



ONLINE: Anthropology in London Day 17 Sept 2013

Allegra
September, 2013

“Visibility and Concealment”

Organised by the anthropology departments of Goldsmiths and UCL in collaboration with University of East London, Brunel, SOAS, LSE, LSHTM and KCL departments.

Opening Plenary Speakers were Pat Caplan (Goldsmiths) and Christopher Pinney (UCL) and Allen Abramson (UCL); Mukulika Banerjee (LSE), Eric Hirsch (Brunel), Nici Nelson (Goldsmiths) ([click here to listen recordings of sessions](#), Abstracts available [here](#), Conference program [here](#))

Organiser: Gavin Weston/Stephanie Kitchen (g.weston@gold.ac.uk, sk111@soas.ac.uk)

Anthropological writing involves rendering hidden and overlooked social facts tangible, and, as such, concealment and visibility are central to anthropological endeavour. Three issues would appear to arise: substantive, epistemological, ethical. In the first case, the performance and crystallisation of underlying significance has to a large extent displaced the ideological concealment of asymmetry as a major focus in analysis. What place, thereby, does concealment – as well as performance – come to occupy as a preoccupation and presence in the lives of our research participants/informants? Secondly, post-representational claims would seem to terminate the anthropological disclosure of implicit relations which might be hidden to research participants/informants and which they do not perform. How does contemporary anthropology survive this interdiction? And, have any impact as a result? In the third case, one cannot



necessarily write about everything discovered in the field without betraying confidences or breaching ethical guidelines. Often those things that cannot be discussed from fieldwork (like love, gossip, conflicts and other intimacies) form the most interesting parts of our field experiences and, indeed, a vital part of our ideal analysis. Yet they must remain undocumented in order to protect our research participants/informants. More recently issues of concealment have also come to the fore for anthropologists in regards to open access. How is contemporary anthropology unmade and renewed in relation to such stringent ethical codes and in light of growing expectations regarding impact?

Opening Plenary Speakers:

Pat Caplan (Goldsmiths) on “‘Things which were inside have come out’”: secrecy, confidentiality and respect in writing personal narratives and biographies’
Christopher Pinney (UCL) on ‘Once Upon a Time in Central India’

CLOSING PLENARY SPEAKERS:

Participants: Allen Abramson (UCL); Mukulika Banerjee (LSE), Eric Hirsch (Brunel), Nici Nelson (Goldsmiths)

[For original call for papers, click here](#)

FOR REVIEW for Journal of Legal Pluralism

Allegra

September, 2013

This note recently came from the [Journal of Legal Pluralism](#), and we wanted to share it. Three books for review:



*Nation and Family: Personal Law, Cultural Pluralism and Gendered Citizenship in India, by [Narendra Subramanian](#), Stanford University Press (in press)

*[Who Owns the Stock? Collective and Multiple Property Rights in Animals](#), edited by Anatoly M. Khazanov and Günther Schlee, Berghahn Books.

*[Islamic Finance in Europe Towards a Plural Financial System](#), edited by Valentino Cattelan, Edward Elgar Publishing Inc.

See below for further details.

Dear Colleagues

This is to inform you that if you are interested in writing a review for the [Journal of Legal Pluralism](#), the relevant press will send a copy of the book. Please include mention of the journal in your request.

1.

Nation and Family: Personal Law, Cultural Pluralism and Gendered Citizenship in India, by Narendra Subramanian, Stanford University Press.

The most comprehensive study to date of the public discourses, processes of social mobilization, legislation and case law that formed India's three major personal law systems, which govern the Hindus, the Muslims, and the Christians.



2.

Who Owns the Stock? Collective and Multiple Property Rights in Animals, edited by Anatoly M. Khazanov and Günther Schlee, Berghahn Books.

Additional information can be found on the Berghahn website:
<http://www.berghahnbooks.com/title.php?rowtag=KhazanovWho>

3.

Islamic Finance in Europe Towards a Plural Financial System, edited by Valentino Cattelan, Edward Elgar Publishing Inc.

