suddenly there was a massive number of students fighting police in the streets. The government response has been much harsher and punitive than in the past - now the police just immediately started beating people up. This violence shows that the officials are in a state of panic because they really were not counting on this level of resistance. The nice thing is that the last time the educational reform was introduced it was a really defensive game for protestors as the officials introduce certain reforms before resistance was organized. This time, since we lost the battle during the first round, ironically, we're now in a better strategic position because it is now us who are setting the agenda, we are the ones in the offensive. People are taking to the streets in order to restore the free university system, to change the basic idea of what education is supposed to be about . I think it is very exciting.

The Anthropological Knots Symposium was about anthropology's role in engaging in the society. What is your opinion, should anthropology



engage more in the lives of the people it studies?

I've always felt anthropology has something to offer. The way that the anthropological community resists when people want to contribute to change by protesting - the anthropological community almost has this reluctance for societal impact - I find a little difficult to understand. While I don't think anthropologists will all go joining social movements [...] few of you might actually lend your knowledge to people who want to use it to do some good in the world. Why not? [Scholarly life and activism] could actually be mutually enforcing.

So you think one can change the world with anthropology?

Did I say that?

No - do you?

I think anthropology has something to contribute to any project of social transformation.

How do you see the future of the discipline?

More internationalization of anthropology, which is going to lead into many different directions and different places. Anthropology could be constituted as a genuinely global planetary discipline, which could break free of the old colonial boundaries... and take advantage of that sort of diversity of perspectives to really enrich our self understanding.

One last question, which is a personal one: What are your hopes for the future?

Well, I'm sort of looking forward to a broad social revolution, which will eliminate the state of capitalism and, you know, a truly free society. But that's a long-term project.



Juho Reinikainen is an undergraduate student in Social Anthropology at the University of Helsinki. He also videoed the Knots Symposium for Allegra.

Video of the interview is available [here](#).

Other interviews of Graeber that are worth a read:

- On the topic of [bullshit jobs](#) in Salon
- About [democracy](#) in America for AlterNet
- On the [Occupy Movement](#) for Gawker
- [“Finance is just another word for other people’s debts”](#) in Radical History Review
- And, as a fun bonus, “What’s the Point if We Can’t Have Fun?” in The Baffler!

Brief bibliography of David Graeber:

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