What to do with the predator in your bibliography?

Daniel Souleles
September, 2020

In the early summer of 2020 I submitted what I presumed was a final round of extremely minor revisions to an article that I'd been working on in one way or another since 2014. The article compares the ways in which contemporary private equity financiers and Inka accounting specialists manage labor, suggesting that the study of finance can encompass both capitalist and non-capitalist instances of financial governance.

The article itself was hard to write. I'm not trained as an archaeological anthropologist (I'm an ethnographer) and had to spend a lot of time learning how to use archaeological scholarship profitably in my comparison with contemporary ethnographic work. As such, the article had a long trail of draft versions, rejections, and (often quite harsh) criticism, finally finding a home in the *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*.

After I submitted my final revisions, I learned that one archaeological author that I lean on quite a bit in my analysis of accounting in the Inka context, Gary Urton, stands/stood accused of a decades-long pattern of leveraging his position within Harvard's anthropology department and within Andean archaeology to coerce students and colleagues into unwanted sexual relationships. The initial allegations are spelled out here; the allegations are further specified and elaborated here; and Urton's retirement in the face of these allegations is noted here.

It's not just that Urton is cited, either. He actually ended up being one of the blind reviewers on the article, and a year or two ago, responded to an unsolicited email of mine, read an earlier draft of the manuscript and offered helpful, encouraging notes.

Who wants to cite an alleged predator?

So, here's the dilemma: what to do in such a situation?

Should you want to write about accounting in the Inka empire, it is (or was) inevitable that you would get steered towards Urton's work on numeracy, accounting, and the *khipu* knot record. Yet, after learning about what was going on at Harvard, and fully aware that citation is a sort of complicated gift, I quite simply didn't want to cite the guy anymore. Who wants to cite an alleged predator? Who wants to accelerate the reach of a possible creep? And if there were reasons to cite him, I didn't want to do so in an unmarked way.

Honestly, I didn't and still don't know how to approach this. I'd never seen journal

or editorial guidelines for this sort of situation. Moreover, citation basically seems binary—you're in or you're out. Insofar as there are grounds to critique the person of a cited author, it's in the context of the bad work they've done, or the way that their bad behavior led to bad work (as in, say Napoleon Chagnon's work which is critiqued here and here.) As near as I can tell, Urton's work is not just passable, it was widely lauded until allegations against him broke.

In what follows, then, I'll explain how I attempted to revise my own article; how and why my attempts failed; and a series of questions and reflections I'm left with. My hope is that this post will generate discussion in the comments or on twitter. I'll then be able to synthesize those into publication guidelines that journals and presses may want to adopt.

But first, an inventory of failure.

Unmarked to Marked

The simplest thing to do would have been to pull the article. After all, no article, no citations. And then, silence. I decided not to do this, though, in part, because I wanted to use the opportunity to try and figure out a way to mark what Urton is alleged to have done in an academic format. I wanted to deal with this explicitly and openly. I wanted to come up with a template for how to deal with this *in our published academic work* that might stand for others in a similar situation.

Given that decision, I wrote to or called a number of colleagues to talk through how to approach this, and ultimately decided to revise my manuscript with three priorities in mind—first I'd see all the Urton citations I could dilute or replace with other Andeanists. Second, I would mark all remaining Urton citations with an asterisk (e.g. *Urton) to both shade the name and draw attention to a note at the end of the article. Third, I would explain my thinking and revisions in a note at the end of the piece.

> *I wanted to come up with a template for how to deal with this in our published academic work that might stand for others in a similar situation.*

Accordingly, I revised and removed and then added as many citations as I could; I added a handful of asterisks; and then, appended the following note:

**** A note on Gary Urton:*** *In the late Spring of 2020, a few weeks after submitting a second round of relatively minor revisions of this article, hoping to finally hear that after years of work it would be accepted, I learned that Gary Urton had a long history of using his position as a tenured professor at Harvard University and a senior authority on the Khipu to coerce students, advisees, and colleagues into unwanted sexual relationships (Bikales 2020a). This sort of sexual propositioning is the definition of sexual harassment. Professor Carrie Brezine sums it up in a follow up article observing, "If you have cited the Khipu Database Project, or found it interesting, you should know that it was first created on the sexual exploitation of a staff/graduate student…If you have ever cited an article of Gary's on which I am co-author, know that it was written in an atmosphere of sexual coercion and emotional manipulation and abuse" (Bikales 2020b). Suffice it to say, Gary Urton's actions have illuminated a set of nesting crises in Andean scholarship, archaeological anthropology, and Harvard's anthropology department, all of which both reflect on and have implications for the practice of anthropology writ large. More to the point, several of these crises intersect in this article.*

As is apparent to anyone studying accounting in the Inka empire, Andean numeracy, or the khipu, Gary Urton's scholarship is central and unavoidable. He has published widely, often with others, across myriad respected academic venues. Closer to home, Urton in fact read and commented on an earlier draft of this manuscript, and ended up being one of the peer reviewers at the Journal of Anthropological Archaeology. Moreover, unlike a eugenicist biologist or an evolutionary psychologist, it doesn't appear that Urton's scholarship specifically advocates for his brand of predation. What, then should we do?

In revising this manuscript with this question in mind, I've proceeded according to two assumptions: First, Urton's scholarship, as Andean research currently stands, is integral to studying the operation of tribute, numeracy, finance, and accounting in the Inka empire. Second, and more importantly, this knowledge is not his alone. As attested in numerous co-authored works, edited volumes, acknowledgments and collaborations, knowledge of the khipu and the Inka is the product of a community of scholars, all of whom deeply care about their topic and the knowledge they generate on this topic. They also believe that this knowledge of people known from archaeology, ethnohistory, ethnography, and in chroniclers' echoes is worth perpetuating and understanding as part of our common human inheritance. Given that, I see my task given present circumstances as not so much one of erasure, but as one of 1) acknowledgment, 2) comparative scrutiny and provision of alternatives, and 3) eventual transcendence. I will explain how I've pursued these goals:

1. *Acknowledgment: In this note I've tried to narrate as succinctly as possible what we now know about Gary Urton, what he's done to those in his care, and how these circumstances reverberate through and compromise our common task as academics. I've also marked with an asterisk all remaining Urton citations in this article to draw the reader to this explanation.*
2. *Comparative Scrutiny and Provision of Alternatives: A number of archaeologists have helped me in guiding me towards other work on khipu and Inka administration (thank you to Charles Golden, Darryl Wilkinson, John Millhauser, Mary Wiesmantel, Terence D'Altroy, and Sarah Rowe for advice and suggestions, as well as to Kylie Quavie for collating a list of alternative scholars to cite). After reading and digesting as much of this work as I could access, I looked at every time I cited Urton as a single author and asked first if I could replace the citation with someone else, and second, if I couldn't replace it, if I could at least provide further citations to dilute his authority and open up other approaches. I allowed collaborative scholarship to remain as it felt wrong*

to erase one academic due to another's sins, particularly if one had been harmed by the other.

3. *Transcendence: This last point has more to do with hope than anything else. Khipu scholarship, despite being a small community of scholars, moves fairly quickly. I suspect with this sort of comparative scrutiny and replacement we can get to a place where Urton's interpretations need not be central to our conversations. This work will likely be deliberate and incremental. With luck, this article can perhaps be a start in that direction.*

After revising the manuscript in this way, I sent it to the editors of the special issue this article was to be a part of. The issue editors approved the changes. Then I formally submitted the manuscript to the journal editor (it's worth noting that this is an Elsevier journal and to acknowledge all the baggage that comes with a large, risk-averse, for-profit publisher).

Shortly thereafter I heard back from the journal editor, who had forwarded my manuscript to Elsevier's legal department. The editor let me know that Elsevier could not publish my manuscript as it stood because they were worried about getting sued for libel. I didn't get an elaboration on what specifically they were worried about.

> *This point has more to do with hope than anything else.*

I asked if the legal department might revise my note to make it libel-proof. This request was ignored.

After a bit of correspondence between the two levels of editors, we decided that my revised citations could stand, I should strip out the asterisks and the note, and that I could start the article with a generic dedication to people working on removing sexual harassment and predation from archaeology. I could also cite some of their work in that dedication. The idea with the dedication is that it would boost the work of people trying to stamp out Urton's alleged behavior. It would

also suggest by implicit juxtaposition that I and/or the journal are upset about predatory behavior in the discipline. This is as direct as the journal was willing to be. Here follows the dedication:

I dedicate this article to those striving to make archaeology safe and open for all who wish to learn about the traces of our common humanity (Rosenzweig 2020:12-13; e.g. Colaninno et al. 2020).

I confess I'm ambivalent about the dedication. I think the sentiment is good. But, without any further explanation, honestly, it can read like trolling:

Oh! Here's a dedication to making archaeology safer. That's nice.

Oh. And here are pages of close engagement with Urton and collaborator's work on Khipu accounting.

Bit of a mixed message, really.

I decided to go with the dedication in spite of that because, well, it pushes the issue. I don't think this is a terribly good solution, but it seemed to be the best I could manage given the circumstances. In an indirect way, some problems with some of my sources are marked.

Where to go from here?

In addition to a miasma of discontent and frustration, I'm left with some questions and reflections about the ethical standards academic writing should abide to. In what remains, I'd like to lay them out and invite comments here or on twitter.

First, how should we think about a person's scholarship when they've done things we think are bad?

Related, do we have a hierarchy of bad things that are consequential? Do we see

tax evasion and being a landlord as different from violent or sexual crimes? Do we see bad actions as being worse if they happen in and to people in the discipline?

What sort of restitution or reparation could we accept to lift a social, criminal, or moral taint and allow citation to go on in an unmarked way?

Second, what obligation does someone have to citing an academic's work when they personally object to the bad things that a person has done, despite the scholarship being passable or perhaps necessary or maybe even good?

> *Do we have a hierarchy of bad things that are consequential?*

Third, when are we comfortable separating a person's actions from their work? (Anyone who cites Heidegger, feel free to chime in…)

What relationship should personal disgust have with academic engagement? Is there a temporal element to this? Does disgust and revulsion fade with time? Should it?

Fourth, what latitude can academic publishing venues offer people beyond the binary of cite or not cite to explain their relationship to disciplinary or academic authorities?

> *How should any of this turn into journal or press editorial policy or disciplinary ethical practice?*

Should we allow for expanded notes? Should we allow people to put asterisks on authors they despise?

And if we say yes, and if for-profit, libel-fear-mongering publishers do not allow this sort of latitude; this sort of academic freedom, doesn't this give us a bullet-proof argument that we should migrate en masse to open access platforms which we, as academics, control democratically?

Fifth, how should any of this turn into journal or press editorial policy or disciplinary ethical practice?

Thanks for reading and considering this. I'm looking forward to seeing what we come up with. If trends emerge in the comments on this post or on social media (at either my [@dansouleles], or Allegra's [@allegra_lab] twitter accounts), I'll do my best to collate them and write a follow-up. You can also reply to this post by writing a follow up post (send your piece to: submissions@allegralaboratory.net). Folks can also email me at ds.mpp@cbs.dk.

[Marcel LaFlamme was kind enough to read and critique an earlier version of this post]

Featured Image: Photo (cropped) by Kate Farquharson, found on Flickr (CC BY-ND 2.0)

The Fiscal Life of Pandemics

Anna-Riikka Kauppinen
September, 2020

In his summer statement, Rishi Sunak, the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced that VAT (Value-Added Tax) would be dramatically cut from 20% to 5% for the hospitality and tourism sectors in the UK until the end of the year as part of a wider corona rescue package. Hoping that any price cuts would encourage people to head out and spend in order to get the economy moving, the government stopped short of forcing businesses to pass on the cut to the customers. As some restaurants, cafes and hotels chose to keep the tax savings to prop up their failing businesses, headlines evidencing the controversial nature of this practice began appearing: *UK restaurants: tensions boil over as diners and chefs fall out over VAT cuts and costly no-shows* (The Guardian, 19th July 2020). These headlines came after British newspapers had widely publicized the initial

expectation that the cut would be passed on to customers: *VAT cut explained – everything that will be cheaper from Wednesday including food* (The Mirror, 15th of July 2020). While it may seem unimportant who pockets the initial saving, as the aim was to keep small businesses afloat and their employees in jobs, the wider public considered the actions of these restaurants unfair. Customers demanded that the cut be passed on to them in order to support their consumption in times when their own finances and jobs were at risk. The customer is after all 'the public', and the one who generally picks up the VAT bill. Meanwhile restaurateurs wished to keep savings themselves to plug the ever-expanding gaps in their finances.