Highlighting the impact of current globalization on financial markets, this topical book challenges the universality of Western property rights and interprets Islamic finance in Europe as part of a plural financial system, where different conceptions of economic justice(s) co-exist and influence each other. The contributing authors analyse key economic development and social integration issues from an Islamic perspective and outline the European approach to accommodating Islamic finance, with particular regard to the peculiarities of individual nation-states. Set in this context, the book presents financial pluralism as a device to enhance a level playing field in the global marketplace, as well as to foster a plural open society. Providing a comprehensive and methodological guide to Islamic finance in Europe, this book will prove an illuminating and informative read for academics, students and policymakers with an interest in the impact on financial

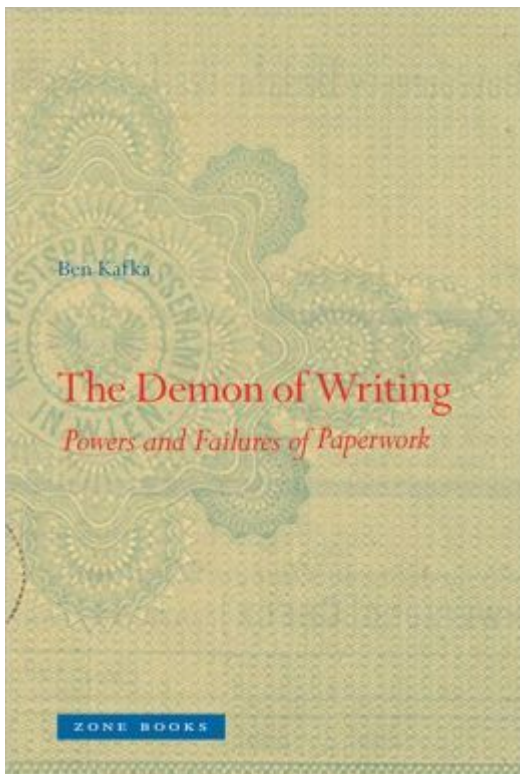


regulation of an increasingly globalized world.

To request a review copy of this, please contact elgarreviews@e-elgar.com. Please include journal details and shipping address.

The Demon of Writing

Allegra
September, 2013



[*Ben Kafka*](#), *The Demon of Writing: The Powers and Failures of Paperwork*. Brussels, Zone Books, 2012.



Although out already last year, this book – authored by someone who apparently bares no relation to the ‘other’ Kafka – was just brought to our attention by the recommendation of a friend – and there is no greater rave than word of mouth by people whose judgment we trust! By reading on, you’ll find both book description, endorsement and more critical reviews.

Overview

Since the middle of the eighteenth century, political thinkers of all kinds—radical and reactionary, professional and amateur—have been complaining about “bureaucracy.” But what, exactly, are they complaining about?

In *The Demon of Writing*, Ben Kafka offers a critical history and theory of one of the most ubiquitous, least understood forms of media: paperwork. States rely on records to tax and spend, protect and serve, discipline and punish. But time and again, this paperwork proves to be unreliable. Examining episodes that range from the story of a clerk who lost his job and then his mind in the French Revolution to an account of Roland Barthes’s brief stint as a university administrator, Kafka reveals the powers, the failures, and even the pleasures of paperwork. Many of its complexities, he argues, have been obscured by the comic-paranoid style that characterizes much of our criticism of bureaucracy. Kafka proposes a new theory of what Karl Marx called the “bureaucratic medium.” Moving from Marx to Freud, he argues that this theory of paperwork must include both a theory of praxis and of parapraxis.

About the Author

Ben Kafka is an Assistant Professor of Media History and Theory at New York University and a candidate at the Institute for Psychoanalytic Training and



Research (IPTAR), a component society of the International Psychoanalytical Association. He works with adult and adolescent patients through the IPTAR Clinical Center and the NYC Free Clinic.

Reviews

“Kafka’s book is a keen, vivacious examination of the frustrating ‘unpredictability’ of paperwork as a cultural institution.”—*Publishers Weekly*

“[Kafka] pursues an argument that leads from paper to paperwork, “the psychic life of paperwork,” the concepts of major thinkers...it is provocative, original, and a very good read.”—Robert Darnton, *The New York Review of Books*

“Ben Kafka does the important job of reminding us that paperwork is part of the great human traditions, not only of communication and information, but also of revolution, existential philosophy, and for some, religion.”—*The New Republic*

“Kafka examines the meaning and implications of this new regime, intertwining threads of historical narrative, psychoanalytic theory, and intriguing anecdotes into a thoroughly absorbing read.”—**Peter Lopatin**, *The Weekly Standard*

Endorsements

“This remarkable book teaches everyone who has gone blind on paperwork to see modern life anew: forms and reports, the stultifying preserve of bureaucrats, emerge as the foundations (and sometimes undoing) of state power. With elegance and poise, Ben Kafka blends the erudition of a masterful historian of the French Revolution with the rigors of a materialist who knows concepts depend on their circulation and the sophistication of a psychoanalyst who understands the psychic implications of worldly transformation. Through the utopia of the



‘paperless office’, Kafka gives the clerks who destroy and fulfill our dreams their due, and a neglected form of modern writing the centrality it demands. And make sure to have a pair of scissors on hand!”

