Jair Bolsonaro and Affirmative Action: Political Rupture or Escalation?

Sarah Lempp
April, 2019

On October 8, 2018, the day after the first round of the Brazilian presidential elections, I exchanged several worried whatsapp messages with friends and "key informants" in Brazil. Jair Bolsonaro, a right-wing extremist with clearly fascist political views who until recently had been a relatively unknown backbencher in Brazil's Congress, had only just missed the 50 percent mark in the race for the presidency – and would clearly win the run-off three weeks later against Fernando Haddad from the Workers' Party (PT).

In the weeks between the first and the second round of the presidential election, Brazil witnessed a number of violent crimes directed against left-wing supporters, journalists, black and queer persons and indigenous communities – i.e. members of those groups against which Bolsonaro had been stirring up hatred. Even though violence against these groups is not a new phenomenon in Brazil, many of their members perceived the attacks as a change in intensity and as a first taste of who would become a target under the new government. On January 1, 2019, Bolsonaro officially took office – and the initial political decisions of his government as well as the composition of the cabinet indicate that dark days are looming in Brazil.

As an anthropologist working on Brazil's affirmative action policies, I research a topic that figured prominently in the electoral campaigns. The question of whether the different presidential candidates would aim to maintain the quotas for Afro-Brazilians (and, in some cases, indigenous or disabled persons) at universities and in the public service was a frequent touchstone in the evaluation of a candidate's program. While most candidates defended the affirmative action policies – which had been introduced in federal universities from the beginning of the 2000s and in the public service as of 2014 – Bolsonaro declared that he would aim for a reduction of such quotas: "for God's sake, let's stop this division in Brazil" (cited in Antunes 2018; my translation). Furthermore, he questioned the existence of a historical debt towards the Afro-Brazilian population, for which the affirmative action policies are supposed to compensate in part.

With this rejection and his description of the affirmative action policies as divisive and unnecessary, Bolsonaro's rhetoric indicates a return to the old narrative of Brazil as a 'racial democracy'.

Under the military dictatorship (1964-1985), which Bolsonaro has regularly praised in the past, this ideology led to a coercive integration of all minorities into the 'mestizo' Brazilian nation. In the course of redemocratization, the Brazilian state turned away from this strategy of assimilation and started to adopt a politics

of recognition which was more sensitive towards difference (cf. Costa 2007, 158) – with the affirmative action policies being one very concrete outcome.

Bolsonaro's election victory therefore raises the question of what might happen under his government to these highly symbolic policies – policies which the Brazilian *movimento negro* (black movement) considers to be one of its main achievements of the past two decades (cf., e.g., Santos 2015). In what follows, I will reflect on this question and sketch out some possible scenarios. The concrete motivation for thinking about these issues is my own research, in which I investigate how race as a category of difference is established and made relevant through bureaucratic, administrative and legal action. Even though state institutions are not at the center of my research field (I focus on the so-called "verification commissions" that have to decide whether affirmative action candidates "rightfully" applied to vacancies), it makes a difference whether the processes I am studying take place in a country on the brink of fascism.

Affirmative action: the catalyst for a debate on racism in Brazil

In many accounts of the introduction of affirmative action policies in Brazil, the UN Conference against Racism that took place in Durban in 2001 figures prominently as a crucial "catalyst for a cascade of affirmative action policy announcements" (Htun 2004, 62). In the years following this conference, many public universities introduced quotas for black students and students of public schools, until such quotas became federal law in 2012. In 2014, another federal law introduced a quota of 20 per cent for black candidates in selection processes for the public service – the highly formalized and competitive *concursos públicos* that are in demand because they offer permanent and well-paid positions.

In contrast to the social quotas for students from poorer families, the implementation of racial quotas led to fierce public debates, projecting "the issue of race and racism to a level never before seen in modern Brazilian history" (Telles and Paixão 2013, 11). While proponents welcomed the affirmative action policies as helpful for redressing historical inequalities, opponents criticized the quotas as an inadmissible preferential treatment or argued that in such a 'miscegenated' country as Brazil, it would not be possible to ascertain who is black and who is not. After the Brazilian Supreme Court declared affirmative action constitutional, the debate calmed down. But the policies continue to be contested, and not a few of the interlocutors I met during my research still described the topic as a "minefield".

The strong resistance and critique leveled against affirmative action policies can be seen in the context of historical continuities of racism – which also played a role in the great success of Bolsonaro, as the literary scholar Oliver Precht

outlines in a recent essay (Precht 2018).

Classifying the welfare and social policies implemented under the progressive PT governments of Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff as social democratic approaches that avoided direct confrontation with the elites, Precht argues that the social structure of colonial times continues to exist, particularly in private employment relationships.

Against this background, Bolsonaro managed to foment a "longing for the good old days" (ibid.; my translation) with a clear distribution of roles between "the masters and the slaves" – to reference the title of a famous historical sociological account of Brazilian colonial society by Gilberto Freyre (1964).

The affirmative action measures were among the policies which challenged this traditional distribution of roles by enabling marginalized groups upward mobility and access to fields they had not been able to reach in the past. This might explain to some extent the resentment and hatred with which the white middle class reacts to the aspiring lower classes, Precht argues. The question of how the new government will handle the affirmative action policies therefore offers a good case through which to study its general approach towards racial inequality and racism.

Possible scenarios regarding affirmative action under Bolsonaro

So how could the new government actually abolish the quota laws if it wanted to put Bolsonaro's campaign promises into practice? Both quota laws – implemented in 2012 for universities and in 2014 for the public service – will be valid for ten years. After their expiration, they need to be revised and evaluated and would have to be readopted by the Brazilian Congress in order to continue. Therefore, one possible scenario is that both laws will simply phase out in 2022 resp. 2024 –

with the chances of reimplementation being extremely small under a Bolsonaro administration.

In order to abolish or change the existing quota laws before their expiry, the new government would have to present respective bills to the Congress. At present, the chances of success of such an attempt are difficult to evaluate. According to João Feres Júnior, a political scientist and expert on affirmative action, this will depend very much on how the political relation between the executive and the Congress will develop over the next years (cf. Melo 2018). In any case, possible alterations could still be repealed or contested in the Supreme Court.

Either way, such decisions would only affect federal institutions. The numerous existing quota laws at the state and municipal levels could continue to exist and their validity could even be extended. In addition, universities could decide to maintain affirmative action measures even after the abolition of the respective law. This would depend on, among other things, the mobilization and political will within these institutions. Furthermore, there will certainly be strong political movements advocating for the continuation of the federal quota laws in the years before 2022 and 2024. As mentioned above, the *movimento negro* claims the affirmative action policies as a major achievement and it is unlikely to give up on them without a struggle.

> *Therefore, the debate around affirmative action might resurface and might again serve as a crystallization point for discussions of racism and racial inequality in Brazil – problems that the Bolsonaro government will probably neglect as well as aggravate.*

This governmental contempt has already become evident in recent debates about the future status of the *Secretariat for Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality* (SEPPIR) – a central institution for the implementation of public policies in support of Afro-Brazilian and indigenous populations. In its first outline for the structure of the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights, the SEPPIR was assigned the status of a minor department. After an intervention by activists from

the *movimento negro*, this was averted. However, the secretariat's budget – which had already been cut significantly under the previous governments – suffered another drastic reduction, pointing to a further decrease of its political significance (Silva 2018).

Acute or permanent state of crisis?

To conclude, one can state that the affirmative action policies will probably not be a primary target of the Bolsonaro government. However, there are clear indicators that Brazil could return to the color-blind ideology which states that "we are all Brazilians and therefore do not need special rights for particular groups". Therefore, the question of whether the affirmative action policies will be maintained or abolished will be a symbolically important arena regarding the (non-)recognition of the existence of racial inequality in Brazil. At the same time, one can argue that even before the change of government, this recognition was by no means firmly established in Brazilian society. The question therefore arises as to whether one can speak of an acute crisis – or whether those affected by racism in Brazil in fact live in a permanent state of crisis.

On the one hand, the situation for Afro-Brazilian activists and academics – who play a crucial role in the realm of the affirmative action policies – might well deteriorate under the new government, which has defined social movements as well as the education sector as two of its principal targets.

At the same time, I remember how one of my interview partners pointed out to me in 2017 that the black population in Brazil has always been living in a state of crisis, without anyone calling it so:

"For example, [if we look at] the mortality rates that have a more significant impact on the black population, the rates of mass incarceration that affect the black population. (…) This phenomenon already was occurring when no one was

talking about a coup against democracy.[1] And it continues to occur in 2016, continues to occur in 2017 and will continue to occur in 2018. (…) Because these deaths, this incarceration are part of the normal functioning of democracy in Brazil. And these phenomena are not enough for us to declare crisis." (Interview in October 2017)

According to this interview partner, the Brazilian political order indeed contains an "integrative perspective" (at least since the new constitution of 1988) of which the affirmative action policies are one result. However, this perspective coexists with a "politics of extermination" – leading to indicators on violence comparable to a country in a situation of war – which affects the black population in particular.

By referring to this argument, I do not aim to deny the qualitative changes and violent effects that the Bolsonaro government might bring about for Afro-Brazilians, indigenous people, women and LGBT persons (just to list those who probably will be the main target groups). However, I find it useful to keep in mind that this inequality has evolved historically – and that there has always been resistance against it. This makes it even more necessary to defend policies such as affirmative action, particularly since many activists emphasize that the policies did not come "out of nowhere" but instead have been built on decades of political articulation.

For critical social scientists working in this field, this means to recognize, on the one hand, that Bolsonaro's election victory indeed "represents a serious political rupture" (Felinto et al. 2018). However, on the other hand, we also must not idealize the preceding, more liberal order. Rather, it is important to take into account the violent colonial structures on which this order was built, as well as how they remain relevant in these times. In doing so, we might be able to contribute to two central tasks of anthropologists as formulated by Rosa and Bonilla (2017, 6) following the election of Donald Trump, namely: "interrogating long-standing power formations and imagining new worlds".

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[1] He is referring to the impeachment against President Dilma Rousseff in August 2016, considered an institutional coup by many observers.

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Ghosts in the Schoolyard

Frank G. Karioris
April, 2019

"Tuesday

8:30 – Good morning circle

9:00 – I'm raising the children

you have forgotten.

10:15 – And you have no

goddamned clue.