We are in a moment where governments, international agencies, civil society and taxpayers are thinking about taxes as a tool for managing the looming economic crisis. But where the tax breaks fall and how this translates into 'helping the economy' are ideological, politically charged moves that reverberate unpredictably through social relationships. For instance, bailing out the private sector, such as the hospitality or airline industry, turns on its head the common refrain that the private sector funds public sector spending. As such, rescue packages for the private sector draws attention to the fallacy of the public/private divide and picks away at peoples' assumptions about where wealth is created. Typically, in times of economic boom and relative stability, the private sector is seen as funding the public sector through tax-payments, while the public sector appears dependent on the 'growth' stimulated by the private sector. The pandemic then poses a challenge to such narratives, given the visible role that states have assumed in ensuring that struggling industries within the private sector still exists in a post-corona world. The private sector is consequently shown to be fundamentally dependent on the state's capacity to rescue its business operations through fiscal interventions such as VAT-cuts, direct grants, and furlough schemes.

For instance, bailing out the private sector, such as the hospitality or airline industry, turns on its head the common refrain that the private sector funds

> *public sector spending.*

Paradoxically, taxes thus contribute to a public/private 'effect.' In other words, taxes are crucial to the economic stories that conjure up the divide between the private and public sectors, making them appear as distinct, separate realms of action. Simultaneously, taxes are also a bureaucratic and financial technology that blurs these very same boundaries, revealing dynamics of cause and effect that manifest their ultimate inseparability as part of one financial system. For instance, David Graeber (2015: 74-75) has described how corporate tax cuts in the US from the 1980s onwards resulted in private industry channelling less money into their research budgets and private research labs, as they no longer worked to minimise taxable profits. This led to less innovative research being generated from within private corporations compared to the immediate post-war era. Such cases reveal how new tax policies can change the very 'character' of the private sector and render the public/private sector effect visible.

> *In other words, taxes are crucial to the economic stories that conjure up the divide between the private and public sectors, making them appear as distinct, separate realms of action.*

Alongside the conversations about who benefits from new tax proposals and what taxes will 'do' in these rescue packages, sit the discussions about how the dwindling public coffers might best be re-filled over the coming years. Recent months have been filled with new questions such as: who has the right to tax, what can be taxed, and how can taxation be scaled up to address issues that surpass a single nation state, like a global pandemic? As an example of scaling up taxation, the European Union recently presented a proposal for new EU-level taxes as a mechanism to partially fund the EUR 750 billion corona rescue package, which was approved by the 27 member states in July 2020 after four days and nights of relentless negotiation. Among direct contributions from the member states and EU-level debt (also a hotly contested issue), the package includes a proposal to a new set of levies, including a plastic tax, a digital tax, a

carbon tax, and also potentially aviation taxes and levies on financial transactions. These proposals, for the first time in the EU's history, would render the Union into a 'tax-collector.' While EU-level taxes were already under discussion before the pandemic, it seems that the economic uncertainty that ensued expedited the tabling of plausible tax proposals for future deliberation and national parliamentary approval. The proposal represents a landmark shift in strategizing for EU's future funding structure way beyond the corona rescue package, which thus far has relied on direct contributions from member states, import duties, and fines.

EU's tax proposals challenge an idea of taxation as the sole right of a sovereign state, proposing that taxes can do 'good' beyond delivering public goods in a national territory. However, like the rescue package as a whole, EU's tax proposals will likely generate political divisions in national parliaments. For instance, when the Finnish parliament discussed the rescue package in early June 2020, many MPs commented on the feasibility of the EU tax proposals. Clear fault-lines existed between the generally approving left-leaning parties and highly critical right-wing parties. MPs from the Finnish right-wing populist party, True Finns, appealed to the loss of 'hard-fought' sovereignty and independence, if Finland allowed the EU the right to tax. Centrist MPs raised questions on the 'differing capacities' of various member states to tax. Social democrats, Greens, and Left Alliance asked for their peers to recognize EU-level taxes as not only a means to mitigate the economic uncertainty of the pandemic, but address other challenges such as climate change and the economic power of tech firms and multinational financial institutions. At a moment when collective vulnerability calls for collective solutions, the EU's tax proposals shift notions of who can tax and what 'tax sovereignty' means in the post-corona world. In its Nordic member states, where national tax agencies are generally respected and trusted (see Boll 2014; Larsen 2017), EU tax proposals may spark questions about the EU's capacity to act as a 'trustworthy' tax-collector, which connects to larger debates about the legitimacy to tax (Rawlings and Braithwaite 2003). At their core, the EU tax proposals highlight the generative role of taxes as not a mere 'reaction' to the

pandemic, but a fiscal flow that enacts new moral visions of the Union, such as environmental sustainability.

> *At a moment when collective vulnerability calls for collective solutions, the EU's tax proposals shift notions of who can tax and what 'tax sovereignty' means in the post-corona world.*

In this moment when health and ecological crises pose major challenges to national and regional economies, there is an opportunity to re-think the role of taxes for realizing new kinds of economic and political futures. Uniquely, the desire to 'think big' and explore 'radical' fiscal policies is suddenly not a fringe position, but embraced by governments and international institutions; alongside the EU, the OECD are recommending a 'gloves off' fiscal approach to dealing with the economic fall out of the pandemic (2020). As the VAT-cut debate in the UK demonstrates, taxes elicit new ways of thinking about the mutual dependence between the public and private sectors. We may also need to consider who are the 'rightful' tax-collectors at a time when tax sovereignty might not adequately respond to the existing challenges. Taxation undoubtedly entails its own politics of fiscal relations, revealing who are considered as 'deserving' of support from collective pools of revenue. Taxes are a form of bureaucratic power with a long history as an extractive technology of rule, especially by colonial governments (Gardner 2012, Meagher 2018, Roitman 2005), but the pandemic has also highlighted taxation as a politically charged field of action that materialise potential futures filled with both hope and contestation. This suggests that making decisions on what is taxed and who can collect taxes are going to be increasingly important questions. What public money should best be spent on, how this will shape the economy, and who are the rightful beneficiaries will remain contested issues, as nations and international agencies continue planning towards a post-corona economic future yet unknown.

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Don’t Come Home this Year

Stefan Voicu
September, 2020

‘Don’t come home this year’ is a short video about Romanian migrants returning home from Italy during the Covid-19 pandemic. The video uses viral live streamed footage of returnees showing themselves stuck in transit on the 17th of March 2020 at the land border between Austria and Hungary, the Nikelsdorf-Hegyeshalom border crossing. Juxtaposing this footage with reaction videos from the diaspora who remained abroad, and from Romanians at home, the video unfolds as a virtual dialogue that shows how the pandemic engendered a field of contention surrounding the identity of these migrant workers, as diasporic community and as medium of virus transmission. The video also captures the way

in which new media technology and aesthetics are embedded in everyday life.

> *The migrants returning home used their smartphones to transform themselves into citizen camera-witnesses.*

I was impressed by how the migrants returning home used their smartphones to transform themselves into *citizen camera-witnesses*, a term used by Andén-Papadopoulos (2014, 754) to describe 'camera-wielding political activists and dissidents who put their lives at risk to produce incontrovertible public testimony to unjust and disastrous developments around the world, in a critical bid to mobilize global solidarity through the affective power of the visual.'

I started collecting videos made at the border on the 17th of March which were becoming viral both on Facebook and on YouTube. Besides these videos, I started collecting also reaction videos that were made prior or in the aftermath of this event. Before the 17th of March viral videos of returning Romanian migrants sitting in long queues at the border between Hungary and Romania, at the airports, being escorted into quarantine, or in quarantine were already circulating online, together with reaction videos. I recontextualized some of the latter to appear as direct reactions to the 17th of March event because this event, around which the narrative arc of the video is constructed, allowed me to bring in and compress into a single video dialogic footage that would otherwise be temporally and spatially dispersed online. It can be seen as what Jaimie Baron (2015) calls productive misuse of found footage.

> *I embodied the role user-channels have in re-posting, and thus disseminate, footage that ends up becoming viral, retaining the logic of internet viral transmission.*

One of the difficulties encountered was in tracking the original source of these videos. Many of the videos have been downloaded several times and re-posted by

Facebook or YouTube users who act as informal channels for Romanian viral video content. This spiral of re-posting made it hard to identify the exact authors of this footage, the dates when these videos were made and, except for the footage shot at the border, hard to identify the exact location where the footage was taken. Related to this was also the difficulty of getting consent for using the footage. In the end I chose not to ask consent from the users that made the footage available online and instead opted for the fair use of the videos (Smith Ekstrand and Silver 2014) . I did so because the videos were created with the explicit intent of being shared as much as possible on social media, 'to reach Mr. Iohannis in Bucharest' as one content creator says. In this manner I embodied the role user-channels have in re-posting, and thus disseminate, footage that ends up becoming viral, retaining the logic of internet viral transmission. Moreover, I believe that in the editing process, although recontextualizations were made, the intent of the video creators was not altered, but rather enhanced its dialogism by constructing a conversation space using the aesthetics of online video chatting apps.

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Although I cataloged the videos based on the original user source, social media platform and date of publication, I organized the material during editing following a set of topics that have defined the debates about the Romanian diaspora in the media and everyday life. Thus, the video focuses on attempts at defining the diaspora (Beciu 2012, Trandafoiu 2013), the social categories that constitute it (Cingolani 2016, Moroșanu 2012), and its political (Bucur 2019, Burean 2011, Gheorghita 2011, Gherasim-Proca 2014) and economic agency (Ban 2012, Mădroane 2016). At the same time, the video creators make use of symbols such as 'the queue', representing in Romania the state's opression or disregard of its constituent population since late socialism (Câmpeanu 1994), or 'smashing a TV',

a trope frequently used in cinema and TV productions, associated with rage against the manipulating power of the medium, but repurposed into an international viral video trend expressing outrage at mainstream media manipulation regarding the existence of the virus or its actual source (as seen most notably in the UK and Australia).

> *The edit creates a polyphonic narrative by overlapping the different footage so as to complement each other and give the sense of a single homogenous narrative. I use (this) visual grammar to portray (…) multiple, opposing narratives of a shared experience, (…) akin to how online video chats unfold.*

My inspiration for the video's aesthetic came from Natalie Bookchin's video artwork *Testament* (2009), whose form resembles that of online chat apps everyone has become familiar to since the beginning of the pandemic. In this work she uses online vlogs that she groups according to different topics. Initially conceived as a multi-channel installation, she edited the different footage into one single video that shows the shared experience of losing a job, being on anti-depression medication and trying to come out. The edit creates a polyphonic narrative by overlapping the different footage so as to complement each other and give the sense of a single homogenous narrative. Unlike Bookchin, I use her visual grammar to portray not a single narrative, but multiple, opposing narratives of a shared experience, more akin to how online video chats unfold. It is the divergence of the multiple voices embodied in this dialogic footage which I bring together that I believe ends up defining the collective shared experience of the Romanian diaspora trying to get back home during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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Featured Image: Prudentia, found on Wikipedia.

No Journal is an Island

Kate Herman
September, 2020

Libraria is a collective of researchers based in the social sciences who seek to bring about a more open, diverse, community-controlled scholarly communication system. Since 2015, the group has explored alternative funding models for open-access publishing and helped catalyze the Berghahn Open Anthro initiative. More recently, Libraria has launched Cooperate for Open, a demonstration project that seeks to identify opportunities for cooperation among small, scholar-led open-access publications in anthropology and adjacent fields.

This interview with Kate Herman, the newly hired project coordinator for Cooperate for Open, was conducted by Marcel LaFlamme in August 2020. They discussed the distinctive role of independent and experimental publications, as well as the risk of perpetually reinventing the wheel by going it alone.

Could you tell us a little about yourself and about what drew you to the

project?