—**Samuel Moyn**, author of *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*

“Ben Kafka’s *The Demon of Writing* is an unexpected pleasure. The wit and intelligence that shine through the notorious recalcitrance and tedium of paperwork make it a joy to read. The real surprise, however, is the reach of the Kafka’s project, the amount this history of a few episodes in the life of paper and ink, files and forms, has to teach us about the proximity of our expectations and frustrations with the modern bureaucratic state. It will be of particular interest to scholars interested in the contradictions of the revolutionary experience, but it will be equally rewarding to everyone who has dreamed of working in an office that works.”

—**James Swenson**, author of *On Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Considered as One of the First Authors of the Revolution*

“Kafka draws on methods and theories most often found in psychoanalysis, political theory, and histories of the book to craft a marvelously engaging and wonderfully witty study of papers, paperwork, and bureaucracy. At the center of this tremendously clever and pathos-laden interpretation is the crucial insight that paperwork, even when it works, fails us. We never get what we want.”

—**Rebecca Spang**, author of *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture*



Online Reviews

*[The New York Times by Jennifer Schuesser](#) (16 December 2012)

*On Blog '[Popmatters](#)' by [Subashini Navaratnam](#)

*In [New Republic](#) by [Jacob Soll](#) (20 January 2013)

* In [Slate Magazine](#) by [Troy Patterson](#) (2 November 2012)

Anthropology in Hostile Times

Allegra

September, 2013



"...anthropologists like myself currently find themselves working in an



academic environment that is profoundly hostile to the task of being alive. Crushed by an avalanche of mission statements, strategic plans, audit reports and review exercises, ideas born on the sweat and toil of an engagement that is nothing if not observant wilt and wither like plants starved of light, air and moisture. The prostitution of scholarship before the twin idols of innovation and competitiveness has reduced once fine traditions of learning to market brands, the pursuit of excellence to a grubby scramble for funding and prestige, and books such as this to outputs whose value is measured by rating and impact rather than by what they might have contributed to human understanding.”

Tim Ingold (2011) [Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description](#). London; New York: Routledge, xiii

Time for a Change - SPORTS LAW?

Allegra
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Bored of digging into the hard core of obscurity? Want something more tangible than theoretical abstractions?

Then the following add might just be for you: why not apply to become a [Senior Researcher in International and European Sports Law!](#)

Admittedly, we have no idea how being a legal anthropologist might qualify one for something like this, but then again, we are all for being creative and re-inventing ourselves, especially in such dire professional circumstances that we are facing today. (AND, would one of you feel an inexplicable urge to apply after this pep-talk of sorts and SUCCEED, do let us know! We can only imagine what kind of juicy 'stuff' would follow!)

([To apply, for real, click here](#))



Emerging South Sudan - Negotiating Statehood

Allegra
September, 2013

The image shows a ballot paper from the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC). At the top, the SSRC logo and name are displayed in English and Arabic. The main heading is "QUO VADIS EMERGING SOUTH SUDAN?". Below this, instructions in English and Arabic ask voters to put a fingerprint on a symbol or a circle. The ballot is divided into two sections: "Unity" (الوحدة) with a hand-holding symbol and a circle, and "Secession" (الانفصال) with a hand symbol and a circle containing a flag. A green banner across the middle reads "Emerging South Sudan: negotiating statehood Workshop 23-24 September 2013". The bottom of the ballot provides the location: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Main Seminar Room, Advokatenweg 36 | 06114 Halle | www.eth.mpg.de, and the organizers: Katrin Seidel and Timm Sureau.

Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle (Saale) / Germany

September 23rd - 24th 2013, Organisers: Katrin Seidel, Timm Sureau



Recent analyses of the situation in emerging South Sudan are often based on short-term research and on external sources and policy-driven assumptions. By following an underlying Weberian concept of statehood, current studies often draw -uncritically- on rather 'classical' constitutive elements of statehood, such as territory, sovereignty and an efficient bureaucratic system. The state is assumed as an *a priori* conceptual object. This reductionist approach has consequences for the analysis of statehood.

It "obscure[s] an otherwise perceptible feature of institutionalized political power, the state-system" (Abrams 1988, 79). It concentrates on assumed state functions and less on the people's perspectives on the state, thereby neglecting an important part of state formation: the inner perspective. The realities of emerging South Sudan show that the concept of 'state' as such is not (yet) completely accepted by the people. Therefore, a primary concern for state formation appears to be the creation of legitimacy and 'coherence' in order to promote societal consensus. Thus, analyses of the people's perspective and of the attempted production of legitimation are crucial. This concern lies behind the initiative of this workshop, which seeks to gain an accurate understanding of current processes of state formation in South Sudan.

Our hypothesis is that from a South Sudanese point of view, the imagined reality of the 'state' is currently under construction through negotiations and practices that allow for expectations and interests (regarding the state) to be expressed. Due to the participation of state bodies' representatives, those negotiations and practices are labeled 'governmental': currently state bodies' representatives are convincing not only the people but also themselves that the state as such exists and that they are its legitimate representatives.

In other words, the above-mentioned reductionist approach found in current research does not sufficiently take account of the complex interrelations of local, national, regional and international individual and collective actors involved in the



processes of state formation. It ignores the deep(er) intricacies of collective identification processes and their interrelations in a changing societal context (Schlee and Watson 2009).

These collective identifications in the case of South Sudan are shaped by exposure to new technologies, ideas and cultural variations as well as by structures of (geo-) politics and policies. Interdependent endogenous and exogenous structures and models (e.g. local power relations, monopoly of violence, programs of DDR, Transitional Justice, Rule of law/Access to justice) have force and impact on state formation: they may be accepted, appropriated, adapted or resisted. Individual and collective actors give these structures meaning, through processes in which they articulate identities and position themselves (Schlee and Watson 2009).

Empirical data show that besides state bodies' representatives, a complex array of social actors such as urban dwellers, returnees and IDPs, local and ethnic groupings, religious movements and institutions, employees of (I)NGOs, and inter-state agencies are involved in the negotiation processes of state formation. The negotiations include conventional debates with state agents but they also range from cooperation to resistance, and open and hidden adaptations.

Furthermore, state bodies' representatives in particular are confronted with exposure to multiple sets of ideas and technologies of the 'State', and as a consequence the ideas of the state remain vague. Those ideas are translated in different practices, influencing state formation efforts.

The state appears to be a contentious resource for which individual and collective actors compete (Schlee 2003). Efforts are oriented towards securing and manifesting existing as well as expected future advantages, including control and power. In practice, however, these efforts may well turn out to narrow the negotiation space for the creation of a legal framework. Governmental actors therefore need to carefully balance the assertion of their personal or group interests, the acceptance of competing interests and the demands of international



actors regarding the application of state laws and apparent promotion of a 'coherent' and 'legitimate' state, in order not to threaten the 'project' of state formation.

To achieve further progress in the 'project' of state formation and to gain internal and external recognition, normative regulations and the establishment of institutional frameworks such as a constitution or a nationality/citizenship law may prove to be relevant legal tools. Both, those normative frames themselves and the process of their formation open up spaces for negotiation where different actors, both from inside and outside South Sudan, including prefabricated models and ideas are, so to speak, brought to one table.

In the emerging South Sudanese state, negotiation processes are not very institutionalized, and that also includes the spaces of action and the participating actors. The ongoing discussions offer a unique opportunity to analyze the scope and influence of the multiple actors that are involved in such a process of state formation. In sum, our starting hypothesis for this workshop is a double hypothesis, based on two presuppositions, which we want to submit to the discussion: the first is that institutions and mechanisms - masks which prevent seeing political practice (Abrams 1988) - are not yet well established and routinized and thus do not yet obscure the negotiation of South Sudanese statehood. The second is that this absence to a certain extent facilitates the study of the political and legal processes and practices that accompany the formation of the South Sudanese State.