11:05 – Lunch
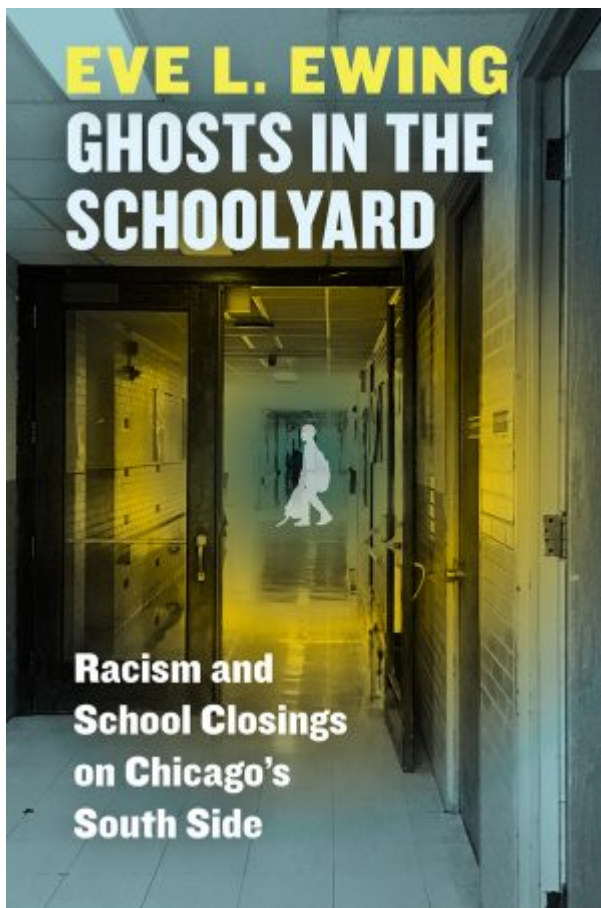
12:10 – Just. Pay. Me. Pay me.

12:55 – I refuse to fold my hands.

1:40 – Would you love them

as your own? As I do?

2:30 – Dismissal"

(Ewing 2017, 83).

Eve Ewing's *Ghosts in the Schoolyard* is a book that resonates with me on both a personal level and from the standpoint of a fellow educator. As I moved to Chicago, one of the first things I saw were the newly renovated Dearborn Homes, and the Ickes Homes, which were in the process of being demolished. It was 2008, having just graduated with a degree to be a high school teacher, and the economy was in freefall. For the next two years, I worked on the South Side of Chicago managing the day-to-day operations of residence halls at the Illinois Institute of Technology – a far cry from the teaching job I originally planned on.

The above epigraph comes from Ewing's *Electric Arches*, where she condenses the life of a teacher in a system that limits the value of education, and seeks to

see education as simply a mechanism for industry with limited impact on children and society writ large. *Ghosts in the Schoolyard*, like Ewing's poetry, is not an academic treatise, but "a story that is revelatory based on the experiences of my own life and the lives of community members living in the shadow of history" (7). Born and raised in Chicago, Ewing is a sociologist of education and writer. She is a graduate of Harvard University and is currently an Assistant Professor at the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration. Their work focuses on social structures such as racism and social inequality.

It is a testimony, acting as witness (174) to the blatant and unabashed racist and wanton destruction of African American communities in Chicago.

This book is exactly that: an account of community in the historically African American neighbourhood of Bronzeville on the South Side of Chicago; and is a well-wrought analysis of educational policies, the impact these have on the students & teachers, and the ways that community groups sought to fight back against the Chicago Public School (CPS) decisions and narratives to preserve the educational futures of their children. The book refuses and refutes suggestions that these two components are separable.

Ghosts in the Schoolyard takes as its locus the 2013 closings of Chicago Public Schools. The original target was to close as many as 330 schools of which 90 percent "were majority black, and 71 percent had mostly black teachers" (5). These closures were billed by CPS and the city as necessary due to the schools being *underutilized* and *underresourced*. Based on Chicago's racist and economic segregation practices, the reality for these students was that "...students leaving a school facing challenges are likely to end up in an equally challenged school close by" (9). These closures are, as Ewing illustrates, part of a broader-system of historical (and current) processes and structures which dictate and perpetuate racist and oppressive regimes; while, at the same time, demonstrating the ways that these communities fight for justice and seek to maintain the history and richness they have built. Throughout, what is clear is that "losing a school is

losing a piece of a history, a piece of self-understanding and personal narrative"
(145); and that it is impossible to separate these closures from broader forms of
harm and violence.

*In examining the school closures, Ewing deftly addresses the structural
problems while maintaining the voices of those impacted by these issues.*

Throughout the process of hearings regarding the school closures, the narrative
of Chicago Public Schools was that they were simply 'failing' and that by closing
these schools students would, in the end, get a better education. By the end of the
2012-2013 school year they ended up closing 49 of these schools. An astounding
42 percent of displaced students ended up in the lowest-ranked schools. These
closures were a part of a wider set of policies designed as part of the "expansion
of 'choice' within CPS" (23), where this 'choice' was unevenly distributed by
neighbourhood, race, and economic status. While CPS framed the community as
driving the process and hearings, for Ewing, as she lays out thoroughly, Chicago
Public Schools had predetermined the outcome long before the discussion began.

Expanding out from the 2013 school closures, Ewing situates them in the context
of housing projects and segregation in Chicago's South Side neighbourhood of
Bronzeville. By 1970 nearly half of Bronzeville residents were living in housing
projects (73), with the majority of residents under the age of 18.

*Tying these pieces together, Ewing notes that 'Segregation, restrictive
covenants, Willis Wagons, demolition of public housing – these policies all laid
the groundwork for the present reality of empty schools dotting the landscape'
(90).*

There is, then, a demand for historical analysis and recognition; to view the
recent school closures as isolated is, itself, a form of violence that denies and
seeks to dismiss the racist history of Chicago, the Chicago Housing Authority, and
Chicago Public Schools. Ewing notes, we "see a system that fails to take

responsibility for creating the conditions of that social instability, preferring to act as though it's all a matter of individuals' pulling themselves up by their bootstraps and teachers' needing to work harder" (123).

Ewing's refusal to forgo structures for people, or people for structures, is what makes this book incendiary.

> *The systems of racism and neoliberalism are hellbent on pushing individuals to compete against each other, with the end goal of leaving the systems untouched. Through this, Ghosts in the Schoolyard is able to theorize 'institutional mourning – the idea that we can mourn lost institutions just as we mourn lost people' (14).*

Ewing writes, 'death that results from extreme violence, especially state violence, can feel anything but natural' (142). These deaths are not just of people, but of institutions, communities, dreams, and possibilities. Throughout the book she brilliantly makes the case that schools are an integral part of a community, and that their destruction constitutes an attack on the people through indirect means.

In preparing to teach my class on neoliberalism this semester, I scribbled on one of the assigned readings: "Are you upset yet?" This book is upsetting. It documents the racist, classist, and oppressive structures and people that are tearing communities apart; and the ways that school children are taught this through the lived realities of disempowerment, diminishment, and deprioritization. While all that is true, the communities on the South Side of Chicago are still there, "despite all attempts to eradicate us" (154), and they are still fighting for their right to self-determination and education. In his *A People's History of Chicago*, Kevin Coval annunciates the ways that Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Chicago need to redress the injustices they have fashioned. In amongst a wide litany of atonements, they must:

"atone for the smug assuredness

atone for the maintenance of two cities

stratified & unrecognizable to the other

atone for the bounty of the north side

the scarcity of the south

the want of the west

atone for the erasure of the public

school, space, housing, parking" (Coval 2017, 118).

Ewing's masterful book delivers a clear message: that people's well-being is contingent on everyone in the community: "If I am because you are, it follows that my understanding of myself is bound up to my relation to you and my place within our network of relationships" (131). At its core, while Ewing documents racists practices and their impacts, she shines light most heavily on the ways in which communities rebute and refuse them.

This trajectory is continued in Ewing's forthcoming book *1919* , an exploration of the race riot that happened in the year 1919 in Chicago. She elegantly and powerfully continues to voice the interconnections between individuals, institutions, and the force of history. From the poem *this is a map*:

"this is a map of my body

this is the blood of my rivers

this is the bruise of my marshland

this is the sinew of my furthest ridge, and

this is a map of the railroad.

and if I could stand and walk I could make it all the way back

to my granny, pinching snuff and humming

and if she looked up she would say *boy, my baby,*

where you been all this time."

(Ewing 2019, p44).

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Ethnographic Poetry: A Conversation with Ather Zia

Mary Pena
April, 2019

This interview with Professor Ather Zia was conducted on March 31, 2018, at the University of Michigan (UM) where she delivered a keynote at a Women of Color poetry event organized by UM graduate students. The interview was conducted by UM doctoral students Salman Adil Hussain (SH), Swarnim Khare (SK), and Mary Pena (MP). The interview was transcribed by Salman, and edited by Dr. Tapsi Mathur. It was revised by Professor Zia in February 2019.

1. **MP: Let's start with talking about your work in both ethnography and poetry, and how you merged the two genres, and how the devices from the two can speak to each other. Processually speaking, how do you use poetic devices in your ethnographic work or how your ethnographic research and sensibility inform your poetry?**

AZ: I came to anthropology from a journalism and media studies background, and quickly became focused on anthropological theory to the extent that I feared losing my other modes of expression. To not lose these other avenues, I forced myself to make time. I founded [*KashmirLit*](#) in 2007-08 to provide me with one such avenue. The idea behind *KashmirLit* was to channel the prodigious Kashmiri poetic output out there. It isn't an exaggeration to say that every other Kashmiri writes poetry, particularly about repression and life under occupation by India. Still, I felt that I was becoming apologetic about my poetry, and guilty that I should be doing Anthropology. Then when I went to Kashmir for fieldwork I noticed that I was writing more poetry than I was fieldnotes. It was when I became affiliated with the Society for Humanistic Anthropology that I saw people who were doing both: theoretical work as well as unapologetically pursing other literary modes of expression. People such as Renato Rosaldo, whose writing I admire a lot, gave me hope.

> *I don't buy into the dichotomy between creative writing and social science research. The latter, too, is creative.*

Yet, there is also the question of ethnographic surfeit, the subject of my forthcoming paper: What do you do with all that doesn't neatly fit into fieldnotes, all that excess, of emotions, perceptions, and experiences? I channel this excess through poetry. The problem is of creating a space for it in academic representational forms and fora. While I intersperse my ethnography with poetic pieces, that alone does not quite cut it. To task the ethnographic reader with absorbing all that excess, the surfeit of emotions is to ask too much from the

reader, but one had to still do it. Poetry helps the researcher as well, at least it did me, in that it is cathartic and helped me process my work. What my ethnographic research partners were telling me about Kashmir, about the trauma of occupation, was also, in a way, poetry. So, poetry has many uses, but we, as academics, worry that nonstandard creative modes of expression may hinder our careers and job prospects. I feel that we need to tell anthropologists who want to work in other forms of expression and representations, in creative writing, and in creative ethnography that there is a place and space for them, too.