It’s become a bit of a cliché to say so, in both the library and publishing worlds where I spend my time, but I’ve always been a bookworm; as I write this, I’ve just finished a cross-country move that necessitated acknowledging the sheer weight of my book collection! When you spend long enough with your nose in a book you get interested in not only what the author says through the words on the page, but also the means they (and others) chose to convey those words: the form, the format, and all the decisions made in making any text truly public.

> *Every researcher is adapting to or with the publishing process in their own way, whether adhering to or transgressing from established forms.*

After studying anthropology as an undergraduate, I was drawn to academic publishing because I saw that, no matter how deliberately standards and expectations for scholarship are set, there’s always room for experimentation and play—particularly in the humanities and interpretive social sciences. Every researcher is adapting to or with the publishing process in their own way, whether adhering to or transgressing from established forms. For a certain kind of person, this leads to conversations about how the means of publication might better align with the vision that scholars have for their work and its circulation.

Tracking these conversations as they have unfolded in anthropology is actually the subject of the Master’s thesis I’m currently writing. But, over the past several years, I’ve also contributed to those conversations through my work at a small-scale open-access publisher and then a well-loved university press. In these roles, I’ve been drawn into the day-to-day mechanics of publishing, but I’ve especially relished exchanges about the messy, generative possibilities that brought me to publishing in the first place. My work on Cooperate for Open promises to be full of exchanges like this, as I connect with small-scale projects that are playing with the form and function of scholarly publishing. I’m drawn to the challenge of enabling these experiments in an intentional way, rather than sanding them down to fit more neatly into the scholarly communication system as is.

What will the day-to-day work that you're doing look like?

Right now, I'm drawing up an interview guide for the conversations I'll be having with our target publications, as well as a data request form that will help us capture some of the fine points of budgets and file formats that editors may not have on the tip of their tongues. We're really trying to keep the time commitment for each participating publication manageable, because we know that scholar-publishers are juggling a lot at the best of times and all the more so during a global pandemic.

> *I'm drawn to the challenge of enabling these experiments in an intentional way, rather than sanding them down to fit more neatly into the scholarly communication system as is.*

I'm also developing a strategy for identifying and connecting with publications that meet our criteria, which includes doing interviews like this one. (Here's the plug: if you are working on an open-access publication in anthropology or adjacent fields and are interested in exploring possibilities for cooperation, drop me an email at kate[at]libraria.cc) .

Based on the knowledge that Libraria has built up over the past five years, we have a sense of some broad areas where small, scholar-led publications might think about working together: funding, infrastructure, expertise, and so on. Still, we're really trying to avoid assuming that we know what the needs and ambitions of these projects are—or ought to be. In a way, that's one of the distinctively anthropological parts of our approach to Cooperate for Open; our intention is to listen and then over time to look for patterns, rather than starting with an off-the-shelf business model that we're trying to evangelize.

That said, I think it's valuable to know how parallel projects in other fields are approaching similar challenges, rather than trying to design structures and processes entirely from scratch. That's where a bird's eye view of the scholarly communication system, with all of the different institutions that it comprises, can

be useful. So I'll also be attending events like the annual conference of the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (which is online this year), in order to stay current on the latest debates and developments. I see an important role for networks like Libraria in surfacing the needs of scholar-led publications in a space like this, helping to make their perspectives legible.

How would you respond to a skeptical editor who wonders: "Does anyone actually want or need a study like this?"

Sure, that's a fair question, and I think I would answer it at a couple of different levels. First, there's the issue of whether Cooperate for Open speaks to the needs of scholars themselves, perhaps especially those who are heading up the kind of publications that we're focused on. For me, the "Labour of Love" manifesto that came out over the summer (to which I know that you and *Allegra* also contributed) offered some insight into the conversations that these scholar-publishers are having with each other.

> *You see the energy and enthusiasm for starting new projects that can challenge that status quo in one way or another.*

Reading that text, you see open access framed as a self-evident good, but one that won't solve all of the problems in scholarly publishing by itself. You see frustration with a status quo defined by a smallish number of gatekeeper publications on which career advancement comes to depend. You see the energy and enthusiasm for starting new projects that can challenge that status quo in one way or another. But what I especially appreciate is the acknowledgment that it's hard to keep these projects going, especially when they are standalone endeavors without an established publisher behind them.

I actually think that the last paragraph of the manifesto could stand in as the mission statement for Cooperate for Open:

How can we enable these projects—increase their reach, tap into new forms of

support, reduce duplication of effort, ward off burnout and discouragement—while being honest about the drawbacks of their institutionalization? Is it possible for projects like these to share certain kinds of social and technical infrastructure, while retaining their autonomy and the experimental edge that makes them so vital?

In other words, the questions that Cooperate for Open is asking are questions that scholar-publishers are asking themselves. So that's one indicator of the study's relevance.

More broadly, my feeling is that the study lines up with priorities that are emerging on the part of other stakeholders in the scholarly communication system. Research funders, who have been criticized for overemphasizing an author processing charge (APC) model of open access that was never a great fit for the humanities and social sciences, are showing signs of greater engagement: there's a Plan S-sponsored study of collaborative noncommercial publishing models underway that has a number of overlaps with Cooperate for Open.

> *How can we enable these projects—increase their reach, tap into new forms of support, reduce duplication of effort, ward off burnout and discouragement?*

Meanwhile, I see libraries starting to think more creatively about how to support scholar-led open access. The existing templates for this involve either funding a full-service platform like the widely admired Open Library of Humanities or creating an in-house library publishing program. But Cooperate for Open is notable in that a dozen research libraries stepped up to fund an effort to understand the needs of publications that are as yet underserved by these mechanisms. Their willingness to invest in an open-ended process of discovery speaks to a broader appetite for capacity building that I think scholars sometimes overlook.

What do you expect the next steps for the project to be?

Let’s start with the short term: by the end of January, we will have sifted through the data gathered from participating publications and distilled it into some insight on the needs and opportunities in this corner of the publishing landscape. So, I’ll be putting together a report for Libraria and the organizations it works closely with, as well as a summary with key takeaways to share with the community at large. We’re also looking into creating a clearinghouse for some of the more sensitive data provided by participating publications that could be shared internally, as a common asset on which further efforts can build.

But what happens after that really depends on what we learn. One of our guiding principles for this initiative is that it’s possible that there is simply no room for increased cooperation among small, scholar-led open-access publications. If that is what we find, then that’s OK: it’s better to know that than to throw a bunch of resources at creating something that people don’t want. However, I think this outcome is unlikely. What I expect us to learn from the study is *in what areas* scholar-publishers see opportunities for cooperation and *with what degree of intensity*. From there, we can start to think about what kinds of partnerships or infrastructures might be needed to advance those aims.

For instance, these publications might benefit from a lightweight knowledge sharing network where best practices could be exchanged. You can imagine a basic listserv or other digital workspace, maybe with a part-time community manager who could chime in when specific expertise is needed. On the other hand, these publications might want to explore working together more closely, potentially forming a cooperative that would seek institutional support as a bloc and perhaps even publish on a shared platform. In that case, I can see Libraria coordinating a funding proposal that would help to get such a venture off the ground.

> *It’s better to know that than to throw a bunch of resources at creating something that people don’t want.*

In the end, the publications that participate in this initiative are not all going to

want the same things. So, one last idea that we've discussed is facilitating connections between "cohorts" of publications that are facing particular challenges or working toward particular goals. Publishing professionals self-select into interest groups in just this way, but scholar-publishers have fewer opportunities to do so (beyond a handful of networks like Radical OA). From this perspective, the next steps for Cooperate for Open may consist as much in forging social infrastructure as in upgrading technical systems. In my experience, one without the other will only get you so far.

Featured Image (cropped) by pixabay.com

#Podcast Round Up: Best of March to August

Emilie Thévenoz
September, 2020

Summer comes to an end, and some of us will start commuting again. Others will desperately wonder how to fill up the ‘spare’ time from their considerably shorter commute between the breakfast table and the home office.

For the former: we know exactly what will make this time enjoyable, but nevertheless productive (yes, this is still the *mot d’ordre*, the pandemic unfortunately didn’t change that).

For the latter: some might argue this is a unique opportunity to pick up a new hobby, spend time with your loved ones and so on, to get your life/work balance under control. That would be a good idea. If you are however a fellow *anthro-holic* and can’t imagine a type of fun that doesn’t include anthropology, we also have you covered.

Our intern and budding *anthro-holic* has rounded up all of the podcasts she most enjoyed listening to this summer, curtesy of our friends at the [New Books Network].

The Fixer: Visa Lottery Chronicles

by Charles Piot (Duke University Press, 2019).

In the West African nation of Togo, applying for the U.S. Diversity Visa Lottery is a national obsession, with hundreds of thousands of Togolese entering each year. From the street frenzy of the lottery sign-up period and the scramble to raise money for the embassy interview to the gamesmanship of those adding spouses and dependents to their dossiers, the application process is complicated, expensive, and unpredictable.

In The Fixer: Visa Lottery Chronicles (Duke University Press, 2019) Charles Piot follows Kodjo Nicolas Batema, a Togolese visa broker—known as a "fixer"—as he shepherds his clients through the application and interview process. Relaying the

experiences of the fixer, his clients, and embassy officials, Piot captures the ever-evolving cat-and-mouse game between the embassy and the hopeful Togolese as well as the disappointments and successes of lottery winners in the United States. These detailed and compelling stories uniquely illustrate the desire and savviness of migrants as they work to find what they hope will be a better life.

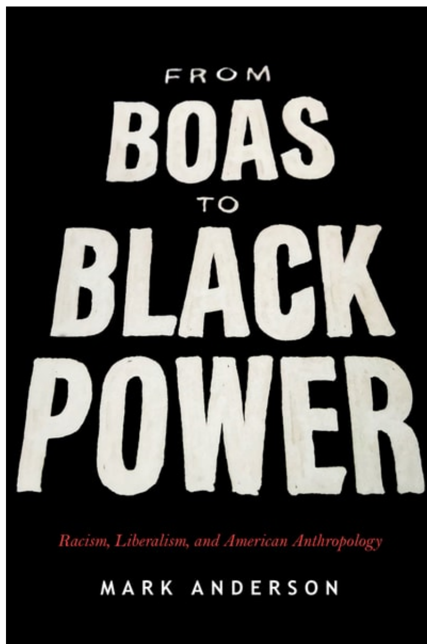
This interview is part of an NBN special series on "Mobilities and Methods."

Charles Piot is a Professor of Cultural Anthropology and African and African American Studies at Duke University.

Interview by Alize Arıcan.

Listen here!

From Boas to Black Power



by Mark Anderson (Stanford University Press, 2019).

Mark Anderson's *From Boas to Black Power: Racism, Liberalism and American Anthropology* is at once a story about US anthropology and US liberalism from the 1930s to the 1960s.

By interrogating the Boasian intervention into the idea of biological race, Anderson shows how, despite their progressive and anti-racist intentions, Boas and 'the Boasians' naturalised the idea of the United States as a white nation and helped to entrench problematic discourses, such as "colour-blindness".

Alongside tracing the history of Boasian thought on race, highlighting the paradoxes and strange logics in Boasian anti-racism, Anderson identifies contemporaries who undertook more rigorous examinations of race, who offered more critical anti-racist analytics, but were sidelined in the history of US anthropology.

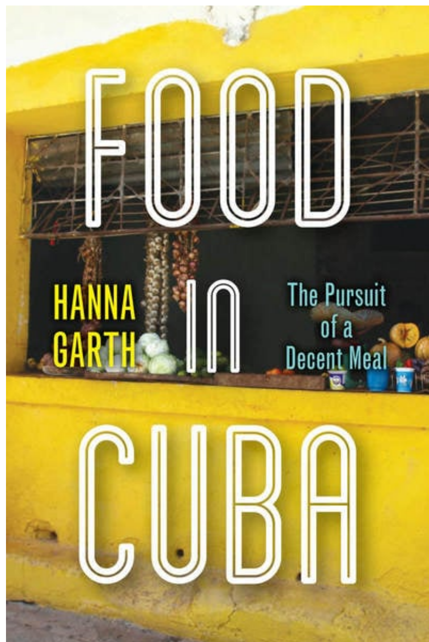
From Boas to Black Power doesn't attempt to deny that the Boasians offered a trenchant critique of the biological conception of race, but shows that their commitment to liberalism undermined a true reckoning with how race shapes the United States.