Thus, the focus of this workshop is on the inner-perspective based on long-term and empirical research, which is currently underrepresented but indeed crucial. The aim is to get at a deeper understanding of what kinds of negotiations take place and who is involved. Furthermore, it will examine how the South Sudanese state itself, as well as the perception the local population has of it, is shaped through those negotiations and what manifestations and outcomes become visible.



We propose the following key questions:

- What kind of negotiations and practices of state formation are taking place?
- Who participates in the negotiations of state formation in your particular case?
- How do people perceive the current state of South Sudan, its representatives and their practices? And through what kinds of actions (and non-actions) are these perceptions produced?
- What are the different current expectations that local actors have of the South Sudanese state?
- (How) does statehood manifest itself in the lives of individuals?

To address these questions, three main themes for individual contributions have been selected:

I. Post-conflict reconstruction

- Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR)
- Infrastructural challenges
- Socio-economic reconstruction and cross-linking to neighboring countries

II. 'Law and justice'

- Interplay of statutory and local normative orders
- Negotiating "citizenship" / nationality
- Transitional Justice (rehabilitation efforts, involved actors, institutions, etc.)

III. 'Non-state' actors



- “Diaspora” communities (returnees, IDPs)
- Religious movements
- (I)NGOs

Contact:

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Katrin Seidel, Tel: 00493452927315, email: kseidel@eth.mpg.de

References

Abrams, Philip. 1988. “Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State (1977).” Journal of Historical Sociology 1 (1): 58-89. doi:10.1111/j.1467-6443.1988.tb00004.x.

Krohn-Hansen, Christian, and Knut G Nustad, ed. 2005. State Formation: Anthropological Perspectives. London; Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press.

Schlee, Günther. 2003. “North-East Africa as a Region for the Study of Changing Identifications and Alliances.” Report // Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology 2002/2003: 163-170.

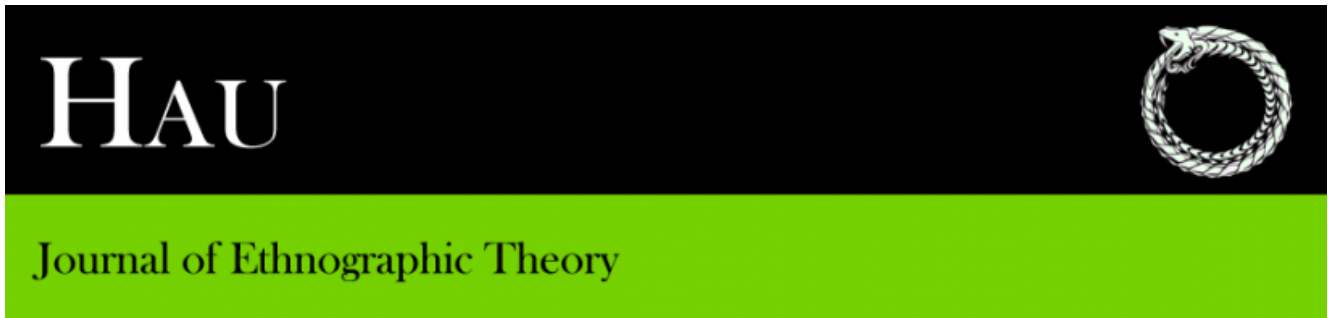
Schlee, Günther, and Elizabeth E. Watson. 2009. Changing Identifications and Alliances in North-East Africa: Volume II, Sudan, Uganda and the Ethiopia-Sudan Borderlands. Integration and Conflict Studies. New York: Berghahn Books.



HAU - 'Value as Theory'

Allegra

September, 2013



[HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory. Special Issue: Values as Theory - Part 1 of 2. Vol. 3, 1 \(2013\)](#)

Although this issue came out a while ago already, we want to showcase it now as we are just in the process of launching Allegra. And also, even though we will work hard to capture the most recent excitement in the field that should never be mistaken for any judgements of relevance. Hence also our commitment to profile classic texts in the field - and there is good cause to suspect that this issue will become one.

Thus: please 'meet' the first special issue of [Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory](#) focussing on values. The issue features a fabulous line of contributors including Anna Tsing, Robert Foster, Horacio Ortiz, Steffen Dalsgaard, Chris Gregory, Joel Robbins, Rane Willerslev, and André Iteanu, and its guest editors are Ton Otto and Rane Willerslev.