2. **SH: If I may ask a follow up question: How do you conceive of the genre of ethnographic poetry? How do you distinguish that from ordinary poetry? To put it another way, what's ethnographic about this poetry that's not about other poetry?**

AZ: Well, several people have offered definitions of ethnographic poetry, such as Renato Rosaldo, [Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor](#) and [Adrie Kusserow](#), amongst the ones that I have read closely; but let me give it a shot. Ethnographic poetry is what comes out of the field, from your experience in the field that's very visceral—in broad terms, that's how I conceive of it. What makes it different from regular poetry is that it is really grounded in your ethnography. So, my poetry is centered on Kashmir, where I do my research, in such a way that a poem and a chapter from my ethnography will reflect each other. Alongside my ethnographic monograph, I'm working on a book of poems, titled *Field In Verse*, a play on the word 'inverse'. This book is enactment and ethnographic surfeit.

There are other ways that you can play, anthropologically-speaking, with this genre. For example, in 2014, Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor, another anthropologist-poet, [Nomi Stone](#), and I experimented with theorizing the idea of enactment. The idea was to take a social science theory, ground it in our field experience, and write a poem around it. We did an event on 'enactments' at the Society of Humanistic Anthropology. But, here's the thing: if you walked into that event, you

wouldn't think that what you were hearing was ethnographically grounded, you'd think this was just poetry. But the process of making those poems was theoretically informed, and productive of theory. For instance, the first poem in Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor's *Imperfect Tense* is titled "Whorfian Hypothesis." The Sapir-Whorfian hypothesis is pivotal to a lot of linguistic anthropology. This was an example of the poetic enactment of theory in action.

I'll say it again – there are anthropologists who express themselves in poetry and creative ethnography. Margret Mead, Ruth Benedict, they all wrote poetry but this poetry was marginalized by the discipline. Some of us at Society for Humanistic Anthropology are engaged in reclaiming this as an anthropological tradition.

3. **SH: Could you talk a little bit about your forthcoming monograph?**

AZ: Sure! The book is titled *Resisting Disappearance: Women's Activism and Military Occupation in Kashmir*. As I said, in Kashmir I worked with the APDP activists, mainly wives, mothers, and in some cases, daughters of the disappeared Kashmiri men. APDP, was co-founded by Parveena Ahangar, popularly referred to as the Iron Lady of Kashmir for resisting the abuses of the Indian Occupation. Women like her are now the face of the human rights movement in Kashmir. This has been a gradual change, over a 33-year period, from the face of resistance being men and the image of resistance being associated with conservatism. Whether women's resistance has been able to create a seat at the table remains to be seen but things are looking up, going by the fact that organizations like APDP are regionally and internationally well recognized, as Parveena's recent award of the Rafto Prize for Human Rights shows. This success is mostly symbolic, although very important in its own right, in that it has gained the Kashmiri cause and Kashmiri women some visibility, but things on the ground

have not changed for the cases of the disappeared men, and the political status quo remains. This is largely due to the paralysis imposed by the Indian judiciary through the means of India's Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), whereby the Indian Army can kill, wound, maim anyone in Kashmir (and other "disturbed areas") without accountability. AFSPA gives the Indian Army authorization to do whatever they want with impunity, and that's how the frequent disappearances occurred in the first place.

The institutional and systemic violence has been so relentless that none of the disappeared have been found so far, and their cases have been languishing in the judicial system.

Even in such a context, and with a lack of funding, APDP and other organizations are doing what they can. This gendered resistance in Kashmir is at the heart of my book. I also analyze the frames through which Kashmir is understood as a "dispute" and how we Kashmiris see the issue and our situation. As a Kashmiri, I feel the native perspective is so ignored because of the hegemony of the Indian narrative. Kashmiris are doing all the dying. They are neither seen nor heard.

4. **SK: Speaking of symbolism, you've written about Afzal Guru and his execution for attacking the Indian Parliament. Could you tell us about your work on that trial?**

AZ: The chapter analyzing Afzal Guru as symbolic of a killable Kashmiri body is published in a volume I helped co-edit titled *Resisting Occupation in Kashmir*. Afzal Guru was formerly a militant and he had given up arms and was later framed in a conspiracy case. This chapter analyzes how the Kashmiri man Afzal was constructed as killable, particularly by the Indian media. The concept of killable body originally emerged from my work on the disappeared Kashmiris and it developed through Agamben's work on *homo sacer.* So, I wrote about how Guru was portrayed as a terrorist "body" in custody, wearing a keffiyah, a beard, and

dressed in a Pathan suit, so to speak—in short, the stereotype Muslim terrorist in Indian imagination; the media might as well have put a noose around his head on screen. That's precisely how Kashmiris are portrayed and constructed in media accounts, and that's how the Indian Supreme Court could say that this man has to be killed to ease the collective conscience of the nation.

I also looked at his life before the attack on Parliament for which Guru was imprisoned. This was important for me to understand how the Counterinsurgency Grid—a constellation of the Indian Army and its mostly surrendered militant irregulars, police, and army-backed *Ikhwani* militias (armed sub-contractors, petty criminals and extortionists), the bureaucrats and top brass overseeing this network—constructed him. They say that Guru was trained in Pakistan, but, from my perspective, he didn't go to Pakistan; he went to Azad Kashmir, or Pakistan-held Kashmir, the Kashmir on the other side of the border. Once he returned and surrendered, he was monitored by the Grid, after which he couldn't carry on with his day to day life and had to report to the police and Indian Army every day. In Kashmiri parlance, the militants who put down arms and surrender are called *cylinders* or *cylinder militant*, because surrender and cylinder sound similar. It's thus a colloquial word used to describe such militia. Arundhati Roy discusses in an essay how Guru was caught in the web of the Counterinsurgent State, and how the Grid made him into a scapegoat even in the face of evidence to the contrary and a lack of evidence linking Guru to the attack of Indian parliament, the so-called heart of Indian democracy. Guru, to me, underscores the meaning of the icon of the Kashmiri as a body that could be killed with impunity and without questions or consequences. One can compare this case with the much older case of Maqbool Bhatt, who was killed similarly. In my view, the increased penetration of news and other media outlets in Indian society at the time of Guru's trial played a key role in constructing him as a body that needed to be sacrificed to placate the nation. Both Bhatt and Guru are buried inside Tihar jail. The Indian government did not return their bodies to their family. On the other hand, Kashmiris have reserved two open graves in Kashmir's martyrs graveyard, symbolic of waiting for their remains.

5. **SK: Could you tell us about the scholarship your work is in conversation with, particularly with respect to Kashmir, and what exciting work to watch for?**

AZ: There are a few Kashmiri scholars who are doing very meaningful work around Kashmir and thinking about decolonial feminist praxis and soldarities. There's Mona Bhan, political anthropologist; Haley Duschinsky, a legal anthropologist at Ohio University; Deepti Misri, literary and cultural critic; and historian Hafsa Kanjwal — all of us got together and founded Critical Kashmir Studies. We found that scholarship from Pakistan or India mainly takes on questions that append Kashmir to either of these states. Critical Kashmir Studies counters that and centers Kashmir through "native" voices and perspectives, providing a platform to talk about Kashmir the way Kashmiris want to. Other than these kindred spirits, there is Suvir Kaul; Nitasha Kaul, who also publishes in mainstream media outlets; Inshah Malik whose book on Kashmiri women in resistance was just released; and the Delhi-based researcher, Seema Kazi, who has worked on gender in Kashmir. There is Cabeiri Robinson, who works on Kashmir from the Pakistani side and provides the kind of knowledge that Kashmiris like me, on the other side of the border, might not know. Then there is journalism, such as Freny Manecksha's book on women's resistance, *Behold, I Shine*, whose title harks back to the medieval poetess Habba Khatun. Also, we have a Special Issue of EPW [now out], featuring quite a few Kashmiri women writers, edited by Kashmiri women (Nitasha Kaul and I). On the Critical Kashmir Studies website, we're creating bibliographies on Kashmir, and planning to create syllabi for potential future courses on Kashmir.

Featured image by *Public.Resource.Org* (flickr, *CC BY 2.0*)

After Deportation

Bogumila Hall
April, 2019

Unless they are disrupted, deportations tend to go unnoticed. It is usually only the [shocking deaths](#) of deportees, or direct action of activists that draw our attention to the racialised violence of the deportation regime, which turns black and brown people into disposable, degraded subjects.

Most recently the injustice of immigration policies was made visible in the landmark [trial of Stansted 15,](#) a group of activists, who locked their bodies to

In their efforts to put an end to deportation, these activists [protested against a border regime](#) that destroys lives, tears families and friendships apart, and undermines people's sense of belonging and identity. As a result of their direct action, at least some of the people from the blocked charter flight managed to remain in the United Kingdom, by gaining time to appeal and win their cases. One of them thanked the activists in a [moving piece,](#) which described the embeddedness of his life in the UK; if deported he would have missed the birth of his daughter, and time with his other children, his partner and his sick mother.

But what happened to the less fortunate individuals on that charter flight, who did not avoid deportation, and what about all the others deemed criminal and unwanted, whose daily disappearances on secretive flights do not make headlines? What are their stories? What do their invisible lives look like after deportation? How do they struggle and heal? What are their dreams and aspirations in the aftermath of exile from places, where their hopes of better life had taken them in the first place?

After deportation: Ethnographic perspectives is a collection of essays built around these crucial questions to ponder deportation afterlives.
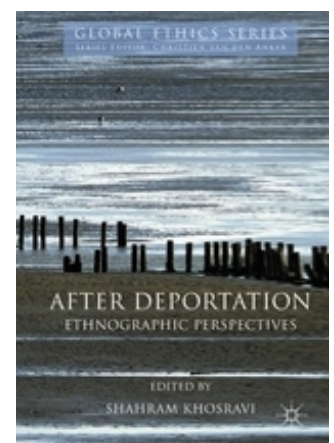
Against the dehumanization of immigration policies, the book renders deportees human, by centering their lived experiences and giving them space to speak about their struggles and hopes for mobility.