Mark D. Anderson is Associate Professor of Anthropology at UC Santa Cruz, and also wrote *Black and Indigenous: Garifuna Activism and Consumer Culture in Honduras* (University of Minnesota Press).

Inteview by Lachlan Summers.

Listen here!

Food In Cuba: The Pursuit of a Decent Meal



by Hanna Garth (Stanford University Press, 2020).

In *Food In Cuba: The Pursuit of a Decent Meal* (Stanford University Press, 2020), Hanna Garth examines the processes of acquiring food and preparing meals in the midst of food shortages.

Garth draws our attention to the social, cultural, and historical factors Cuban's

draw upon to define an appropriate or decent meal and the struggle they undergo to produce a decent meal. Often, studies of food security overlook the process of acquiring food, which Garth demonstrates as a critical locus for understanding food access.

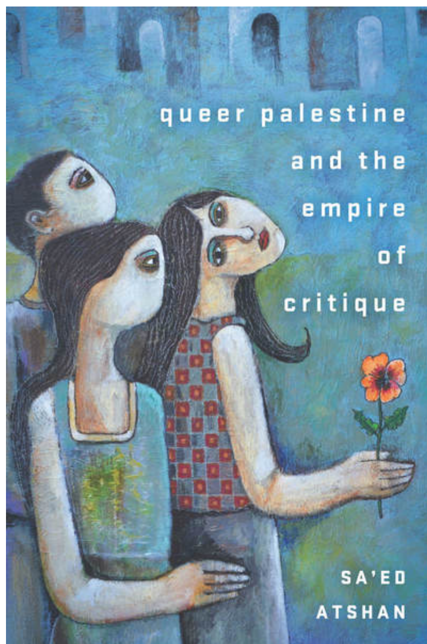
Garth focuses on a variety of households, families, and individuals in Santiago, Cuba at different class levels and household compositions in order to show the gendered, racial, economic, social, and moral dimensions of how Cubans navigate their food landscapes and attempt to create culturally appropriate meals.

In so doing, she argues for the centrality of how local people determine their food system to be adequate. The book would be of interest to the areas of anthropology, particularly medical anthropology, food studies, Latin American Studies, Cuban studies, and studies of socialism and post-socialism.

Interview by Reighan Gillam.

Listen here!

Queer Palestine and the Empire of Critique



by Sa'ed Atshan (Stanford University Press, 2020).

In *Queer Palestine and the Empire of Critique* (Stanford University Press, 2020) anthropologist and activist Sa'ed Atshan explores the Palestinian LGBTQ movement and offers a window into the diverse community living both in historic Palestine and in diaspora.

His timely and urgent account contends that the movement has been subjected to an "empire of critique," which has inhibited its growth and undermines the fight against homophobia in the region and beyond. On the one hand, explains Atshan, queer Palestinians must contend with the harsh realities of patriarchal nationalism, homophobia and heteronormativity, Israeli occupation, dehumanizing discourses such as 'pinkwashing,' and the legacies of western imperialism.

At the same time, Atshan argues that critiques against such issues – leveled by academics, journalists, and even queer activists – have contributed to a stifling ideological purism that has put activists on the defensive and alienates some queer Palestinians.

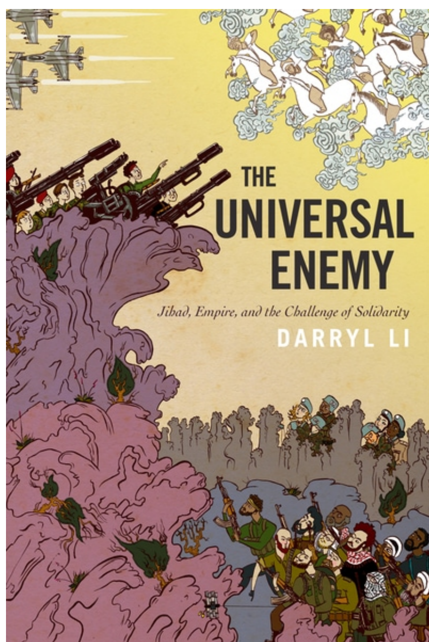
Along with a succinct presentation of the immense challenges faced by the LGBTQ-identifying Palestinians, Atshan highlights Palestinian agency, ingenuity, and resilience. He considers how progressive social movements around the world

can navigate the often fraught and complex dynamics of intersectional activism, and leaves his readers with a vision of a diverse queer Palestinian movement capable of "radically reimagining possible futures."

Interview by Joshua Donovan.

Listen here!

The Universal Enemy: Jihad, Empire, and the Challenge of Solidarity



by Darryl Li (Stanford University Press, 2020).

No contemporary figure is more demonized than the Islamist foreign fighter who wages jihad around the world. Spreading violence, disregarding national borders, and rejecting secular norms, so-called jihadists seem opposed to universalism

itself. But in a radical departure from conventional efforts to explain and solve the "problem" of jihad, *The Universal Enemy: Jihad, Empire, and the Challenge of Solidarity* (Stanford University Press, 2020) begins with the assertion that transnational jihadists are in fact engaged in their own form of universalism: armed transnational solidarity under conditions of American empire.

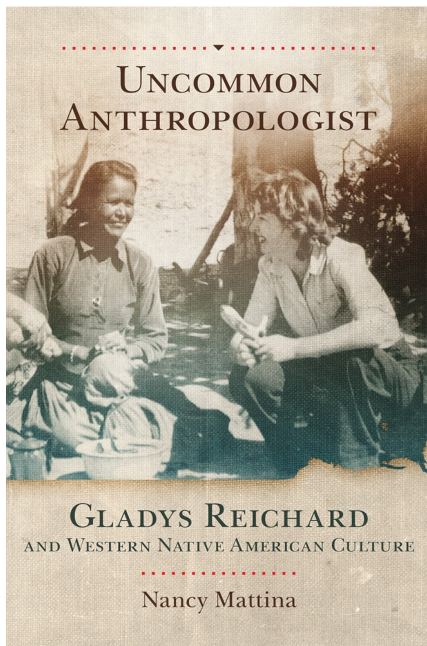
Drawing on 15 years of interviews and research conducted in Arabic, Bosnian/ Serbian/ Croatian, Urdu, French, and Italian, and following the stories of former fighters across the Middle East, the Balkans, the United States, and Europe, anthropologist and attorney Darryl Li uses the lens of universalism to revisit the pivotal post-Cold War moment when ethnic cleansing in the Balkans dominated global headlines. Highlighting Bosnia-Herzegovina as a battleground of multiple universalisms—socialist Non-Alignment, United Nations peacekeeping, humanitarian intervention, the War On Terror, and the transnational jihads that posed an alternative to American governance—Li urges us to consider what grants claims to universalism their authority and allure.

A historical ethnography from below whose protagonists move between and beneath governments, *The Universal Enemy* explores the relationship between jihad and American empire, thereby shedding critical light on both.

Interview by Bhoomika Joshi and Nancy Ko.

Listen here!

Uncommon Anthropologist: Gladys Reichard and Western Native American Culture



By Nancy Mattina (University of Oklahoma Press, 2019).

Protégé of Elsie Clews Parsons and Franz Boas, founder and head of Barnard College's anthropology department, and a trailblazer in Native American linguistics and anthropology, Gladys Reichard (1893–1955) is one of America's least appreciated anthropologists. Her accomplishments were obscured in her lifetime by differences in intellectual approach and envy, as well as academic politics and the gender realities of her age. Reichard's approach to Native languages put her at odds with Edward Sapir, leader of the structuralist movement in American linguistics. Similarly, Reichard's focus on Native psychology as revealed to her by Native artists and storytellers produced a dramatically different style of ethnography from that of Margaret Mead, who relied on western psychological archetypes to "crack" alien cultural codes, often at a distance.

Nancy Mattina's *Uncommon Anthropologist: Gladys Reichard and Western Native American Culture* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2019) is the first full biography of Reichard, and examines her pathbreaking work in the ethnography of ritual and mythology; Wiyot, Coeur d'Alene, and Navajo linguistics; folk art, gender, and language; and her exceptional career of teaching, editing, publishing, and mentoring.

In this episode of the podcast Nancy talk to host Alex Golub about Reichard's life, her remarkable ethnography *Spider Woman,* her career as a teacher (including as an instructor of Zora Neale Hurston), how academic politics can erase people from disciplinary memory, and why Reichard's 'humanitarian' values are needed now more than ever.

Interview by Alex Golub.

Listen here!

Harassed: Gender, Bodies, and Ethnographic Research

by Rebecca Hanson and Patricia Richards (University of California Press, 2019).

Researchers frequently experience sexualized interactions, sexual objectification,

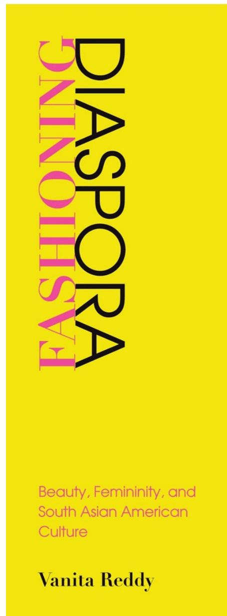
and harassment as they conduct fieldwork. These experiences are often left out of ethnographers' "tales from the field" and remain unaddressed within qualitative literature.

In *Harassed: Gender, Bodies, and Ethnographic Research* (University of California Press, 2019), Rebecca Hanson and Patricia Richards argue that the androcentric, racist, and colonialist epistemological foundations of ethnographic methodology contribute to the silence surrounding sexual harassment and other forms of violence. Hanson and Richards challenge readers to recognize how these attitudes put researchers at risk, further the solitude experienced by researchers, lead others to question the validity of their work, and, in turn, negatively impact the construction of ethnographic knowledge. To improve methodological training, data collection, and knowledge produced by all researchers, *Harassed* advocates for an embodied approach to ethnography that reflexively engages with the ways in which researchers' bodies shape the knowledge they produce. By challenging these assumptions, the authors offer an opportunity for researchers, advisors, and educators to consider the multiple ways in which good ethnographic research can be conducted. Beyond challenging current methodological training and mentorship, *Harassed* opens discussions about sexual harassment and violence in the social sciences in general.

Interview by Sneha Annavarapu.

Listen here!

[Beauty, Femininity and South Asian American Culture]



by Vanita Reddy (Temple University Press, 2016).

Vanita Reddy, in her book *Fashioning Diaspora: Beauty, Femininity and South Asian American Culture* (Temple University Press, 2016), locates diasporic transnationality, affiliations and intimacies through the analytic of beauty.

Through her analysis of Asian American literary fiction and performance artwork and installations, Reddy lingers on moments, objects and subjective positions that reveal the potentiality of beauty. Not just a site for neoliberal complicity, beauty, in its presence as well as absence, also emerges as something subversive.

The re-articulation of the *bindi* and the *saree*, objects that are otherwise imbued with upper-caste, Hindu hetero-reproductive symbolisms, in the works of performance artists, offer queer queer subversion of power structures. Beauty also becomes the site of not just physical but also social (im)mobility as Reddy presents the complicated ways in which beauty relates to aspiration.

Central to her project is upending the male-centric understanding of the

relationship between the diaspora and the "nation". Focussing not only on female narratives of movement and mobility but also interrogating the vulnerability and queer-ness of male subject positions, Reddy provides a nuanced interrogation of how "frivolous" beauty becomes the site of transformative transnational journeys.

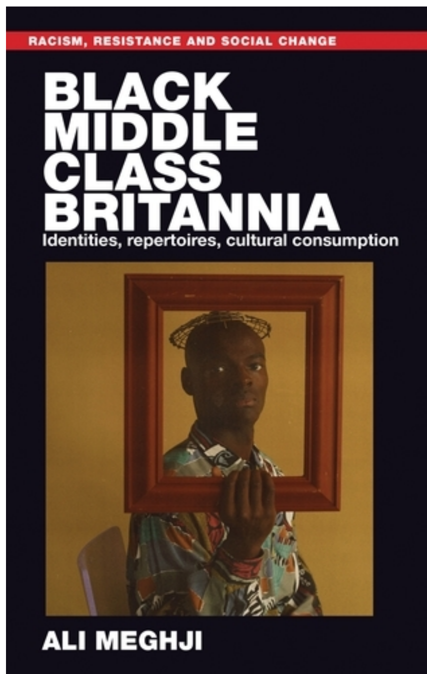
In the first three chapters, she looks at the literary fiction that either centrally or marginally deploys beauty as the site of narrating stories about the diaspora. Chapter 4 and 5 look at feminist performances and cyber representations of objects like the *bindi* and *saree* that deliberately challenge the essentialization of these objects and destabilizes them not just to narrate stories of movement but emphasize potential for mobilization through seemingly non-serious, beautiful artifacts.