As the editor of HAU Giovanni Da Col characterizes the special issue in his [introduction](#):



“The theme of value is one which has a distinguished anthropological pedigree and finds its most eminent heralds in Louis Dumont, Nancy Munn, Terry Turner, and David Graeber, among others. Questions of value have been stirring much interest in the last decade, yet the discipline lacks a thorough collection exploring the multifariousness and theoretical potential that the concept could mobilize”

The editors have also included more space for book reviews, noting

“we have been profoundly dissatisfied with the current state of book reviews in the discipline. Seven-hundred words, or even a short essay, do little justice to a complex work; neither does the standard format allow authors to respond with gratitude to the reviewers’ illuminations or rebut unsympathetic comments. Enter the HAU Book Symposium, a forum for monographs that tackle key debates in the discipline or that, in our opinion, may open up new fields of inquiry or highlight aspects of human sociality that are receptive to the craft of ethnographic theory. We bring in numbers of talented scholars to reflect on these monographs and then invite the authors to respond.”

We are impressed with the outcome, and the journal also as a whole.

Gender, Bodies & Technology:



Performing the Human

Allegra

September, 2013



May 1-3, 2014, Third biannual interdisciplinary conference, The Inn at Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia

DEADLINE October 1, 2013

Sponsored by the Women's and Gender Studies Program at Virginia Tech

Gender, Bodies, & Technology is an initiative within Women's and Gender Studies at Virginia Tech that aims to creatively and intellectually explore the multiple, proliferating, and gendered dimensions of technologized bodies and embodied technologies. Through our initiative and biannual conference, we seek to demonstrate, theorize, and perform the discursive and material nodes around which gender, bodies, and technology both cohere and fracture: how, for example, do the specter and reality of transvaginal ultrasounds index a historically specific female body? What is the relationship between expanded combat roles for female soldiers and the U.S. military's escalating use of "unmanned" drone warcraft? How should we interpret airport body scanners and restroom architecture that threaten and displace transgender persons? We invite proposals from scholars in the humanities, social and natural sciences, feminist science studies, visual and performing arts, life sciences, and STEM fields for papers, panels, workshops, new media, art, and performance pieces that explore the intersections of gender, bodies & technology in contexts ranging from classrooms to the military, and from health care to the media. Our confirmed



keynote speakers include:

- Dr. Jennifer Robertson, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Michigan
- Micha Cardenas, performance artist and media theorist based at the University of Southern California
- Dr. Shaowen Bardzell, Assistant Professor of Informatics at Indiana University

For more information on the topics and themes, please visit this website: <https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/handle/10919/49250>.

Our conference theme, “Performing the Human,” is an invitation for embodied creative and intellectual effort. We are committed to complementing traditional paper presentations from the social sciences, STEM, and humanities fields with scholarship and performance from the creative arts. We encourage innovative uses of technology and creative session formats and we welcome early contact by email if space and/or technology requirements might present logistical challenges.

Proposal Deadline: **October 1, 2013**

Proposals will be reviewed and notification of the outcome will be made by November 15, 2013.

For more information or questions please contact:

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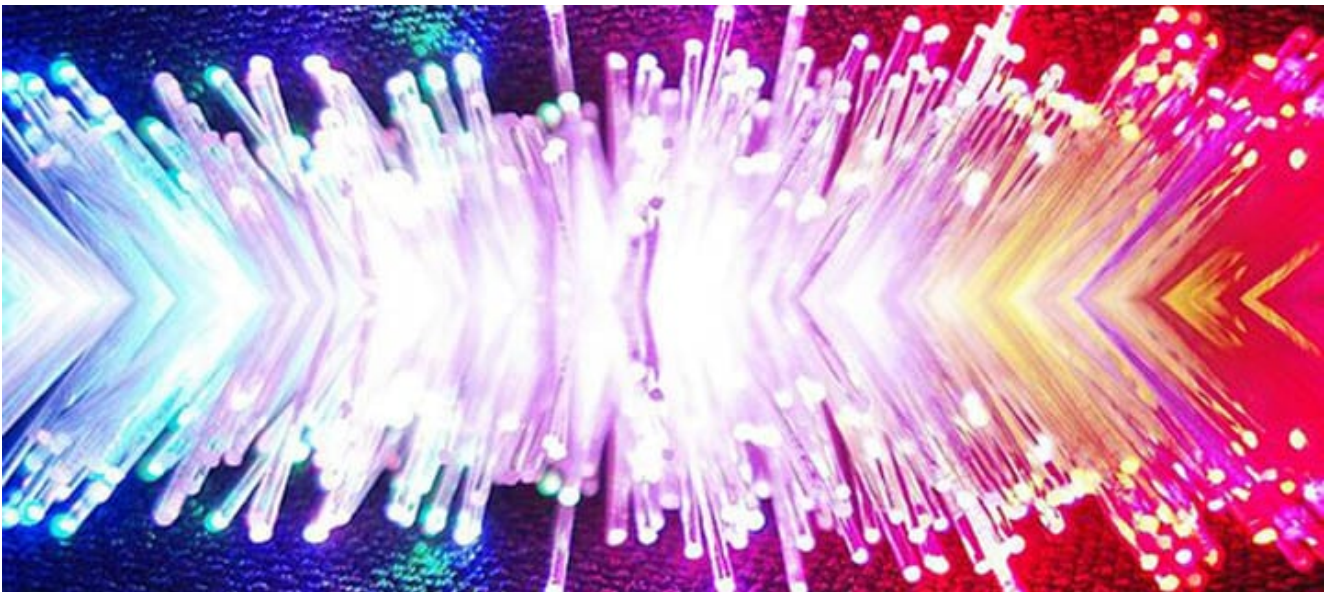
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APLA: Future of Publishing for Political and Legal Anthropology

Allegra

September, 2013



Have you ever thought to the future of publishing for Political and Legal Anthropology? How do you imagine it?

The [APLA](#) future of publication sub-committee members (Susan Coutin, Madelaine Edelman, Sally Merry, John Conley, Justin Richland, Erik Harms, Kate Sullivan, Kate Henne and Andrea Ballestero) are currently brainstorming about ways to expand the reach of its publication program in order to better serve its membership, take advantage of new communication technologies, and respond to the financial challenges that scholarly publication is facing. At our 2013 AAA business meeting we will collect ideas on how to better reach the broader law and society, international studies, global politics, and legal studies communities. If you have ideas and want to add to the conversation feel free to contact Susan Coutin at scoutin@uci.edu.



Intuition and Science

Allegra
September, 2013



All science relies powerfully on forms of intuition. As Kuhn (1962) showed long ago in his discussion of paradigm shifts in science, scientific progress depends on the intuitive transcending of existing conceptual frameworks. Even Albert Einstein remarked that knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress It is, strictly speaking, a real factor in scientific research

Boellstorff, Tom, and George E Marcus (2012): [Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: a Handbook of Method](#). Princeton: Princeton University Press, 97.



The Politics of Law and the Humanities: Crisis, Austerity, Instrumentalism

Allegra

September, 2013

Seventeenth Annual Conference March 10-11, 2014. Organized by the [Association for the Study of Law, Culture and the Humanities](#) at [University of Virginia, School of Law](#).

DEADLINE: October 15, 2013

We invite your participation. The Association for the Study of Law, Culture and the Humanities is an organization of scholars engaged in interdisciplinary, humanistically-oriented legal scholarship. The Association brings together a wide range of people engaged in scholarship on legal history, legal theory and jurisprudence, law and cultural studies, law and literature, law and the performing arts, and legal hermeneutics.

We want to encourage dialogue across and among these fields about issues of interpretation, identity, and values, about authority, obligation, and justice, and about law's place in culture. This year's conference theme is as follows: The Politics of Law and the Humanities: Crisis, Austerity, Instrumentalism.

How will law and the humanities scholarship fare against the pressure of the science and technology paradigm that has now permeated the institutional frameworks of academia? Will it mime the general humanities and, as suggested by the defeatist pomp of many national "crisis reports", merely retreat to its



traditional position as the well-mannered guardian of liberal values?

Will law and the humanities scholarship be subsumed under the science paradigm's instrumental ethos by either taking on aims and objectives sanctioned by government policies or by domesticating its own political potential to address those very same policies? Or can we imagine more salutary alternatives to defeatism and instrumental subsumption?

The terrain is well known. The ongoing economic crisis has engendered a worldwide decline in funding for research in the humanities showing sharp decreases between 2009 and 2012 with funds almost cut in half each year. The global trend is also detectable at national levels, with growing gaps between public investment into STEM subjects and the humanities.