It reveals ties that cut across borders; people's sense of belonging to places where they are construed as outsiders, and their sense of alienation when they are allegedly 'back home'.

Under the editorial work of Shahram Khosravi, the thirteen chapters in the book speak from different geographical sites and cover a myriad of perspectives- from women removed from UK's prisons and detention centers, sex workers sent back to Nigeria, deportees from the US to the Dominican Republic, to minors and undocumented families sent from Iran to Afghanistan, criminal deportees in Samoa, and 'non-admitted' Cameroonians caught travelling without valid documents.

Deportations, we learn, come in different forms and under moral justifications that disguise their inherent violence.

For example, in the chapter on the removals from the United Kingdom to Sri Lanka, Michael Collyer discusses how, through the 'pay-to-go' schemes that offer financial incentives for failed asylum seekers to leave and undertake business activity in their countries of origin, deportation is legitimized as serving development goals.

In the chapter on sex workers returned to Nigeria, Sine Plambech delves into deportations carried out in the name of protecting women, in particular those identified as victims of trafficking. As Plambech, and several other authors in the book make clear, deportations – as part of neoliberal governmentality- are not only about saving or punishing, but they are also about disciplining and moralizing deportees into entrepreneurial, self- reliant subjects. In the case of the deported Nigerian women, they are compelled to exercise responsibility and to act as empowered victims in order to access financial support through the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) program.

Rich in nuance and empirical detail, the chapters in this volume reveal the 'behind-the-scenes' work of the multifaceted, global deportation regime, and

highlight how particular deportation contexts set in motion varied trajectories for the deportees. And yet, despite all the case-specific particularities, they also convey similarities in lives distorted by deportation: struggles with limited opportunities, poverty, stigmatization, uncertainty and mental illness are a thread that run through the chapters. As the authors highlight, deportations have far reaching repercussions on lives of affected individuals, their families and whole communities.

The book complicates tropes deployed in mainstream policy discourses and agendas. Beyond debunking the binary distinction between migrants as either 'victims' or 'villains',

> *the authors challenge the notion that expulsion means 'return', and that deportees go back to places where they had been integrated before, as the oft-used concept of 'reintegration' implies.*

Instead they persuasively demonstrate how being sent 'home' very often means being uprooted and separated from loved ones. Different chapters conjure up images of lives on the move, moulded by states that dispose them and those that subsequently receive them, as well as global structural mechanisms that unevenly distribute access to wealth, power and mobility.

> *As Shahram Khosravi points out in the introduction, there is a borderless world of unconstrained mobility for the global elites, and a world of the subaltern, where borders proliferate and obstacles to move mount, and deportation works to 'keep two worlds separated from each other' (p.6).*

In this vein, the authors in the volume challenge the idea of a deportation as a one-off event, and instead propose to understand it as a complex process with 'transnational, intercontinental, post-colonial' (de Genova p. 256) dynamics, in which states and non-state actors cooperate in managing, overseeing, externalizing and outsourcing border policing.

However, the deportees in the book are far from powerless victims. Rather, we get fully rounded accounts of individuals, whose vulnerability and suffering do not take away agency, steadfastness and hope. Their agency may take various forms, from quiet efforts to maintain everyday life, to struggles for livelihood and survival, to collective acts of becoming political subjects, as in the illuminating chapter by Clara Lecadet on deportees' activism in Mali and Togo. Many deportees cope with daily hardships by dreaming about and planning new journeys, forcefully revealing the tension between their desire to move, and the system that wants certain categories of people to stay put, precarious and sequestered.

After deportation is a compelling and highly readable volume, whose valuable contribution should extend beyond the academic work on migration and deportation to a broader public conversation around the disaster of European border policies.

There are instances in the book where the links between individual trajectories and the structural violence could be more fleshed out. In particular, I missed the discussion on how race and racism structure experiences of border controls, imprisonment and (im)mobility. An intersectional reflection of how race, class and gender come into play in determining who is criminalized, detained and deported could also enrich the analysis. After all, it is no accident that deportees in the book are poor, brown and black people from the Global South.

But centering the lives of those who are otherwise made to disappear and suffer out of our sight, is also one of the book's strengths. Khosravi's engaging anthology prompts the reader to consider how border regimes harm individuals and perpetuate global inequalities. In doing so, it affirms the urgency of acts of resistance, as exhibited by the Stansted 15, which challenge the system of immigrant detention and deportation, and do so in solidarity with those cast as undeserving, criminal and illegal.

Khosravi, Shahram. (ed). 2018. *[After deportation: Ethnographic perspectives](#)*. **Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 978-3-319-57266-6.**

Threshold: Emergency Responders on the US-Mexico Border

Pedro Silva Rocha Lima
April, 2019

A close friend, currently preparing to become a military firefighter in Brazil, described his training as an exercise in "how to become a hero." His curriculum includes rescue exercises on land and in the water; incidents involving fires, hazardous substances, drownings, car crashes, and shootings; and the appropriate use of equipment for each case. Whatever type of event, trained firefighters should be able to assess the scene and know what "powers" and gadgets in their toolbox are necessary to complete the mission.

In *Threshold: Emergency responders on the US-Mexico border*, Ieva Jusionyte shows how emergency responders interpret "space through the lens of threats – both natural and manmade" (26) and how this perspective contrasts with securitized understandings of the border by the US federal government's Border Patrol (BP), charged with detaining and deporting those it considers "illegal aliens." Both are part of the same state but report to different authorities: BP to the US federal government and emergency responders in fire departments to local authorities.

Threshold is based on fieldwork in fire departments in Nogales, Sonora (Mexico) and Nogales, Arizona (United States) – jointly called *Ambos Nogales* (both Nogales) – as well as in different settings in other smaller towns. Jusionyte's experience as a trained firefighter and emergency medical technician (EMT) adds a layer of nuance to her ethnography. Describing her experience at the fire department in Boston where she received training, at a time when she was also finishing her PhD, she notes that "[firefighters'] bodies and tools were fine-tuned with the urban environment, synced and tied to it" (219) as they anticipate emergencies based on the weather.

The book draws on various experiences as it weaves together questions of embodied expertise with the materiality of terrain and infrastructure, touching on the broader topics of the state, ethics, borders and migration.

> *The reader learns how emergency responders espouse "heroic sacrifice" on the one hand and "an ethics of anti-politics" on the other, by refusing to directly engage with, and often to speak of, politics.*

Jusionyte then asks: "what is the threshold of politics in emergency response?" (27-28). She answers this question by describing two contrasting understandings about the materiality of terrain at the border, held by emergency responders and Border Patrol.

In their training, emergency responders learn to interpret the built and natural environment of the border through the logic of risk, identifying features that can cause physical injury to those using it or moving through it. Fences with sharp features can sever migrants' fingers and limbs, deserts can cause dehydration to those crossing them, and built border infrastructure increases the likelihood of natural disasters such as flooding, which can harm local populations. During everyday operations, emergency responders look for the causes of wounding in their physical surrounding.
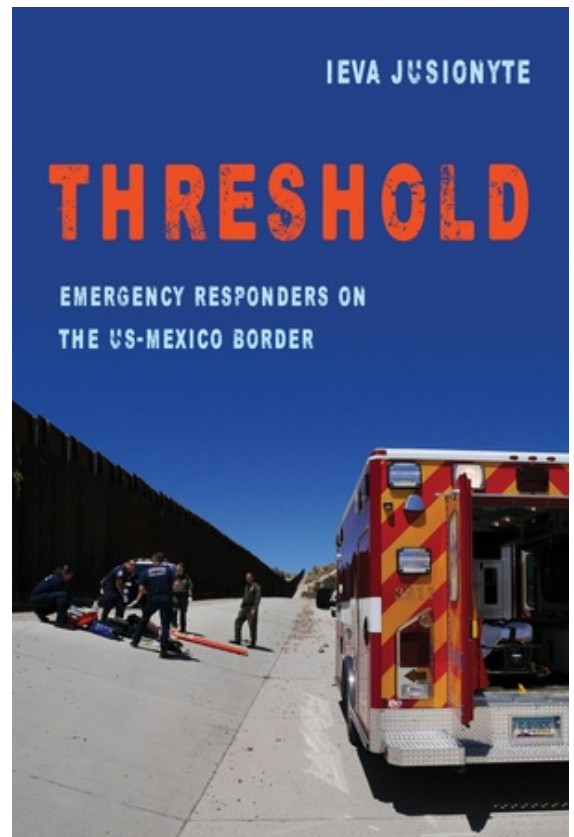
The federal government's Border Patrol, in turn, holds a contrasting understanding that strategizes these same spaces to hinder migrants' movements, intentionally shaping the terrain to wound them. High and sharp fences can deter, stop or slow crossing attempts, and serve to push migrants further into the "hostile terrain" of deserts that provide a natural barrier.

Emergency responders and Border Patrol represent the same state, yet they operate on different readings of the same space. The productive tension that Jusionyte explores is how, at its threshold, the state "both wounds and cares" (24).

In the second part of the book Jusionyte shows how aid flows asymmetrically across the border. Firefighters in Ambos Nogales, like the natural and manmade disasters they respond to, are not impeded by the physical presence of the border. Yet, when there is an emergency that overwhelms the capacity of fire

departments on either side, only Mexican *bomberos* (firefighters) move north to help, since US responders are fewer and recently became uninsured for work accidents in Mexico. The flow of donations (equipment and materials) is also asymmetrical, flowing from US fire departments to their Mexican counterparts.

The third part of the book discusses how "borderlands fall into the gray area of the law" (184), where there is an ethical contest between Border Patrol and charities regarding what constitutes right and wrong stances towards migrants crossing the border.

Readers familiar with the anthropology of humanitarianism see parallels abound. *Threshold* elicits questions about the possibilities and limits for a humanitarian *ethos* within (or along) the boundaries of states that normally enact it abroad. In contrast to the French context, where asylum seekers draw on their sick selves to obtain refuge (Fassin and D' Halluin 2005; Ticktin 2006), at the US-Mexican border the wounded body is seen by the state as "proof of crime" (14), which the migrant seeks to hide. Body wounds attest to illegal attempts at crossing the border and thus help characterize individuals as "illegal aliens," targets for detention and deportation by Border Patrol.

Moreover, one learns that the work of emergency responders is similar to the work performed by "humanitarian workers." They seek to alleviate suffering without discrimination based on nationality or ascribed legal status, while positioning themselves outside of politics. Yet, looking at the asymmetrical flow of emergency responders on the border, one can see a "politics of life" (Fassin 2007) in the hierarchy of whose lives can be put at risk and whose should be saved – Mexican lives can be put at risk to save US citizens on US soil, but not the other way around.