Vanita Reddy is an Associate Professor of English at Texas A&M University.

Interview by Lakshita Malik.

Listen here!

Black Middle-Class Britannia: Identities, Repertoires, Cultural Consumption



by Ali Meghj (Manchester University Press, 2019).

Who are the Black middle-class in Britain?

In *Black Middle-Class Britannia: Identities, Repertoires, Cultural Consumption* (Manchester University Press, 2019) Ali Meghj, a lecturer in social inequalities at the University of Cambridge, considers the identity of Britain's Black middle-class by understanding culture and cultural consumption.

Offering examples from across contemporary art and culture, the book provides both a theoretical framework and rich empirical data to demonstrate the importance of understanding race to the study of both class and culture.

As a result, the book is essential reading across the arts and social sciences, as well as for cultural practitioners and policymakers.

Interview by Dave O'Brien.

Listen here!

[Working in Public: The Making and Maintenance of Open Source Software]

by Nadia Eghbal (Stripe Press, 2020).

Open source is the once-radical idea that code should be freely available to everyone. Open-source software was once an optimistic model for public collaboration, but is now a near-universal standard. But most open-source code is not developed by big teams or equitable collaborations; it's maintained by unseen individuals who work tirelessly to write and publish code that's consumed by millions.

In *Working in Public: The Making and Maintenance of Open Source Software* (Stripe Press), Nadia Eghbal takes an inside look at modern open source software development and its evolution over the last two decades. The book draws from hundreds of interviews with developers, and serves as a first-of-its-kind anthropological investigation of the open source community.

Eghbal examines the role of GitHub as a platform for hosting code, the way software developers are (and often aren't) compensated for their work, and the complex dynamics between maintainers, contributors, and users of open-source software.

Nadia Eghbal is a writer and researcher who explores how the internet enables individual creators. From 2015 to 2019, she focused on the production of open source software, working independently and at GitHub to improve the open source developer experience.

Interview by Matthew Jordan.

Listen here !

Featured Photo: Supermarket in Cuba, photo by Alessandro Caproni, found on PxHere.

Allegra Summer break

Allegra
September, 2020

Allegra is going on holidays from 22 July to 22 August. We’re happy to continue receiving all your suggestions and [submissions] while on leave, but are unlikely to respond before 22 August.

In the meantime, we wish you all a proper slowdown over this summer. This has been a trying year for all of us, and we hope you will be able to take a real break.

Enjoy your #Summerbreak!

featured image: Photo by bady abbas on Unsplash

Open Call: #AnthroEducate!

Allegra
September, 2020

Imagine dozens of tables in a huge hall, with 12-15 children sitting at each. They negotiate with each other, squabble, and make up. They need to decide among themselves what to put in their city center: a shopping district, a government building, a giant playground, a rocket launch pad or a huge prison? How will the people of this new world live together: will they be divided into poor and rich? Will they have bosses? How will they treat visitors, the elderly, and what rights would children have in their world? (Nika Dubrowski,

Anthropology for Kids)

We invite individuals, groups and institutions to submit a short summary of innovative projects that seek to make anthropology accessible to, and with, children and youth. Please send us a 250-word summary of your project/initiative by 22 August 2020. We'll curate a thematic thread on the basis of these entries.

If you…

– Are trying to make anthropology accessible to, and with, children and youth

– Are developing teaching tools/resources informed by anthropology

– Are working to introduce anthropology into schools

– Are designing anthropology tours for children in museums, exhibitions or other public spaces

-Have other related experiences and insights that are so innovative we couldn't possibly anticipate them in this open call

Please write to submissions@allegralaboratory.net

We are looking forward to collaborating with you.

Featured photo by [Leonardo Burgos]() on [Unsplash]()

Fires of Gold

Sophia Hoffinger
September, 2020

As of 2019, Ghana is the country with the largest gold-mining industry in Africa, overtaking South Africa, after two South African gold mining companies shifted focus on the West African country. Small miners produce the large majority of the Ghanaian gold output, approximately one third of the country's gold production (p. 5). In the shadow of the Ghanaian gold industry's success story, however, loom multiple struggles over labour, land, rights, and politics. One such struggles involves artisanal miners, known as galamsey, who are of particular importance as they largely mine gold illicitly from the perspective of the mining companies. The claims on the basis of ancestral rights which galamseys make on the land in

which the gold can be found, raises pertinent questions over who determines the legitimacy and legality of certain acts of mining.

Rosen's ethnography provides important insights into the force field that structures life around Obuasi's gold mines and goes beyond mere political and legal analysis by revealing the different forms of power, violence, and activism that complicate the success story of Ghana's gold industry and rule-of-law system

It is precisely the various struggles and contests over land, labour and law that Lauren Coyle Rosen's monograph *Fires of Gold* (2020) analyses. Throughout her analysis, the author argues that the legal and political struggles over work and ownership of the gold mines are not entirely embedded within the formal legal structures of Ghana's centrally governed constitutional democracy, but rather, mediated by what she terms 'shadow sovereigns'. Secondly, such struggles involve not only earthly actors, but great importance is given to religious sovereigns and the realm of the sacred (p. 8-9).

Rosen's ethnography provides important insights into the force field that structures life around Obuasi's gold mines and goes beyond mere political and legal analysis by revealing the different forms of power, violence, and activism that complicate the success story of Ghana's gold industry and rule-of-law system (p. 3). This important contribution, however, is dimmed by the ethnography's theoretical shortcomings and methodological monotony. The core questions around sovereignty, the tensions between legitimacy, legality, and illegality, as well as Rosen's key analytic figure of the *shadow sovereign*, are insufficiently addressed both in theory and in their historical context in Ghana.

Fires of Gold is told through five core chapters, each densely ethnographic and starting with a tumultuous event which draws the reader into the field of conflict

between mining companies, unions, spiritual authorities, and the spirits themselves. Dwelling on Rosen's key term '*shadow sovereign*' (p. 4), chapter one explores the fraught and often violent encounters between the galamseys and the key gold mining company AngloGold Ashanti over claims to gold. This conflict, however, is not merely about legal ownership over the mines (chapter one)- rather it is also about the different spiritual authorities that sanction certain acts of mining, that can be called upon for consultation, but that also themselves may inflict violence (chapter two and three). Chapter four goes on to explore the role of local chiefs in the mining struggle, who negotiate the disputes over distribution of land and compensation for land claimed on account of ancestral ownership (p. 96). Drawing on popular memory of a large-scale miners strike in 1999, the final chapter explores how the unionised miners deployed a range of political actions, from strikes to protests and finally lawsuits, over casualisation and poor working conditions. The rich exploration of the different actors' perspectives, mostly by means of long interviews, participant-observation of ceremonies and events, as well as by reconstructing locally significant incidents, makes this ethnography particularly relevant for scholars interested in qualitative analyses of labour struggles. Though Rosen herself does not mention a specific intended audience for her book, *Fires of Gold* can be located in the wider anthropological literature on the politics of resources extraction and mining (see for example Nash 1993).

> *Rosen's emphasis is on her ethnographic descriptions and qualitative interviews themselves, rather than on advancing a specific theoretical argument.*

Because the author does not position her work in relation to the wider academic literature, it becomes difficult for the reader to assess the monograph's wider relevance and contribution. Relevant references to the literature on labour and the state in Ghana, as well as academic work on gold mining are mainly found in the endnotes (p. 143), while a thorough discussion of these bodies of literature within the ethnography is almost entirely missing. Though the author suggests to study the "ethnographic implications for the classical philosophical triad of the city, the soul, and the sacred" (p. 4), only the 'city' gets a brief exploration –

however it is neither explored explicitly ethnographically or theoretically later on in the book . Rosen's emphasis is on her ethnographic descriptions and qualitative interviews themselves, rather than on advancing a specific theoretical argument (p.4). From this position, it could be argued that a long literature review might take away attention from the worlds and experienced conflicts that feature so prominently in Rosen's ethnography. However, Rosen's missed opportunity to locate her own work amongst that of others, made the monograph difficult to follow. Further, a more diverse display of methods, such as an analysis of court documents in Chapter 5, could have added a deeper level to the analysis, particularly given Rosen's expertise in law.

The difficulty in writing an ethnography about a large field of struggles, as the present work attempts, lies in muddling over the particular histories and complex, sometimes contradicting, positions that produce such a field of struggle. Engaging with theory as well as history is ethnographically and politically pertinent, in order to avoid what Lila Abu-Lughod sees as the collapse of "the politics of ethnography into its poetics" (1991: 473).

Although drawing on key thinkers such as Foucault and Agamben, as well as the anthropologists Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat, the author merely prefaces the ethnography with thin references to the debates around sovereignty, law and legitimacy. Similarly, due to the disconnect between theory and ethnography, Rosen's key analytic lense, the *shadow sovereigns*, remains opaque throughout the book. Theory in anthropological writing can help make sense of different forms of struggle by connecting them throughout time and place. Meanwhile, thorough ethnography prevents a collapse into fruitless universalisms and marks the particularities of local struggles. Ethnography without theory, however, risks a depoliticisation of both anthropology and local struggles by rendering them merely local phenomena, without connecting them to the wider and even global structures that underlie the politics of struggle. The distinction between Self and Other is exacerbated in the process of under-theorising the lived realities of Rosen's interlocutors, with whom the reader becomes acquainted only in the context of the mining struggle. Their everyday lives –

which arguably inform the desire for work, less precarity, connection to the community, history, and spiritual realms (p. 50)- remain hidden.

> *Fires of Gold is indeed poetic. Particularly remarkable are the descriptions of the different deities and spirits, which are beautifully interwoven into the text as interlocutors in their own right.*

As it stands, *Fires of Gold* is indeed poetic. Particularly remarkable are the descriptions of the different deities and spirits, which are beautifully interwoven into the text as interlocutors in their own rights (p. 52-53). The group of galamseys who constitute the central group of analysis, are revealed to the reader through different ethnographic vignettes, dispersed throughout the book. In every chapter, a new aspect and perspective on the galamseys is described, adding some complexity to their actions, while only hinting at the miners' everyday wishes and desires beyond labouring. By far the most insightful, the book's second chapter provides an intimate picture of the galamsey's interactions with spirits on the matter of gold. Descriptions of wider Akan cosmologies are brought to life through ethnographic observations of a priestess' servicing prospection (p. 56). These observations revert to a number of relevant research questions that Rosen raises, such as *"How do the galamseys' sacrifices – literal and metaphorical – effectively serve as sites for a powerful renegotiation of cultural justice in the realms of the city, the soul, and the sacred?"* (p. 49). Regrettably, such questions remain food for thought and unanswered, rather than a prompt to actually explore the wider theoretical implications of this ethnography.

Anthropologists are fascinated with tensions, conflicts, and inconsistencies. Evocative ethnographies resist the smoothing over of such complexities by explaining the fields within which they emerge in order to add new ways of understanding social life. Lauren Coyle Rosen's ethnography does a good job at laying bare these conflicts around the Obuasi mines in Ghana, addressing the concerns and hopes of galamsey miners, unions, spiritual leaders, local

authorities, and civil society groups. However, the stated intentions of the book to address forms of casualised labour under neoliberal governance and reforms (p. 8 – 11) as well as the tensions between ideas of the rule of law and local forms of 'shadow' governance (p. 3) lack a thorough theoretical grounding that would connect the well-written and dense ethnography to wider discussions in the academic field.

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Featured Image: Photo (cropped) by Sharon McCutcheon on Unsplash.

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This review is a response to our call for reviews on Law, Technology and Bureaucracy. We have already published two reviews for Genocide Never Sleeps (here and here), as well as one for Dispossessed, for Uberland, for The Gray Zone, and for Sentiment, Reason and Law.