But the changes do not merely concern the fiscal prioritization of diminishing resources. The social sciences, including law, are under constant political pressure as lawmakers question the value of curiosity-driven basic research. This pressure is then mirrored at the institutional level of individual law schools emphasizing their vocational remits at the expense of research and scholarship. And this research and scholarship is itself increasingly cast in reformist, practical, and "policy relevant" terms, and directed to issues of perceived topical and regulatory concern.

The implied allegation is simple enough: basic research in the humanities and social sciences is, if not obsolete, then at least a luxury we can't afford in these times; because it cannot satisfy the more immediate needs of market-driven societies in the current economic climate, it is politically irrelevant.

But can we imagine new ways to claim - or, perhaps, to reclaim - our political relevance? Are we relevant in other, perhaps more radical ways? And if we are, how? Is there a politics that is specific to law and the humanities? Or can we articulate the limits to the conversation about "relevance" in a way accessible to minds focused on instrumentality? How might we respond to our critics, or do we ignore them?



Participants are encouraged to reflect on this broad, but not exclusive, conference theme. In addition to sessions that connect to the theme, examples of other types of sessions we expect to organize include: History, Memory and Law; Reading Race; Law and Literature; Human Rights and Cultural Pluralism; Speech, Silence, and the Language of Law; Judgment, Justice, and Law; Beyond Identity; The Idea of Practice in Legal Thought; Metaphor and Meaning; Representing Legality in Film and Mass Media; Anarchy, Liberty and Law; What is Excellence in Interpretation?; Ethics, Religion, and Law; Moral Obligation and Legal Life; The Post-Colonial in Literary and Legal Study; Processes and Possibilities in Interdisciplinary Law Teaching.

We urge those interested in attending to consider submitting complete panels, and we hope to encourage a variety of formats-roundtables, sessions at which everyone reads the papers in advance, sessions in which commentators respond to a single paper. We invite proposals for session in which the focus is on pedagogy or methodology, for author-meets-readers sessions organized around important books in the field, or for sessions in which participants focus on performance (theatrical, filmic, musical, poetic).

How to register: ASLCH uses a two part registration system (this will all be explained in detail on the website). First you register your paper or panel and pay a \$35 membership fee. Then after January 10th, 2014, assuming your paper or panel is accepted, you go back to the same website (an email will be sent on that day to remind you) and pay the conference fee. Here is the link to register: <https://www.regonline.com/17thannualmeetingLCH>



Contamination

Allegra

September, 2013

6th Melbourne Doctoral Forum on Legal Theory, Melbourne Law School 9-10

December 2013,

DEADLINE closed

This year the forum addresses contamination. It will again bring together research students and early career researchers from all disciplines and diverse fields of scholarship to engage with political, theoretical, and methodological issues engendered by law. As a concept, contamination is organic, fluid, contagious, and affective. The grammar of contaminating law calls attention to the processes of change and becoming through which legal thought carries valence, effect and violence. And yet, contamination is inherently ambivalent.

How might law alter the non-legal dimensions of life? How can the interaction between different legal orders and types of law be theorised through contamination? If contamination is already neutralised of its subversive power, what would it mean to pursue a politics of contamination against structures of domination that thrive on the symbolic idea of purity? Might law be interpreted as irreducibly pharmacological – at once medicinal and poisonous – always on guard against the horrors of an unchecked nature?

What work might the unruly, irresponsible and risky body do in unmaking juridical ordering? From epidemics to blasphemy, the corporeal to the ephemeral, the precarious to the undying, to the uncertain horizons of environmental change, mass dislocations, and global financial instability, we invite creative responses to the theoretical problems and potentialities of contamination. We invite submissions around such possible themes as:

- legal subjectivities of the animal, the human and the post-human
- postcolonial, anticolonial and decolonial futures



- queer inflections and infections
- patents and intellectual property
- privacy and information control
- global economic ordering

A limited number of bursaries will be available for interstate and international presenting participants who are unable to claim funding to cover the full cost of travel from their home institution. The bursaries are intended to contribute towards travel expenses. Please indicate in your application whether you would like to be considered for a bursary.

Conference Organisers: Tom Andrews, Cait Storr, Josh Paine and Oishik Sircar Send abstracts of 500 words (max) and biographies of 100 words to: law-mdflt@unimelb.edu.au **by Monday 9 September 2013**. Confirmation of accepted abstracts will be made on 1 October 2013.