What the reader might find most interesting is Jusionyte's personal relationship to emergency response and how her previous experience in that profession shaped the research.

Her first contact with the work of firefighters was during her dissertation fieldwork on local media in the tripartite border between Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay in Iguazu, where journalists routinely stopped at fire stations for news on the latest emergency. After taking shelter in a fire station during strong storms, she overcame long-held fears and found comradery in the everyday work of firefighters. Upon returning to the US, she decided to start her emergency responder training – marked by physical toll and the same comradery she found in Iguazu – along the final stages of her PhD. This then led her to conduct ethnographic research with emergency responders along Mexico-US border, a move she made partly not to risk jeopardizing friendships established in the places where she had previously volunteered.

Jusionyte cautions the reader that her account of events in *Threshold* may have been detached, which is the standard way emergency responders respond to and report on everyday emergencies. Her fragmented narrative, also a reflection of the nature of the job, conveys the emotional distance required from rescuers, as they move from one emergency to the next. As an example of these spatial fissures, she recounts moving from a school class' visit to the fire department to the rescue of a woman with an open fracture on the border, and then back to the class. Avoiding the glorification of violence, and without explicitly deploying sentiments in the text, Jusionyte's writing evokes strong emotional reactions in the reader, offering a window into pressing current issues on migration, borders and securitization. While providing important insights into the politics of border control and emergency response, this book is a timely and beautifully written contribution to public anthropology.

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Ticktin, Miriam. 2006. "Where Ethics and Politics Meet." *American Ethnologist* 33 (1): 33–49.

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[Featured image](#) by *[The U.S. Army](#)* *(flickr, [CC BY 2.0](#))*

Workshop: Muslim Humanitarianism — #MUHUM

Till Mostowlansky
April, 2019

Date: 15-16 May, 2019

Place: The Graduate Institute Geneva

Convenor: Dr Till Mostowlansky, Department of Anthropology & Sociology, The Graduate Institute Geneva

Studies on the emergence of humanitarian thought tend to put emphasis on the global, and often violent, spread of Western-centric ideas and practices. This perspective has provided important insights into the Christian genealogy of humanitarianism, the secular translations of its ethical foundation, and processes

of contemporary neo-colonial diffusion. Many of these studies on global humanitarian government and its links to the politics of emotion have focused on large-scale institutions conventionally seen as linked to Western societies.

However, more recently, research highlighting the complex entanglements of actors situated in different humanitarian genealogies has gained traction. In practice, these actors have long interacted with each other and continue to re-translate concepts of humanitarianism, development, philanthropy, and charity in the course of everyday encounters. At a historical point in time at which Muslim societies are frequently seen as sites where Western ideas and practices are violently contested, this workshop seeks to explore humanitarian encounters beyond pre-conceived binaries. Bringing together scholars with different empirical and disciplinary backgrounds, it attempts to challenge such clear-cut distinctions.

Against this backdrop, the workshop employs an ever-provisional notion of Muslim humanitarianism – an array of different actors and practices relating to Islam and humanity – as a way of de-centering humanitarianism, and as a means to think together what is often deemed to be apart. It thereby aims to address the following sets of questions:

- How can we think about and conceptualize Muslim humanitarianism? Who are relevant actors and organizations? When and where have they emerged?
- How do Muslim institutions negotiate and navigate humanitarianism in relation to concepts of development, philanthropy and charity? In what ways do they change, accommodate, or adapt them?
- What political and ideological regimes of power exert influence on Muslim humanitarians? What kind of social, spatial and material transformations are thereby fostered?
- What are the methodological implications of studying Muslim humanitarianism across time and space?

Summaries of the workshop contributions will be made available in the series [MUHUM](#) – Muslim Humanitarianism at [Allegra Lab](#). Self-funded participants are welcome to attend: please write to till.mostowlansky[at]graduateinstitute.ch

Participants

Benthall, Jonathan (Anthropology, University College London)

Billaud, Julie (Anthropology, University of Sussex)

Derbal, Nora (Department of Sociology, Egyptology & Anthropology, The American University in Cairo)

Gupta, Radhika (LIAS, Leiden University)

Iqbal, Basit (Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley)

Möller, Esther (Leibniz Institute of European History, Mainz)

Monsutti, Alessandro (Anthropology & Sociology, The Graduate Institute Geneva)

Mostowlansky, Till (Anthropology & Sociology, The Graduate Institute Geneva)

Osella, Filippo (Anthropology, University of Sussex)

Rodogno, Davide (International History, The Graduate Institute Geneva

Taylor, Christopher B. (Sociology & Anthropology, George Mason University)

Varley, Emma (Anthropology, Brandon University)

[Featured image](#) by [IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation](#) ([CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#))

Allegra Wants You! Call for Associate Editor

Allegra
April, 2019

Allegra Lab is looking for a committed, resourceful and inventive new collaborator interested in volunteering as Associate Editor.

The job consists in:

- Overseeing the Media section of our website, which includes Allegra Virtual Museum of Obscure Fieldwork Artefacts (AVMoFA), Allegra TV

and Allegra Jukebox

- Taking care of the technical realisation of posts (1 post per week at our busiest times)
- Collating calls for upcoming workshops and conferences into our monthly #EVENTS feature
- Liaising with authors of posts when required
- Giving a hand circulating Allegra's content on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

The ideal candidate:

- Is on top of cutting edge developments in Visual Anthropology
- Is committed to Open Access publishing
- Is conscientious and well organised
- Enjoys working in a team
- Knowledge of Word Press is a plus!

Please send a 1-page motivation letter mentioning your skills and interests and a CV to submissions@allegralaboratory.net by 25 March 2019.

Featured image (cropped) by duncan c (flickr, CC BY-NC 2.0)

#EVENTS: Cultural Heritage, Ethnographic Storytelling and the

Future of the University

Allegra
April, 2019

Anthropologists are known for being great travel buddies. Take one (or more) with you to Vietnam and Ghana by way of Malta or the Netherlands to discuss questions ranging from what is ethnography and what is the role of the

ethnographer, to where does the globalisation (and neoliberalisation!) of university education lead us (Yes…where?!). Do drop us a line to tell us all about it!

As always, if you want your event to feature in our next events list or if you wish to write a short report, don't hesitate to get in touch with our events assistant at events@allegralaboratory.net

Summer School: MeditHerIty – Mobility and Heritage in the Mediterranean

14-22 September 2019, La Valletta, Malta

Cultural heritage is commonly thought as a product of the longstanding link between people and their own territory. But, as anthropologist James Clifford shown us, in our contemporary world culture and identity are associated to "routes" as much as to "roots". We are prompted to recognize that different kinds of mobility and flows are closely connected to the global dynamics of place making.

In order to follow the paths of this **"heritage on the move"** we can combine different fields of studies and manage a variety of approaches, ranging from engagement in theoretical debate to application of our skills in innovative projects.

The main aim of the Summer School is to **improve the knowledge of the participants in the anthropology of mobility and heritage** and their capacity to develop fruitfull cooperations with private and public agencies.

The Summer School will be divided in sets of lessons and activities including: analysis of theoretical and methodological tools; presentation of case studies with an ethnographic approach; visits to specific places and institutions engaged in migration and tourism in Malta.

[more]

Deadline for application: 16 April 2019

Summer School: Hands-on Anthropology: Role of the Ethnographer

6 July to 20 July 2019, VU Amsterdam

Everyone has a story to tell. For anthropologists, such accounts can reveal as much about the people and societies we study as more conventional research. But the process of collecting stories in the field and retelling them in the academic arena is littered with pitfalls. How do we ensure that our subjects are fairly represented? How do we construct a culturally sensitive narrative whilst maintaining scientific validity?

This course focuses on hands-on anthropology with strong orientation toward storytelling and narrating the life of others from cultural anthropological perspectives. The course is hand-on which means students learn to utilize the skills that they have gathered through their own lived experience as well as the training that receive during the course. Hand-on anthropology brings together reflexivity and academic trainings to show how students can turn their field-notes

and observations into coherent narrative that are scientifically valid. [[more](#)]

Deadline for application: 1 May 2019

Conference: [**3ʳᵈ Ghana Studies Triennial Conference**](#)

10-13 July 2019, University of Ghana

Geographically, Ghana is at the center of the world where the Greenwich Meridian meets the Equator. Conceptually, Ghana can be said to be at the center in regards to important themes in the study of Africa, such as pan-Africanism, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonialism, state-building, and development, with their attendant themes of power, materiality, and modernity. At the third triennial conference of the Ghana Studies Association, we engage with what it means to have Ghana truly at the center of African/Ghana Studies scholarship.

Recognizing Ghana at the center invites scholarship that takes Ghanaian models and concepts as a starting point. It also implies recognizing Ghana as both unique and global, not 'a place apart…[but] a site for the generation of ideas and theoretical insights' as well as methodological innovations. What might we contribute to political science if we questioned Western state formation as the standard model by which to assess state-building in Ghana and Africa? Could we utilized Ato Quayson's methodology of 'horizontal archaeologies' as applied to Oxford Street in Accra to explore postcoloniality and globalization in other cities? Would we gain new perspectives on economics through the economic ideology of

the Akan brought out in Gracia Clark's ethnographic work? How much more relevant might development studies be if there were a shift in focus from sophisticated but empirically-flawed abstractions to what Agnes Apusigah refers to as 'street evidence'? [more]

Conference: New Approaches to University Education in Asia

April 20-21, 2019, Fulbright University Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Fulbright University Vietnam wishes to announce our annual conference on New Approaches to University Education in Asia. The 21st century has witnessed an unprecedented globalization of education, alongside the development of new pedagogies and epistemologies rooted in transnational research and local context. What does the future hold for higher-education in Asia? What role will policy, the liberal arts, fine arts, STEM, and everything in between play in re-shaping minds, nations, and regions? [more]