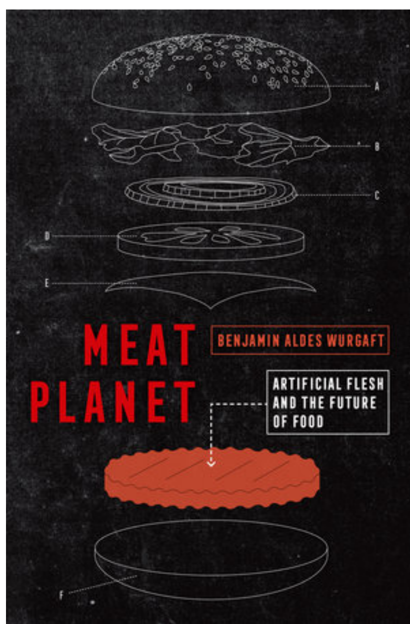
Meat Planet

Purbasha Mazumdar
September, 2020

If the proponents of cultured meat are to be believed we might be soon headed towards a future in which bioreactors replace, or at least exist alongside, industrial abattoirs, and a large percentage of the meat produced for mass consumption comes from technologically tinkered cells derived via biopsies from animals rather than their slaughtering. At a juncture where the world is reeling under a zoonotic pandemic, and meat consumption has once again come under

scrutiny, perhaps the image of what is at times (not uncontroversially) labeled "clean meat" lends itself to even more curiosity than usual.

> *Benjamin Aldes Wurgaft's Meat Planet: Artificial Flesh and the Future of Food is a book about this emerging technology of cultured or in vitro meat, a wonderfully crafted journey into its hype and hope laden world.*



Cultured meat, if it were to become a reality, promises to usher in an era of significantly reduced carbon emissions, do away with the industrial scale butchering of animals and rid us of epizootic diseases (often traced back to the appalling conditions prevalent in the CAFOs) to boot. Approaching this speculative techno-fix as a morally invested "engineering project" (p. 19), and with the curiosity of a conflicted carnivore balanced by well-honed skepticism, Wurgaft asks: "What makes cultured meat imaginable?" (ibid.) This question is the linchpin of the text, one that serves to unite the eighteen chapterised "detours" through which Wurgaft guides the reader. It's a story animated by the imaginative elasticity of speculative capital and science fiction alike.

The story begins in 2013, the year the first cultured beef burger (which cost no less than 300,000 dollars), created by the Dutch scientist Mark Post, was unleashed amidst much fanfare. Wurgaft watches this international media event, as it unfolds in London, from his home in Los Angeles. From 2013 to 2018 Wurgaft follows various actors in the business of cultured meat, tacking across sites from San Francisco to Maastricht, as the promise fuelled story of this biotechnology evolves at a, perhaps unexpectedly, sluggish pace. The author cleverly marries his own reflections on the various roadblocks encountered as he wishes to partake (as a scholar) in the high stakes world of cultured meat with insights into the workings of an industry nourished mostly by venture capital and

sustained by intellectual property regimes (there is discussion of alternate models as represented by the non-profit New Harvest, founded by Jason Methany, which support the open source sharing of information—this, however, is an exception). And most times it seems that the promissory, being as it is the most fluent speech genre of speculative capital, tends to overshadow "all other kinds of speech, including debate about what *is desirable* in our food system" (p. 50, emphasis added)—and this is where Wurgaft's book, to me, makes its most incisive contribution. Putting the more deliberate temporality of ethnography to good use he forces us to stop and think instead of getting unmindfully caught up in the hype. Promise and unbridled hope in cultured meat is, however, reigned in by doubt; doubt that primarily arises out of the two core issues in the cultured meat movement — "finding a serum-free growth medium and producing three dimensional or "thick" tissue" (p. 65). The story of cultured meat is, like most speculative biotechnologies, a story suspended in hope and hype, promise and doubt.

The six chapters titled "Future", "Memento", "Copy", "Philosophers", "Maastricht" and "Parting/Gathering" form the meaty crux of the text; these are conceptually dense, philosophically motivated discussions of the place of (technologically mediated) meat (production) in our natural-cultural worlds. The wide ranging treatment of meat's past and possible future in our shifting worlds is especially enjoyable and illuminating. Having set the stage by familiarising us with the capaciousness of the concept of meat in the chapter titled "Meat" towards the beginning of the text, the author approaches the concerns of some of cultured meat's proponents to "naturalise" it from a different, more critical vantage. In one possible reading of the biological anthropologist Richard Wrangham's work meat consumption is crucially tied to what made us *human* in the first place and cultured meat, by extension, is but the next evolutionary leap. However, although some paleoanthropologists might view meat as merely instrumental, which Wurgaft reads as an extension of the reductive location of our humanity in its characterisation as *Homo faber,* there are other non-instrumental ways in which meat is implicated in our worlds—here the discussions of

anthropologists Marshall Sahlins and Claude Levi-Strauss, as well as the reflections on what counts as kosher meat are significant detours. What is, however, most important to be noted is that cheaply available meat and the present architecture of its mass production has only been a reality for the last hundred years or so. What might be the best way out of this unsustainable, and, needless to say, cruel practice? It isn't easy to draw an uninterrupted evolutionary arc between the projected past of our meat loving ancestors and the projected future of cultured meat without considering the peculiarity of the changes wrought by industrial meat production and the widespread availability of cheap meat. Instead of attempting to naturalise our present meaty appetites in order to envision the place of cultured meat in our futures it perhaps behoves us to ask "what stories about us and our appetites will our creations [here, lab grown meat in particular] tell?" (p.120).

Cultured meat, besides struggling with the feasibility of its mass production, also struggles to fulfil another promise. The future success of cultured meat, it is often thought, rests on its ability of *mimicking* the texture and bite of conventional meat, something that sets it apart from mining other sources of protein such as insects or using plant based meat substitutes (sophisticated plant based substitutes are widely available but can't claim to mimic meat in quite the same way). Mimicking conventional meat, however, is a labour intensive technicality as well as revelatory of the strategic choices that we make regarding which *forms* of meat we wish for to be made available (the celebrated lab grown burger is a strategic as well as technical feat). Mimesis, as Wurgaft shows, rests in the laboratory nervously alongside plasticity, or the ability of tissue to take diverse forms. Although the processes in the laboratory might be read as "extending" those found in nature, via mimesis, it also "provides such an obvious opportunity for flesh to take on new forms that only an intense attachment to the familiar ones could keep cultured meat within the paradigm of imitating nature" (p. 119). Here, through the mediary of the philosopher and intellectual historian Hans Blumenberg, Wurgaft draws our attention to the fraught line between imitation and innovation. This is exactly the tension which the bio-artists Oron Catts and

Ionat Zurr wish to tap into through their use of tissue culture to generate what they call "semi-living" creatures. Catts and Zurr have identified "an aesthetic potential in biotechnology….Biotechnology might unwittingly perform one of art's functions and transform our way of seeing the world —more specifically, our way of seeing the meaning of biological life" (p. 179-180). Their work stresses the protean potential of life (processes) and rejects its mechanistic reduction; reducing life and its processes to a mechanism which yields itself to control and optimisation is a claim that ultimately drives the cultured meat movement, and one whose analytically reductive character comes with consequences. Ironically, the journey of the cultured meat movement itself might be borne by such plasticity, as the author muses at one point (p. 175), in resulting probably as it does from the growing disillusionment with the feasibility of other biotechnologies such as regenerative medicine, clean fuel etc.

> *Cultured meat might have as its impetus a significant moral thrust, i.e. to reduce animal suffering, but Wurgaft ventures further to ask what moral questions might cultured meat, were it to realise the abolition of animal agriculture, raise.*

Peter Singer, and his brand of utilitarianism, provides the philosophical grist for these conversations. Utilitarianism's moral philosophical pegs rest on the the reduction of suffering and the maximisation of happiness. However, if animals were to be freed from the instrumental ends they often serve us and were to exist as creatures with their own ends, "…creature[s] whose individual experience[s]…should matter" (p.133), how might the debate on maximising happiness, a goal utilitarianism wishes to accomplish, be transformed and in turn transform us. The book ends with the invocation of "an experiment in ethical futures"— the "pig in the backyard" (p. 188-189) scenario. This is a likely path that the cultured meat movement might tread in the future and one that the author invests his hope in. In this scenario a pig frolics in a city yard, where it lives among and interacts with the people who feed and play with it. A certain amount of cells are removed from the pig every week through a biopsy to produce

just enough meat for the community's consumption. It is a scenario which, while not fully liberating pigs from their role as a "source" of meat, also brings together "intimacy, community and…difference" (p. 188). A veritable utopia which redirects a critical lens onto our present interactions with animals and meat.

Wurgaft manages to skilfully foreground the political brew within which new technologies emerge and implores us to ask tougher questions that the hype and hope around them often tend to obscure. The writing weaves philosophical, anthropological and historical discussions with science fiction and poetry with distinct flair and comes peppered with a healthy dose of witticisms. Although, at times, some might feel they've bitten off more than they can chew, the book is definitely well worth wading through.

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An opportunity for Argentine and Brazilian social sciences?

Ana Marcela França
September, 2020

Nowadays, most people are asking themselves what will happen in the coming months. In this time of COVID-19, it is not just the present that is under threat but the future, too. We are told to expect a great economic crisis as a consequence of the pandemic and, with it, new social problems. Especially in Latin America, the threat of a huge social crisis is imminent. People are losing their jobs, with no money to pay for rent, or even buy food for their families, which is already a visible reality in the streets of Argentina and Brazil. Many of these economic and social problems are not new to us, but they will increase in post-pandemic times. In this context, the presence or absence of the government is fundamental to decisions that guarantee lives and welfare. And education is a big slice of what I understand as welfare.

The presence of Argentine and Brazilian academic research scientists on the

subject of coronavirus is really strong. From medical studies to social research, the role of academic professionals has been made visible across different types of media. Social scientific knowledge plays a significant role in analysing the social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in warning about the new forms of inequality that may arise as a result of it. With this kind of information, both countries can prepare to care for especially vulnerable groups, such as homeless, women, indigenous, poor people, and so on.

Argentina and Brazil: separated by policy

In Argentina, the government of President Alberto Fernández (in power since December 2019) has made significant efforts to maintain people's health. Working with a group of scientists, Fernandez is analyzing the steps proposed by the scholarly community. Additionally, sixty-four research projects on COVID-19 have been approved in the past few months for research aimed at developing possible solutions related to the health crisis and social well-being. Among biological and medical project proposals, there are social projects that will be developed to help in particular suburban locations in Argentina. With the approval of this variety of research projects, it is clear that not only the medicine is important, but also social studies are fundamental to overcome the health crisis. The real effectiveness of some projects can be questioned, but I believe that the effort to include social problems generated by the pandemic in the overview of a future health crisis should be recognized in the context of Latin American public policies.

> *Education is a big slice of what I understand as welfare.*

Some of this research shows that certain problems that are likely to occur in the post-pandemic period are not new. For example, the public presentation of the Institute of Geography at the University of Buenos Aires shows that precariousness in the homes of some Argentine communities is one of the possible causes of the spread of the disease. This is something that should be resolved

with effective housing assistance plans. In other words, old socioeconomic problems are gaining visibility with the pandemic; the social sciences can reveal these and offer plausible solutions to the public and private organizations.

Many researchers and institutions have worked hard to understand, think and debate about how much the different spheres of Argentinian society are affected by the coronavirus. A great example is a project called Collaborative Map (*Mapeo Colaborativo*), which is an open platform that contributes to the collective development of a map which reflects the diversity of social initiatives in Argentina. The intention is to put together information about social organizations (institutions, universities, local organizations, etc…) and their actions against the social and health crisis. Monitoring public policies and making frequent diagnoses about social conditions in this pandemic period, researchers from humanities and social sciences hope to show to the public and to the government the economic difficulties generated by COVID-19.

If the current Argentine government is financing the development of projects humanities and social sciences in the context of the pandemic crisis, being publicly on the side of social sciences also means taking a stand against the previous, neoliberal government. By supporting social policies and the social sciences in generating solutions for the most vulnerable parts of the population, the Fernández government lends credence to its political discourse that the Argentine nation has to be rebuilt 'between all' (*entre todos*). Regardless of the political intentions behind this slogan, humanities and social sciences have been given more space and support. Thus, thinking about research as a public good gives the humanities and social sciences an important role in devising health policies.