Featured image (cropped) by July Brenda Gonzales Callapaza on Unsplash

#Podcast Round Up: The Best of January

Ian M. Cook
April, 2019

Last month our dear podcasting heroes at New Books in Anthropology brought us

some truly wonderful interviews. And, ever grateful for their work, this month we have collated for you some of the best. By clicking below, you can hear anthropologists discuss the sounds of Islam, capitalists relations, Islamic finance and contract workers fighting in America's war zones.
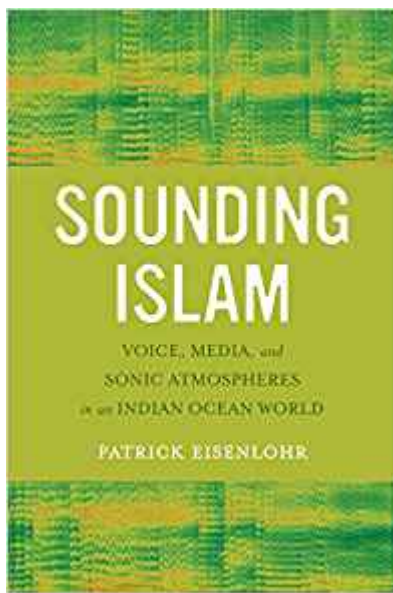
Sounding Islam. Voice, Media, and Sonic Atmospheres in an Indian Ocean World
by Patrick Eisenlohr
(University of California Press 2018)
Sounding Islam: Voice, Media, and Sonic Atmospheres in an Indian Ocean World (University of California Press, 2018) by Patrick Eisenlohr is an exciting ethnographic study of Mauritian Muslims' soundscapes. Through the exploration of *na't,* or devotional poetic recitations that honor the prophet Muhammad, Eisenlohr captures the sensory dimension of Islam, particularly through a linguistic anthropological analysis of performance, poetry, and acoustics. The book situates Mauritian Muslim' practices and devotions within the context of Islamic piety both across the Indian Ocean but also through a transnational and diasporic lens. In doing so, it highlights the sectarian differences that follow the performance of *na't* within the Muslim world, signaling to the intersubjectivity of Islamic piety. The study challenges scholars of Islam to take sonic atmospheres seriously, especially as it provides key insights into Islamic identity formation, piety, and ritual practices.

Interview by Shobhana Xavier
Listen **here**!

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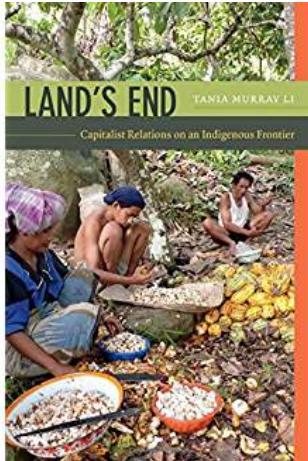
Land's End. Capitalist Relations on an Indigenous Frontier

by Tania Li

(Duke University Press 2014)If you want to read just one book to properly understand capitalism, let it be Tania Li's award-winning 2014 book *Land's End: Capitalist Relations on an Indigenous Frontier* (Duke University Press, 2014). This might seem like a strange choice: how can a study of a faraway and possibly exotic indigenous place shed light on "our" own global realities of jobless growth and rising inequality? But it can, and it does.

The book is a masterpiece of social scientific scholarship and critical political praxis. Through a longitudinal ethnography conducted over twenty years, the book follows the consequences of Indonesian highlanders' fateful decision to plant the booming cash crop of the 1990s, cacao. That decision, Li shows, was the reason that capitalism took root and developed apace in the highlands over the coming decades. All the telltale signs of capitalist relations emerged: land was privatized, commons eroded, classes differentiated, and wealth and poverty co-created. Instead of coming as an imposition from the outside, from the state or transnational corporations, capitalism grew within the highlands, in the intimate spaces between kin and neighbors who had all planted cacao hoping it would lead them to a better life and many of whom instead ran into a dead end — land's end. The dilemmas and challenges that land's end brought are explored with care, compassion, *and* a critical eye in Li's astonishingly lucid prose.

Interview by Aparna Gopalan
Listen **here**!

http://traffic.megaphone.fm/LIT9134224900.mp3
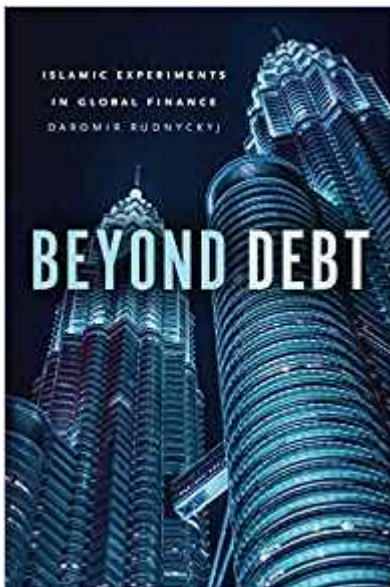
**[Beyond Debt. Islamic Experiments in Global Finance](#)**

by Daromir Rudnyckyj

(University of Chicago Press 2019)

Recent economic crises have made the centrality of debt, and the instability it creates, increasingly apparent. In *Beyond Debt: Islamic Experiments in Global Finance* (University of Chicago Press, 2019), anthropologist Daromir Rudnyckyj illustrates how the Malaysian state, led by the central bank, is seeking to make the country's capital Kuala Lumpur the central node of global financial activity conducted in accordance with Islam. *Beyond Debt* tracks efforts to re-center international finance in an emergent Islamic global city and, ultimately, to challenge the very foundations of conventional finance.

Interview by Hillary Kaell
Listen **here**!

http://traffic.megaphone.fm/LIT4066168699.mp3
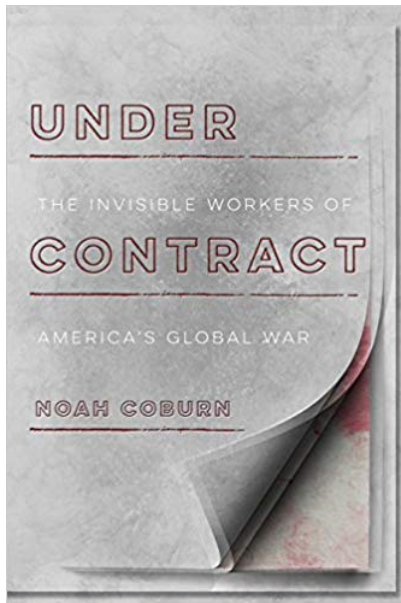
Under Contract. The Invisible Workers of America's Global War

by Noah Coburn

(Stanford University Press 2018)

Noah Coburn's *Under Contract: The Invisible Workers of America's Global War* (Stanford University Press, 2018) is about the hidden workers of American's foreign wars: third country nationals who while not serving in their country's militaries, still work to support the American war effort. These men and women serve as laborers, cooks, logisticians, engineers and security guards. They bear the burden of service in a war zone with the hopes of good pay, but are sometimes, maybe even often, disappointed. Prof Coburn explains in this book how they come to be in America's wars, why they want to sign on a contract, how America's government incentivizes and perpetuates the contracting system and what that means for the world both in the present and future.

In our talk, we discussed how Prof. Coburn came to this project, his personal experience in Afghanistan, what it means to be a contractor and how contracts are established as well as what happens to these contractors when they no longer have America's wars to fight.

Interview by Jeffrey Bristol
Listen **here**!

http://traffic.megaphone.fm/LIT2395088389.mp3

Featured image (cropped) *by* *Dennis Sylvester Hurd* *(flickr,* *CC BY 2.0)*

How to Win at Photography – How Games Teach Us to See

Marco De Mutiis
April, 2019

I have worked as photography director for The Long Day Of Young Peng with Andrea E. Pia, with a specific focus on the role images play in the project as well as on the overall interaction design. Part of the research for the project has led me to work on the relationship between photography and computer games.

"How's the Size? 900 pts! All right! It's very nice!"

You have handed in your pictures for Professor Oak to review them.

"What's the Pose? It's rolling… 500 pts!"

You are playing *Pokémon Snap* (HAL Laboratory, Pax Softnica, 1999). It's a photography game. It simulates the act of photographic capture in a safari-like ride, on an island populated by Pokémons running around in the wild.

Photography simulations are intriguing and bizarre media object: they merge representation and game rules and they short circuit image layer and algorithmic layer, surface and sub-face, semiotics and mechanics, vision and play.

Espen Aarseth: "The semiotic layer of the Game Object is the part of the game that informs the player about the game world and the game state through visual, auditory, textual and sometimes haptic feedback. The mechanical layer of the game object (its game mechanics) is the engine that drives the game action, allows the players to make their moves, and changes the game state."(1)

These two layers inform and influence the player in different ways. The politics of representation in games are easier to single out, as photorealistic CGI graphics tend to remediate the semiotics of photography, cinema and advertisement.

Film and photography theory have long critiqued the problematic notion of objectivity of images, pointing to the embedded cultural filters within visual culture and the way representation influences and programs the viewers.

Game mechanics, on the other hand, are equally effective forces that work through an invisible layer of rules and limitations to shape players' behavior, allowing and encouraging specific choices in order for players to win the game.

Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman: "Game Play: the formalized, focused interaction that occurs when players follow the rules of a game in order to play it."(2)

Game mechanics restrict the freedom of players and reduce play to a set of predefined rules and discrete choices that are made available by the game software. The tension between play's freedom and submitting oneself to the constraint of gameplay is one of the pleasures of playing computer games.

Is it about mastering the machine or being mastered by it?

> Seth Giddings and Helen Kennedy: "[…] 'mastery' is only one pleasure among many, […] activity and passivity are not opposites in videogame play but fluctuations in the circuit, and thus […] a new conceptual language is needed to attend to both the operations of nonhuman agency and the human pleasures of lack of agency, of being controlled, of being acted upon." (3)

If films facilitate the viewer's identification with key protagonists and let the spectator internalize social norms and filters through an aesthetic experience, game mechanics "program" the player through their possible scripted actions, actions that must be learnt and performed. Until a certain machinic game state is not satisfied by the player – a choice is made, a certain position is reached, a certain number of coins have been collected, an enemy is not killed – the game does not progress and the player cannot move closer to her goal.

Semiotics and game mechanics may go hand in hand, reinforcing specific narratives. Players of Grand Theft Auto V (Rockstar, 2013) move through the streets of Los Santos, the parodic version of late capitalist America that was rendered and simulated on top of "250,000 photographs and countless hours of video"(4) taken from Los Angeles.

The representational layer of GTA V reinforces problematic views of gender and race, depicting marginalized groups of people of contemporary American society in photorealistic computer graphics.

Homeless people live in tents in areas littered with garbage under flyovers, transgender individuals only exist as sex workers outside of night clubs, people of

colour in Los Santos are mostly fulfilling the "gangster" stereotype.

This layer is coupled with game mechanics that reinforce the biased representations of GTA V. Homeless people have no role in gameplay, they serve no purpose in the main story line and the only interaction possible is for the player to physically attack them. The transgender sex workers can only "be heralded with disgustingly transphobic lines such as 'Hello, sir. I mean, madam.'"(5) Black characters are more skilled at stealing cars and are more likely to take out their guns if provoked by the players.

> Steffen Krüger: " it is not advisable to bump into or provoke a member of one of the racialised minorities represented in the game that populate the poorer areas of Los Santos. The chances are, it will get the avatar killed, with armed men appearing from everywhere around, attacking without further warning. Again, the algorithmic inevitability of such a pattern results in a supposedly natural state of affairs in which racialized minorities are shown to be inevitably and naturally inclined to raw, unmitigated violence." (6)

Alternatively, representation and algorithmic mechanics can be disjointed, indifferent from one another, with the aesthetic experience acting more like a decorative distraction from the core of gameplay and its rules.

> McKenzie Wark: "In The Sims 2 you start with preset templates (Caucasian, African American, Chinese, Persian—and Elf) alterable via a lot of sub-sliders. […]but these external attributes are merely a skin. They do not really affect the game. […] The external representations are of no account; the internal variables determine potential. The "skin" is arbitrary, a difference without a distinction, mere decoration. Underneath it lies a code which is all." (7)

Back to photography games. Back to Pokémon Snap. Back to Professor Oak's review: "How's the Size? 340 pts! Hmm… It's so-so." Photography is gamified, it must be performed by the player, it must follow the rules of the game. "How's the Pose? 750 pts! Hmm… It's so-so." Professor Oak stands in his lab judging your pictures, giving points and scoring technique, size and pose. "How's the

Technique? Wait… Your Pokémon isn't in the middle of the frame. It would have been perfect if the Pokémon were in the middle of the frame"

You are not only consuming a representation system, you are taught to perform it. "Oh, dear… your last shot was better than this." As you master the game obtaining high scores for you images, you are trained by its narrow and strict code of what can be accepted as good photography.

Look again at Prof. Oak: he wears a lab coat and stands in his laboratory filled with machines. He is a scientist doing a portfolio review, which is somehow the perfect visualization of algorithms applied to an aesthetic analysis of photographs.

Cindy Poremba: "Photography is an inherently gamelike practice."

Yet you cannot win in photography, or so we thought until it became quantified and ruled by algorithmic mechanics of gameplay and by a code that allows no ambiguity. Photography is reduced to only one acceptable representation system, that players have no choice but to subscribe to.

Alexandra Orlando and Betsy Brey: "The fact that Snap gamifies basic photography skills and teaches its players how to create a single kind of photographic image indicates a single acceptable or desirable kind of photography. Not only does it teach just one style, but it also discourages learning others in the game space. This can be viewed as a kind of photographic colonialism—the limitation to a single viewpoint at the expense and extinction of others by a controlling power outside of the immediate environment." (8)

It's all fun when confined to Huizinga's "magic circle" of play, but gamification of photography is a phenomenon that has been spreading outside of computer games, shaping the rules of representation of social exchange on online media platforms. Within the currency of likes and followers of the so-called attention economy, the version of photography that is most effective is the one that produces what Jonathan Beller calls "fractal celebrity."(9) This idea of

computational representation flattens diversity and promotes gender inequality, racism and cultural codifications through a unique notion of successful photography:

"14 ways to make your Instagram photos stand out and get noticed"(10), "How to Take Good Instagram Photos: A Step-by-Step Guide"(11), "How to Take Better Instagram Photos: 13 Steps (with Pictures)"(12)

While the genre of photography simulation games remains a niche compared to the dominant titles of FPS and car racing games, their mechanics are directly transferable from the interface of the game camera to that of a DSLR. Because of the game-like qualities of photography itself, the relation between gamified and traditional photographic capture is arguably closer than that between shooting a gun and playing an FPS. In other words, Professor Oak remains your photography teacher even after you are done playing Pokémon Snap.

Pokémon Snap is one of many photography games, or – to be more specific – photography safari games. You are now a wildlife photographer in the fictional Manyanga Conservation Area in East Africa. The game is Afrika (Rhino Studios, 2008). You have at your disposal a number of cameras and lenses, all faithful and licensed simulations of the Sony Alpha camera series. Your clients send you tasks.

>Subject: Another photo request just came in

>From: Research Project Head Office

>The Masai Giraffe photo you sent us the other day was quite nice. You're already creating a buzz around the office.

When we showed the photo to a bottled water manufacturer, they expressed an interest in seeing a photo of a giraffe drinking water.

Can you manage this additional request?

Manyanga Research Project

After taking and submitting your pictures, you get client evaluation reports:

>Angle: Excellent

>Target: Marvelous

>Distance: Great

>Technique: Great

Photography safaris are a special kind of photography. The photographer hunts a prey, the camera sublimates the gun. The subject of the image is unaware of the activity and possibly unwilling to be portrayed.

Susan Sontag: "One situation where people are switching from bullets to film is the photographic safari that is replacing the gun safari in East Africa. The hunters have Hasselblads instead of Winchesters; instead of looking through a telescopic sight to aim a rifle, they look through a viewfinder to frame a picture."(13)

Pokémon Snap, Afrika, Safari Guns (New-Deal Productions SA, 1989), *Wild Earth* (Super X, 2006), *Snapimals* (BebopBee, Inc., 2015): all these games build upon a one-sided idea of photography where what is in front of the lens is mere background, with no voice in the photographic process. They reward the capture of the subjects, as if they were just another item in their inventory, an achievement trophy. It's a unilateral relationship where the photographer dominates her prey through visual media.

Arella Azoulay: "The assumption is that the photographs show or perform something that is already over and done, foreclosing the option of seeing photography as a space of political relations."(14)

It gets worse. In front of you now stands a female model in a swimming suit, posing next to a pool.

You are playing *Paparazzi* (HuneX Co. Ltd., 2004). While not technically a safari but more of a photoshoot simulation game, Paparazzi promotes an extended safari gaze. Its game mechanics are similar to those of Afrika and Snap. It simply swaps the textures and skeletons of the wild animals with that of the subservient female object of desire – including what seems to be a ridiculously exaggerated gravity force that only affects the bouncing of the breast of the model. The photographed subjects remain trapped in this violent act of dominance, the gaze of the white male (the prototypic game player of what is known in the industry as the "Hard Core"), gamified and quantified. In fact the model of *Paparazzi* enjoys even less freedom than the elephant in Afrika, as she is unable to leave the room, or to attack the photographer and evade the camera gaze.

Digital, networked and computational processes have reorganized sign and semiotics, quantifying forms of representation and reducing them to a binary model. Professor Oak stands as the "allegorithm" (McKenzie Wark) of the current networked image system, encouraging and rewarding a photography that offers a spectacle to be consumed, its subjects to be conveniently boxed in clear categories and with no agency.

This image system also follows a problematic tradition in photography which assumes the objectivity of reproduction and the role of the photographer as the sole agent in the scene portrayed. Scores turn into numbers and points, revealing the often tacit and hidden rules of such representation and effectively training players to conform to a view that keeps reinforcing (the creation and consumption of) images of inequality, in a society that has commodified images and has turned the photographic attention into a currency.

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Featured image by [Yahdi Romelo]() on [Unsplash]()

Walking in Young Peng's Shoes

Greg C. Bruno
April, 2019

Fei Xiaotong, the late Chinese anthropologist, believed that the best way to study China was by acquiring "intensive, firsthand knowledge of Chinese society itself." But what about secondhand knowledge? Is there a suitable substitute for personal experience in the field of anthropological pedagogy?

The last time I visited China was nearly two decades ago, but during the 2016-2017 academic year, I "visited" China daily as a master's student in

comparative anthropology at the London School of Economics and Political Science. And one teaching tool, a [point-and-click video game](#) developed by Professor Andrea Pia, served as a key resource during my rediscovery tour.

In the early morning hours of May 8, 1999, an American B-2 cruising at 50,000 feet opened its cargo bay doors above the Serbian city of Belgrade. Cloaked in the pre-dawn cover of darkness, five JDAM bombs floated silently through the clouds, ripping past their intended target – the Yugoslavian Federal Directorate of Supply and Procurement – into the roof of the Chinese Embassy. By the time the dust cleared, three Chinese nationals were dead, buried in the rubble.

From Washington, the apology was swift. President Bill Clinton blamed outdated maps for a raid that was part of NATO's operation against Slobodan Milosevic, the former Serbian president. But in China, where I was, public anger was at an early boil. Chinese state television called the strike a "[barbarian act](#)", and Hu Jintao, then the vice president, said the incident had "[incited the fury of the Chinese people](#)." Within hours, tens of thousands of young Chinese men and women were protesting and burning American flags in cities across China, including in Dongying, a small oil boomtown in northern Shandong province that had been my home for a year.

The morning of the attack started normally in Dongying, where I was teaching English to young Chinese university students.

Around sunrise I climbed aboard my rusty bicycle for the five-minute pedal to the main teaching building on campus, a blocky-brown five-story behemoth of dark hallways and cold, concrete classrooms.

On the third floor my two-dozen English conversation students were already seated at the long wooden tables when I walked in. We spent the next two hours talking about American culture, discussing grammar, and enunciating our r's. One student who called himself Birden (after Larry Bird, the basketball legend) wanted to know what my favorite Hollywood movie was. A girl who went by the

name of Juliet (she was forever looking for her Romeo) discussed her plans for after graduation.

But by mid-morning, Dongying was convulsing with anti-American rage. As I sat in my serviced apartment, glued to coverage of the Belgrade bombing on the state-run English *CCTV*, my phone rang with death threats and heavy breathing. "Teacher Greg," one caller said in English, "leave China now, or you die."

By noon the anonymous calls had become chants outside my living room; hundreds of university students demanded that the "foreigners go home."

> *Another teacher and I climbed to the roof of the building with a camera, and through the viewfinder I could see some of the students I had taught that morning.*

For 48 hours, the only thing standing between eight foreign teachers and our students were three Chinese soldiers, placed at the front door of our apartment complex.

Nearly two decades later, when I arrived at Andrea Pia's China in Comparative Perspective (AN447) course at the LSE, my days in Dongying were still front of mind. I carried with me many preconceived ideas of China's development, but only a narrow scope of academic or ethnographic material to draw from. Over the course of the year-long program, Pia helped students trace the collective cannon of China's modern and pre-modern history. We were introduced to concepts related to China's social, ideological, and political organization. And we used these theoretical frameworks to shape more nuanced views of China from a historical and comparative perspective.