In Brazil, the story is very different. This great country is suffering in many ways with the current government. What was bad before is really worse now. In this scenario, the attack on public universities did not start with the pandemic — it started with the Michel Temer government (2016-18). With a declared policy of neoliberalism, the Bolsonaro government continues to weaken the sciences, for

instance cutting grants and the university budget. Not only the humanities and social sciences are suffering, but also the areas of biology and mathematics.

This is based on an attempt to weaken the public sector, especially education and health. There is a clear intention to privatize these sectors, releasing the State from the duty to maintain them. One strategy of the current government is to position the humanities and social sciences as a declared enemy, by saying that universities are influenced by left-wing students and teachers (understood as in favor of Ex-President Lula). With this kind of talk, Bolsonaro got support from parts of Brazilian society who also support the privatisation of the public sector. Based on some decisions made in recent months, priority areas were privileged (specifically technological areas), while social areas were, in a way, subordinated to them. With these decisions, the cuts in funds were intensified and disciplines such as history and the social sciences are seeing their projects lose strength across several dimensions, from the autonomy of choosing themes to the loss of interest of young people in gaining a professional formation in the area.

> *There is a clear intention to privatize these sectors, releasing the State from the duty to maintain them.*

For a government that does not invest in quality public education and health, the humanities tend to be increasingly attacked. As humanities and social sciences do not offer immediate financial results from their research, they are at risk of being put in the shade. With the spread of COVID-19, the situation became extremely worrisome, because the Ministry of Health of Brazil does not dialogue directly with universities in search of solutions that attend the different needs that form Brazilian socioeconomic diversity.

What will happen to the humanities and social

sciences in post-pandemic Argentina and Brazil?

It is not easy to say or even imagine. These days, we live in suspended time, when the world we know is being dissolved. Two neighbouring countries, Argentina and Brazil, are experiencing different political moments which, as seen, trigger different ways of facing the current health crisis. While Argentina is preparing to face the post-pandemic era with the help of academics and in an interdisciplinary way, Brazil is sinking into political fights, the spread of fake news, and placing staff with no experience in health positions — which entails the massive loss of lives. A social crisis generates an economic crisis and an economic crisis generates social problems that remain for generations. Poverty is a reality that cuts across both countries.

Actually, Argentinian social scientists have been working intensively, even before the pandemic, in community outreach projects with neighboring communities in vulnerable situations (rural, indigenous, women, children, etc.). With the public funding, the area of the humanities and social sciences will surely expand its research and have greater opportunities to apply its projects to society. Unfortunately, Brazil is going the other way. With the weakening of social sciences, the tendency is the loss of space within universities and in society itself. However, students and professors from Brazilian public universities do not stop fighting for the survival of the humanities.

Poverty is a reality that cuts across both countries.

We are being bombarded by a lot of vague or fake news in this singular moment. However, one of the more plausible hypotheses, in my opinion, indicates that the appearance of COVID-19 is based on socio-ecological interaction. The coexistence of humans and non-humans can generate a series of problems that are harmful to human health. Deforestation, the occupation of ecosystems, and their consequent devastation generate an unprecedented ecological imbalance. In short, it is possible that the coronavirus has been spread in a fatal way through the interactions between humans and wild animals and that its massive dissemination

is related to the globalized world in which we live. In this sense, the biological sciences have a lot of research to do, but the Humanities and Social Sciences have the same fundamental role. Thinking of societies as a product of socio-environmental relations makes animals, vegetables, rivers, humans, among other elements, agents of equal importance when constantly interacting with each other. In this sense, I believe that one of the greatest contributions of the Humanities can be through Environmental History. This field of History is based on interdisciplinary research, in which biology, history, botany, geography, anthropology, among others, build a horizontal dialogue to think about past and current societies.

Environmental History can contribute, and is already contributing, a lot in the investigations on how to prevent other pandemics and how vulnerable populations can be better protected, based both on past experiences and on the current context. Through short texts, study groups, laboratories, blogs and web meetings such issues are already being debated, in order to offer scholars and the public possible solutions to be adopted by society. Environmental history, due to its interdisciplinary character, is able to strengthen the humanities and social sciences through the application of its disciplines in common projects, emphasizing that interdisciplinarity is the best tool to rethink human actions.

For these disciplines in general, organizing virtual activities with formats accessible to the public (via Facebook, Instagram, Youtube) would offer greater visibility to social research. I think that contact with the non-academic public is extremely important as a way of disseminating the work developed at the universities. For this, it is extremely necessary to listen to the different voices that make up the socio-economic spheres of the regions studied and to give them a place of favorable expression in the projects carried out.

> *Humanities and social sciences can reveal realities that are hidden behind the current health crisis, such as deforestation and the death of indigenous people.*

Another factor to be considered is that Argentina and Brazil are two countries

structured around the agrarian economy. Taking advantage of this characteristic and highlighting the agro-ecology that has grown in both countries is a way for the humanities and social sciences to get closer to the agrarian sciences. Thus, alongside the agricultural advances produced by agribusiness, it is possible to emphasize the importance of agro-ecology and its social actors for the maintenance of the population's health and the conservation of environments — for example in what type of food and food distribution we really should adopt in the face of the crisis to come. At the same time, local growers and their produce, their tradition, wisdom and regional memory are valued. This is something that is already being done, but which could expand in a post-pandemic context, in which these actors are in danger of being forgotten. In this way, the humanities and social sciences can reveal realities that are hidden behind the current health crisis, such as deforestation and the death of indigenous people.

Connecting with teachers and students from local schools, scholars in the humanities and social sciences will be in contact with the different spheres of society (*favelas*, rural populations, indigenous people, peripheral schools and so on). Working with local basic education is essential for the formation of future generations and to arouse interest of young people in seeking possible solutions for the society in which they live. The pandemic shows that we are all vulnerable and, in this context, the humanities and social sciences of Argentina and Brazil must emphasize that what differentiates us is not only the skin color (black people or indigenous ethnic people, disproportionately disadvantaged in both countries), but geography, socioeconomic and cultural inequalities — something that needs to be rethought if we want to face a healthier future.

In conclusion, we have seen that Argentina and Brazil are currently experiencing different policies, however the humanities and social sciences face similar problems when looking at their fellow citizens of the respective countries. Complex and diverse, the social reality that we are experiencing is quite problematic, and unfortunately tends to get worse in the post-pandemic times. However, I believe that it really is a unique moment in which the humanities and social sciences can emphasize their role in society, showing that the post

pandemic economic crisis implies social inequality. The humanities and social sciences will have the chance to prove that both biological and social conditions come together in the spreading of pathological agents; and that it is therefore essential that the Argentine and Brazilian nations take care of their most important base: their people, *su pueblo*, *seu povo*.

Featured image by José Muzlera (@jmuzlerafotos), Pelourinho, Salvador da Bahia, Brazil 2018.

The Political Lives of Masks: Citizenship, civility and covering up during the COVID-19 pandemic

Nicolette Makovicky
September, 2020

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the science of masks has become hotly debated by epidemiologists, public health officials, and the public at large. The possible positive effects of masking the general public has been a particularly contested subject.

Having previously tried to dissuade the general public from wearing masks, the European and the United States Centres for Disease Control started recommending the use of cloth face coverings in early April. The World Health Organisation followed suit on the 6th of June, recommending medical-grade masks for healthcare professionals, caretakers and the sick, and 'three-layered fabric masks' for the public. The political response to the expert advice has also varied across the globe. In countries with an established tradition of mask-wearing, such as South Korea and Taiwan, public health authorities quickly recommended citizens cover their nose and mouth when out in public. For most

Europeans, however, masking has accompanied the lifting of quarantine measures. In Austria, Germany, Poland, France, and the United Kingdom, fabric face coverings are now mandatory on public transport, in schools, and in retail spaces.

> *Discussions about how, when, and whether to mask the public are not as novel as they might seem.*

Discussions about how, when, and whether to mask the public are not as novel as they might seem. Face masks have been used by medical professionals since the 16th century, initially for purposes of personal protection and later also to prevent cross-contamination between patients (Spooner 1967). The idea they be might be used by the general public, however, was first introduced with the advent of the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic. That year, a number of cities in the United States issued legislation – known as the 'mask order' – requiring all citizens to cover their faces in public places (Crosby 2003, Blakely 2006). The order was met with widespread protests and civil disobedience, citizens flaunting the order by refusing to wear masks or deliberately wearing them improperly. The wearing of masks was also recommended in the United Kingdom (Loeb 2005) and in Japan, where the National Public Health Bureau encouraged masking on public transport, as well as in theatres, cinemas, and other places of entertainment (Burgess and Horii, 2012). While the 'mask order' was met with resistance by the American public, the recommendation was more positively received by the Japanese public who came to see mask-wearing as 'the embodiment and the symbol of national defence against the invisible threat of the influenza' (Horii 2014).

> *Despite lacking any precedent, citizens in the Czech and Slovak Republics widely accepted a legal requirement to cover ones' nose and mouth as part of nation-wide lockdowns in both countries in March.*

Public reactions to contemporary masking orders have been similarly varied.

Despite lacking any precedent, citizens in the Czech and Slovak Republics. widely accepted a legal requirement to cover ones' nose and mouth as part of nation-wide lockdowns in both countries in March. Indeed, the Czech masking order was followed by a grass roots mobilization of citizens voluntarily producing and distributing fabric masks for medical personnel, frontline workers, and fellow citizens unable to make their own. Wearing a mask became a visible sign of participation in a collective effort to combat the virus, helping to strengthen the national community inwardly and defined it outwardly. In contrast, masking orders have been met with ambivalence, or even resistance in other countries. In the United States, face masks have become a point of contention amongst cititzens demonstrating against lockdown measures and the subject of partisan arguments about the balance between individual liberty and collective responsibility. Protesters in Texas and Virginia have been photographed brandishing signs painted with the pro-choice slogan 'My Body, My Choice' and crossed-out pictures of surgical masks. Others have linked masking orders to communism, citing a perceived constitutional right to freely choose whether or not to cover up.

Accross Europe, masking orders have also sparked debates about the nature and limits of liberal citizenship. Despite lacking any cultural precedent, the legal requirement to cover ones' nose and mouth has been widely accepted by citizens in the Czech and Slovak Republics. Sociologist Michal Vašečka has speculated that such conformism may be a legacy of the collectivism of the Communist past. In France, governement officials were initially reluctatn to mandate the wearing of masks in public space. A ban on Islamic face veils (*niqab*) in 2011 and of face masks at public demonstrations in 2019, cemented a cultural and legal imperative that citizens uncover their face in public sphere. Adopting face masks, the French anthropologist Frédéric Keck has argued, would not merely be contrary to existing cultural practice, but would require a 'revolution of civility'. Interestingly, both Keck and Vašečka see these divergent reactions as grounded not merely in cultural differences between Slovakia and France, but in a differential embrace of liberal notions of sovereignty and bodily autonomy. Invoking ideas of (Communist)

collectivism and (Enlightenment) civic virtues, they frame masking as incompatible not so much with local traditions of medical practice or social comportment, but with the exercise of liberal citizenship itself.

> *Invoking ideas of (Communist) collectivism and (Enlightenment) civic virtues, they frame masking as incompatible not so much with local traditions of medical practice or social comportment, but with the exercise of liberal citizenship itself.*

Whatever assumptions about the incompatibility of face masks and liberal citizenship, however, much of Europe – France included – now seems to be experiencing Keck's 'revolution of civility'. Recognizing the possible public prejudice against covering up, politicians and public health authorities across the continent have framed mask-wearing as a pro-social, other-oriented practice, rather than a personal protective measure. Presenting masking as part of the performance of responsible citizenship, they have encouraged individuals to feel responsible not only for their own health, but also that of their fellow citizens. Others have made deliberate efforts to present masks as fashionable – and fashionably patriotic. In the Slovak Republic, the public has been encouraged to share pictures of themselves in masks with the hashtags #ruskoniejehanba (#amaskisnotembarrassing) and #ruskotipristane (#amasksuitsyou). President Zuzanna Čaputová attends official events wearing colourful cloth masks and gloves which match her outfits, and Prime minister Igor Matovič briefs the press in white masks decorated with a small Slovak flag. Facemasks in the colours of the national flag also appear on Italian public health notices, and are regularly used by Italian politicians.