By year's end, I had a far deeper understanding of China's past as well as its present. Despite gaining this perspective from a geographic distance, my engagement with the academic literature even helped me contextualize the events of May 1999 – for example, as surprised as I was by the outpouring of

student-led nationalistic fervor, Communist Party leaders may have been even more shocked (see Zhao, 2004).

But for any postgraduate student studying China from afar, it is not easy to achieve what Fei Xiaotong idealized as knowledge through personal experience (Fei, 1992). Engaging with my Chinese classmates at the LSE did provide small windows into the modern Chinese state; Pia's educational video game, *The Long Day of Young Peng*, offered another.

Based loosely on Pia's own ethnographic fieldwork, *The Long Day* pulls from topics studied in AN447 – including modules on religion, urbanism, post-socialism, consumerism, and property – to create a linear narrative "lived" by the game's protagonist and "experienced" by the game's players. Akin to a choose-your-own-adventure computer saga, *The Long Day* traces Peng's journey as a migrant, and pushes users to contextualize the myriad ways in which China's citizens must navigate their historical, political, and practical surroundings.

For me, the game was also an opportunity to test and question my own biases toward China. In the West, scholars and journalists typically emphasize the political and economic *differences* between China's past and present, while overlooking and underemphasizing social and cultural constraints. In other words, while Peng's decision to migrate and leave his ancestral homeland in search of work in Beijing was related to filial duty and economic need, it was also complicated by legal and cultural pressures – elements that have shaped the Chinese relationship to and with migration throughout the post-Mao period (Fan, 2007; Murphy, 2002).

That same calculus – to leave or to stay – bore heavily on my students in Dongying.

> *Before the bombs fell on Belgrade, students easily shared their ambitions, dreams, and hopes; like Peng, they had left home in search of wealth and status, but also to support their parents and grow their country.*

And they, like Peng, were navigating China's modernization in real time. While towers of bricks and glass have altered the physical landscape beyond visual recognition, it seems that the personal and individual factors shaping China's social fabric have not changed so quickly.

I may never see my former students from Dongying again or have the opportunity to challenge them on their reaction to the events of May 1999. But through Pia's class and *The Long Day of Young Peng*, I at least have the satisfaction of knowing that the pace of China's progress has not yet rendered my own "firsthand" experiences obsolete.

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Featured image courtesy of pixabay.com.

UPDATE on our Collective Letter Against the Eradication of Anthropology in Poland

Judith Beyer
April, 2019

This is a follow-up post to our collective letter which we drafted last month in support of our colleagues in Poland who are fighting the eradication of anthropology as an independent discipline.

In the meantime, our letter has been shared numerous times worldwide, for

example by the [Association of Social Anthropologists of Aotearoa/New Zealand](#) (ASAA/NZ). An email has been sent by the Chair of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK & Commonwealth (ASA), Professor Nigel Rapport, encouraging all members of ASA to sign and various collectives and groups have shared our initial post via their social media networks. Thank you all for your support!

The American Anthropological Association (AAA), who had issued its own letter of support already at the end of last year, has signed our letter as have hundreds of others, sometimes with detailed comments. Browsing through the list, we were struck by the outpour of solidarity. Here are a couple of comments to give those who are new to the issue an idea of what is at stake:

AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION   REPLY
FEBRUARY 6, 2019 AT 11:35 PM (EDIT)

The American Anthropological Association, an organization with 10,000+ members worldwide, fully supports this petition.

LYNELLYN D. LONG, PH.D.   REPLY
JANUARY 24, 2019 AT 4:39 PM (EDIT)

It would be a great loss for all, and especially for work in Central and Eastern Europe generally, if this decision prevails.

A

DR. MAC MARSHALL, PROFESSOR EMERITUS, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
REPLY

JANUARY 24, 2019 AT 5:02 PM (EDIT) ✎

I oppose banning Anthropology.

PROF. EMMA TARLO
REPLY

JANUARY 24, 2019 AT 6:22 PM (EDIT) ✎

We hope you will recognise the value of Polish anthropology.

MUHAMMAD SULAMAN IJAZ, PHD CANDIDATE AT DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY QUAID I AZAM UNIVERSITY, PAKISTAN
REPLY

JANUARY 24, 2019 AT 6:22 PM (EDIT) ✎

Survival of Anthropology is the survival of Humanity

PROF PAT CAPLAN
REPLY

JANUARY 24, 2019 AT 8:11 PM (EDIT) ✎

In the hope of a change of policy and in solidarity – a word which I believe has a special resonance in Poland.- with Polish colleagues.

FAYE V. HARRISON

JANUARY 24, 2019 AT 9:43 PM (EDIT) 🖉

Faye V. Harrison
Professor of Anthropology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA
Past President of International Union of Anthropological & Ethnological Sciences
Anthropology & ethnology constitute a distinct discipline with a significant record of knowledge
that warrants its full-fledged recognition and representation in the research & curricular domains
of academic life.

DR RODERICK EWINS, UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA

JANUARY 24, 2019 AT 11:43 PM (EDIT) 🖉

It passes understanding that a country's government should attempt to eliminate the study of
humankind, which is the function of Anthropology. It poses the question of just who or what the
government imagines it is governing, or more importantly, representing, if not those very humans it
does not deem it worth studying.
I join my colleagues worldwide in condemning any such move, and asking the government of Poland
to immediately reverse this really very silly decision.

MICHAEL W. YOUNG, AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

JANUARY 25, 2019 AT 2:43 AM (EDIT) 🖉

Malinowski would turn in his grave!

SUBHADRA MITRA CHANNA

REPLY

As the Senior Vice-President of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) I strongly support the petition against the abolition of anthropology as a subject in Poland

DR HAB. DOMINIKA FERENS, UNIVERSITY OF WROCŁAW, POLAND

REPLY

Polish cultural anthropology and religious studies have such radically different histories, methodologies, and theoretical underpinnings that forcing scholars in these disciplinies to function in the same departments and evaluate each others' work can only lead to conflicts and misunderstandings.

CHRISTINE VERBRUGGEN

REPLY

With full support for a Polish anthropological tradition to remain highly visible and distinct, and with respect for the authors of this letter to be able to voice the matter of factness of this political mistake, in the face of blunt ignorance.
Christine Verbruggen
KULeuven, Social and Cultural Anthropology

AHMET KERIM GÜLTEKIN

JANUARY 26, 2019 AT 11:08 AM (EDIT) 🖉

Dr Ahmet Kerim Gültekin (Ethnologist)
I was dismissed from my position in Munzur University (Dersim/Tunceli – Turkey) Sociology Department via a decree law in January 2017 by Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party) because of signing a declaration of Academics for Peace, against AKP's militarist oppressions.
I fully support Polish colleagues and their struggle for anthropological tradition.

PAUL STOLLER

JANUARY 26, 2019 AT 6:05 PM (EDIT) 🖉

In Solidarity with my Polish colleagues. Let's stand up to mindlessness

PROFESSOR JUDITH OKELY, AFFILIATE, OXFORD SCHOOL OF ANTHROPOLOGY, EMERITUS PROFESSOR HULL UNIVERSITY

JANUARY 26, 2019 AT 11:58 PM (EDIT) 🖉

Poland should celebrate and develop NOT destroy the legacy of Europe's if not one of THE world's greatest anthropologist. He encouraged people to go and live for many months with people to understand and explain their differences thus helping us learn from and relate to people from the entire range of humanity. How ironic that after 9/11 the CIA tried to recruit anthropologists because they wanted to understand terrorism. I was taught by a pupil of Malinowski at Cambridge, Edmund Leach, and I owe everything to that wonderful year long course we postgrads did on the entire work of Malinowski. It facilitated my academic fieldwork from then on. I have also helped teach Polish students anthropology when visiting professor in Denmark and lectured around Poland. I was so impressed with the different universities and students steeped in anthropology. Poland we need your expertises in the discipline developed by your distinguished ancestor. Don't destroy your cultural legacy and future

ALEX MOLTZAU   REPLY

JANUARY 28, 2019 AT 9:40 AM (EDIT) ✎

I am a student at the University of Oslo studying Anthropology with a minor in Computer Science. A similar process is happening here. I support you and anthropology in Poland. Wish you all the best of luck!

VINTILA MIHAILESCU   REPLY

JANUARY 31, 2019 AT 7:39 PM (EDIT) ✎

It's unbelievable – but more and more frequent with raising nationalist-populism in Europe. It seems that we have to unite too...
Vintila Mihailescu
Professor of Anthropology
National School of Political Studies and Administration
Bucharest, Romania

PROF.SR.SHARON MACDONALD   REPLY

FEBRUARY 1, 2019 AT 10:41 AM (EDIT) ✎

Social and cultural anthropology are vital disciplines for understanding the nature of experience in our contemporary world. For the country that is home to some of the most globally important anthropological heritage to cut the discipline is an error on an epic scale, surely also for those who claim to have the country's best interests at heart or who might hope to elevate the country's international standing.

RICHARD RATHBONE, EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF THE HISTORY OF AFRICA, SOAS, LONDON

FEBRUARY 1, 2019 AT 4:53 PM (EDIT) ✏

I cannot believe that a nation which has played such a major part in the exploration of what it is that makes us human in an intriguing variety of ways can abolish a discipline that lies at the cutting edge of the quest for mutual understanding and tolerance.

PROF. DR. CHRISTOPH ANTWEILER, UNIVERSITY OF BONN, GERMANY

FEBRUARY 5, 2019 AT 1:03 PM (EDIT) ✏

I express my solidarity!
Polish anthropology is important for world anthropology.

ROBERT LAYTON, PROFESSOR EMERITUS AND FELLOW OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY

FEBRUARY 5, 2019 AT 4:59 PM (EDIT) ✏

An extraordinary decision from the government of the country that gave us Bronislaw Malinowski, one of the most influential founders of modern anthropology. May I respectfully request that Polish government ministers inform themselves more fully of anthropology's broad scope and its huge potential for improving the quality of human social life?

Where do we go from here? We have already mailed out the first list of signatures (550 of them) on January 31, 2019.

We have now agreed to send out a new regular mail to Minister Gowin every time we add 500 new signatures to our list in order to keep the pressure up.

So please keep on sharing our post and make sure you alert people to the [accompanying post by Mateusz Laszczkowski](#) for background information on the situation in Poland.

If you haven't done so already, please sign here by adding your name to the comment section at the end of the letter.

Thanks, Allies!