Such political performances mark out practices of masking as part of a wider moral imperative to protect the greater good. However, they also work to define the content and boundaries of this greater good in the form of the national body politic, symbolically reinforcing both postive notions of national solidarity and negative forms of nativism which have led migrant workers and foreign students

to be stimgatized as carriers of the disea.

> *Since the outbreak of COVID-19, however, face masks have also performed a particular kind of boundary work; demarcating and negotiating the relationship between the body and the body politic, and the individual citizen and the national whole. They have become practically and symbolically entangled in the (re-)production of power in public space, reinforcing political choices and giving them a visual and material presence in society.*

Masks are boundary objects (Fox 2011), mediating between ideas of contamination and containment, purity and pollution, and life and death. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, however, face masks have also performed a particular kind of boundary work; demarcating and negotiating the relationship between the body and the body politic, and the individual citizen and the national whole. They have become practically and symbolically entangled in the (re-)production of power in public space, reinforcing political choices and giving them a visual and material presence in society. As such, masking orders have sparked new discussions about the nature of liberla citizenship and the limits of individual freedom.

During lockdown, their use formed part of a wider reduction of civil liberties given up by the public in exchange for the greater protection of human life. As restrictions begin to be lifted across some parts of the globe, however, covering one’s face has now become the trade-off for greater freedom of movement and a return to some semblance of normal life. In countries where face masks have long been associated with certain religious affiliations, with gender inequality, or with criminal intent, publics are now having to learn to view them as compatible -even key- to public life and notions of civility.

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World élite? Latvia, national identity and the pandemic

Gareth Hamilton
September, 2020

An introduction to somewhere less observed

Research on Covid-19 is a hot topic worldwide, and, recently, the Latvian goveernment has also launched its own emergency research programme. We, as

a department, planned to apply for funding under this scheme for this rather important topic; also, in this current metricised academic environment that has extended to Eastern Europe, we must either publish or perish. There is a certain irony, more than coincidental in this quasi-flat tax, low-welfare, neoliberal poster child of a country, in that on social issues, the projects should focus on 'economy and societal welfare solutions, including economic durability against pandemics and epidemics, […] as well as societal behaviour models and psychological durability in crises'. Durability reigns; being weak and vulnerable, or in need of extra support, do not feature in this image of strength and resilience, and successful outcomes.

> *Durability reigns; being weak and vulnerable, in need of extra support, do not seem to feature in this image of strength and resilience, and successful outcomes.*

There is a connection here to the broader question of 'success', given that Latvia has been highly praised for its so-far successful response to the pandemic. The UK's *Daily Telegraph*, in an article headline feted a country as having 'led the world against [the] coronavirus pandemic'. This, perhaps surprisingly, is the Eastern European (and Baltic) state of Latvia. The UK's *Guardian* asks, we fear somewhat unintentionally condescendingly, 'Why has eastern Europe suffered less from coronavirus than the west?'. The idea that Eastern Europeans are somewhat less advanced than their Western counterparts is familiar, and expressed well in Kürti and Skalník's (2009) critique of the anthropology of Eastern Europe: that the work of local anthropologists is marginalised compared to those from the 'West'.

This is no counteracting patriotic 'puff piece' on Latvia, yet we do not wish to pan the swift and measured response amidst an 'inchoate' world narrative (Carrithers 2008) either. Latvia has had 'only' 1016 cases and 'only' 21 deaths as of 20 May, out of a population of approximately 1.9 million people. Hamilton's native Northern Ireland and Putniņa's Latvia have similar population figures under two

million, but the *deaths* in Northern Ireland rise daily, similarly to those for new *cases* in Latvia. On certain days, Latvia counted no new cases at all.

> *Certain long-term issues in Latvian society are acutely evident in the crisis, and studying these would not be simple under the call for research as issued.*

We would not suggest that Latvia is wonderfully exceptional, or exceptionalist, as Hylland Eriksen does for Sweden's approach; however, the situation is not as successful as it looks – or rather, success, or keeping to government ideas of what should be, or be done, are not as evenly spread as they might be. Certain long-term issues in Latvian society are acutely evident in the crisis, and studying these would not be simple under the call for research as issued.

The current state of affairs

In terms of the theme of success, Latvia made the best of the crisis, its silver lining useful for strengthening its national identity. Becoming visible from outside for its successes represented a very important confirmation that the country existed in international eyes. The chief infection control specialist Uga Dumpis, and defence minister, Artis Pabriks, appearing in a webinar held by the 'Royal' British RUSI for sharing Latvian successes worldwide, made Latvian national news. The introductory note on its webpage quotes the minister saying Latvia is in an "elite group of nations".

So what elevated Latvia into this apparent world pandemic elite? The government instituted a state of emergency on 12 March, extended several times, claiming its policy had been medical research/evidence-based. Public gatherings were initially prohibited; only families or people residing together could gather. This, however, occurred early in the pandemic, before more than a handful of cases and any deaths had occurred.

The emergency did bring surprises in terms of national identity. While the preamble of Latvian constitution states that "the identity of Latvia in the

European cultural space has been shaped by Latvian and Liv traditions, Latvian folk wisdom, the Latvian language, universal human and Christian values", organised religious gatherings were prohibited two days after the declaration of the state of emergency – a week earlier than casinos/gaming halls had to close, after heated parliamentary debate. Churches remained open and the regulation was ambivalent, but leaders of all congregations supported the lockdown. Despite that, some congregations of all denominations continued to meet in person, giving opportunity for vigilant citizens to denounce them. The mayor of the Liepāja was accused of attending a service (at a church apparently for the city elite) at a time when no religious gatherings should have taken place. He claimed he did not actually attend an organised gathering, but had privately prayed for the whole city. After an investigation by police, no breach of the rules was found.

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Language, information availability, and buckwheat

When colleagues or friends from abroad ask when shops would reopen here, it is a strange feeling (perhaps with national pride mixed in) to say they always have been, even with some specific restrictions in place. Smaller shops have been given instructions on how many people may enter, with statutory notices to be placed on entrance doors and an offering of hand sanitiser. But such regulations are rarely 'foolproof' or innocent. Hamilton witnessed a row in one small shop as an older man inadvertently jumped the checkout queue, who was swiftly admonished by a young woman, calling on fellow shoppers, including Hamilton, for backup.

Such episodes are abstractly interesting but potentially alarming for Hamilton

due to Latvia's linguistic situation. It can appear rude or even nationalistic not to answer back in Russian if spoken to in it, but thankfully the episode above was in Latvian (which he speaks well). As Dzenovska (2018) demonstrates, language politics in the country are particularly complexsuch episodes reveal that national identity is not as all-encompassing as the 'successes' suggest. However, the language issue became more severe during the emergency: parliament (*Saeima*) passed a law stipulating fines for providing information in a 'foreign' language (so, including Russian) without someone making a prior request for this. This is Catch-22: if you do not understand Latvian, how would you even know that there was information that would be supplied to you in Russian if you asked? Practically, there is not much time to read notices on rapidly opening/closing shop or post office doors telling you to come in or not depending on the number of patrons inside – or to work out what is being said to you. A person denied information does not feel 'elite' in such situations.

> *This is Catch-22: if you do not understand Latvian, how would you even know that there was information that would be supplied to you in Russian if you asked?*

Putniņa noticed that the news of the state of emergency did not spread as efficiently to the Russian minority due to such language issues. The lack of a national Russian media space has been a problematic, and much discussed, issue for a significant period. While the younger ethnic Russian(-speaking) population does consult Latvian language media for information, the older generation has relied upon Russia-based channels. This problem became obvious in the first days of the state of emergency. While large supermarkets in Riga neighbourhood centres were busy and their shelves emptied already by the eve of the state of emergency, Putniņa observed that smaller local food shop shelves in predominantly Russian-speaking areas of Riga remained largely well-stocked. She sent her (well trained!) adolescent children to observe three supermarkets around her predominantly Russian-speaking area. They reported no crowds in the shops and only potato crisps were depleted, perhaps indicating the effect of official,

personalised messages received by pupils that schools were to close the next day. On the first day of the state of emergency, despite the prohibition on gathering, Putniņa saw a large group of elderly Russian women outside their apartment buildings trying to make sense of the situation**.** No information had been posted in the neighbourhood, on the assumption that everybody made use of national media. Two weeks later, the shelves of buckwheat (a beloved staple here, and particularly in Russia) had finally been emptied in smaller supermarkets, suggesting that the information had gotten through.

> *On the first day of the state of emergency, despite the prohibition on gathering, Putniņa saw a large group of elderly Russian women outside their apartment buildings trying to make sense of the situation.*

'National' celebrations, ethnic blame

Despite reports that all ethnic groups residing in Latvia were equally well-addressed by news dissemination, events during the emergency paint a different picture. 4 May is a public holiday commemorating the re-establishment of independence, from the USSR. As restrictions on assembly were in force, people joined in a virtual national costumed march, effectively celebrating at home. Then came 9 May, 'Victory Day', on which the Russian population celebrates the end of WW2. Usually, a large crowd gathers at Riga's Victory Monument and national security institutions use the magnitude of the crowd to estimate the current security threat posed by Latvia's eastern neighbour. Despite the prohibitions, 20,000-25,000 people came, causing public outrage: even if a lack of information might have been the issue, claiming the police had adopted double standards. Even questions of confidence in government policy is ethnicised: the latest ratings on trust towards public figures/institutions show ethnic division in naming public figures they trusted: 30.6% of Latvians but only 5.2% of Russian-speaking respondents trusted Dumpis' (who is Latvian) pandemic management.

Testing times

Hamilton returned to Latvia before the state of emergency, from a London conference (see EASA2020 Laboratory L01). Being a teacher in a university, and passing via Germany, he was supposed to self-isolate but discovered this only due to a friend, a doctor. This friend noticed on the website of SPKC, the national disease prevention body, information appeared initially only in Latvian. Indeed, only one page in English is given on its site in general on Covid-19, and the Latvian state media website LSM's English boilerplate text on all Covid-19 articles sends information seekers to a missing page there. While the Latvian government is usually good at providing information, this lack of accessible information is concerning as international and Erasmus students have little knowledge of Latvian on arrival. During the period of self-quarantine, Hamilton started to show symptoms and easily got tested at his apartment. This was medically fine, an interesting experience, but questions of both national and language identity arose.

On initial form-filling by the tester (in a hazmat suit), the issue arose of who was going to pay. Medical care should be provided for EU permanent residents as for citizens, with, here, a free test. Somewhat surreally, this unfortunate medic-turned-'street-level bureaucrat' had to be explained EU residence rules, half in English and half in Latvian, in this quite stressful situation. Latvian ID cards for EU citizens resemble those for Latvians, and the fear of a potential fine for ticking the wrong box added to the confusion. That a medical examination becomes a test of nationality (and language) adds to the stress; but at least the result was negative.

Beyond the above

There are issues beyond ethnic and linguistic divisions influencing the impact of the emergency on the population. A focus on those who are not in the elite (or

even middle class of society) was missing at the start of the pandemic. Emergency policies focused on the image of responsible, individual, independent and adult citizens, representing the middle class only, who would continue their productive work online. It became apparent that not all schoolchildren had equipment for home-schooling. One school had to home deliver books. Families with multiple children suffered as lump-sum payments first ignored the actual number of dependents. Tensions within families increased, with Riga city police reporting an increase in domestic violence within two weeks.

Two Riga homeless shelters became nexuses of infection and death.

> *Diversity was no concern at all.*

These negative aspects, however, were not perceived as intrinsic features of the national fabric, and that posed a problem for anthropologists trying to go beyond the success stories and reaching out to the dispossessed and weak. Diversity was no concern at all. As nice as it might be to be regarded as a country doing well in the pandemic, and such an emblematic focus on the strong in the national research programme, as anthropologists, we would have liked to have aimed to apply for funding, but the feeling exists that those topics that anthropologists study best – including the marginal, weak and vulnerable – may not win too many points. (And thus, only a few members of the department even submitted their applications, and most were rejected.)

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